

INDIA: FLOODS

10 October 2000

appeal no. 19/2000

situation report no. 4

period covered: 1 - 9 October 2000

Flood victims are in acute need of relief, including food, water purification tablets, basic health care, tarpaulins, shelter and household materials. The West Bengal state branch of the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) is mobilising all available resources and the Bihar state branch has dispatched relief supplies and medicines to flood-affected districts. The IRCS, supported by the Federation, continues assessments of the impact of the devastating floods. As more details are received, a revision of the plan of action and the budget will be required in order to respond to the overwhelming needs.

The context

Over 30 million people have been affected by the floods in north and north eastern India over the last two months. In the north-eastern state of Assam, there were initial reports of flooding in late July. The situation worsened dramatically at the beginning of August when flash floods resulting from heavy rains in the Himalayas swept south, causing breaches in the embankments along many parts of the Brahmaputra river and its tributaries, inundating the surrounding area. The combined death toll as a result of floods, landslides and torrential rains in India, Bangladesh and Bhutan stands at over 1,500.

As reported in the Information Bulletin no. 2 issued on 29 September, the most critical situation is now in the state of West Bengal. Heavy monsoon rains have caused a second wave of floods that swept across a vast and densely populated area. Local authorities state that over 15 million people were forced to flee their homes. The floods have, so far, claimed 1,187 lives, around 74,000 heads of cattle have perished and eight districts have been declared flood-affected.

The northern state of Bihar was also severely affected by a further disastrous wave of floods in September. Three consecutive flood waves hit a total of 31 districts and claimed 163 lives. Official figures confirm that, to date, 6.9 million people have been affected.

In addition to Assam, West Bengal and Bihar, the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Marahastra have also experienced extensive flooding caused by the seasonal monsoon rains. As the waters begin receding, many people are now attempting to return to their homes. However, hundreds of villages in the flood-affected regions are still submerged or marooned and millions of people who have lost their homes are now living in makeshift shelters.

Latest events

Bihar is struggling to cope with the third wave of floods to affect the district within a period of less than two months. The situation remains critical in many regions and road and rail connections to several affected districts are still disrupted. According to updated figures recently released by state authorities, the combined number of villages inundated in Bihar stands at over 7,000 and more than 600,000 hectares of land were submerged by flood waters.

Heavy rains also struck several districts of Uttar Pradesh in the first days of September, killing over 100 people and affecting crop land and villages.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

According to the findings of a joint assessment team from the Indian Red Cross Society and the Federation which visited the affected regions in August, flood victims are in acute need of relief, including water purification tablets, basic health care, food, tarpaulins and other shelter and household materials. The assessment team completed its work on 5 September and was replaced by a five-person Federation field team which arrived in India to assist the IRCS in carrying out relief operations.

The International Federation is responding to the latest disaster in West Bengal under the assistance programme for the victims of the August floods. A revised 'international request for assistance' to assist 200,000 beneficiaries was launched on 25 September 2000. In light of the latest events and the massive humanitarian needs, a further revision of the plan of action and the budget may be required. Assessments continue to be performed and details of the full impact of the floods are yet to be confirmed.

West Bengal •

A senior officer from the Indian Red Cross Society and two Federation delegates were deployed from Delhi to West Bengal immediately after the first reports on the latest floods emerged on 21 September. Based in Calcutta, the delegates continue to assess the situation and to provide crucial support to the IRCS. The West Bengal state branch of the IRCS is mobilising all available resources to assist the flood-affected population. However, logistical difficulties in reaching some of the flood-affected districts continue to hamper relief efforts. In addition, the overwhelming scale of the disaster is outstretching the limited resources of the district branches.

Food items, relief goods and 8 rescue boats have already been dispatched to those districts currently accessible by road. A second consignment of relief supplies has just been dispatched from Delhi and is expected to arrive shortly in Calcutta.

In addition, the Orissa state branch of the IRCS is sending 10 MT of rice from its buffer stocks in Bhubaneswar to West Bengal. The Federation relief delegate is assisting the state branch to devise a plan for the immediate dispatch and distribution of all of the items in the pipeline.

Bihar •

The response of the IRCS state branch to this new emergency has been immediate and effective. Relief supplies and medicines available as buffer stocks or donated by the public were quickly dispatched to the flood-affected districts. The state branch is also working in close co-ordination with the Society's National Headquarters in Delhi and other state branches which have offered their support on behalf of the flood victims in Bihar. The state Branch has requested 27 rubber boats, 7 aluminium boats and a water purification unit from the IRCS warehouse in Calcutta. Additional relief goods, including mattresses, kitchen sets and buckets have been sent to Bihar from the Tamil Nadu state branch buffer stocks in Madras.

