

# ***BANGLADESH: FLOODS***

**appeal no: 23/98**  
**30 July 1998**

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 2,743,000  
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES  
TO ASSIST 500,000 BENEFICIARIES  
WITH FOOD AND MEDICAL SERVICES  
FOR THREE MONTHS***

## ***Summary***

Over one-tenth of Bangladesh's 130 million people have been affected by widespread flooding which has hit the country since the onset of the monsoon season in early July. Heavy rains, reinforced by the onrush of waters from India, have dramatically raised the water level of main rivers running through the four basins of the Brahmaputra, the Ganges and the Meghna. Water levels will go on rising until the end of August as a result of continued monsoon rains and even more people are likely to be affected as waters rise and disease spreads. Most rivers are already near or above danger level, and the continued and rapid erosion of river banks is posing a serious threat to the vulnerable population in low lying areas or sheltering on embankments.

## ***The Disaster***

A disaster situation pertains, with 15 million people affected, many of them living in unhygienic conditions in temporary shelters on embankments, rooftops and any high ground available.

According to the Government Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre, the floods are expected to cause increasing problems over the coming days in the country's central areas, especially in the vast slums of the capital, Dhaka and surrounding districts.

Scarcity of food, firewood and fodder has caused serious suffering throughout the country. Shortage of safe drinking water is prevalent in most places as the flood has damaged tube-wells and contaminated other sources of water. Outbreaks of water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea, dysentery and fever have been reported. A large number of rural dwellings have been fully or partly damaged. Flood waters have also caused widespread damage to the rice crop and -- worryingly for the later planting -- to seed beds. Prices of basic food items have increased, hitting the poor particularly hard.

As of 29 July, the Government of Bangladesh has confirmed:

- |                        |                |
|------------------------|----------------|
| - Districts affected:  | 37 (out of 64) |
| - Population affected: | 15 million     |
| - People killed:       | 140            |
| - Crops damaged:       | 192,000 acres  |

- Houses damaged:	126,000
- Cattle killed:	3,000
- Roads damaged:	3,509 km
- Embankments damaged:	2,622 km
- Bridges/culverts damaged:	1,767

## *The Response so far*

### **Government Action •**

The Government has been co-ordinating ongoing relief activities among ministries and other organisations. On 25 July, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited flooded areas, calling on all political parties, professional groups, NGOs and wealthy people to help the victims. She also assured the population that the government would deliver prompt assistance.

As of 25 July, the Government had distributed a total amount of Tk 5.4 million (CHF 174,000) in cash and over 35,000 MT of rice to flood victims. The government has opened 226 temporary shelters for flood victims, housing 81,683 people. Government health teams are also working throughout the country.

### **Red Cross/Red Crescent Action •**

The BDRCS NHQ (Bangladesh Red Crescent Society National Headquarters) sent out an alert to all district branches in mid July, calling on them to maintain close contact with the NHQ regarding the prevailing flood situation. In the meantime, branches were instructed to alert members and volunteers to get ready for a relief operation. A number of branches have already distributed emergency rations to thousands of victims using their own limited funds, and most of the affected branches have reported to the NHQ. BDRCS and the Federation delegation in Dhaka have jointly prepared a Plan of Action based on a consolidated assessment.

The Federation has already allocated CHF200,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund for the immediate procurement of 20,000 emergency food rations. Distribution will start shortly.

The Regional Information Delegate from the Regional Delegation Kuala Lumpur has been deployed to Dhaka to provide media support.

## *The Intended Operation*

### **1. Food distribution**

Through this appeal, the BDRCS and the Federation intend to assist 100,000 most vulnerable families (500,000 beneficiaries) in two phases by distributing emergency food rations for a period of three months:

**Phase One:** To distribute 20,000 emergency food rations, consisting of 10 kg *chira* (compressed rice) and 2 kg *ghur* (molasses) to 20,000 families, with distribution ending one month after this appeal is issued.

**Phase Two:** A month after completion of the first distribution BDRCS/Federation will distribute 80,000 food rations of 30 kg rice and 5 kg dal designed to last two weeks to another 80,000 families most seriously affected by the floods.

The whole distribution is expected to be concluded within three months of the time that funds are made available for the operation. The distribution areas will be selected based on the prevailing flood situation at the time of distribution.

## **2. Medical service**

Some 60 mobile medical teams will be organised in the affected districts to provide medical services for a month. Each team will be composed of a doctor, a paramedic, a BDRCS volunteer and a female support staff. The NHQ will give logistic, technical and administrative support. The medical service, focusing on waterborne diseases in the disaster areas, will be conducted in parallel with the food distribution. A total of 250,000 people, many of them also beneficiaries of the food programme, are expected to benefit from this programme.

### **Assessment of Needs •**

Given the extent of the flooding, many affected areas are inaccessible and needs assessments in the field by either the Government or the BDRCS remains difficult. However, Red Crescent units are reporting on needs to NHQ and both Federation delegates and BDRCS staff have made a number of field visits to affected areas.

### **Immediate Needs •**

- { To distribute in Phase One 20,000 emergency food rations of 10 kg chira (compressed rice) and 2 kg ghur (molasses), designed to last for two weeks, to 20,000 families.
- { To distribute in Phase Two 80,000 food rations (including 30 kg rice and 5 kg dal) designed to last for two weeks to 80,000 families.
- { To purchase medicine/equipment needed for medical teams to serve flood victims.

