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Information bulletin Bangladesh: Floods

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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Date of disaster: August 2014	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 (BDRCS)	

This bulletin is being issued for further information following the first bulletin as well as setting the basis for a DREF request to fund continued humanitarian assistance required in the coming days. It reflects the current situation and response, and the immediate intervention that is required for the affected population. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has principally decided to make a DREF request to provide and scale up assistance to the population affected by the disaster.

The situation

Since the second week of August, heavy rains in the main river basins and upstream catchments of India, along with continuous rainfall in northwest and north-eastern parts of Bangladesh have caused flooding in low-lying districts. Districts in the north-west of the country were heavily impacted which triggered a Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) to be carried out in nine districts by members of the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT). Situation reports from the Disaster Management Information Centre (DMIC) and reports from BDRCS' local units as well as other NGOs brought attention to the seriousness of flooding in those districts clustered around the north-west (Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Bogra, Sirajganj, Jamalpur, Sherpur).

In the following week, with the continuation of heavy rainfalls and many rivers flowing above danger level, the number of districts hit by flood increased as fresh areas went under water. Sunamganj, Sylhet and Netrokona in the North-east of the country and, even more recently, districts in the centre of the country (Munshiganj, Tangail, Faridpur, Manikganj, Rajbari) were affected by the floods. Due to the collapse of embankment on the night of 28 August, 100 more villages were inundated affecting 100,000 more people. The DMIC situation report issued on 1 September shows that more than half a million families (approx. 2.8 million people) are affected.



Map showing the flooded districts (Source: Draft JNA Report)

Among these, more than 57,000 families (275,000 people) are displaced, including more than 31,000 families (150,000 people) whose homes have been totally inundated/destroyed. A total of 99 floods shelters are active in the affected districts, housing some of the displaced population while others have settled in along elevated roads and with host families.



The flood situation in the north-eastern districts of Bangladesh (Photo by BDRCS)

It needs to be mentioned here that districts in the South (Bhola, Patuakhali, Barguna) had experienced flood since July and districts such as Feni and Chittagong had been waterlogged around the same time for several days due to heavy rains.

The draft JNA report shared on the 1 September mentions the 2014 floods as 'the most severe floods the country has faced since the 2007 mega floods, and reports over two million people being affected by the current flood in the assessed nine districts. In Kurigram alone, 120,000 people were displaced at the time of the assessment. The most prominent needs are reported to be food, followed by water and sanitation and livelihoods.

According to the latest Government report, some of the rivers are in falling trend (Ganges and Meghna) while the rivers around Dhaka city such as Buriganga, Balu, Turag and Tongi Khal are likely to rise. As the monsoon season extends up to October, the situation is likely worsened. Water table¹ at 16 river stations are still flowing above their danger levels.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society

BDRCS, along with its branches in the affected districts had been monitoring closely the overall flood situation. Information is being collected on an ongoing basis in response to the changing nature of the flood by the branch offices from the local Red Crescent volunteers and government officials. This information is then shared with BDRCS National Headquarters, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), ICRC and Partner National Societies (PNSs).

As first responder, BDRCS's local units have mobilized their volunteers to provide search and rescue and first aid services to the affected people.

BDRCS has taken an active part in the JNA in the



BDRCS members travelling to remote areas with relief items (Photo by BDRCS)

¹ Water table is the surface where the water pressure head is equal to the atmospheric pressure (where gauge pressure = 0). Water table may vary due to seasonal changes such as precipitation, evapotranspiration.

north-western districts organized by the HCTT. Four members of the National Disaster Response Team (NDRT) had been deployed to Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Sirajganj and Jamalpur districts to assist in the phase one JNA. BDRCS, along with IFRC, has led the assessment in three sub-districts; while taking part in the assessment with other agencies in 20 sub-districts (under the four identified districts). BDRCS has also provided orientation venue and other facilities at Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts.

To meet the immediate needs, BDRCS has mobilized resources and allocated BDT 11,000,000 (approx. CHF 116,000) for eleven districts (Kurigram, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Sirajganj, Bogra, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Bhola and Sunamganj) for distribution of dry and cooked food along with basic NFIs to the affected people. Various food distributions have already reached more than 4,400 families.



