

INDIA : ORISSA CYCLONE

7 June 2000

appeal no. 28/99 (programme extension to 30 Sept 2000)

situation report no. 10

period covered: 5 to 31 May 2000

Although the rainy season is starting and despite weaknesses in the government food for work programme, rehabilitation projects are picking up speed. Construction of tube wells has begun, and so has the building of 8 of the 10 schools cum shelters and 3 dispensaries, while the renovation of branch headquarters and the Red Cross blood bank is under way. Only the building of cyclone resistant housing has been held up. The operation has been helped by the appointment of a national level Rehabilitation Officer. Data base initiatives, to improve the sharing of information on the work of aid agencies in Orissa, have been introduced

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, planned to end 31 July 2000, has now been extended to 30 September.

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Latest events

Seven months after the cyclone, the situation in Orissa has not improved much. The impact of the disaster on the affected population is still severe and improvements in people's living conditions are very slow.

The international media continues to focus on the drought in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Local media attention is slowly shifting from the cyclone-affected coastal areas to affected areas further inland, in the central and western districts of the State, where there are serious health issues.

The drinking water shortage and deteriorating health conditions in some of these cyclone-affected districts are worsening although the Government and NGOs are trying to deal with the situation. The drinking water issue is, nevertheless, beginning to take its toll. More and more cases of jaundice, diarrhoea and skin diseases are reported. Although a major outbreak of diarrhoea has so far been contained in Brahmapur, in Gunjam district, daily developments in the health situation are being closely monitored.

Occasional rains herald the fast approaching monsoon season which will slow down the construction work.

The poor output of the food-for-work programme is a source of growing dissatisfaction and frustration both among victims of the cyclone as well as with the Government and NGOs. The main problem is allegedly caused by different daily wage rates, making some villagers unwilling to work on the Government sites or encouraging them to register to work for several NGOs at the same time.

Another problem reported by several districts is the continued migration of the labour force from the affected areas. If it continues, it could cause further delays, especially in construction work, as labourers and skilled masons are already hard to find. On the other hand, there are also reports of migrant workers and contractors coming from other States in order to benefit from the Government sponsored food-for-work programme.

Red Cross action

Rehabilitation •

The time frame for the rehabilitation phase of the Orissa Cyclone 99 operation has been officially extended by two months, i.e. from 31 July to 30 September 2000 to make allowances for the deteriorating weather and changed requirements in some government specifications for public buildings.

Despite constraints faced in the field and in the Orissa State Branch, all the contracts were signed by mid-May and the construction work is catching up. Since the rains have already started, although they are still sporadic, it is important to do as much work as possible before the major monsoon season starts in mid-June, when many of the field sites might become inaccessible.

The appointment of a Rehabilitation Officer in the Indian Red Cross headquarters who is in charge only of the Red Cross rehabilitation programme in Orissa gave an impetus to the Orissa State Branch and alleviated and accelerated the decision-making process. Improved coordination and communication between the branch and the headquarters and with the Government will hopefully enable much smoother and easier implementation of the programme in the field.

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Progress in the rehabilitation programmes is as follows:

Agricultural support

Agricultural training for farmers is being held in relevant cyclone shelters according to the preset schedule. These gatherings are also used for the distribution of tools which are a part of the agricultural kit. Presently, ploughs, phowrahs and spades are distributed. Sickles, hand pumps, sprayers and additional fertilisers will be distributed with the kharif seeds in the first half of June, together with the seedlings (mango, coconut, cashew nut, guava) which must only be planted when the rains start around mid-June.

The May harvest has been completed and the present estimate is that around 60% of the harvest was successful. The failed crops are in extremely hot areas with a shortage of water and poor or no irrigation facilities.

The Orissa State Branch management committee has decided not to go ahead with the procurement of poultry since, according to agricultural consultants, it would take some five months to procure and supply all 5000 one month old chickens.

Renovation and/or upgrading of the Red Cross Maternity Hospital in Bharampur

Plastering, electricity repairs and woodwork are being carried out in this hospital for women and children.

Renovation and upgrading of the Red Cross Blood Bank in Cuttack

Electricity and drainage repairs, plastering, woodwork and construction of an additional bathroom are being carried out.

Renovation/reconstruction of Red Cross Dispensaries

Construction work has started on all three dispensaries. Two of them need total reconstruction while the third one is undergoing renovation work (plastering, roofing).

