

# OPERATIONS UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## BANGLADESH: FLOODS

2 August, 2004

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organisation and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

### In Brief

Appeal No. 15/2004; Operations Update no. 1; Period covered: 26 July – 2 August, 2004; Appeal coverage: 3.6%; [Click here to go directly to the contributions list on the website \(the list is updated weekly\).](#)

#### Appeal history:

- Launched on 26 July 2004 for CHF 4,350,000 (USD 3,440,095 or EUR 2,844,997) for six months to assist one million beneficiaries.

Outstanding needs: CHF 4,192,090 (USD 3,327,056 or EUR 2,724,858)

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: [Annual Appeal 01.56/2004](#)

**Operational Summary:** With the monsoon anticipated to last until mid/late September it is unlikely that there will be an early end to this emergency. Although river levels have started to fall and flood waters are receding, many major rivers are still flowing above danger levels in most affected areas. There has been a rapid escalation in the incidence of diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases/conditions. With large areas of the country still under water, embankments and field crops have been destroyed, severely restricting the ability of agriculture-dependent communities to earn income whilst increasing the demand for food.

The initial response to the Appeal has been very encouraging and hopefully it will be fully funded in order to provide emergency aid to the 200,000 worst-affected families.

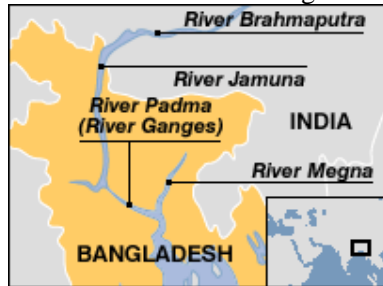
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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

## Background

The monsoon arrived early and Bangladesh has been lashed by heavy rain since late June. Persistent and exceptionally heavy rainfall, augmented by torrential river flows (coming in from neighbouring countries Nepal, India and Bhutan), and accelerated snow and ice melt from the Himalayas, contributed to severe flooding.

To date, 40 of Bangladesh's 64 districts have been affected. The current flooding is exceeding the levels of the 1998 disaster and mirroring the impact of the 1988 floods.



*Many of Bangladesh's major rivers including the mighty Brahmaputra are still flowing above danger levels.*

*Map courtesy BBC*

A total of 31 million people (over 21 percent of the population) have been affected by the disaster. As of 1 August, the official death toll stood at 586.

Well over three million people in rain-soaked villages and towns in northern and central Bangladesh are marooned and/or homeless. Many have been forced to seek temporary refuge in public buildings or having to resort to living on road embankments. Many others are stranded on small hamlets surrounded by water.

Monsoon rains have deluged the capital Dhaka, forcing thousands of city residents to live on the rooftops. Much of the city has been under water for the past week.

Official reports state that two million acres of crops have been destroyed or damaged. Roads and other areas of infrastructure have also been destroyed or damaged.

The Bangladesh Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) reports that the flood situation is improving in all areas, including Dhaka. The FFWC says water levels are falling. However the major rivers continue to flow above danger levels and some have recorded a slight rise due to increased flows caused by draining flood waters.

## Operational developments

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) and the Federation Delegation have been maintaining close contact with all BDRCS district branches in the flood-affected districts. Branches have been instructed to mobilise members and volunteers for the current relief operation.

The BDRCS and Federation Flood Task Force have held two meetings in the past week to assist the operational activities of the National Society's national headquarters. The emergency Flood Relief Control at NHQ is operational and is coordinating and sharing information with the district units and other stakeholders.

The delegation initiated the request for deployment of a relief coordinator, two relief delegates and a logistics delegate. The logistic delegate, from New Zealand Red Cross, is arriving on 5 August and relief coordinators from the Korean and Swedish Red Cross are due to reach Dhaka shortly afterwards. The recruitment for the relief delegate is ongoing.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action - objectives, progress, impact

Local Red Crescent branches, along with community-based disaster preparedness squad volunteers, has been continuously assisting affected people in shifting to safer ground. District branches are also providing limited emergency relief through local fundraising for immediate distribution among the affected population.

