

BANGLADESH: FLOODS

11 October 2000

appeal no. 20/00

situation report no. 5 - focus on the western districts

period covered: 29 September - 10 October 2000

Although flood waters in the north have begun to subside, the effects of the flooding in the western districts are increasing in severity, with a current estimated total of 2.8 million people affected. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), supported by the Federation, has been active in rescue and evacuation activities and distributed food items to vulnerable disaster victims. The BDRCS is working in collaboration with the newly created Control, Coordination and Monitoring Centre (CCMC) in Jessore branch which is closely following developments in those districts which have been worst hit by the recent phase of flooding in late September. Funding is urgently required in order to sustain the momentum of BDRCS/Federation activities and to save lives.

The context

Since the launch of the preliminary appeal for floods in Bangladesh on 18 August, the scale of the disaster has broadened in nature. The early arrival of the south west monsoon was accompanied by flooding and extensive river erosion along stretches of the three main river basins of the Brahmaputra/Jumuna, Padma/Ganges and the Meghna. The situation was compounded on 31 August by a violent tidal surge in the Bay of Bengal which engulfed vast areas of Sandwip and Hatiya islands and areas along the Chittagong coastline.

Since 22 September, a further spate of flood waters originating in neighbouring West Bengal in India, has severely affected western districts of Bangladesh. This situation report concentrates on the most recent phase of flooding which, according to the government of Bangladesh, has affected 2.8 million

people. A total of eight districts adjacent to the border of West Bengal have been affected following a massive encroachment of floodwaters into areas of Bangladesh that have not experienced serious flooding since 1945. The five worst affected districts are Mehepur, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Jessore and Satkhira. The widespread destruction of housing and the lack of coping mechanisms amongst the affected population has necessitated a substantial relief and health intervention by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) with support from the Federation.

Latest events

Since the onset of the recent floods in September, the floodwaters have been moving slowly southwards towards the Bay of Bengal. Of the five most seriously affected districts, 99 of the 188 unions were under water as of 4 October. The flooding has also struck the previously unaffected Magura District and areas of Kustia, Rajshahi and Chapai-Nawabganj districts, all of which have already suffered heavily from the impact of river erosion.

Whilst flood levels have been receding in the northern districts, in the past twenty four hours the floodwaters have engulfed new areas in Satkhira district, inundating over 30 villages. About 80% of Satkhira town is reportedly under water and an estimated 441,000 people have been displaced from their homes and have taken refuge in government shelters. At least 230,000 more remain marooned in their villages or have set up temporary shelters on embankments and other areas of high ground. The situation is worsening following the recent breach of two protective embankments. All 12 unions of Koloara sub-district are under water and there are fears of an imminent collapse of more embankments.

The speed at which the floods struck meant that people had to flee their homes - unable to salvage their belongings. The sheer force of the floods has destroyed or damaged thousands of homes, has had a devastating impact on livelihoods and destroyed an estimated 80% of the standing crop and vegetable fields. A lack of boat transportation in the region has hampered rescue efforts and the floodwaters have been slow to recede as a result of a lack of drainage.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The BDRCS and the Federation delegation in Bangladesh have responded rapidly to the disaster. On 24 September, a joint BDRCS/Federation team was active in Mehepur, assessing the humanitarian needs arising from the floods. On 25 September the first supplies of emergency food stocks were procured and distributed locally by BDRCS volunteers.

Despite the shortage of boats, BDRCS volunteers have been rescuing and evacuating villagers stranded by the floods in Jessore and Satkhira districts. In addition, squad members of the BDRCS community based disaster preparedness (CBDP) programme have been actively warning villagers in advance of the floods to evacuate their homes and seek safety on higher ground.

Priorities for the ongoing relief operation are to distribute food and non-food relief items as well as to provide emergency medical assistance to victims of the floods. To date, the BDRCS/Federation have despatched 456 MT of food to the affected districts. As of 6 October, the Federation had purchased 1,028 MT of basic foodstuffs, all of which are intended for distribution before 14 October. Seven BDRCS medical teams have also been sent to the western districts to help combat outbreaks of waterborne diseases and 23 more are on standby pending further funding pledges.

