

INDIA: CYCLONE

21 November 1996

appeal no. 20/96

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period covered: 14th - 20th November 1996

The violent cyclone which struck Andhra Pradesh in early November had serious short, medium and long-term effects. Apart from the death toll of over 800, large tracts of agricultural land were destroyed and tens of thousands of people were left homeless. Up to seven million people were affected by the cyclone, which has had a crippling impact on families who depend on fishing for their livelihoods.

The context

On Wednesday 6 November, the Godavari Delta of Andhra Pradesh was hit by a high velocity hurricane, violent rains and eight to ten-foot high tidal waves which, according to official sources, left more than 800 people dead and tens of thousands homeless. The East Godavari district was the worst hit, accounting for 70% of the total damage. Two villages -- Bhairvapada and Bulusutippa in Eastern Godavari district -- were reportedly totally wiped out. Some seven million people were affected by this cyclone.

Latest events

The government reported 742 relief camps had been established for 177,000 temporarily homeless people (many of whom are now returning to their homes), 490,000 hectares of farm land damaged, 480,000 houses damaged, and an expected loss of 13,500 head of livestock and poultry. Some 935 medical teams had been established, repair of the water supply system was in train and drinking water was being widely distributed. The government provided 12,000 tons of rice (25 kgs per family) for those most in need. The total number of deaths as of 14 November was 810 people. It is predicted that many still missing will not be found as they would have been washed into the bay.

The Indian Red Cross reports that the emergency relief phase in relation to food needs has been completed. However, thousands of families have lost their livelihoods, particularly those living in the coastal belt of the affected districts who depend on fishing for their income. It is more than likely that assistance will be required to help these families return to their normal lives.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Indian Red Cross dispatched 10 trucks carrying blankets, dry food rations, milk powder, and cooking utensils from Delhi to the affected areas in Andhra Pradesh, which were distributed by the local Red Cross branch. In addition, the Indian Red Cross purchased relief supplies with funds from the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF).

The Indian Red Cross and an International Federation representative completed a needs assessment on Friday, 15 November. The results of the assessment indicated that no further emergency relief assistance would be required but there is a need for families to be assisted in returning to their normal livelihoods. Such rehabilitation measures could be reached by providing families with fishing boats and nets.

Outstanding needs

The Indian Red Cross is currently identifying the need for fishing boats and nets for fishing families in East Godavari. A detailed plan of action will be drawn up and submitted to the International Federation Secretariat by Indian Red Cross this weekend. An appeal will be submitted to sister national societies early next week.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Indian Red Cross has been co-ordinating closely with the government. No other international NGOs are working in the area. It is reported that church organisations have been providing relief assistance.

Conclusion

The emergency relief efforts made by the Government in Andhra Pradesh with the support of the Indian Red Cross Society are commendable. The IRCS can now play an important role in assisting families who have lost their means of support due to this disaster.

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