

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Bangladesh: Cold Wave

DREF operation n°MDRBD008
Update n° 2
3 March 2011

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the IFRC in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent emergency response. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of National Societies to respond to disasters.

Period covered by this update: 21 January to 20 February 2011.

Summary: CHF 253,527 (USD 235,418 or EUR 202,822) has been allocated from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' (IFRC) Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) in delivering immediate assistance to some 100,000 beneficiaries. Un-earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.



A severe cold wave with dense fog has swept through all over Bangladesh since 7 January 2011. This cold wave

is now over. According to the meteorological department, the temperature was recorded as low as 2 to 5 degrees Celsius lower than the normal average temperature. More than 50 people – most of whom were children and the elderly – died due to the cold and cold related diseases. At that time, many people got admitted in the hospital due to the cold related diseases.

A distribution site where volunteers and Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) officers are working together to reach the cold-affected people.
Photo Credit: IFRC.

BDRCS and IFRC quickly responded to address the adverse situation and a DREF appeal was launched on 14 January 2011. With the support from IFRC, BDRCS has planned to assist up to 20,000 severely affected families or 100,000 people with the distribution of a package of warm clothes. The distribution was completed on 12 February 2011 and each family has received a package of warm clothes which was comprised of two blankets, one shawl and one woollen cap.

This operation is expected to be implemented over three months, and will therefore be completed by 15 April 2011, and a final report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 15 July 2011).

IFRC, on behalf of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, would like to thank all donors and partners for their generous support of DREF. The major donors to the DREF are the Irish, Italian, Netherlands and Norwegian governments and ECHO. Details of all donors can be found on: <http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/responding/drs/tools/dref/donors.asp>
<click here for contact details>

The situation

Bangladesh as a tropical country enjoys a moderate winter. But from January 7 2011 the country has been observing a severe cold wave with dense fog. January is the coldest month of the year, when the average temperature for most of the country is about 10°C. But according to the Meteorological Department, the temperature is recorded as 2 to 5 degrees Celsius lower than the normal average temperature during that time of the year. The current temperature of 4-6 degrees Celsius is considered to be very low for Bangladeshi standards and even in some places the temperature went down to 4.5 degrees Celsius, which is according to the Meteorological Department, the lowest-ever temperature recorded in the country for last 45 years.

Many of the people of the country living under the poverty line and do not have enough warm clothes and many having no roof over their heads have to sleep in the open this makes the situation worse. Over 50 people died due to the severe cold and cold related diseases. After observing the situation, the government distributed 60,500 blankets all over the country among the distressed populations. But those were not enough considering the situation, therefore BDRCS and IFRC had undertaken a rapid assessment of the cold wave areas and decided to launch a DREF to address the need of the people.

BDRCS, with support from IFRC, has monitored the cold wave situation. BDRCS procured 10,000 blankets from its own funds. In addition BDRCS has launched a general national appeal on 19 January for contributions from the business community, philanthropist and civil society organizations to assist the cold wave affected people. In total, 5,000 blankets have been collected from different sources and distributed among the people of the cold wave affected districts.

Coordination and partnerships

Coordination between European Commission of Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) and BDRCS has been established in terms of possibility of exploring support for humanitarian assistance to the cold affected vulnerable population. Discussions were held between BDRCS, IFRC and Ministry of Food and Disaster Management in targeting geographic locations. In addition, BDRCS units of most affected districts in Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions have been maintaining contact with district administration for identifying remote locations that still remain uncovered by government or other organizations for possible intervention by BDRCS. Within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement responses, discussions were held between BDRCS and partner national societies to divert allocation of Chapainawabganj district to other affected areas as Swiss Red Cross programme is planning to distribute blanket among the affected people of this district.

BDRCS's national headquarters has been communicating with the Bangladesh Meteorological Department to monitor the weather situation. In addition, BDRCS has been gathering situation updates from different agencies including the network for information, response and preparedness activities on disaster (NIRAPAD). Through BDRCS local units' coordination will be made between BDRCS and other social organizations' in maximizing the coverage of assistance. Since BDRCS and IFRC are active members of the disaster emergency response (DER) group, information and operation updates will be shared with other humanitarian agencies and the national government in order to avoid any overlapping of distribution.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Progress towards outcomes

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Outcome: 20,000 families (100,000 beneficiaries) will receive warm package, each includes two blankets, one shawl and one woollen cap, in 16 districts to withstand the cold weather.

Outputs (expected results) and activities planned:

Families who received warm cloths are better protected from the effect of cold wave

Activities planned:

- Door to door assessments.
- Beneficiary registration.
- Procurement of relief items according to IFRC standard procedures.
- Dispatch and transportation by BDRCS to the distribution sites.
- Storage and distribution of relief items, especially at unit level.
- Distribution by trained Red Crescent Youth volunteers.
- Regular detailed monitoring and reporting of distributions.
- Ongoing monitoring and technical advice by the BDRCS national headquarters and IFRC.

The rapid assessment of cold wave was completed on 15 January and based on the vulnerability criteria identified through this assessment, the northern and north-eastern districts of the country, has been severely affected by the cold wave. The four weather parameters of temperature, wind, sunlight and fog decided the vulnerability situation. The temperature goes down 5 to 7 degrees celcius which is very low considering the average temperature of Bangladesh. It became very difficult for the poor people who stays in remote areas to buy any warm clothes. Besides the absence of sunlight, dense fog and bone chilling wind made the situation worse for the people. The BDRCS district unit has started the beneficiary selection. The volunteers of the most affected 16 cold wave operational districts, eight BDRCS officers and four IFRC field monitoring officers have been deployed to assist the BDRCS respective units for beneficiary selection, card distribution and to organize the overall distribution plan. The procurement of 40,000 blankets, 20,000 shawls and 20,000 woollen caps under the DREF contribution was completed and after the quality inspection by the joint team of BDRCS and IFRC, the packages has been despatched to the respective districts. The package is for the whole family members and the woollen caps are distributed specially keeping the children in mind.

