

BANGLADESH: POST CONFLICT REHABILITATION

**appeal no: 09/98
23 March 1998**

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 1,990,000
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES
TO ASSIST 175,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 12 MONTHS***

Summary

After the signing of a Peace agreement last November ending the 15 year conflict between the Government of Bangladesh and the Chittagong Hill Tract tribes, the last of 13,000 families who fled the fighting to India returned to their homeland. They are being helped to resettle by a substantial government aid programme. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, which over the last three years supplied each returning family with supplementary food, will facilitate the returnees' resettlement -- and thereby support the delicate peace process -- by prolonging food assistance to the returnee families, and introducing health and community services that will benefit both returnees and the general population.

The Disaster

In November 1997 the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and the Shanti Bahini, the armed wing of the tribal political party in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) area, signed a Peace Agreement after 15 years of armed conflict. Altogether, more than 13,000 tribal families sought refuge in Tripura, India during the years of conflict. A limited repatriation, of 3,124 families, began in 1994 as a result of negotiations between the governments of India and Bangladesh and the tribal leaders. All returnees received supplementary food from the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), funded through an international Federation Appeal.

Immediately after the Peace Agreement, the repatriation of the last 10,427 tribal families (45,890 persons) began and was completed in February 1998. Under the terms of the Agreement, all returning families received food, cash, building material and land from the GoB. In addition they were given a three months supplementary food package by the BDRCS. The Federation released CHF 300,000 from DREF for this operation in November 1997.

The distributions, undertaken at the request of the GoB, received excellent support from the local district authorities, and the involvement of the BDRCS made an important contribution to the smooth running of the repatriation.

The Response so far

Government Action w

The GoB undertook to provide each returning refugee family with 50 kg of rice per month for one year, Takas (Tk) 3,000 for the purchase of a cow, Tk. 3,000 for wood for house-building, two bundles of corrugated iron sheets, and Tk. 15,000 as a resettlement grant. After receiving the GoB package at the border crossing, the refugees were transported to their villages.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

At the request of the GoB, the Bangladesh Red Crescent provided supplementary food assistance to all government registered returnee families, in the form of dal (lentils), soy bean oil, and salt.

The Intended Operation

Through this Appeal, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) and the Federation will supply supplementary food to approximately 55,000 beneficiaries, develop community service activities for an additional estimated 120,000 beneficiaries, and introduce disaster preparedness and health programmes benefiting a very large part of the total CHT population of one million people.

The Appeal will ensure that all families who arrived after March 1997 receive a total of 12 months supplementary food (the three months' package on arrival, plus supplies for another nine months). These families will receive their remaining rations in three instalments, except for 1,248 families who arrived in March/April 1997 and who received 9 months rations all at once: they will receive one more three-month ration.

A tracing service will be developed for the returnees' use.

To support the peace process by ensuring that the general CHT population also benefits from the relief operation, BDRCS plans to introduce health and sanitation and disaster preparedness programmes and to further the institutional development of its Branches in the three CHT Districts. BDRCS already has a Community Service programme in one of the CHT districts, Rangamati, and will expand and implement this in the other two districts, Khagrachari and Bandarban.

Assessment of Needs •

An assessment of the immediate needs of the repatriates has been made on the basis of repeated visits to the CHT by BDRCS officers and the Federation delegates and staff during the last four years in connection with supplementary food provision and local disasters. In addition, a senior officer from the Secretariat, during a mission to Bangladesh from 21 - 27 February 1998, confirmed after reviewing the first three months' operation that the continuation of food distributions and the introduction of rehabilitation and community development programmes are essential needs in the CHT.

A thorough analysis of the complex socio-economic and political situation has also been made, taking into account the distinct ethnic, linguistic and religious identities of the Hill Tribe peoples and the Bengali settlers in the area. The successful implementation of conditions of the Peace Agreement and the harmonious resettlement of the returnees are crucial for the future general development in the CHT.

It is also vitally important to continue to support peace with long-term development work in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, benefiting inhabitants from all ethnic communities. Due to the conflict, a detailed development needs assessment has not so far been possible. A rapid but thorough assessment therefore has to be made so that an appropriate long term development Plan of Action can be established.

