

INDIA : ORISSA CYCLONE

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period covered: 16 December 1999- 18 January 2000

The emergency relief phase following the super cyclone which hit the east coast of Orissa on October 29, 1999 is now coming to an end. Efforts are now focusing on developing and implementing rehabilitation programs in a shift towards providing longer term assistance to the victims of the cyclone.

Supplies of food and non-food relief assistance have now been received by all of the targeted 50,000 families during the emergency phase of the Red Cross relief operation. A third phase covering some continued relief assistance, but concentrating more on rehabilitation, started on January 1, 2000.

The Federation's senior relief delegate who has been assisting the Indian Red Cross with the coordination of the operation will now be supported by a reporting and a logistic delegate, with support provided by the South Asia regional delegation in New Delhi. While the overall health situation is satisfactory, the food situation, particularly for many farmers without irrigation facilities, is critical. Rehabilitation efforts during the coming months are crucial for the most vulnerable.

The context

Cyclone, 05B struck the coastal region of the Indian state of Orissa at noon local time on Friday 29, October causing widespread devastation across eight coastal districts. Winds of up to 260 km/h were registered over a 36 hour period, accompanied by a 7 metre tidal surge that swept 20 kms inland in some areas. The cyclone caused extensive damage to homes, agriculture, electricity supply, transport and telecommunications networks. More than ten thousand people lost their lives, and almost two million houses were either totally destroyed or partially damaged in the districts of Ganjam, Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapada, Bhadrak, Balasore, Cuttack and Jajpur.

About 85% of Orissa's population is rural, primarily relying on agriculture. The cyclone has had a devastating impact on the agriculture sector, mainly due to the inundation of salt water. The large number of livestock lost during the cyclone has also caused a decline in livelihood. It is estimated that more than 250,000 cattle died due to the cyclone. In the worst affected area of Ersama block in Jagatsinghpur District, an estimated 35 of the 200 villages have been totally destroyed accounting for

80% of the total death toll from the cyclone. According to the latest government estimates, 1,714,000 houses were totally destroyed, 406,000 livestock perished and 1,678,000 hectares of cropland have been destroyed.

Latest events

Twelve weeks after the cyclone hit, the victims are gradually trying to return to a normal life and rebuilding their homes and livelihoods. While the officially recorded death toll remains around 10,000 persons, the actual loss of life is considered to be much higher. The full extent of the damage caused especially to the houses and the agriculture is of major concern. Many NGO's have been distributing vegetable seeds, a welcomed nutritional supplement to the standard food basket of rice, lentils and oil. Short and medium-term prospects for income generating strategies and food security are slim unless steps are taken now to support the farmers. In Kendapara and Jagatsingpur, approximately 80% and 60% respectively of the paddy was lost due to the inundation of salt water. Those depending on rain-fed crops, the vast majority of subsistence farmers, would be able to harvest at the earliest late September or early October 2000 providing seeds and fertiliser are made available in time. All relief efforts have lately been focused on Food-For-Work activities, especially roads, embankments and other infra-structural facilities.

The government has re-established and will maintain their Public Distribution System (PDS) which provides rice and wheat flour at a subsidised rate to all families registered as being below the poverty level (BPL).

Most NGO's and the government have phased out their food aid and provision of non-food items assistance and now moving towards rehabilitation efforts in order to re-establish the community facilities, housing and livelihood in general.

The Red Cross has been promoting the building of multipurpose shelters, which are a supplement to the more expensive and traditional cyclone shelters. Essentially these are a community facility, such as a school or a clinic, but they are constructed to be cyclone resistant so that they can be used as shelter for a village. This concept has now been adopted in general by the government and NGO's.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

• Relief

Emergency distributions to 50,000 families is now completed, with a one month food ration and some non-food relief items provided to 50,000 families living in villages in the immediate vicinity of the 23 Indian Red Cross (IRCS) cyclone shelters throughout 6 coastal districts. A total of 3,100 metric tons of food has now been distributed. It is, however, still estimated that a small group of the most vulnerable beneficiaries, such as families that have lost breadwinners, the elderly and handicapped will require additional food for a further 3 month period during the rehabilitation phase.

The non-food items distributed are blankets, kitchen sets and clothing. Each of the 50,000 families have received two blankets and one set of clothing consisting of one saree and one men's dhoti. The 4,800 kitchen sets available have been distributed primarily to the most needy families in the worst affected areas. The shelter programme which originally focused on providing plastic sheeting has been stopped as the needs have been fully covered by the government and other NGO's. Available funds are now being utilised to provide building materials to 200 families, so they can build low-cost cyclone resistant houses.

