

INDIA : ORISSA CYCLONE

12 November 1999

appeal no. 28/99

situation report no. 2

period covered: 5th - 10th November 1999

The violent cyclone that created widespread devastation on India's eastern coast has seriously affected well over one million people. The full extent of the disaster is now emerging as roads into the area are cleared Indian Red Cross teams are continuing to distribute emergency relief supplies, including food, and a joint Federation/Indian Red Cross assessment team have completed a rapid assessment of the area in which they have identified immediate and longer term needs. This assessment has been coordinated with the Government and all other major organizations in the field. A full appeal, which it is expected will almost double initial requirements, is in preparation.

The Federation has assigned a relief co-ordinator and a four member health and logistics team to the area, to assist the Indian Red Cross with the relief operation.

The context

A violent cyclone hit Orissa State on India's eastern coast on Friday 29 October, with winds of up to 260 kph (155 mph) and a 20 foot tidal surge that caused massive destruction and forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of families in the districts of Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Puri and Bhubaneswar. The vast stretch of rural Orissa, from Puri district across eleven districts, north to Balasore, the rice bowl of the State, has been heavily destroyed. The Indian Government has stated that in total over 15 million people have been affected by the cyclone, with many of them losing their homes or experiencing severe damage. The official death toll is already reported as over 4,000 and is set to increase significantly.

Nearly all of the semi-concrete and thatched structures in the area were washed away or reduced to rubble. Communications and electricity systems in most areas were knocked out and will take many months to repair. Most major routes are now accessible, making rescue and relief operations easier.

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Latest events

Red Cross staff have now visited most of the affected coastal areas. Some of the villages in Balikuda and Erasama blocks in Jagatsinghpur district have lost almost their entire population -- in one village 150 died out of an original population of 170, in another 142 out of 155. In many places families are living in makeshift huts on the roadside. Many people, especially children, are in a dazed state and are suffering considerable mental trauma.

In areas where four days ago the Red Cross supplied several days of rations, the situation, although not comfortable, is under control. In these villages, the immediate food supply is not an issue, but supplies will need to be increased rapidly for longer term needs.

Contamination of the water supply is a very serious concern, and being given priority treatment, though some wells are functional again and apparently producing water of acceptable quality. A large number of bodies and animal carcasses are lying unburied, although efforts are underway to bury or dispose of the remains. However, many families are still using their normal water supply, now polluted, for drinking and washing. Several agencies and the Government are addressing these issues.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Red Cross has been carrying out rapid assessments and delivering emergency supplies to all the coastal areas surrounding the 23 permanent Red Cross cyclone shelters. Some of these areas have only just become accessible, while others received supplies several days ago. There is no doubt that the shelters helped save many lives. Each gave shelter to up to 2,000 people, well above their planned capacity.

The distribution system is run by the State Red Cross branch, which is now increasing the level of this operation, not only in quantity of supplies, but also in an expansion to new villages in the coastal areas.

Supplies already delivered include: rice, emergency rations, flat rice, potato / dahl, salt and sugar, supplementary feeding for children; plastic sheeting; ORS powder, bleaching powder, and garments

The International Federation now has four delegates in the field, assisting the Indian Red Cross with the relief operation..

Co-ordination w

The Government maintains overall responsibility for the operation. The IRCS is working alongside all other parties in the affected areas. Daily coordination meetings in the field are attended by all the major agencies and the government. In Delhi a system of regular coordination meetings is being continued, at present on a weekly basis.

Outstanding needs

Immediate Needs w

A full appeal is being produced and will be issued shortly. The amount sought is expected to be in the region of 7.2 million Swiss Francs (4.8 million US \$).

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The following needs have been identified:

Shelter Materials: Tarpaulins and plastic sheeting are required

Food: Family food stocks have been washed away or spoiled and markets and shops have also lost their stocks, causing a severe shortage of food in the immediate area. The immediate food needs which the Red Cross will cover are rice, dahl and cooking oil. These basic items will be supplemented with flattened rice and other items as necessary.

Medicines: Various medical items are needed to prevent water borne diseases and other health problems. The provisional appeal does not include medical items as the Government and a number of agencies are already addressing these needs. However a two person Red Cross medical team has been deployed in order to assess and monitor the health situation and review future needs.

Domestic items: Families will be supplied with clothing, cooking utensils, water containers, blankets, ground sheets and plastic sheets.

Water purification: The drinking water system has been completely destroyed in many places, creating a real threat to health. The Government is addressing the problem, but the Red Cross will continue to monitor the situation, and in the short term will provide bleaching powder and water purification tablets. Other agencies are addressing the longer term problems.

Procurement w

All procurement is being carried out in India by the Indian Red Cross in collaboration with the Federation. Procurement is being conducted through The Food Corporation of India. Emergency stocks maintained by the Indian Red Cross in their regional warehouses have already been drawn on, at the outset of the relief operation - these will be replaced as part of the appeal.

Duration w

The overall operation, including rebuilding of emergency stocks, will be completed within six months. The relief distribution will be completed as rapidly as possible.

Distribution w

The Indian Red Cross is responsible for organising the initial central distribution. A system of local purchasing has been set up for most of the relief items, and these are then distributed through the Red Cross State and district branches. Volunteers and youth members will be heavily involved in the process, with overall guidance and monitoring being provided by IRCS national staff coordinators and the Federation.

Selection of beneficiaries w

An initial selection of the most vulnerable has been made by the joint Indian Red Cross/Federation rapid assessment team. A detailed village to village evaluation will be effected and the distribution of immediate and rehabilitation items will be done according to the needs of individual villages and, in some cases, individual families.

Warehousing w

Wherever possible local suppliers will be found who can transport the supplies to the nearest distribution point, thereby reducing the need for stockpiling and redistribution between warehouses.

Transportation w

Local suppliers will use their own vehicles as far as possible, while final distribution will be conducted by the Indian Red Cross, only using leased vehicles if necessary.

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