BDRCS staff distributing emergency relief goods to flood affected people in Jamalpur (Photo by BDRCS)

In consideration of the acute scarcity of safe drinking water among the affected population in the north-west region, BDRCS has mobilized one Kit 5 Water Treatment Plant to support Kurigram district with supply of fresh drinking water. Two National Disaster Water and Sanitation Relief Team (NDWRT) members and two NDRT members have been deployed for this purpose. Another Kit 5 remains stand-by for utilization.

BDRCS, with support from IFRC, has also updated its disaster preparedness stock which consists of tarpaulins, tents, plastic rolls, cooking pots and utensils, ORS, water purification tablets, clothes, jerry cans, hygiene kits, etc. and is ready to deliver to the affected areas. The remaining NDRT members are on stand-by for rapid deployment if needed.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

IFRC has been supporting BDRCS with the initial mobilization of funds and personnel, as well as in preparing situation reports and providing technical inputs for a coordinated relief operation. IFRC is part of the JNA Core Team for the north-west assessment. IFRC is also participating in different coordination meetings, including HCTT and the Disaster Emergency Response (DER) of Local Consultative Group (LCG). IFRC is coordinating with the Shelter Cluster co-lead UNDP in compiling shelter and non-food item (NFI) contingency stock to prepare for the upcoming response. IFRC is hosting the upcoming Shelter Cluster Meeting to be held on 4 September to discuss with the cluster members the response strategy in relation to shelter and NFIs. In addition IFRC is participating actively in the WASH Cluster and Information Management Working Group. IFRC is closely monitoring the situation together with the BDRCS and actively coordinating with all in-country PNSs.

Other humanitarian actors

HCTT has conducted a phase one JNA in nine north-western districts (Kurigram, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Sirajganj, Bogra, Rangpur, Jamalpur, Nilphamari and Sherpur). The draft report was shared with relevant stakeholders on 1 September, while the final version is due to be out on 4 September.

The Government of Bangladesh has allocated for immediate assistance to all affected districts more than 5,000 MTs of rice and Cash. The United Nation's World Food Programme (WFP) has distributed 38.25 MTs of high energy biscuits. Various UN agencies and INGO/NGOs have also started responding to the immediate needs of the affected population with food packages, WASH activities and cash grants.

Needs, gaps and challenges

According to the draft JNA report, food, sanitation and livelihoods are reported as the main priority sectors across the districts.

Food has been reported as the priority need in most districts. Food stocks and household items were damaged by flood waters, leaving some families fully dependent on relief support. Many have been surviving on the little dry food that they were able to take with them like puffed rice, flattened rice, etc. The ability to cook food and boil water is also an issue. Short term food security appears more imminent a problem; however there will still be a significant impact on long term food security due to the impact on agriculture crop and livelihoods. Agricultural land is still under water and no clear indication is available now in the time needed to the water to recede. Food will continue to be a major issue in the longer term as damaged crops are not replaced with newly planted seeds.

A large number of hand tube-wells are estimated to have been contaminated by flood waters, forcing the affected population to seek alternative water sources. Shortage of safe drinking water is a pressing concern, and so is the lack of latrines in the spontaneous settlements. Many latrines have been washed away and inadequate sanitation facilities have caused many to openly defecate, hence contaminating pond waters and increasing the risks of spread of water-borne illness. There have been increased cases of diarrhea and other water related diseases as was reported in DMIC situation report dated 1 September.

Shelter, although not mentioned as the biggest priority at the moment, is a concern for most of the assessed unions. The situation report released by DMIC on 1 September reported more than 31,000 houses destroyed and over 188,000 houses damaged.

In view of the needs, BDRCS needs to go for a more comprehensive response. These include the need for scaling up the distribution of food and essential non-food items, provision of safe drinking water, emergency shelter for the displaced population, health assistance in hard-to-reach areas.