Immediate Needs •

Immediate needs can be summarised as follows:

- { Support for the peace process
- { Supplementary food to assist the refugees in settling into their new homes
- { Socio-economic and health related programmes

{ Safeguarding of operational security

{ Reinforcement of the operational capacity of the BDRCS CHT Branches and NHQ support

Continuing food support is a key necessity. Some of the returnees have spent up to 15 years in the camps in India. Many of the older people are no longer fit for agricultural work, and many of the younger generation have no experience of agricultural work. Also, after so many years of institutionalised life, significant physical and psychological adjustments have to be made, and this takes time. Extending the supplementary food period from 3 to 12 months will provide sufficient time for settling-in, growing crops and finding, where necessary and possible, non-agricultural work. The supplementary food is particularly important for pregnant and lactating women and children.

The long period of food support must also be seen in the light of the poor soil conditions which reduce and delay crop production. Slash and burn cultivation methods are common in the Hill Tracts, the harvest cycle is long, and the growing season can be dramatically disrupted during the monsoon by flash floods, mud slides, and the effects of cyclones.

The three BDRCS district Branches are weak, and only the Rangamati Branch has (since mid 1997) been part of the Community Service/ID programme of BDRCS. It is an established policy of BDRCS to decentralise operational responsibility to its Branches, but none of the three Branches has the required operational capacity and all need a well designed and substantial ID programme.

Anticipated Later Needs •

Apart from the supplementary food, the other needs will continue for an extended period. The BDRCS must be able to continue to meet them and so maintain its contribution to the peace process.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Objectives •

{ To ensure that 11,675 families who have arrived since March 1997 receive a total of 12 months' supplementary food.

{ To make the BDRCS and Red Cross and Red Crescent principles widely known and respected in the CHT, in order to facilitate its operations.

{ To contribute to the fragile peace process in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and enhance it through programmes benefiting communities.

{ To implement Community Service programmes for 120,000 beneficiaries. Economic activities in the CHT have been disrupted by the long conflict. Nutritional levels are low, the population generally in poor health and poverty widespread.

{ To build the disaster preparedness capacity of the BDRCS branches, since the three districts are affected by flash floods, mud slides, cyclonic high winds and winter cold .

{ To strengthen local BDRCS branches in the CHT.

{ To upgrade and intensify tracing activities. (During the conflict many people have been displaced, in the CHT, in other parts of Bangladesh and in other countries, and the tracing services of BDRCS will be much needed.)

{ To encourage the BDRCS to ensure that gender equity is an integral part of all BDRCS programmes in CHT and that the selection of beneficiaries and local staff recruitment reflect this, as far as possible.

National Society/Federation Plan of Action

Immediate Action •

Procurement of supplementary food will start as soon as the schedule for distributions is available. The food parcel every three months for each eligible family will consist of: 12 kg of lentils, 6 litres of cooking oil, and 6 kg of salt. The large quantity of salt is provided to ensure that the returning families receive iodised salt, and, in addition, it is needed for preserving dried fish.

A joint BDRCS/Federation assessment mission to the CHT will be undertaken with the objective of producing a detailed PoA.

April - December 1998: Food Distribution •

Procurement

The Federation, through its Delegation in Bangladesh, will be responsible for all procurement. Procurement will be done in phases corresponding to quarterly requirements or, if funds are inadequate, up to the funding level. A total of 345,420 kg of dal, 172,710 litres of soya bean oil and 172,710 kg of salt will be required for 28,785 supplementary food packages.

Mode of Distribution and Responsibilities

The distribution will be planned in close co-operation with the Deputy Commissioners (DC) of the Districts, who keeps records on the whereabouts of the returnees. BDRCS will form three teams: one Co-ordination Team, and two Distribution Teams. The Co-ordination Team will stay in the area throughout the duration of the operation and the Distribution Teams will be based in Dhaka and go to the areas of operation as and when needed to carry out the quarterly distributions. Each quarterly distribution is likely to take about five weeks.

The three phased distribution plan will be as follows:

Phase 1-	10,427 food packages
Phase 2-	9,179 food packages
Phase 3-	9,179 food packages
Total:	28,785 food packages

Warehousing

The goods procured by the Federation will be delivered to the BDRCS warehouse at NHQ. There will be one main warehouse in the area of operation prior to the start of distribution. If required, warehouses will be established at Thana level.

Transport

BDRCS will provide trucks to transport the goods from Dhaka to the main warehouse in the operation area, where BDRCS will make one truck and one pick-up available for operational support.

Security

BDRCS will appoint a focal Security Officer (SO) at NHQ who will collect all information pertaining to the security aspects of the operation and keep the Federation Delegation informed of any development in security status. There will be no movement during hartals, road blockades or unrest in general. The SO will keep in close contact with the Co-ordinator.

