

# **BANGLADESH: POST CONFLICT REHABILITATION**

*11 June 1998*

*appeal no. 09/98*

*situation report no. 02*

*period covered: 1 May - 1 June 1998*

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*The Bangladesh Parliament enacted a series of laws in May officialising the peace agreement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the returnees are working hard to resettle themselves. The Federation has begun purchasing supplies for the first three-months food parcel distribution. However, despite general acknowledgement within Bangladesh and among the international community of the value to the peace process of the BDRCS/Federation operation, response to the Appeal remains low.*

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## ***The context***

On 2 December 1997 the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and the Parbattaya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) signed a Peace Agreement, ending a 15 year armed conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region. The Agreement was immediately followed by the repatriation, concluded in February this year, of the last 10,427 families (45,890 persons) from their refuge in India. Under the terms of the Agreement, all returning families received food, cash, building materials and land from the GoB. In addition they were given a three months supplementary food package by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS).

At the request of the GoB, the BDRCS/Federation, in an operation supported by this appeal, will supply supplementary food to 10,427 families for another nine months, develop community service activities for an additional estimated 120,000 beneficiaries, and introduce disaster preparedness and health programmes benefiting a very large part of the total CHT population of one million people - returnees and settlers, thus contributing to the stability of the peace process.

## ***Latest events***

In early May, the Bangladesh Parliament passed the CHT Regional Council Bill and three other bills on the Local Government Councils of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban in the CHT. Their passage aroused strong hostility from the opposition BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) and its alliance, in the form of a political strike, token hunger strikes and a threatened 'long march' from the capital towards the CHT on 9 June. On 24 May, the President of Bangladesh gave his assent to all four CHT Bills, which thus became Laws and Acts of Parliament and completed all the legal and constitutional procedures for implementing the peace accord in the CHT.

On 29 May, leaders of the CHT Returnee Jumma Refugee Welfare Association appealed to the Bangladesh Prime Minister to activate implementation of the 20-point package of incentives offered by the GoB to the repatriates, which had run into delays.

On 30 May, the local media in Khagrachhari reported that the Bangladesh Forest Department had drawn up a seven year afforestation plan in the three CHT districts, representing a total investment of Tk 4.6 billion (equivalent to CHF 148,387,000). Horticulture projects have been started on abandoned plots of land. The authorities hope to rehabilitate some of the landless, unemployed and destitute people through such garden projects.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

### **Federation appeal**

The UNDP Sponsored Needs Assessment Mission in April concluded in its report: "...the \$ 2 million International Appeal launched by the Federation is appropriate, as it will cater for, inter alia, supplementary food assistance to approximately 55,000 beneficiaries combined with disaster preparedness, and health and sanitation support. The mission finds this initiative appropriate to the conditions of the (Peace) Accord for immediate needs ..." It urged financial or in kind contributions to the programme.

The GoB/Development Partners Working Group Meeting on 27 May, at which representatives of all donor countries and International Agencies were present, concluded that: "*the GoB should endorse and recommend to development partners the International Appeal already launched by the Federation.*" The Secretary (of State) of the External Resources Department of the GoB expressed appreciation and gratitude for the action taken by the Federation/BDRCS in the CHT so far.

### **Procurement**

According to the agreement with the BDRCS, the Federation Delegation in Bangladesh is responsible for all procurement relating to this operation. On 19 May, after approval from the Federation Secretariat in Geneva of the comparative bidding analysis, the Delegation immediately began purchase of the food items (125,124 kg of dal, 62,568 litres of oil and 62,568 kg of iodised salt) required for the first three months distributions to 10,427 families. The delivery of these items to the BDRCS's central warehouse in Dhaka is expected to be completed in the second week of June. Random checks on the items delivered so far have been conducted by the Delegation at the BDRCS central warehouse in Dhaka. Those that did not meet packing and quality requirements were replaced by the suppliers concerned.

### **Joint BDRCS/Federation visit to CHT**

The Deputy Director of BDRCS Relief Department and the Federation Disaster Preparedness Delegate visited the Hill Tracts from 26 May to 1 June, to discuss issues relating to the relief and development programmes/activities outlined in the Appeal with the local government and BDRCS Unit (Branch) leaders in the CHT region. In particular, the team inspected the local warehouse facilities where the food items would be stored before distribution, visited the planned distribution points at thana level and reviewed the means of informing the refugees on which day they should collect their allocation. They also visited some of the resettled refugees in the Khagrachhari District. The returnees, they observed, were working extremely hard: in some cases they had already not only built their house, but had also harvested a rice crop, planted vegetables and started to raise cows, bullocks, goats and poultry. Based on the team's findings, a detailed plan of action has been developed to carry out the food distribution in Khagrachhari and Rangamati, the two districts of CHT where the returnees are now residing.

## ***Outstanding needs***

### **Immediate needs**

Cash contributions to the appeal are urgently needed to ensure that the three phased distribution plan of 28,785 food packages will be carried out as projected and to begin implementation of the Branch institutional development and community development programmes.

### **Anticipated Later needs**

The BDRCS/Federation will complement the GoB's efforts to promote the social reintegration of the 1,946 demobilised PCJSS fighters by including them and their families in the list of beneficiaries who will receive supplementary food rations. However, an undefined number of this total are soon to be integrated into Government service and would then not need to be provided with rations.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

The BDRCS/Federation is maintaining close contacts with the GoB authorities, UN agencies, foreign missions/embassies and other organisations in Bangladesh in connection with the implementation of the Federation appeal, which has been very positively received.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

The Federation has so far received contributions/pledges of CHF 282,352. Following the findings and recommendations of the UNDP Sponsored Needs Assessment Mission, several embassies in Dhaka expressed interest in supporting this Appeal. PNSs are requested to pursue this funding support issue with their governments.

## ***Conclusion***

Although the significance of the BDRCS/Federation food distribution for the ongoing peace process in the CHT region is fully recognised and appreciated by the GoB and the local donor community in Bangladesh, the appeal has not yet generated the cash needed to fully implement the operation. The Federation, therefore, renews its appeal to donors to give their maximum support to this operation.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Director  
Operations Funding & Reporting Department

Hiroshi Higashiura  
Director  
Asia & Pacific Department