

## Information bulletin

### Bangladesh: Fire outbreak

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Date of disaster: 11 January 2015	Point of contact: 1. Md. Belal Hossain, Director, Disaster Response, BDRCS 2. Andreas Weissenberg, Operations Coordinator, AP Zone
Host National Societies: Bangladesh Red Crescent Society	

This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) will, however, accept direct assistance to provide support to the affected families.

## The situation

A devastating fire broke out at a slum at Katasur of Mohammadpur area in Dhaka at around 08:15hr of 11 January 2015, reported two children dead<sup>1</sup> and more than 500 shanties burnt. This is the second fire in the slum since 1998. The 1998's fire reduced the slum to a smaller one. There are other similar recent fire incidents<sup>2,3,4</sup> involving slums and/or commercial buildings in the country:

- **March 2014** in Dhaka with no casualties
- **September 2013** in Nandipara with 3 people injured
- **August 2013** in Gazipur with at least 10 people confirmed dead
- **November 2012** in Ashulia with 117 people confirmed dead and more than 200 people injured



Burnt remains of houses at Bat-tala slum while efforts are ongoing to douse the flames (Photo: BDRCS, 11/01/2015)

Aside from these incidents, in April 2013 a garment factory building collapsed in Savar claiming more than 1,100 lives. These incidents have raised the concern over weak safety standards in operating this industry as well as lack of awareness and preparedness regarding fire hazard.<sup>5</sup>

The fire originated from the slum and soon engulfed the adjacent area. Ten firefighting units, local people and Red Crescent volunteers rushed to the spot and managed to bring the blaze under control around 10:00 am. Fire service officials are yet to ascertain the cause of the fire or the exact extent of the damage so far. The fire service and civil defense authorities formed an inquiry committee to find out the cause of the hour-long fire.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2015/jan/11/fire-breaks-out-mohammadpur-slum>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bangladeshchronicle.net/index.php/2013/09/fire-breaks-out-at-rmg-factory-in-capital-3-hurt/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/08/bangladesh-garment-factory-fire\\_n\\_4065922.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/08/bangladesh-garment-factory-fire_n_4065922.html)

<sup>4</sup> [http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/25/world/asia/bangladesh-factory-fire/?hpt=hp\\_t1](http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/25/world/asia/bangladesh-factory-fire/?hpt=hp_t1)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.bip.org.bd/SharingFiles/journal\\_book/20130718121437.pdf](http://www.bip.org.bd/SharingFiles/journal_book/20130718121437.pdf)

The first body recovered from the gutted remains of the slum after 4 hours is the charred body of a three and half year old girl. Another dead children body was recovered subsequently. In addition, more than 500 families were rendered homeless as the houses and 20 shops were gutted in the fire. The families lost all their belongings and are living in a critical situation. They are in immediate need of food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, shelter, basic household items, clothes and blankets.

Around 150 of the affected families have been accommodated temporarily in three under-construction buildings adjacent to the site, each having eight to nine floors. Some families are living in the middle of the burnt remains in makeshift shelters made out of salvaged materials, while the remaining have temporarily seek shelter with their relatives staying in other parts of the city.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

As a first responder, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) local unit mobilized volunteers to provide search and rescue and first aid services to the affected people. A team of nine members of Red Crescent Youth volunteers, officers from the national headquarters and Dhaka City unit were at the site of the disaster. The team was skilled in first aid and search and rescue, with three members having skills in psychosocial support (PSS). The team worked alongside the Fire Service Department.



BDRCS volunteers working with the Fire Service at site to calm down the situation (Photo: BDRCS, 11/01/2015)

The team also conducted a rapid observational assessment of the damages and needs of the affected families. The District Administration and Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) worked together for preparing the list of affected people. BDRCS beneficiary cards were distributed among the affected people as per list prepared by district admin.

In response to the immediate needs BDRCS mobilized resources to assist the affected families. Shelter is one of the most critical needs, compounded by the fact that the country is going through the cold winter season. With this in mind, tarpaulins and blankets were distributed to 500 affected families (each family receiving 1 blanket and 1 tarpaulin) on 12 January, in the presence of the Chairman and the Secretary General of BDRCS. IFRC has been supporting BDRCS with the initial mobilization of funds and goods, as well as in preparing situation reports.

### Action taken by the Government and other actors

In addition to assistance from the Fire Service and Civil Defense, Rapid Action Battalion arranged lunch for the affected people on the day of the incident. This was followed by quick distribution of 20 kg rice and one blanket to each of the affected families by the District Administration of Dhaka. In total, the District Administration distributed 1,500 blankets, 1,000 saris and 1,000 lungis to the affected people, and BDT 3,000 (approx. CHF 39) as cash grant to each family. The blankets are particularly relevant considering the lower temperature at night and the condition in which people are temporarily living in. People from the surrounding neighborhoods have taken the initiative to arrange three meals a day for the affected families. Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA) is providing clean water through water-trucking. There have also been some instances of in-kind distributions of buckets, clothes, etc. by private organizations and individuals.

## Current needs and gaps

Although food is being provided by the locals for the time being, it is not appropriate for infants and younger kids, and cases of diarrhea have been reported. There is a need for baby food to be provided, and mobile health clinics would be very useful. In the absence of sanitation facilities, open defecation is the common practice. Basic household items such as cooking pots, candles, fireboxes, mosquito nets, etc. would make the lives of these families much easier. Longer term cash support would help these families get back on their feet.



BDRCS staff distributing emergency relief goods to the families affected by the fire incident at Bat-tala slum  
(Photo: BDRCS, 12/01/2015)

## Contact information

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## How we work

All IFRC 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 the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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