

BANGLADESH: CYCLONE

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The relief operation is now well into its final stage : the provision of specially designed, wind resistant huts for 1,000 beneficiary families. The project is welcomed locally and attracting attention from other organisations.

The context

Cyclone Bravo One hit the south eastern coast of Bangladesh on 19 May. An estimated one million people took refuge in cyclone shelters, thereby significantly reducing potential loss of life. The Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) with its effective volunteer network, warning system and awareness campaigns, played a major role in ensuring the population's evacuation to safety.

The cyclone left a trail of devastation along the 200 kilometre coastal belt between Chittagong and Teknaf, at the Southern tip of Bangladesh. 250,000 homes were totally destroyed and over 100,000 were partially destroyed and crops and livestock were seriously affected. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society immediately forwarded relief goods to the affected area and provided assistance to approximately 35,000 people.

Latest events

The weather in October and November was relatively dry and fine and, despite several hartals (political strikes) in the areas, conditions were conducive to completing the operation.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

After the emergency phase of the operation, emphasis was put on the provision of food and roofing materials and the construction of wind resistant huts for the most vulnerable in the cyclone-affected areas. A Plan of Action and budget with three components was drawn up by the BDRCS/Federation which consisted of provision of food rations for 4,800 families, provision of CI sheets for 4,400 families and the reconstruction of 1,000 huts. The first two components are now completed and the third component is on-going. ECHO funding was granted for the second component, CI sheets.

The construction of the huts has been planned with community participation and various Departments of the BDRCS taking responsibility for different aspects of the operation. The Relief Director, two Field Co-ordinators and the local Units, with assistance from the CPP volunteers at community level, are involved in implementation.

The BDRCS Construction Director is responsible for management and supervision of progress and quality by the four manufacturing contractors. The contracts were signed on 13 October, following which there were two weeks for mobilisation, three weeks for a pilot stage and six weeks for the full production stage. Much of the material is being produced in the Thanas (Sub Districts) where the huts will be constructed: Banshkhali, Chokoria, Moheskhali and Kutubdia. The Construction Development Delegate and his team recently visited the fabrication sites and were satisfied with the quality of work undertaken.

The selection of 400 beneficiaries has been finalised and selection of the remaining 600 beneficiaries is on-going. Verification at field level is being done by the Field Co-ordinators, CPP team leaders and IFAD personnel. Monitoring is also being carried out by Federation Delegates in order to ensure full adherence to the selection criteria. Delays in the process of beneficiary selection have been incurred as a result of poor co-ordination between the different sections of BDRCS.

In a pilot scheme, trained CPP community-level volunteers are assisting beneficiary families in transporting the building components from the fabrication sites and in erecting their huts. The erection process is hampered by difficult access, problems in organising CPP volunteers and the general learning process relating to erection of the huts. The following is the situation to date:

Fabricated Huts	Delivered and being Erected	Erected
190	63	13

It is expected that the process of putting up the huts will accelerate significantly as those involved become more experienced.

In addition, field training and information on the huts for the beneficiaries will be organised by the BDRCS Training Director in December and in January next year. This will focus on beneficiary ownership, basic maintenance, disaster preparation advice and replication by the communities.

Outstanding needs

Any further funding will be used to increase the number of wind resistant huts, otherwise the operation will be finalised.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The BDRCS/Federation has been actively following the relief work carried out by the GoB, NGOs and international organisations. The BDRCS is ensuring co-ordination with the GoB and those NGOs which are implementing housing programmes. Action Aid is one of a number of NGOs showing interest in the hut design. Representatives of this NGO visited the offices of the BDRCS/Federation to view the pilot huts constructed and had discussions with the BDRCS Construction Director and the Federation

Construction Development Delegate. The benefits of these low cost but strong huts were also discussed in the GoB's Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) at their headquarters in Dhaka.

Several GoB co-ordination meetings were held at Inter-Ministerial level following the cyclone at which the Acting Secretary General of BDRCS was in attendance. BDRCS Officers and the DP Delegate also attended meetings held by the Disaster Management Bureau of the Government. This level of disaster relief co-ordination had not been experienced in previous years and was seen as a positive development.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Initial delays in funding commitments added to delays in implementation of the operation, particularly in the case of the wind resistant huts component, since the operation did not become viable until 35% coverage of the proposal was reached.

Further delays were caused by difficulties in co-ordination between various BDRCS bodies at field level.

The positive aspect of these delays was to give more time for improving beneficiary selection, pre-distribution checking and Delegation monitoring.

The huts component has gained real acceptance by the beneficiaries and the communities due to its value in disaster mitigation, appropriateness and community participation both in planning and production.

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