Reconstruction of schools

Construction work has started on eight out of ten of these multipurpose buildings i.e. schools-cum-cyclone shelters. Government requirements that all structures within the 10 km coastal belt must be constructed on raised platforms and on pillars (to let the surge through) has increased the time needed for the construction of one building to three months. The Jitendra school, Padampur, is being constructed.

Building materials for cyclone resistant housing

This programme is undergoing further difficulties because of the current, increasing shortage of skilled labour (masons) in Orissa, as well as the shortage of building material. Although an additional supplier of building material has been contracted, delays in the production of the required number of concrete blocks are anticipated.

Renovation of the Orissa State Branch Headquarters

The quotations for the remaining part of the building to be renovated have been collected. One toilet will be renovated, 1 room reconstructed and additional electricity repairs done.

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Medicaments and medical equipment

The purchase orders for the medical equipment and medicaments for the renovated Red Cross Maternity Hospital, Red Cross Blood Bank and three Red Cross dispensaries have been issued. Most items from the list should be supplied within two to three weeks.

**Please see the list of medical equipment at the end of the report.*

Educational material for primary schools i.e. school kits

The suppliers have been selected and the purchase orders issued. The procurement will be done within two weeks, so that 300 selected schools can be supplied with materials by mid-June when they open again after the summer vacation.

Construction of tube-wells

All selected contractors have started working in the targeted districts of Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur and Puri. Field visits have shown that the contractors are duly observing the contracts and providing the wells with sealed platforms, pumps and appropriate drainage.

Progress report as at 24 May 2000

District	Total tube-wells	Lowering completed	Fully completed
Kendrapara	60	40	2
Jagatsinghpur	47	38	17
Puri	28	11	0
Total	135	89	19

One tube-well covers the needs in drinking water of approx. 25 families (average 5 members).

Food distribution

The central Government in Delhi has decided not to renew the favourable price of rice (6 INR/kg) for the Red Cross. The Orissa State Branch must now make purchases at the government controlled rate of 11,50 INR/kg. The procurement of all articles (rice, dal, oil) will be done through government agencies, the Food Corporation of India and the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India.

Earlier problems with the selected beneficiaries (5,000 most vulnerable) have been solved by the introduction of new selection criteria. As some of the initial beneficiaries have started growing their own crops in the meantime, they were replaced by beneficiaries in villages which due to unfavourable weather conditions and soil salinity have not yet managed to start sustaining themselves. The next distributions will thus cover whole villages rather than selected beneficiary families within affected villages. This, however, has increased the total number of beneficiaries by 1,000, making it necessary to reduce the quantity of oil from 10 kg to 5 kg per family in order to keep overall expenditure within budget limits.

Mosquito Nets

10,721 nets have already been supplied and sent to the field. Distribution of all mosquito nets is expected to be completed by mid-June.

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

The second part of the initial workshop “Lessons learned, recommendations and future planning” targeting Disaster Preparedness Committee members (DPCs) and Task Force teams (TF) attached

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to 23 cyclone shelters i.e. field volunteers, has been going on in consecutive groups. Three groups have already completed their sessions and only one group remains.

Using the experiences and views of DPCs and TF teams, the aim of the workshop was to develop a master contingency plan in Orissa State Branch and at the community level.

Some of the issues discussed were: sustainability of the programme, training, disaster warning, maintenance of cyclone shelters, management of relief assistance in disaster situations, relationship between DPCs/TF teams and local communities.

Many concrete recommendations and suggestions come up in discussions. They included:

- more Red Cross dissemination;
- procurement of rescue equipment;
- improvement of early warning equipment;
- environmental education i.e. awareness about the importance of coastal belt plantation in order to alleviate the effects of cyclones.

The second workshop, on disaster management, is planned for senior Orissa State Branch staff, key members from the Disaster Preparedness Committees, relevant government officials, district level functionaries, etc. in mid-June.

Credit-Saving Schemes

The supervisor for the programme has been appointed and is coordinating the opening of the joint bank accounts for the selected 56 self-help groups. Once this is done, the consultancy will advise the groups on the activities they chose. Mainly, they focused on farming sector (poultry, ducks, goats, pigs, sheep breeding and vegetable production); non-farming sector (grocery, tea stalls, vegetable vending, fish business); value added activities (rice processing).

Buffer Stocks

The national headquarters has decided to procure buffer stocks at the national level.

Other Red Cross activities •

The Youth Red Cross, Orissa State Branch, organised another dissemination workshop, from 6 to 9 May, preceded by the State Level Elocution Competition on the Red Cross and participation of youth in the activities of the organisation. World Red Cross Day, 8 May, was commemorated with a rally, a blood donation campaign and a presentation of awards and life member cards.

