



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: TROPICAL STORMS

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The Situation

During the end of April 2002, a series of heavy tropical storms swept across much of mainland Bangladesh. At first, on 22 April 2002, the tropical storms affected districts in the north-east of the country particularly those bordering India and through which the rivers Tista and Jamuna flow, including: Gaibandha, Lalmonirat, Bogra, Nilphamari and Netrokona. Many of the stricken villages had already suffered the impact of tornadoes late last year.

After a short respite, lasting less than a week, a further wave of tropical storms swept across Bangladesh on the evening of Friday 26 April 2002, causing further destruction and distress in many districts. Known locally as 'Norwesters' and following an eponymous trajectory, the storms again ravaged districts affected during the previous week and extended as far south as Laxmipur on the river *Meghna*, where it widens to form an arm of the estuary into the Bay of Bengal. These new storms damaged an estimated total of around 5,000 dwelling houses, standing crops over extensive tracts of agricultural land and significantly disrupted electricity supplies and telephone communication to many areas.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BRCS) district branches in affected areas, reported that a total of 11 persons had been killed and several hundreds injured. Of these, six people were killed and more than 100 injured in five sub-districts of Kishoregonj alone: Kishoregonj Town, Hussainpur, Pakundia, Kathiadi and Bajitpur, respectively. In Brahmanbaria, the storm was reported to have killed two persons and injured 30 others. In Mymensing, two people were killed and around 50 injured by associated hailstorms. Standing crops on about 5,000 hectares, several huts and 20 educational institutions were damaged.

In Jhenaidah District, a seven year old boy was killed and at least 40 others were injured by the storm, which also destroyed 500 houses. Similar scenarios were reported from the BRCS district branches of Magura, Tangail, Sirajgonj and Moulavi Bazar which, like others, requested support from BRCS national headquarters with providing urgently needed relief materials to the victims of the storms.

Local Government administrations utilised schools and other educational institutions to provide temporary shelter to families whose homes had been damaged.



Bangladesh Red Crescent Society Volunteers distributed relief items to some 2,000 affected families.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, through its district branches carried out rapid field assessments in the most affected areas. The findings gathered through field assessments were used to draft a detailed plan of action in order to assist the most affected population. Immediately after tropical storms lashed their districts, several BRCS district branches, responded by carrying out needs and vulnerability assessments and drawing up provisional beneficiary lists. Using their local Disaster Emergency Funds, a number of branches also procured and distributed limited relief supplies and provided First Aid services, where necessary.

The Federation, in response to an official request from the BRCS for assistance, released an amount of CHF 102,346 (USD 69,021/EUR 69,434) from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) in support of BDRCS relief intervention and replenishment of emergency “family kits” from BRCS buffer stocks.

BRCS national headquarters, responded immediately establishing a Control Room to liaise with Units and concerned Government Departments in the distressed areas. Consequently, in collaboration with the Federation delegation, BRCS allocated 2,000 emergency “family kits” from its national buffer stocks for distribution among targeted vulnerable families in 10 affected districts.

The BRCS and Federation objectives were:

- To provide rapid support to 2,000 most vulnerable families (approx. 10,000 beneficiaries), by the distribution of essential nonfood items to meet immediate family needs.
- To replenish and increase BDRCS buffer stocks of emergency “family kits”.
- To complete the relief operation within a time frame of three weeks.

Beneficiary Selection

Beneficiaries were selected through site visits by BRCS volunteers, in accordance with vulnerability criteria set-out in the BRCS’s Disaster Relief Manual, focusing on those unable to cope or to recover rapidly and whose situations could not be alleviated without BRCS assistance. Consequently, the beneficiaries consisted primarily of under privileged families headed by the elderly, sick or physically disabled and/or by separated, divorced or widowed women. Following selection, a ration card containing family details, relief entitlement and arrangements for receipt of goods was issued to the head (or agreed representative) of each beneficiary family.