During July two joint multi-skilled BDRCS/Federation assessment teams visited 14 severely affected districts in the northern, north eastern and central parts of Bangladesh. As recommended by the teams, relief distributions have been organised in the above areas. The distribution was made according to beneficiary lists prepared by the local Red Crescent branches, targeting the most vulnerable families who had completely lost their dwellings.

The Federation Head of Delegation and the BDRCS Chairman carried out an assessment mission in the northern parts of Bangladesh. Based on their findings and recommendation, it was concluded that there is an urgent need for food, non-food items, and medical assistance in the most affected districts.

The unanticipated severe flooding in Dhaka resulted in the BDRCS deciding to launch a food and non-food distribution operation in the capital. This began on 27 July among severely affected slum dwellers living in the low lying areas. Since the beginning of the flood season, the BDRCS has distributed the following relief goods from its buffer stocks and own resources:

Family Kits	BP-5 Biscuits	Food Packets <sup>1</sup>	Second Hand Clothing	Oral Rehydration Solution (saline)	Water Purification Tablets
4,950 family kits	1,372 cartons	1200	600 pieces	52,700 packets	243,500

In addition to the response from the sister National Societies, local fundraising brought contributions from major banks HSBC and Citicorp in Bangladesh. Commercial companies Karnafuli Fertilizer Company, Grameen Phone, Malaysian Airlines, Tullow Bangladesh Ltd., and Fourth Fisheries Project have made donations along with members of the public.

**Operation Objective: To meet the urgent needs of some 1,000,000 unassisted and displaced beneficiaries severely affected by the ongoing monsoon season who are currently living in their flooded homes, river embankments, roadways and chars through the provision of basic food items, family kits, medical services and small-scale agricultural support during the rehabilitation phase**

#### Emergency Relief Phase

**Objective 1: 135,000 displaced and unassisted families to receive emergency complementary food ration for one month within the coming weeks.**

Through this appeal, the BDRCS and the Federation intends to assist 135,000 of the most vulnerable displaced families by distributing emergency food supplies of 2,700 metric tonnes (MT) of rice (including the 700MT allocated by WFP/GOB), 675 MT of dhal (lentils) and 270 MT of cooking oil for an initial period of one month. Each affected family will receive a food ration consisting of: 20 kg of rice, 5kg of dal (lentils) and 2 litres of cooking oil.

#### Progress/Achievements

700 MT of rice allocated by WFP/Government of Bangladesh was due to be received by 2 August for distribution. The procurement process through established Federation procedures for the remaining rice, dal (lentils) and cooking oil is under way. Preparations of detailed distribution plans are also underway. Tenders for additional food items will be posted this week.

#### Impact:

N/A.

#### Constraints:

The prices of food and non-food items have increased alarmingly in the local market due to high demand and increases in transportation costs and limited supplies due to closed factories as a result of the flooding. These price hikes may be transitory, so until the tender process is completed, it is difficult to say if this will impact on the ability to purchase the required food within the appeal budget.

**Objective 2: 50,000 flood-affected families to receive family kits and emergency BDRCS buffer stock replenished over a period of four months**

<sup>1</sup> Food packet consisting 5 kg rice, 1 kg dal (lentils), and 2 kg potato

50,000 family kits will be distributed among the most affected vulnerable families (many of these beneficiaries are also expected to benefit from the food and non-food programmes).The family kits have multiple impacts on the affected families – they provide the most necessary non-food items to help restore life to normality after the disaster and they also provide valuable psychological support to families who have lost all their possessions.

**Progress/Achievements**

The purchase of 30,000 family kits had been initiated with a tender notice inviting quotations being posted. A number of potential suppliers have submitted quotations together with sample kits. The tender sub-committee comprising of BDRCS/Federation officials has begun reviewing quotations and the sample kits.

**Impact:**

N/A.

**Constraints:**

N/A.

**Objective 3: Provide basic medical services within the first two months of the operation to the flood-affected population, limiting possible outbreaks of water-borne diseases.**

A total of 198,000 people, many of them also beneficiaries of the food and non-food programmes, are expected to benefit from this programme.

