

DREF Bulletin



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

BANGLADESH: COLD WAVE

DREF Bulletin
no. MDRBD001
09 January 2007
Glide no. CW-2007-
000001-BGD

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in 185 countries.

In Brief

This DREF Bulletin is being issued based on the situation described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 150,000 was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to respond to the needs in this operation, targeting 30,000 beneficiaries in 64 districts of Bangladesh. This operation is expected to be implemented over one month, and will be completed by February 2007; a Final Report will be made available two months after the end of the operation (by mid April 2007). In the meantime, development of this operation is to be reported as DREF Update with more detailed information and plan of action. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

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Background and current situation

Since 01 January 2007, a severe cold wave has been sweeping through most parts of Bangladesh, especially the northern and north-western districts, and has affected thousands of vulnerable people ill-prepared to cope with cold conditions. According to local media sources, there have over 134 cold-related deaths so far and the death toll continues to rise everyday. Though the country generally has a tropical monsoon climate with mild and short winters, during the last few days single-figure temperatures (below the 9 degrees Celsius mark) have been recorded throughout the areas affected by the cold spell.

According to the meteorological department, temperatures dropped to 5 degrees Celsius (the lowest recorded) in some areas in the northern part of the country on 03 January, while other areas experienced temperatures between 7-10 degrees Celsius. It is predicted that several colder spells, with possibility of intensification (4-7 degrees Celsius), will continue to affect the country within the coming weeks of January.

The cold wave has been worsened by thick fog, which continues to blanket most parts of the country, paralysing normal life and keeping daytime temperatures very low. This has caused massive damage in the agricultural sector and in communication. Dense fog has delayed most international flights and disrupted road and river transport throughout the country.

Winds from the north over the northern and south-western parts of the country have further intensified the cold. Thousands of people, mainly infants and children, are suffering from cold-related conditions (cold, fever, pneumonia, asthma and respiratory complications). The vulnerable population, especially women and children who are homeless and are poorly resourced to cope with colder weather, has been heavily impacted by the cold. Many are unable to buy appropriate warm clothing and blankets and are struggling to fight against the cold by wrapping themselves with gunny bags and plastic bags. Many street children (including orphans) have to sleep by the Dhaka railway station and ferry terminal, on the bare floor or on dried grass that they collect to protect from them from the cold as they lack appropriate clothing, mats



Street children sleeping by the Dhaka ferry terminal

The government has been assessing the situation but, so far, the relief assistance provided to the vulnerable people has not been adequate. Although the media has reported that the government would be dispatching 30,000 blankets to the most affected areas, it is difficult to ascertain whether this has been done. A quick survey conducted, on 07 January, among the aid agencies present in Bangladesh indicate that only approximately 11,095 blankets and a smaller amount of warm clothes would be distributed to the affected population. Taking into account the 8,700 blankets so far distributed by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) and the Federation's Bangladesh delegation, from the existing BDRCS emergency stock, the total figure of blankets distributed would still amount to only 19,795.

This DREF Bulletin will meet the non-food needs of about 30,000 affected people who are the most vulnerable to and are suffering due to the ongoing cold wave. The experience of cold wave operations in Bangladesh shows that it is essential to maintain a degree of flexibility in targeting beneficiaries, which may require developing this DREF Bulletin to an Emergency Appeal.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Many units (branches) of the BDRCS have been either calling the national society headquarters or sending request letters for blankets and warm clothing for distribution to the affected people. The BDRCS and the Bangladesh delegation have been closely monitoring the situation. Some of the branches of BDRCS are distributing blankets and warm clothing from their own resources (no detailed figures are available yet). As an immediate response to the growing emergency, the BDRCS and the Bangladesh delegation are distributing approximately 8,700 blankets, from the BDRCS emergency stock, among the affected population. Based on the current situation, there is a need to procure approximately 30,000 blankets for distribution and for replenishment of the stock.

The plan is to concentrate the distribution of blankets among the most vulnerable people in the hardest hit areas in 64 districts of Bangladesh. Despite the 72-hour transport blockade across the country due to political unrest, distribution of blankets started in Dhaka at midnight on 07 January with blankets being distributed to 250 people seen sleeping on the bare floor in the railway station and ferry terminal. Many of them were either homeless or were stuck due to transportation related problems because of the blockade. The BDRCS chairman, some board members, secretary general and deputy secretary general, together with the head of the Bangladesh delegation, carried out the distribution. Although the distribution has started, the task of sending the blankets to the 68 affected district branches is difficult due to the 72-hour country-wide blockade that started on 07 January.

The BDRCS and the Bangladesh delegation have been in contact with the various agencies, including DFID, ECHO, and WFP, to gather and share information and coordinate response. The delegation is receiving as well as sharing information with the disaster emergency response group (the in-country body coordinating during disasters, jointly chaired by the UN and the ministry of disaster management and relief).

The needs

According to the assessment reports, the basic emergency need is to meet the urgent requirements of about 30,000 unassisted beneficiaries who are severely affected by the ongoing cold wave and live under vulnerable conditions, with poor resources, making it impossible for them to cope with this cold. Many are unable to buy appropriate warm clothing and blankets and are struggling to fight against the cold

Blankets: The distribution of blankets will provide emergency assistance and give life-saving support to the most affected people. With the support of the DREF, about 20,000 blankets will be immediately distributed among the affected population and another 10,000 blankets will be kept at the BDRCS national headquarter warehouses as replenishment of the buffer stock, as the national society and the Bangladesh delegation have been using the existing stock for distribution to the affected people.

Plan of action against the DREF allocation

- Identification of the most vulnerable beneficiaries, using the “BDRCS Disaster Relief Manual”, with special emphasis on gender and disability.
- Local procurement of 30,000 pieces of blankets.
- Dispatch and transportation of blankets from BDRCS headquarters to the final destinations using the BDRCS fleet and other options.
- Provision of assistance to the BDRCS for strengthening its management of distribution structures, especially at the branch level.
- Distribution of blankets to pre-determined beneficiaries by trained BDRCS volunteers.
- Regular detailed reporting on the distribution.
- Provision of continuous monitoring and technical advice by the BDRCS headquarters and the Federation.
- Provision of assistance to the BDRCS in strengthening its human and material resource capacities in the 68 branches and at national headquarters, as necessary for the operation.

DREF Budget

	Total CHF
Clothing and Textiles (Blankets) – 30,000 pieces	123,215
Distribution and Monitoring expenses	15,000
Program Support (PSR 6.5%)	9,609
Grand Total	147,824

[Click here to return to the title page for contact information](#)

This operation is aligned with the International Federation's Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- *Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.*
- *Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.*
- *Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.*
- *Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.*

All International Federation 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 is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>