Allocation and Distribution of Emergency ‘Family Kits’

District	No. of assisted families
Barisal	200
Brahmanbaria	150
Gaibandha	200
Habiganj	150
Jamalpur	350
Kisoreganj	351
Kurigram	352
Lalmonirhat	200
Laxmipur	200
Sunamganj	150
Total	2'303

Implementation

Coordinated by staff of the BRCS’s Disaster Management Division and in accordance with established regulations and operating procedures, the BRCS Relief Department organized the dispatch of 2,000 pre-packed emergency ‘family kits’ from the National Society’s buffer stocks held at the National Headquarter’s Central Stores in Dhaka to the identified Units. Secondary distribution of the kits to beneficiaries was arranged and carried out directly by volunteers of the Units concerned, supported (where available) by locally based BRCS staff. The volunteers included members of the Unit Executive Committees, Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) squads and Red Crescent Youth (RCY) BRCS volunteers were identified by Red Crescent insignia at distribution points, all of which were clearly indicated by banners and a Red Cross/Red Crescent flag. At the commencement of each distribution, a ‘family kit’ package was opened to exhibit the contents to beneficiaries and onlookers. In some districts, these events were covered by the local press.

The distribution process to beneficiaries was completed within 20 days.

Procurement and replenishment of buffer stocks

<i>Composition of a 'Family Kit'</i>	
Item description	No. of pieces
aluminum pots (with lids)	2
plates	2
spoons	2
drinking cups	2
candles	6
matches (box)	12
plastic bucket	1
washing soap	2
measuring/pouring jug	1
sari (clothing for women)	1
lungi (clothing for men)	1
plastic sheeting (18ft x 12ft)	1

Simultaneously, with the distribution of “family kits” from available BRCS buffer stocks, tendering procedures for the local supply of replenishment and additional stocks were initiated. A subsequently awarded contract was fulfilled at the end of June, when BRCS received the final consignment of a total of 4,000 new “family kits”.

Additional intervention

During the latter part of June, unusually heavy and persistent early monsoon rains left some northern districts of the country waterlogged. These local inundations were limited in their geographical extent and did not give rise to any general need for emergency intervention.

However, in response to a request for BRCS national headquarters support submitted by the BRCS Unit in Gaibandha, a joint BRCS/Federation team was immediately dispatched to carry out a rapid appraisal and needs assessment. This resulted in the identification of a need to support local government initiatives to address localized outbreaks of diarrhoea and other diseases generated by flood-induced contamination of drinking water supplies. Accordingly, a small part of the residual DREF allocation (about CHF 1,500) was used to supply, equip and dispatch BRCS medical teams (each of which consisted in a doctor and a paramedic) to the affected district.



Approximately 5,000 houses were damaged by tropical storms in April.

Assessment of the Operation

- Rapid approval of the Federation delegation’s request for a DREF allocation enabled swift and appropriate National Society response to identified immediate needs of the most affected population by the storms and facilitated a necessary increase in the level of BRCS buffer stocks of emergency “family kits” at the outset of the monsoon season.
- Units that had developed CBDP capacity and established local Disaster Emergency Funds demonstrated significantly greater capability to carry out rapid and accurate needs assessment, beneficiary targeting and the swift provision of practical support.
- Effective BRCS planning, coordination and clearly stated institutional procedures for emergency response enabled the delivery of appropriate assistance to the intended beneficiaries in a timely manner.
- Characterized by effective cooperation between the Federation Delegation, BRCS and the local authorities concerned, successful completion of the relief operation - together with the procurement of additional buffer stocks - contributed to an enhancement of the National Society’s confidence in its ability to implement similar emergency response initiatives in the future.
- Local media coverage of the distribution process positively raised the local profile and reputation of BRCS Units concerned in the operation.

- The relief operation encouraged and motivated the National Society's local volunteers who were engaged in its implementation.

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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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