To date, the following items have been sent to the flooded areas:

Item	Quantity
PVC sheet	30,000 metres
Tents	60 pieces
Tarpaulins	500 pieces
Stoves	28 pieces
Blankets	500 pieces
Canvas rolls	2,000 metres
Match boxes	30,000 pieces
Small food containers	500 pieces
Feeding cups	5,000 pieces
Rope	20,000 metres
Candles	1,000 pieces
Assorted garments	205 pieces
Cloth sheeting	10,000 metres
Cloth bags	182 pieces
Water purification tablets	500,000 tablets
Disposable syringes	3,500 pieces
Cotton rolls	100 packs
Paracetamol	19,000 tablets

Assam •

The Federation logistics, relief and information/reporting delegates had scheduled a visit to Assam during the first week of October. The main objective of this visit was familiarisation with the state branch and provision of basic support for the initial implementation of the assistance programme to the population affected by the floods in August. However, due to the worsening situation in West Bengal, this visit has been postponed. Meanwhile, the selection of beneficiaries and distribution of relief goods were continued by IRCS teams in Assam. A total of 2,000 family kits, containing household goods funded by the American Red Cross, were dispatched from Delhi on 3 September to Assam state.

Outstanding needs

The local authorities and armed forces have been rescuing and evacuating people and distributing some relief assistance in West Bengal. However, to meet the existing needs, rescue boats, food supplies, clean drinking water, shelter materials, medicines and cooking utensils are all urgently required. Many of those who have been rescued are still lacking shelter and access to medical care. Local authorities are emphasising the need for basic health care and rehabilitation of housing at a later stage. The Federation medical co-ordinator will carry out a health needs assessment in the state's flood-affected districts .

The Federation will be providing 10 new emergency health kits (NEHK) to help local IRCS personnel in the affected states to deal with an upsurge of malaria and waterborne diseases in the aftermath of the floods. Due to the critical situation in West Bengal, three additional NEHKs, one Relief Delegate and a vehicle are urgently needed. There is also a need to procure and distribute medicines locally, to train health staff, and to provide logistical support to medical teams so that they can reach remote communities affected by the floods. To assist in the efforts made to prevent outbreaks of malaria and encephalitis, treated mosquito nets will be procured as soon as possible. Since many tube wells have been contaminated or destroyed by the flooding and communities have been forced to drink water taken from the rivers, there is an urgent need for chlorine tablets and buckets. This will facilitate family-level water purification until the local authorities can restore safe water sources. With millions of people made homeless, tarpaulins are an urgent need to provide shelter against the continuing monsoon rains, and distribution of cooking utensils is essential to replace belongings lost in the flooding.

In view of the scale of needs, it may prove necessary to revise both the plan of action and the budget to take into account additional Red Cross assistance.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

On 4 September, the Federation assessment team briefed UN specialised agencies and representatives of the NGO community on plans to assist 200,000 people with health care, purified water, food and non-food relief. The latest events in West Bengal have been the subject of national and international media attention.

The two Federation delegates currently working in West Bengal are maintaining close contact with local authorities responsible for the overall co-ordination of relief activities in the affected areas, particularly at the district level. In addition, the Federation relief delegate participated in an information-sharing meeting attended by local and international NGOs operating in West Bengal. This meeting, held on 27 September, was co-ordinated by UNICEF. In addition, the HoD continues to ensure liaison with embassies and agencies represented in New Delhi.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and
Reporting Department

Hiroshi Higashiura
Director
Asia & Pacific Department

This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

India Floods						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 19/2000						PLEDGES RECEIVED
						10/10/00
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				5,969,270		TOTAL COVERAGE 37.8%
AMERICAN - PRIVATE		20	USD	34	22.08.00	
AUSTRALIAN - RC		11,613	AUD	11,594	02.10.00	
BRITISH - RC		50,000	GBP	126,000	11.08.00	PURCHASE, TRANSPORT & DISTRIBUTION OF RICE
BRITISH GOVT/RC - DFID		245,098	GBP	617,646	11.08.00	
CANADIAN - GOVT/RC		99,000	CAD	111,118	11.08.00	
DANISH - RC		250,000	DKK	52,650	21.08.00	
DANISH - RC		950,000	DKK	200,070	14.08.00	
DANISH - RC		231,250	DKK	48,285	29.09.00	
FINNISH - RC		84,094	EUR	132,162	11.08.00	
FINNISH - RC		33,637	EUR	52,383	27.09.00	
GERMAN - GOVT		300,000	DEM	234,330	02.10.00	15'800 KITCHEN SETS, 3 NEW EMERGENCY HEALTH KITS, INCL. TRANSPORT
ICELANDIC - RC		200,000	ISK	4,456	11.08.00	
IRANIAN - RC		30,000	USD	51,375	23.09.00	
JAPANESE - RC				150,000	14.08.00	
JAPANESE - RC				148,000	02.10.00	
KOREA, REPUBLIC OF - RC				30,000	28.08.00	
LIECHTENSTEIN				50,000	02.10.00	
SPANISH - RC		5,000,000	ESP	47,225	18.08.00	SPANISH DEL. MEMBER OF FACT TEAM
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		750,000	SEK	140,775	11.08.00	
SWEDISH - RC		250,000	SEK	46,925	11.08.00	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				2,255,028	CHF	37.8%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						