

# ***BANGLADESH: COLD WAVE***

**appeal no: 02/98  
09 January 1998**

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 560,000  
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES  
TO ASSIST 34,000 BENEFICIARIES***

## ***Summary***

The death toll in a sudden cold snap in normally-tropical Bangladesh has reached 80. Following on-the-spot assessments by Red Crescent units the need for urgent supplies of blankets has been clearly identified. This Appeal seeks to raise resources to supply 34,000 of the most vulnerable with one blanket apiece.

## ***The Disaster***

Bangladesh, a country with a tropical monsoon climate, is currently suffering a spell of unusually cold weather. Single figure temperatures have been recorded throughout the country. The cold wave has been worsened by thick fog which has kept daytime temperatures very low. It was 6.2 degrees Celsius in Jessore on 4 January and 8.2 degrees Celsius in Rajshahi on 5 January. Although the cold weather is affecting all of Bangladesh the Northern and Western districts are the worst affected.

The forecast is for continuing cold weather over the next three days and another cold wave in two weeks.

Because Bangladesh is used to temperatures of over 20 degrees Celsius, the majority of the population was totally unprepared. More than 80 people are reported to have died throughout the country with at least 16 deaths recorded yesterday alone. The main victims are the very poor or homeless with young children and the elderly.

## ***The Response so far***

### **Government Action w**

The Prime Minister's Relief Fund has distributed 21,330 items of warm clothing and 12,000 blankets to various districts and the Disaster Management and Relief Ministry has sent a further 7,450 blankets. The Prime Minister also issued a personal nation-wide plea for donations of clothing and blankets to her relief fund.

### **Red Cross/Red Crescent Action w**

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) has already sent 1,200 blankets to 15 of the most severely affected districts and is currently preparing to send warm clothing to all of the country's 64 districts.

### **Other Agencies' Action w**

Many of the smaller NGOs in Bangladesh have made limited distributions to some of the worst affected districts. The larger NGOs are still assessing the situation.

### **Co-ordination w**

A meeting was held on 7 January at the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief to co-ordinate the activities of the bodies concerned. At the meeting the Government urged NGOs and BDRCS to support its relief efforts.

## ***The Intended Operation***

### **Immediate Needs •**

BDRCS district units have identified an urgent need for warm clothing and/or blankets. Many have made formal requests to headquarters for immediate supplies. The Relief Department is ranking the relative needs of each district so as to target the most vulnerable in the initial phase.

### **Red Cross Objectives •**

The operation seeks to protect the most vulnerable in each district from the cold through the distribution of 34,000 blankets. The overall objective is to reduce the number of deaths resulting from this and any subsequent cold wave this winter.

## ***National Society/Federation Plan of Action***

### **Emergency Phase: January 1998 •**

The operation will target two categories of beneficiaries: Category 1 will comprise the worst affected districts and Category 2 those remaining. If sufficient funding is secured distributions will be made to both Categories simultaneously; otherwise Category 1 will be given priority.

The distribution will be carried out by BDRCS units where these have the required operational capacity and by National Society Headquarters elsewhere.

The operation will be directly managed by the National Society's Relief Department with the assistance of the Federation Delegation where required.

Beneficiaries will be selected by the Red Crescent units concerned using the guidelines laid down in the BDRCS Disaster Relief Field Manual.

Procurement and logistic arrangements are currently being worked out by the Federation with the assistance from the German and Swedish Red Cross Societies. Subject to final confirmation from the suppliers, the following arrangements will be put in place:

- { 17,000 blankets provided by the German Red Cross from its emergency stock will be airlifted to Dhaka next week.
- { 17,000 blankets available locally from limited stocks will be purchased by the Delegation in Dhaka.
- { Used clothing from the Swedish Red Cross is ready for airlifting if space is available alongside the blankets.

Due to the emergency situation, time is of the essence.

**Capacity of the National Society •**

BDRCS has considerable experience in distributing relief goods through its network of units and has responded admirably to the challenges posed in one of the world's most disaster-prone countries.

**Present Capacity of the Federation in Bangladesh •**

The Federation Delegation will procure some of the blankets locally to ensure a timely and more cost-efficient operation. But unless this is done immediately the local market may not have sufficient supplies.

The Delegation will monitor the distribution and management of the relief operation as necessary.

## ***Budget summary***

See Annex 1 for details.

## ***Conclusion***

Vulnerable people in Bangladesh need assistance to help them through this and any subsequent cold wave this winter. The Government is doing its best but does not have the resources to reach all of those at risk. This is a sudden emergency and it needs an immediate response to enable the relief operation to begin as scheduled and halt the death toll.

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