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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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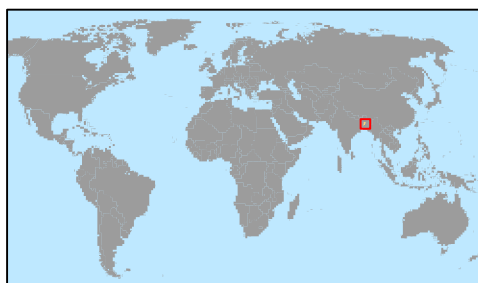
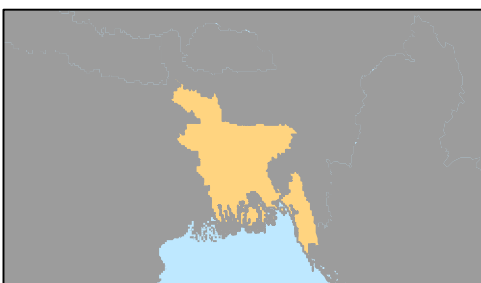
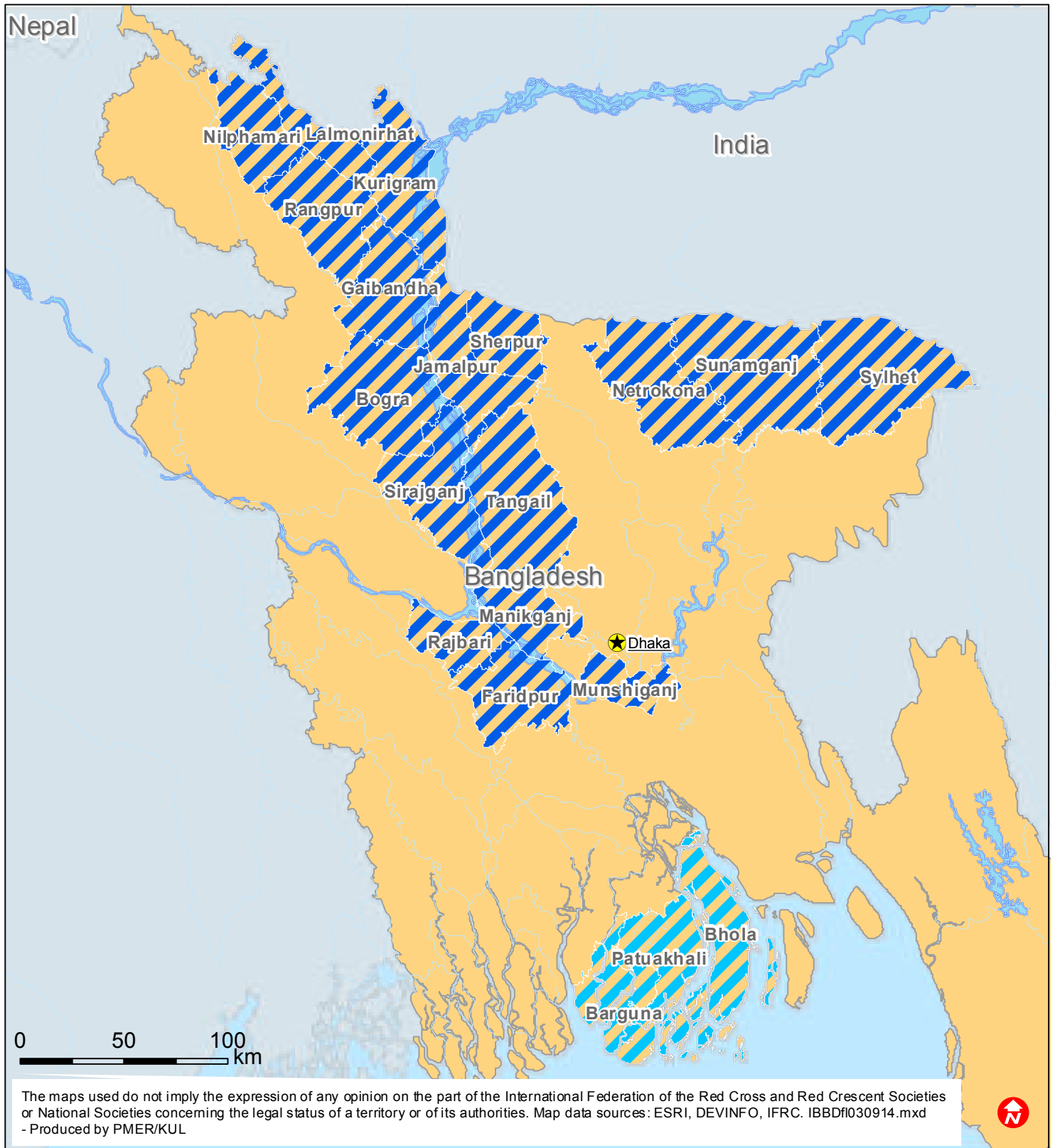





The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.



Bangladesh: Floods



-  Affected districts
-  Districted flooded since July 2014
-  Rivers