IRCS relief distributions have been carried out systematically, directly involving members of the affected communities. Each family receives a Red Cross ration card and distributions are supervised by the chairman of the local disaster preparedness committee and project officers from the IRCS. Each distribution is followed up by a weekly monitoring visit.

The Orissa state branch of the IRCS has received considerable credit not only for saving so many lives due to the cyclone shelters but also for the quick response and commitment to help the communities.

The following table reflects the total assistance distributed to date:

DISTRICT	BLOCK	GP	NO. VILLAGES	BENEFIC. FAMILIES	FOOD	BLANKETS	KITCHEN SETS	CLOTHES	
Kendrapada 19,315	Rajnagar	Rangani	11	1,273	78.9 mt	2,546		2,546	
		Gupti	10	1,197	74.2 mt	2394		2394	
			Brahmansahi	13	1,057	65.5 mt	2114		2114
			Dera	9	1,100	68.2 mt	2,200		2,200
			Satabhaya	2	611	37.8 mt	1,222		1,222
			Kojlipur	13	1,500	93 mt	3,000	300	3,000
		Mohakalpada	Kharanisi	3	1,414	87.7 mt	2,828		2,828
			Jamboo	4	1,300	80.6 mt	2,600	400	2,600
			Batighar	8	1,405	87.1 mt	2,810	300	2,810
			Suniti	5	1,202	74.5 mt	2,404	400	2,404
			Barakanda	7	1,210	75 mt	2,420	400	2,420
			Ramnagar	6	1,455	90.2 mt	2,910		2,910
			Mangalpur	9	1,602	99.3 mt	3,204		3,204
			Gagua	10	1,500	93 mt	3,000		3,000
		Badi	10	1,400	86.8 mt	2,800		2,800	
Puri 8,010	Kakatpur	Bangurigaon	7	1,070	66.3 mt	2,140		2,140	
	Astaranga	Nagar	10	1,295	80.3 mt	2,590	380	2,590	
		Nuagarh	6	1,380	85.6 mt	2,760	375	2,760	
		Alasahi	6	1,500	93 mt	3,000		3,000	
		Sisua	13	1,300	80.6 mt	2,600		2,600	
		Chhuriana	9	1,465	90.8 mt	2,930		2,930	
Jagatsinghpur 8,661	Erasama	Kunjakothi	8	1,251	77.6 mt	2,502	625	2,502	
		Padmapur	5	1,250	77.5 mt	2,500	600	2,500	
		Nuagoon	6	1,010	62.6 mt	2,020		2,020	
		Goda	13	1,707	105.8 mt	3,414		3,414	
			G.Harishpur	3	1,366	84.7	2,732	500	2,732
		Balikuda	Naharana	12	1,760	109.1 mt	3,520	520	3,520
	Baramundali		6	1,500	93 mt	3,000		3,000	
Balesore 1250	Bahanaga	Kharasahapur	11	1,250	77.5 mt	2,500		2,500	
Bhadrak 8,984	Basudevpur	Adhuan	13	1,403	87 mt	2,806		2,806	
		Eram	4	1,090	67.6 mt	2,180		2,180	
		Bideipur	5	1,140	70.7mt	2,280		2,280	
		Chandabali	Charadiha	7	1,518	94.1 mt	3,036		3,036
			Orasahi	12	1,320	81.8 mt	2,640		2,640
			Bijaynagar	7	1,330	82.5 mt	2,660		2,660
			Nalagohira	10	1,150	71.3 mt	2,300		2,300
Ganjam 2,202	Chikiti	Sonapur	5	1,200	74.4 mt	2,400		2,400	
	Gokharkuda	Pallibandha	12	1,519	94.2 mt	3,038		3,038	
GRAND TOTAL				50,000	3,100mt	100,000	4,800	100,000	

• Logistics

The relief operation has been slightly delayed due to logistical problems primarily related to the difficulty for large trucks (10 MT) to access village roads in the coastal belt. Thanks to FFW schemes the roads have, however, improved considerably within the period. With the government having practically stopped distributions in the disaster area, there have not been difficulties securing adequate transportation locally.

Supplies of rice have been locally purchased from the Food Corporation of India. Other commodities such as dal (lentils) are procured from a local supplier.

Non-food items have been procured in New Delhi with the exception of 50,000 blankets, WPT's, and bleaching powder.