**Progress/Achievements**

The incidence of diarrhoea and water-borne diseases as the flood waters recede is increasing sharply. The BDRCS has deployed five medical teams on an emergency basis to work in the most affected areas of Dhaka city and adjoining areas. Three more teams are scheduled to be deployed on 3 August.

The purchase of medical team equipment and medicines has been initiated. Procurement will commence shortly once quotations have been received. The BDRCS has received a donation of 250,000 of water purification tablets from the WHO.

Planning is underway for the deployment of a further 44 medical teams in flood-affected areas as soon as possible. Each medical team will be provided with essential drugs and basic equipment

**Impact:**

Whilst difficult to measure the impact at such an early stage, the services being provided by the deployed medical teams and the distribution of ORS and water purification tablets among affected city dwellers is vital in trying to stem the spread of water-borne disease.

**Constraints:**

N/A.

**Rehabilitation Phase**

**Objective 4 To provide four months into the operation, agricultural inputs to the 30,000 affected families who have access to land**

At the end of monsoon season, once water levels recede and the conditions are established so the affected population can return to their homes, basic agricultural support needs to be provided. This will involve the provision of two types of seeds (paddy rice and vegetable) to allow the potential beneficiaries to plant crops at the suitable time of year. This component is very important as the floods have destroyed 889,722 acres of crops and seed beds while a further 1.2 million acres of arable land has been damaged.

**Progress/Achievements**

N/A.

**Impact:**

N/A.

**Constraints:**

N/A.

**Federation Coordination**

The BDRCS and the Federation Bangladesh Delegation has continued to liaise with governmental, local and international organisations, UN agencies, NGOs and disaster forums.

Regular Disaster Emergency Response (DER) Group meetings are attended by BDRCS and Federation representatives to coordinate relief interventions among partners and avoid duplication of assistance. The BDRCS and Federation Bangladesh Delegation are also working closely with Federation South Asia Regional Delegation (SARD). The Head of Delegation regularly visits donor missions and UN agencies to update them on Federation/BDRCS activities. The European Commission Ambassador to Bangladesh is planning a field trip with Federation/BDRCS later this week to some of the most affected flood areas.

**National Society Capacity Building**

The BDRCS has 68 Branches throughout the country with a membership of more than 350,000. The National Society has 37,000 well-trained Community-Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) volunteers in flood-prone areas and 5,863 community volunteers in cyclone-prone areas (approximately one-third of which are women.)

The BDRCS with its extensive experience in responding to flood emergencies has developed its operational capacity through a number of extensive disaster relief and preparedness programmes over the last few years. The value of volunteer engagement at community level is shown through the CBDP teams recently established in 35 branches located in districts frequently subjected to floods, tropical storms and the impact of river erosion. Nevertheless, there are no 'quick fix' solutions to community vulnerability. Its reduction requires long-term commitment and strategic planning of development activities focused on key disaster management issues related to prevention, preparedness and mitigation.

The BDRCS will hopefully continue to receive support for its long-term strategic development programmes in the field of Disaster Preparedness and Response. In March 2004, the BDRCS finalised its new four-year Disaster Management Strategy. The strategy is a major component of the National Society's four-year Development Plan. Lessons learnt and experience obtained in this relief operation will further strengthen the capacity of the National Society in order to implement the Disaster Management Strategy particularly for the Community Based Disaster Management (CBDM) Programme for floods.

**Communications – Advocacy and Public Information**

International and national media interest in the floods and associated Red Cross/Red Crescent relief initiatives has remained high during the reporting period. Federation Head of Delegation have been interviewed by the BBC 'World Service', CNN, CBC, BBC Radio and other broadcasters. He has conducted a total of 21 interviews with international media in the past five days (18 live electronic media and three print interviews). Local media coverage (in Bangla and English) has also been sustained on many national TV and radio station and newspapers. The European Commission issued a press release on 1 August highlighting their contribution to the International Federation.

High visibility for the operation will be maintained through local media, the HSBC Bank website (<http://www.hsbc.com.bd/bd/comm/flood.htm>) and international web links. Press releases on Red Cross/Red Crescent action will be issued on a regular basis for publication. Adequate visibility for donors and the Federation will be ensured, including maintaining a high profile in the international media.

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