### **Anticipated Later Needs •**

As rains are expected to continue to fall over Bangladesh and the catchment areas in India, Nepal, Bhutan and China during the rest of the monsoon season, the flood situation in the country is likely to get even worse and more people might need to be assisted. Needs for medical assistance, clothing, household items and for rehabilitation in the affected areas are also anticipated after the floods.

### **Red Cross Objectives**

- { To assist 100,000 most vulnerable flood affected families (500,000 persons) through provision of 100,000 emergency food rations designed to last for two weeks in two phases.
- { To reach 250,000 people through the provision of medical services.
- { To develop the operational capacity of the BDRCS NHQ and the district branches concerned through intensified Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) and Branch Capacity Building.

## ***National Society/Federation Plan of Action***

### **Immediate Action •**

- { To conduct field damage assessments when the situation in the affected areas permits;
- { to make necessary logistical preparations for the forthcoming operation;
- { to procure 20,000 emergency food rations of chira and ghur for distribution in phase one;
- { to procure 80,000 rations of rice and dal for distribution in phase two;
- { to purchase medicine/equipment for the medical teams.

### **Procurement •**

All procurement is being made in Bangladesh, and the Federation Delegation in Dhaka is responsible for all procurement, monitoring of quantities and quality control.

#### **Duration of Operation •**

Funds released from DREF have allowed BDRCS/Federation to start procurement of food rations and distribution will start shortly. Depending on the actual number and locations of the operational areas, state of communications and weather conditions, a branch is likely to complete the distribution within a month. Although it would be preferable to carry out the distributions in all districts simultaneously, many practical difficulties prevent this and it is expected that the total distribution will take about two months.

#### **Mode of Distribution •**

BDRCS will be responsible for organising the distribution at the central level. At the district level branches will carry out the distribution in the field with the back up and support of the NHQ through Field Co-ordinators assigned for this operation and branch level officers. Specific procedures will be worked out by the different branches with the participation of their volunteers/youth and other members before distributions take place.

#### **Selection of Beneficiaries •**

The selection of beneficiaries will be conducted by BDRCS following the criteria given in its Disaster Relief Field Manual to ensure that the most vulnerable receive appropriate assistance.

#### **Warehousing •**

Food items will be delivered to the BDRCS's central warehouse in Dhaka or, wherever possible, directly to the district branches. Local warehousing will be provided by the respective branches before the start of distribution.

#### **Transportation •**

BDRCS will use its own trucks and rented vehicles to transport food rations from Dhaka to the field for distribution. Other vehicles, if required, will be made available.

#### **Dissemination •**

The distribution will be used by the BDRCS as an opportunity to disseminate Red Cross/Red Crescent principles and activities. High visibility for the operation will be maintained through local media and the display of Red Crescent flags/banners/posters at the distribution sites. Aprons with the Red Crescent emblem will be worn by distributors. Other publication materials will be produced to enhance dissemination and visibility.

#### **Delegates •**

A Relief Delegate will be recruited for three months to assist the BDRCS in implementing the operation. The Finance/Administration Delegate will be responsible for logistics. Support will also be provided by the Disaster Preparedness and bilateral delegates. Currently four delegates and two bilateral delegates in Dhaka are working on the relief operation.

#### **Monitoring •**

Field monitoring will be carried out by BDRCS and the Federation Delegation.

#### **Reporting •**

BDRCS, with support from the Federation Delegation, will prepare situation reports and a final narrative report within one month of the conclusion of the operation. The Federation will be responsible for producing a final financial report.

### **Disaster Preparedness Capacity Building of BDRCS Branches •**

Given the limited capacity of BDRCS branches in the affected areas, there is an urgent need to upgrade disaster preparedness through this relief operation in line with the concept of "relief to development". Funds earmarked for this purpose will be used on training as well as necessary equipment/facilities in accordance with the BDRCS Plan of Action for 1998.

### **Capacity of the National Headquarters •**

BDRCS has developed its operational capacity and organisational strength through extensive Institutional Development and Disaster Relief and Preparedness programmes over the last few years, despite limited external support. Its leadership, officers and volunteers have wide-ranging operational experience in disaster relief which has been demonstrated in previous successful emergency operations, but the need for continued institutional development at NHQ level remains.

### **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 Head of Delegation, a Finance/Administration delegate, a Disaster Preparedness delegate, a Relief delegate and qualified local staff. An Information Delegate is temporarily in Dhaka.

### **Evaluation •**

The operation will be regularly monitored by BDRCS and the Federation Delegation in the field. The findings will be reflected in the situation reports and the final report to be issued in connection with the programme. No separate evaluation is planned.

## ***Budget summary***

See Annex 1 for details.

## ***Conclusion***

The extensive floods, triggered by heavy monsoon rains and onrush water from India, have affected more than 10 per cent of the population of Bangladesh. Thousands are living in temporary shelter on embankments and in other unsafe areas, exposed to snake bites, polluted drinking water and unsanitary conditions. With the onset of the monsoon season and more rains to fall in the days to come, water levels are forecast to rise and affect more people across the country. The Federation urges donors to give strong support to this relief operation.

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