

BANGLADESH : FLOODS

21 August 1996

appeal no. 12/96

situation report no. 1

period covered: 5 - 18 August 1996

Although floods are abating, they are far from over in many areas and more are feared. Relief goods have arrived in the affected areas. These emergency supplies are being distributed to 6,500 families, as scheduled. Those driven from their homes and even those who have returned are in desperate need of food and clean water. To help them, more funding is needed.

The context

Heavy monsoon rains over the sub-continent in July caused serious flooding along the Brahmaputra, Ganges and Meghna basins. More than five million people are affected in 38 districts. Hundreds of thousands of families have been forced to evacuate their homes and seek refuge along roads and embankments.

Latest events

The overall situation in north and central Bangladesh has slowly improved as the Ganges and the Brahmaputra Rivers continue to recede in some areas. At some points, however, water is still flowing above the danger level and vast areas remain flooded. The Meghna River in the south is now flowing above its danger level, inundating new areas in the Chandpur, Barisal, Patuakhali and Bhola districts. The water is gradually moving south and flooding new areas in southern Bangladesh, including the capital, Dhaka. Rains in the north-east of the country and in Assam in India caused flash-floods in Sylhet District. If the heavy rains continue the situation is expected to deteriorate.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

All food, water purification tablets and sarees have now been dispatched to the 18 districts for the 6,500 identified families, in accordance with the plan of action. Distribution to the families is underway. Before the start of the operation all field staff and Unit Secretaries attended an orientation workshop in Dhaka. Sponsored by the Federation, it stressed beneficiary targeting, financial accounting, reporting and introduced the new Disaster Relief Field Manual which will be tested during this operation. At the same time a Field Kit for field staff, with standardised forms, office materials, stationery, etc., was introduced.

Field officers have been deployed to all Units to support the relief operation. Three Field Co-ordinators from the BDRCS National Headquarters are monitoring the operation, as are Federation delegates.

Outstanding needs

Once the Secretariat is able to confirm that sufficient contributions are available, Phase II of the flood relief operation will be initiated. Additional needs for food, clothing, and water purification tablets are expected to be identified after a new survey assessment is carried out later this week.

Funds are urgently needed to continue this operation.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The BDRCS has launched a National Appeal in the media and an Appeal to all BDRCS Units in the monthly magazine; "The Message", requesting cash donations to assist flood victims.

The BDRCS is co-ordinating at the national and local level with the Bangladesh Government. Regular updates on the activities of NGOs are obtained.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Now that the flood situation has stabilised in many places and the water has receded, hundreds of thousands of families are returning to destroyed houses and crops. Their food resources are exhausted and the most vulnerable are in desperate need of supplementary food and clean water. The aftermath of such serious flooding will affect many people for a long time as they have lost a whole harvest and have to reconstruct their houses.

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