

INFORMATION 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 SPELL

15 January 2002

Information Bulletin N° 1

Disaster Relief Emergency Fund Allocated: None

This Information Bulletin is for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time. If the situation will deteriorate and is confirmed by an assessment the Federation may consider launching an appeal. Donors are also welcome to support the Bangladesh Red Crescent via the Federation 2002 Annual appeal for Bangladesh, 01.26/2002.

The Situation

Since the beginning of December 2001, a severe cold spell has gripped northern districts of Bangladesh. Although the winters in Bangladesh used to be generally mild and short, global climate changes have also started to affect Bangladesh with unusual drops in temperature over the winter.

According to the Meteorological Department, temperatures have been dropping to 7 degrees Celsius in some areas, and to between 8 - 12 Celsius in others. The wind coming from the north and flowing over the northern and south-western part of the country enhanced the intensity of cold. These temperatures are perceived as severe cold by the general population, who are used to much warmer weather, even at this time of the year. Such conditions have further aggravated the suffering of the most vulnerable people: the poor, people of low income, destitutes, undernourished and underweight people. These include people who lost their homes and possessions, either in heavy flooding in 1999 and 2000, or in tropical storms and flash floods in 2001.

Although there are only six deaths reported (elderly people) since the beginning of the cold wave, some Districts in the north have reported an outbreak of cold related diseases such as asthma, cough, viral fever. In the first week of January, thousands are reported to have been treated in medical centres.

In early January 2002, some District administrations in the northern part of Bangladesh organised limited distribution of warm clothing and blankets among the poor population. Local NGOs and the Lions Club have also distributed small quantities of warm clothing and blankets.

According to the Meteorological Department, the cold wave will intensify and is likely to continue up-to February.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), supported by the Federation, have been closely monitoring climatic and situation developments. The BDRCS, from its own emergency stock, distributed 400 blankets and 400 pieces of warm clothing in Panchagarh districts. Further distribution of 100 blankets and 2,277 pieces of warm clothing is ongoing.

After receiving requests for assistance from the District branches, the BDRCS and the Federation have decided to utilize balances of previous relief funds of CHF 25,000 for additional procurement and distribution of blankets in the eight districts. Donors are welcome to support replenishment of blankets to the Disaster Preparedness stock.

The BDRCS and Federation objectives are to:

- Deliver assistance to the districts of: Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Satkhira, Sylhet, Sunamjonj, Nilpamari and Jessore, target areas with most urgent assistance needs.
- Immediately assist 2,800 beneficiaries in the eight districts by providing a blanket per beneficiary.
- Complete the relief assistance within two weeks.

The BDRCS/Federation logistic departments have commenced the process for blankets procurement.

Needs

At this stage there is no clearly identified need for external assistance. If the situation changes, an update would be issued immediately with a request for further assistance.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

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