Distributions took place in accordance with the table below:

Districts	Rice mt	Dal mt	Chira mt	Ghur mt
ChapaiNawabgonj	30.00	6.00	10.00	2.00
Jessore	40.00	6.00	15.00	3.00
Meherpur	55.00	8.00	10.00	2.00
Chuadanga	55.00	8.00	10.00	2.00
Jhenidha	30.00	4.00	10.00	2.00
Rajshahi	20.00	4.00	5.00	1.00
Satkhira	50.00	8.00	25.00	5.00
Kustia	20.00	4.00	5.00	1.00
Total	300.00	48.00	90.00	18.00

w **The Control, Co-ordination and Monitoring Centre (CCMC)**

In an effort to improve overall control and monitoring of the relief operation, on 9 October a Control, Co-ordination and Monitoring Centre was established at the Jessore branch office of the BDRCS. The CCMC has the overall responsibility for the management of BDRCS current and future activities linked to the emergency in Jessore, Satkhira, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Kushtia, Jhenidah, Magura and if possible, Chapai Nawabganj and Rajshahi. The CCMC is headed by a controller supported by a deputy controller, an experienced storeman, a relief officer, a medical co-ordinator, an office assistant and seven Red Cross youth volunteer leaders. The team departed from Dhaka with one 4WD vehicle, a pick-up van, and three 10-ton trucks. They also left with 72 MT of food, including 50 MT of rice, 10 MT of chira, 10 MT of dhal and 2 MT of ghur. A further 50 MT of rice and 10 MT of dhal will be dispatched to Jessore on 11 October. Other items which the team provided included cooking utensils, tents and tarpaulins, medicines, water purification tablets, oral rehydration salts and first aid boxes.

If required, the team may subdivide in order to assist BDRCS units working in rescue and relief in the affected areas. As of 9 October, all relief goods for this area will be sent from Dhaka to the CCMC Jessore, for local distribution. The CCMC Jessore will maintain daily contact with the BDRCS national headquarters' control room to ensure co-ordination on operational issues.

Outstanding needs

Although the situation is now gradually improving in seven of the affected districts, it is expected that in the coming days more people in Satkhira District will be affected as the floods engulf new areas. There remains an urgent need for food and non-food relief items to assist the most vulnerable amongst the affected population, who have lost their homes, possessions and means of subsistence. In many areas the floodwaters have been slow to recede. Many people have had no choice but to drink contaminated water and the threat of waterborne diseases is ever present. Joint teams of BDRCS/Federation/bilateral personnel continue to monitor the evolving emergency through an

extensive series of ground, boat and aerial surveys. These surveys have enabled the BDRCS/Federation to anticipate and respond rapidly to the crisis.

On 6 October the Federation issued a full Appeal for CHF 3,796,936 to assist 771,000 people which reflects the increased humanitarian needs arising from the floods. Donor funding, however, has been slow to come forward and is impairing the BDRCS/Federation ability to respond with maximum effect to the disaster.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The BDRCS and the Federation delegation ensure continuous liaison and co-ordination with government authorities, local and international organisations and NGOs and national umbrella organisations such as the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Disaster Forum (a network of local and international relief organisations). Meetings have been held with MSF, Oxfam and CONCERN. The BDRCS/Federation are also keeping donors in Bangladesh and PNSs regularly updated on the current situation. Regular contacts are also maintained with the ECHO representative for Bangladesh. The Federation is attending WFP meetings for the UN family, diplomatic missions and international organisations. On 10 October, the head of delegation accompanied the country director for WFP, the EU Ambassador, the head of the EU food security unit, the ECHO correspondent and the DFID representative met the director general to the Prime Minister in order to express concern about the amount of government food which is being distributed.

On 5 October a press release was issued to the international and local media on the BDRCS/Federation response to the floods. The Singapore-based correspondent of Swedish National Radio produced a report from the field with a Federation field officer. Regional correspondents from the BBC and CNN based in Delhi have been regularly updated on developments.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The Federation/BDRCS have responded quickly and effectively to the floods and are one of the few organisations with the capacity to assist many of the affected population over the coming months. However, in order to meet the immense humanitarian needs that currently prevail, additional funding for the existing appeal is urgently required. Current operations are in danger of being suspended, given the lack of financial resources.

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This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

BANGLADESH - FLOODS 2000						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No.20 /2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED			10/11/00	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				3,293,146		TOTAL COVERAGE 27.5%
AUSTRIAN - RC		25,000	EUR	38,933	20.09.00	
BRITISH - RC		45,000	GBP	113,400	25.08.00	
BRITISH - RC		55,000	GBP	142,450	25.08.00	FOOD & OPERATIONAL NEEDS
CANADIAN - RC		20,000	CAD	23,068	15.09.00	
FINNISH - RC		33,637	EUR	52,864	24.08.00	
ICELANDIC - RC		200,000	ISK	4,295	22.09.00	
JAPANESE - RC				162,000	24.08.00	
KOREA, REPUBLIC - RC				20,000	25.08.00	
LIECHTENSTEIN - RC				50,000	02.10.00	
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		1,250,000	SEK	233,875	18.08.00	FLOOD RELIEF OPERATION
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				840,885	CHF	25.5%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
IRANIAN - RC		37,169	USD	63,652	23.09.00	TENTS, BLANKETS, RICE, TEA, OIL, CLOTHES, SLIPPERS, SOAP
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				63,652	CHF	1.9%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						