- ***Staffing***

A Federation relief co-ordinator is providing technical assistance to the relief operation conducted by the Orissa state branch of the IRCS. Additional delegates are required in order to implement the rehabilitation phase and conclude the reporting and accounting of the relief phase. Some of the local IRCS staff which were originally assigned to the Orissa Disaster Mitigation Programme (ODMP) and who have been implementing the relief phase will be released and a new staffing structure put in place supported by external consultants to implement the rehabilitation phase.

- ***Monitoring & reporting***

The relief operation has been monitored by IRCS programme officers and a Federation delegate. Operational reports for the relief phase will be submitted to donors before the end of March 2000. The operation is expected to be externally evaluated by a group of UK-based evaluators looking at the British contributions to the programme.

- ***Health***

One of the most positive aspects of the disaster has been the lack of an outbreak of any epidemic. With the many dead bodies and carcasses of animals, the climate and total flooding, the conditions for a potential major health disaster were present. The Federation senior health delegate, however, provided a very accurate prediction on the likelihood for this during the November assessment. Relatively few cases of diarrhoea have been reported in the villages visited and the health situation appears to be stable with most villages having access to safe drinking water even though many tube wells are still saline. It is now unlikely that widespread outbreaks of cholera or other waterborne diseases will occur. General awareness amongst the villages surveyed revealed that measures were taken immediately and there was a good understanding of the need to boil or chemically purify water from contaminated sources.

MSF has introduced a health surveillance reporting system which will allow the government and local health authorities to monitor the health situation closely. UNICEF is carrying out a measles vaccination campaign. However, malaria is a serious problem in Orissa state.

Close monitoring of the health situation will, however, continue over the next three months. There is some concern that lack of irrigation facilities and a lack of access to food following the reduction in current relief efforts in the affected districts could have serious consequences for the health of vulnerable groups.

Outstanding needs

Although most villages have now received some food assistance there remains a need to maintain food rations on a systematic basis to particularly vulnerable groups. The situation remains serious in the worst affected areas where the local population will require the provision of subsidised, and in some cases free food, until at least April 2000.

While phase two of the relief operation has come to an end, the rehabilitation programme is scheduled to run from January 2000 until June 2000. An assessment has been carried out and a plan of action for the rehabilitation programme has been finalised.

The assessment team identified the most critical areas that relate to habitat and the re-establishment of household economic assets. The huge loss of houses, livestock, crops, trees, boats, household items and

food stocks means that many households are having to totally rebuild their economic base in order to achieve any degree of self sufficiency. The main priorities agreed upon for the Red Cross were identified as: health (including water), education, agriculture and housing.

The rehabilitation programme will cover affected communities in the vicinity of 10 Red Cross cyclone shelter sites in the worst affected districts of Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapada and Puri. The cyclone shelters are located at Khurantathuta, Padmapur, Dhanuharbelari, Nuagarh, Nagar, Jamboo, Barakolikhala, Kharanisi, Benakandha and Sarumuhin. The rehabilitation includes.

- Food aid for 5,000 most vulnerable families for 3 months.
- Credit saving schemes for 68 communities in the vicinity of the Red Cross cyclone shelters.
- Agricultural package of seeds, seedlings, fertiliser, livestock and tools for 500 families.
- 135 tube wells.
- Construction of 11 private primary schools as multipurpose shelters.
- Construction and renovation of 5 clinics dispensaries.
- Schools kits with teaching materials for approximately 200 schools.
- Low-cost cyclone resistant housing (building materials) for 356 families in 5 villages.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

At the Bhubaneswar level, co-ordination continues to function well with weekly meetings held at the UNICEF office, and with a representative from the government of Orissa present. In Delhi, senior level strategy meetings are still held on a weekly basis.

Meetings are presently being conducted between the government and NGO's defining minimum requirements and standards for individual housing. NGO's have shared their plans and designs and are thus now awaiting government approval.

UNICEF is planning a special workshop on cyclone shelters and multipurpose shelters in order to reach a common understanding and approach.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The relief in traditional terms has come to an end, and efforts are now concentrating on rehabilitation. The main focus for the Red Cross will be on health, education, agriculture and housing. A food element for the most vulnerable will be maintained for a period of 3 months. The situation is still critical for many farmers who do not have irrigation facilities, and for fishermen in the coastal belt who have lost their boats and nets. The housing and shelter issue is presently being discussed between NGO's and plans and designs will be approved by the government very soon. The initial Red Cross rehabilitation programme will continue until June or July 2000. Further schools and clinics, built to act as cyclone shelters during a disaster, will be constructed depending on the receipt of additional funding. The Federation is extremely grateful for donor support to date although further support is required to sustain the rehabilitation phase of the operation.

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