The warm clothes distribution has been completed for 20,000 families by 14 February 2011. The progress of distribution had been delayed due to an outbreak of *Nipah* virus encephalitis in Lalmonirhat district the distribution was cancelled. Because it was a health hazard for both the beneficiary, volunteers and the BDRCS officers, a mass gathering would have made the situation worse. Besides the absence of unit committee in BDRCS Rajshahi district unit, and a country-wide general strike called by the opposition on 7 February 2011 also delayed the distribution process.

BDRCS officers, along with IFRC field monitoring officers (FMO) from the national headquarters, are in the field to facilitate the relief distribution. In addition to the national headquarter officers, the IFRC DM team at national headquarters had made visits to the northern districts during the distribution. During the visit it was found that beneficiaries are very happy with the quality and quantity of the warm clothes package. The local administration and representatives from the local government in some places were present in distribution and appreciated the content and quality of the packages. The people who got the package were very happy, they expressed that this package will help the entire family instead of supporting one person as it has two blankets, shawl and caps.

All three items in the package – blankets, shawl, and woollen cap – were procured, following the IFRC procurement procedure. Prior to the distribution, the inspection of quality was conducted by a joint team of the BDRCS's and IFRC logistics and disaster management officials. BDRCS officers from national headquarter and IFRC's field monitoring officers assisted the respective units for the registration of appropriate people. They also assisted in the physical distribution as well as for coordination with government and other stakeholders, in order to prevent any duplication and overlapping in terms of coverage. The respective unit executive committee members, unit level officers and unit level volunteers were involved in the entire distribution process. The beneficiary selection process was done through door-to-door assessment by the trained volunteers as well as by the BDRCS's life members.

To select a beneficiary, the first prerequisite is that the family have no self ability to buy warm clothes. It is easy to buy warm clothes in the city area but in the Upazila or in Union level availability of warm clothes is limited. People need to go to district town to buy warm clothes. The poor have very limited or no capacity to go to the town and buy warm clothes. Their only source is the weekly village market which is also limited in number. Thus, they were selected as the receiver of the warm clothes. Most of the selected families were the marginal farmers, female-headed households, person with disability, family with school-going children, unaccompanied elderly, ethnic minorities and other socially excluded groups.

The people who got the packages seems very happy as for them it was not possible to buy the warm clothes due to their poverty. They also mentioned that these packages will also help them in future to protect themselves from bone chilling cold.

Challenges:

- In some of the BDRCS units, the executive committees are new so the BDRCS officers and field monitoring officers have to orient them with the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and the proper procedure of relief distribution and how to facilitate the quick distribution of materials. The respective officers have to give more efforts on doing the whole process properly.
- There is an outbreak of *Nipah* virus encephalitis in two northern operational districts of Lalmonirhat and Rangpur where 31 people died from the viral infection. This led to postponement of the relief distribution in Lalmonirhat district for eight days.
- The opposition party had called a strike on 7 February 2011 which had slowed down the whole distribution process.

How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

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Annex 1:

District	Upazila(sub-district) allocation	No. of total families	Distribution progress
Panchagar	Tentulia, 250, Boda, 600 Debiganj 350 Atwari 300	1500	Completed on 4 February
Thagurgaon	Baliadangi 350, Ranishankail 400, Haripur 350, Sadar 400	1500	Completed on 5 February
Dinajpur	Kaharul 350, Birganj 400 Birol 600 Bochaganj 150	1500	Completed on 2 February
Rangpur	Gangachhara 245, Taraganj 284, Pirganj 250, Mithapukur 495, Badarganj 350 Kawnia 176, Sadar 200	2000	Completed on 5 February
Lalmonirhat	Patgram 300, Hatibanda 300, Kaliganj 400	1000	Completed by 14 February
Kurigram	Raumari 200, Ulipur 500 Chilmari 325 Nageswari 775, Rajibpur 200	2000	Completed on 11 February
Gaibandha	Fulchhari 120, Saghata 200, Sundarganj 130 Sadar 200 , Sadullapur 170, Gobindoganj 180	1000	Completed on 28 January
Nilphamari	Dimla 200 Domar 200 Jaldhaka 200 Kishorganj 200, Sadar200	1000	Completed on 12 February
Bogra	Sariakandi500 Dhunat500	1000	Completed on 30 January
Sirajganj	Chowhali 150 Belkuchi 200 Kajipur 150 Shahjadpur 150 Kamarkhanda 200 Shadar200	1500	Completed on 12 February
Joypurhat	Panchbibi 200 Khetlal 150 Kalai 150 Akkelpur 150 Sadar 200 Pouroshova 150	1000	Completed on 11 February
Pabna	Ishwardi 250, Chatmohar 450 Santhia 150 Sujanager 150	1000	Completed on 12 February
Natore	Lalpur 250 Singra 300 Boroigram 200 Gurudaspur 250	1000	Completed on 11 February
Naogaon	Badalgachi 200, Patnitala 200, Mahadebpur 200, Monda 100, Raninagar 100, Sadar-100, Niyamatpur 100	1000	Completed on 12 February
Rajshahi	Godagari 300 Tanore 300 Bagmara 400	1000	Completed on 12 February
Chapainawabganj	Sibganj 429 Nachole 289 Gomastapur 282	1000	Completed on 10 February