Reporting

The BDRCS will submit a report after each distribution with attached Distribution Reports, Beneficiary Lists, Warehouse/Stock Reports and Financial Reports. Reporting will follow the BDRCS/Federation Delegation established procedures.

April 1998 - March 2001: Community Service Programmes •

Health/Water/Sanitation

Activities foreseen include: intervention at the community level through Community Based First Aid (CBFA) specially adapted for the Hill districts; community based rehabilitation programmes for people with disabilities, depending on the need; training for volunteer groups, community and youth leaders;

education about malaria and its control. This programme will also involve provision of safe drinking water and installation of latrines.

Income Generation Programme

Many of the returning refugee families have no land, so income generation programmes will be of great value. Surveys by family and community will be needed before training related to existing skills of the returnees and marketing plans are drawn up. Loans may be given for vegetable and cereal seeds, fruit trees, poultry, cattle, handlooms and associated raw materials, etc. The BDRCS will provide necessary management capacity through its Unit officers in the Districts. This loan scheme is to encourage families to raise income by themselves by utilising revolving funds within a given time limit.

Disaster Preparedness Programme (DPP)

The aim of the DPP is to reactivate the BDRCS Branches of Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban to enable them to respond efficiently to disasters. Activities will include training of Unit Level Officers, developing contingency plans, establishing Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) teams capable of managing disaster relief operations and establishing a Unit Disaster Emergency Relief Fund.

Tracing of displaced persons

BDRCS experience so far points to a need for Tracing Services. Returning refugees will want to contact family and community members who in the intervening years may have moved not only to new villages in the same district, but in some cases to different districts. A Tracing Cell will have to be set up and staffed. The ICRC will continue to co-operate with the BDRCS in support of this programme.

Dissemination of Red Cross/Red Crescent Principles, Emblem, International Humanitarian Law

In order to ensure working security in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, it is necessary to educate all sections of community about Red Cross/Red Crescent aims and objectives. This will be done through workshops for: volunteers, students, community members, and local government officials. The dissemination component will be tailored to the special needs of the situation in the CHT, in close co-operation with and support from the ICRC.

Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of the District Branches

The Institutional Development of the BDRCS Branches will be based on the standard BDRCS Branch ID module, and focus on:

- { Creation of the necessary infrastructure and capacity to manage sustainable activities according to the respective Plans of Action;
- { Re-activation of existing youth groups and promotion of new volunteer groups;
- { Intensified fund raising;
- { Promotion of a broad based and active membership;
- { Improved functional facilities of the operating Branches;
- { NHQ support, training, monitoring and evaluation.

The responsibility for programme implementation will rest with the Branch Executive Committee and volunteers, supported by a Branch officer and the NHQ.

Capacity of the National Society •

The BDRCS has developed its operational capacity and organisational strength through extensive Institutional Development and Disaster Preparedness programmes over the last few years, despite limited external support. Its leadership, officers and volunteers have wide-ranging operational experience in disaster preparedness, relief and development, and it has well developed long term plans that include the three Hill Districts.

Present Capacity of the Federation in Bangladesh •

The Federation has a well established delegation with close and good relations with the BDRCS, currently staffed by a HoD, F/AD, DP, ID and Logistics delegates and qualified local employees. In view of the specific needs of the CHT and the overall operational needs, a delegate will be needed for twelve months.

Evaluation •

The programme will be regularly monitored by BDRCS and the Federation in the field. The development components will be formally evaluated during the second year of implementation.

Budget summary

See Annex 1 for details.

In order to launch the operation for the 10,427 families (45,890 persons) who returned from November 1997 to the end of February 1998, CHF 300,000 was released from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF).

The development component of the appeal (CHF 937,500) covers costs until March 1999; another (estimated) CHF 340,000 and CHF 232,000 will be needed for the following two years, until completion of the 3 year programme.

Conclusion

The support of the Federation to the BDRCS Chittagong Hill Tracts operation will effectively contribute to one of the most important objectives of the Movement: to promote peace by action. The Peace Agreement is crucial to the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of all the inhabitants of the CHT. The provision of supplementary food to the returnees is an important part of the Agreement and much needed by the repatriated tribal population. In addition, as an experienced volunteer organisation with clear non sectarian principles, the National Society will be able to contribute to the safeguard of peace by mobilising people from all sections of the population in the CHT for development. While response to the relief component is needed immediately it is also important to recognise the need for continued support for the development component of the programme over a period of at least three years.

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