

# ***INDIA : ORISSA CYCLONE***

*31 May 2000*

*appeal no. 28/99*

*situation report no. 9*

*period covered: 5 April to 5 May 2000*

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## ***The context***

A violent cyclone hit India's eastern coast on 29 October 1999. Winds of up to 260 kph (155 mph) lasting over 36 hours, caused a 7 metre tidal wave which swept more than 20 km inland and brought massive destruction and death to coastal districts in the State of Orissa. At least 10,000 people lost their lives during the storm.

The Government of Orissa estimated that of the State's population of 30 million more than 10 million people in 12 coastal belt districts were affected by the cyclone. The worst affected districts were Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Puri and Ganjam.

Homes were flattened, trees uprooted, infrastructure destroyed, livestock killed, paddy fields submerged. Vast areas of land with crops and livestock have been destroyed due to inundation with saline water.

The Indian Red Cross responded immediately with an emergency relief operation. In mid-November 1999, the Orissa State Branch of the Society, with the support of the International Federation, extended the emergency relief operation into a three month relief operation which was completed on 31 January 2000. Assistance to the affected population, however, continues through the rehabilitation phase of the operation. This phase, originally planned to run until April 2000, has been extended to 31 July.

## ***Latest events***

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## ***Latest events***

Six months after the cyclone, the situation in Orissa is showing little sign of improvement. The impact of the disaster on the affected population is still severe and improvements in living conditions are taking place very slowly.

At the same time, international attention and media interest has shifted from Orissa to the severe drought affecting Gujarat and Rajasthan.

The most crucial issue is the food security situation. Vast areas of land close to the sea are still saline and no crops can be grown there. Due to major crop losses, people are consuming immature paddy grains which are a health risk. Many irrigation pumps are non-operational and power is still down in remote areas.

A much advertised government-approved “food-for-work” programme which was supposed to start in February with the support of local and international NGOs has been delayed for various reasons. These include a shortage of food supplies, the indifference of local communities, and the migration of cyclone victims to other districts. Major migration from the areas which are increasingly affected by food scarcity is predicted if “food-for-work” is not implemented fully.

In the meantime, the government has agreed to continue to provide rice at a subsidised rate to the population in cyclone-affected areas until October 2000. Under the BPL (below poverty line) rice scheme, a family in the cyclone-affected area would get 20 kg of rice per month at the BPL rate of INR 6 per kg.

Monitoring of the drinking water situation, heat wave preparedness, reconstruction and health situation shows the same continuing problems.

Drinking water is becoming increasingly scarce as the water table falls and the temperature continues to rise (causing a number of sunstroke cases in April).

Government assistance in the form of loans and grants for the cyclone victims seems to be reaching beneficiaries slowly or not at all. Irregularities in the selection of beneficiaries have been reported.

Local government assistance, generally channelled through local NGOs, is mainly targeting the reconstruction of houses and the rehabilitation of fishermen. The construction work, however, will come to a standstill during the rainy season which starts in mid-June.

Some local companies and the government of the state of Maharashtra have committed funds to the construction of a large number of multipurpose cyclone shelters (school-cum-shelter).

The Department for International Development (DFID) UK, the World Bank, the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation, the WFP and UNDP have also announced large contributions towards reconstruction work, agricultural development, water and sanitation, rehabilitation for widows and artisan development.

## ***Red Cross action***

### **Rehabilitation •**

The time frame for the rehabilitation phase of the operation is 1 February to 31 July 2000. An extension of this period seems inevitable because of certain constraints, especially in the field of construction work:

- The coming monsoon season will slow down construction work

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The time frame for the rehabilitation phase of the operation is 1 February to 31 July 2000. An extension of this period seems inevitable because of certain constraints, especially in the field of construction work:

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- Delay in the implementation of the programme has already occurred due to the extensive and time-consuming tendering procedures required of the Orissa State Branch
- The number of items to be procured for educational kits has had to be increased, in order to meet government requirements
- Agricultural kits have been improved and adjusted to current requirements: hand-pumps for irrigation and a plough have been added..

The approval for a further extension of the programme has already been requested from donor National Societies and ECHO.

The current situation of the various programme elements is as follows:

***Agricultural support***

The distribution of summer seeds and fertilisers was finalised in March. These summer crops have grown and May harvesting is already under way.

Most of the agricultural tools have been procured and are ready for distribution during the agricultural training sessions for farmers taking place this month.

***Renovation and/or upgrading of the Red Cross Maternity Hospital, Blood Bank and dispensaries.***

The tendering committee agreed on the contractors and work orders are to be signed.

***Renovation of the Orissa State Branch Headquarters***

External repairs and the internal renovation of the main building have been completed. Additional repairs to the annex to the main building will be done this month.

***Medicaments and medical equipment***

Medical equipment and medicaments are to be purchased for the renovated Red Cross Maternity Hospital, Red Cross Blood Bank and three Red Cross dispensaries damaged in the cyclone. The renovation of these medical institutions will, however, have to be done before equipment and medicaments are distributed.

In line with the advice of the Indian Red Cross Secretary General, a comprehensive analysis of requirements and availability of relevant equipment in India will be carried out before any procurement is done. The tendering process is underway.

***Educational material for primary schools i.e. school kits***

The tendering process for school kits is finished. The quotations will be submitted to the tendering committee.

***Construction and rehabilitation of tube-wells***

The purchasing committee has selected seven contractors. The work orders have been issued and the construction and reconstruction work on 135 tube-wells at selected sites began with the deployment of machinery.

***Food distribution***

A second food distribution to very vulnerable beneficiaries was stopped when it provoked disturbances in two distribution centres, mainly due to confusion about the beneficiary selection criteria. Food was distributed to 3,100 of 5,000 beneficiary families. Distribution of the balance has been postponed.

