

BANGLADESH: FLOODS

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Bangladesh is experiencing its second round of flooding during the month of July. Earlier this month, floods created hardships for residents in the Northwest and Northeast. Two joint Bangladesh Red Crescent Society/Federation Delegation assessment teams deemed at that time no relief action was required. They observed the situation to be less severe than that portrayed in the media. However, it was noted that the situation in the Northwest was unstable and more problems were anticipated. Now the situation is worsening in the north western quadrant of Bangladesh as saturated ground from the previous flooding and flooding in new areas increases. The assessment teams are preparing to return to the affected districts.

The Situation

The monsoon, with its heavy and frequent rainfall, is active all over the country. Light to heavy rainfall has been recorded at most places in the Brahmaputra and Meghna basins. Light to moderately heavy rainfall is falling in the Ganges basin according to Flood Forecasting and Warning Division of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB). Water levels at all monitoring stations along the Brahmaputra River as well as several stations along the Ganges continue to rise. Monitoring points along the Meghna River and in the South East Hill basins reflect both a rise and fall. The Brahmaputra River at Aricha and Sirajgonj, and in the Ganges basin at Goalanda and Bhagyakul are expected to rise. The following rivers are all flowing above danger levels:

Aricha	Gaibandha and Surma at Sunamgonj
Brahmaputra at Bahadurabad	Kanaighat
Dharla River at Kurigram	Punarbhaba at Dinajpur
Ganges at Bhagyakul	Sirajgonj

As a result, the flood situation is taking an alarming turn in 11 districts:

Bogra: The situation is deteriorating from earlier flooding adding Sariakandi, Sonatala and Dhunat to the growing list.

Dinajpur: The flood situation in the district has worsened with further inundation including fresh areas. The rail communication between Dhaka and Dinajpur has been interrupted as flood water is flowing over rail track in many places.

Gaibandha: Data not currently available

Jamalpur: About 200,000 people in five thanas (counties) have been affected by flood. Water levels in the Jamuna and Brahmaputra River continue to rise.

Kurigram: According to a facsimile received from the Acting Chairman of the BDRCS Kurigram Unit, the flood situation of the district is alarming. All rivers are flowing above danger levels. He made a request to the BDRCS Headquarters for immediate relief assistance.

Lalmonirhat: The flood situation in Lalmonirhat District remains static. About 300,000 people have been affected.

Madaripur: The flood situation in the district worsened as water rushed over the banks of the Padma and Arialkhan Rivers.

Nilphamari: Flood water has poured into a vast area, breaching the flood bypass road of the Teesta river barrage and damaged at least 1,000 homes of the adjoining areas.

Rangpur: Three thanas have been engulfed by flood waters of the river Teesta.

Sherpur: The flood situation has worsened further as water from the old Brahmaputra River pours into the adjacent low lying areas. Three thanas have been inundated as water entered the areas through 11 breaches in the flood control embankment.

Sirajgonj: The flood situation in the district has deteriorated as fresh areas have been inundated. Approximately 200,000 people in 400 villages have been affected.

According to Flood Forecasting and Warning Division of the BWDB, the prevailing flood situation in the district of Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha and Dinajpur may remain unchanged. More areas of Bogra, Sherpur, Sirajgonj, Jamalpur, Manikgonj, Dhaka, Munshigonj, Rajbari, Faridpur, Madaripur and Shariatpur districts are likely to be inundated. The flood situation of Sunamgonj and Sylhet should remain unchanged.

Government Action: According to BSS the government news agency, as of 15 July the government had allocated 685 tonnes of rice, 600 pieces of clothing, 1850 tins of biscuits, and Taka 645,000 in cash for the flood affected people in different areas of the country.

It was reported that the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) is assisting 6,000 flood affected families in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat through evacuation, food, medicine and shelter materials. Relief materials include compressed rice, molasses, water purifying tablets and polythene sheets. RDRS is also sinking tube wells in shelter areas.

BDRCS Action: The BDRCS Units have been instructed to closely monitor the situation, organise volunteers and BDRCS Youth members, provide assistance locally as far as possible and send regular information to the Headquarters on the situation. The BDRCS Headquarters has been monitoring the overall flood situation by maintaining close liaison with different governmental and non-governmental agencies.

The BDRCS Headquarters sent 1200 pieces of clothing, 30 cartons of baby milk powder, and 10 cartons of soap to Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha and Kurigram subsequent to requests by the BDRCS Units in these affected areas.

Conclusion: It is anticipated that more nearby river basins will soon experience flooding. With heavy rains predicted the situation could quickly reach disaster proportions. BDRCS, with the support of the Delegation, is preparing to respond, however their stock of relief items has been depleted and may be inadequate to face a moderate or large scale disaster.

Kris Hurlburt
Desk Officer,
Asia & Pacific Department

Jerry Talbot
Director,
Asia & Pacific Department