Another unforeseen problem is the increase in the price of rice. The Government decided to stop selling rice to NGOs at the favourable “below poverty line” rate after 31 March. As a result,

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budgets will have to be revised and additional funds made available. The Indian Red Cross has, however, appealed to the central Government in Delhi and the issue has now reached Cabinet level.

### ***Mosquito Nets***

The selection of the supplier has been completed. The mosquito nets have been ordered and the first shipment was scheduled to reach the Orissa State Branch in the second week of May. Although the initial procurement covers the total 20,000 nets, additional available funds will make it possible to cover whole village communities (Gram Panchayats) and not only the selected beneficiary families. Altogether, some 22,000 mosquito nets will probably be procured.

### ***Strengthening of the capacity of the Orissa State Branch in Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Management***

Two workshops have been scheduled. The first one, on “lessons learned, recommendations and further planning”, has been divided into two separate sessions. The first session, for the headquarters staff, including the Orissa Disaster Mitigation Programme staff, was held on 2 and 3 May. The second session, for Disaster Preparedness Committee members and Task Force teams attached to 23 cyclone shelters (field volunteers) was scheduled for the second half of May.

The second workshop, on disaster management, will be for senior staff and key Disaster Preparedness Committee members, relevant government and international agencies and NGOs. Participants from other states will also be invited.

### ***Building materials for cyclone resistant housing***

Model houses have been finished in the village of Siali. The villagers, however, have expressed doubts about their ability to build their own houses with only the guidance and training provided by the masons. They asked the Orissa State Branch to reconsider the concept. It has been decided to hire skilled masons to build the houses, thus increasing the price of a housing unit by approximately 10%. Following other assessments, an additional supplier will be contracted to supply building material since the original supplier is unable to provide the agreed number of cement blocks per day.

### ***Reconstruction of schools***

All contractors have been selected. Work orders for the construction of ten schools are about to be signed.

### ***Credit-Saving Schemes***

These schemes are in the organisational phase. The proposals submitted by the self-help groups (mostly women’s groups) are being considered. A supervisor for the implementation of this programme and a professional consultancy will be appointed. Training for the self-help groups is being organised.

### ***Other Red Cross activities •***

On 7 April, World Health Day, the Orissa State Branch organised a “Safe Blood Starts With Me - Blood Saves Life” campaign, which included a blood donation component.

On 25 April, the Orissa State Branch organised the 8th Festival of Differently Abled Children at “Sahaya” (Support), Red Cross Centre for Special Children at Cuttack. The focus was on the rights of children to survival and development. A cultural programme was prepared by differently abled artists.

With the continuous high temperatures and in line with Government recommendations and efforts, the Orissa State Branch decided to install a water point in front of the headquarters for all needy passers-by.

Disaster preparedness training for the members of the cyclone shelters Disaster Preparedness Committees and Task Force teams is an ongoing process for the Orissa State Branch DP/DM Training Centre. Two groups of some 40 participants each attended two day workshops in the third and fourth week of April, respectively.

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The celebration of 8 May included a debate competition entitled “Millennium priority - Youth Solidarity” held in colleges for 18 to 20 year old students and another blood donation campaign.

## ***Outstanding needs***

Due to the above mentioned constraints in the implementation of the rehabilitation programme as well as the capacity of the Orissa State Branch, activities related to some parts of the programme will have to continue well beyond July 2000. Construction of core cyclone resistant houses, tube-wells and multipurpose shelters will need more time and manpower to yield the planned results. Additional masons and a construction consultancy are required to speed up the production of cement blocks and the actual building.

With the departure of the Logistics delegate, the Orissa State Branch, and especially its rehabilitation programme co-ordinator, will have to take on more responsibilities.

As a part of the capacity building objectives, the Orissa State Branch has advertised the position of Information Officer in local papers. This position should give the branch an opportunity for more recognition in the local community and open wider doors for Red Cross fund-raising efforts.

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

Weekly co-ordination meetings of international organisations and NGOs continue to be held in UN House in Bhubaneswar. Apart from sharing information on the ongoing activities in their respective districts, the participants are trying to focus on resolving the problems of food and construction material shortages in the market.

Although at one point attention shifted from food security to heat-wave issues, the issue of food security is back on the agenda of the UN co-ordinated meetings.

A food security workshop was held on 1 and 2 May in collaboration with the Government and participation of all NGOs. The so-called household food security was examined and strengthening the Public Distribution System (PDS) and a micro-level approach were recommended.

A need for a stronger co-ordination role and involvement of the government has been stressed on various occasions at the UN meetings.

A presentation of the Disaster Management Information System (DMIS) was held in UN House on 14 April. The DMIS is based on a Maharashtra Government initiative to provide an early warning system in the event of an impending disaster which links offices at the district/block/GP levels. In normal times, the system would be used to train people and build their capacities.

The Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC-UK) funded agencies (as a core group interested in disaster preparedness) holds bi-weekly consultations on community-based disaster preparedness. The objective is to promote this concept with the government by proposing certain improvements in the Orissa State Relief Code and incorporation of this concept into it. An independent consultant has been hired to do the comparative analysis of the Relief Codes of neighbouring States in India and other countries in the region and come up with recommendations for the Orissa State Relief Code.

A presentation on “Child protection” by Save the Children Fund was held at one of the DEC meetings with the emphasis on the effects of the cyclone on children. Together with UNICEF, Save the Children Fund is presently attaching a lot of attention to the issues of the rights of the child, child labour and

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child prostitution in the region, including the increase in the number of orphaned children after the cyclone.

The UN House has also decided to start a “help line” to assist donors and NGOs in rehabilitation and all emergency programmes.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Director  
Operations Funding and  
Reporting Department

Hiroshi Higashiura  
Director  
Asia & Pacific Department

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