Outstanding needs

The main problem in the Orissa State Branch are its cumbersome procedures which can slow down urgent action. The visit of the Federation Institutional Development delegate from Delhi and his recommendations show the acute need for “improvements in personnel, decision-making procedures, organisational vision and strategy, clarity of policies and organisational infrastructure”. Community based disaster preparedness has been strongly advocated as a package which may be used as an institutional as well as an organisational development tool.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Although the coordination of Orissa State Branch activities with the NGOs at UN house was a Federation activity during the relief phase, a representative of the Branch will henceforth take part in the weekly coordination meetings, first to provide continuity once the Federation leaves, and second, to improve the Branch’s own exposure and visibility.

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A representative of the Orissa State Disaster Mitigation Authority (a Government body) was finally appointed to coordinate the weekly co-ordination meetings of international organisations and NGOs. This demonstration of government commitment gives a new and much-needed impetus to the efforts of the NGOs.

The issue of media coverage, locally and internationally, and the need to keep the focus on the prevailing conditions in Orissa, has been raised by NGOs. Stronger Government involvement in this area has been sought.

The question of the effects the construction of tube-wells by so many NGOs might have on the water table of the State also came up. The Government gave assurances that, at the moment, only 6% of the water table is being used.

The DEC funded agencies in Orissa have finalised their software package -- a database related to the various relief and rehabilitation activities of DEC-funded NGOs. The software package will be submitted to DEC in UK for possible further development as a tool for better coordination of humanitarian activities in emergency situations and better utilisation of donor funds and more efficient and equitable provision of humanitarian services (see www.orissa.fsnet.co.uk).

Another attempt to improve the information flow on humanitarian activities in Orissa has been initiated by the UN house. The software prepared by DEC is being further broadened to include all other NGOs and international agencies and their activities. The web site, revised on weekly basis, gives a global picture of the rehabilitation of Orissa after the cyclone. (See www.un.org.in/orissa.htm or www.un.org.in.)

Further improvements in information sharing were discussed at the meeting of the District Coordinating Agencies which are, in turn, responsible for feed-back to the UN coordination meetings and for presenting uncovered needs in their respective districts.

Several international agencies and NGOs have pointed out a particularly important aspect of current humanitarian assistance in Orissa. As one of the most under-developed States in India, Orissa has a large number of deprived women, unable to speak out or earn wages for themselves. The orientation of NGOs towards the equal participation of women in community decision-making the organisation of women's self-help groups and the creation of conditions for their economic subsistence, represent an almost revolutionary approach, causing many changes in the lives of rural women and their families.

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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**INDIAN RED CROSS
ORISSA STATE BRANCH**

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

Medical kit for single doctor dispensaries	Medical equipment for the Red Cross Maternity Hospital	Medical equipment for the Red Cross Blood Bank
Examination table	Labour table	Plasma expressor
Microscope GP model	Spot light	Platelet -agitator with incubator
Laboratory chemicals and reagents for staining	Fetal heart monitor	Laminar air flow horizontal (3x2x2)
BP Instrument	Instrument trolley (labour room)	
Surgical gloves	3 KV generator	
Scale adults	Operation table	
Scale babies	Shadowless light	
Weighing machine	Instrument trolley (operation theatre)	
Sterilising drum 9x9 inches	Assorted instruments	
Minor OT instrument	Circle absorber	
Normal delivery kit	Electronic glucometer	
Slide	Centrifuge	
Bowl and Stand	Patient trolley	
BP handle with blade	X-ray view box	
Kit box	Instrument trolley (outpatient dept)	
OT towel	Screen	
Instrument cabinet	Angle poise lamp	
Trolley instrument	Man typewriter	
Stretcher	Godrej almirah	
Oxygen cylinder complete	Iron cash chest	
Saline stand	Office furniture	
Observation bed		
Bed pan		
Urinal		
Forceps		
Thermometer		
Speculum		
Stethoscope		
OT gown (cap and mask)		
Eye and ENT set		
Baby resuscitation set		
Urethral cathedra		
Foley's		
Water filter		
Centrifuge machine (Reme)		
Hoemometer		
Hasmocytometer		
ESR stand		
ESR pipette		
Spirit lamp		
Desk and chair		
Steel almirah		
Refrigerator		
Basic drugs kit		
Generator 3 KV Honda		
Revolving chair		
Dustbin (stainless steel)		

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OT towel	Screen	
Instrument cabinet	Angle poise lamp	
Trolley instrument	Man typewriter	
Stretcher	Godrej almirah	
Oxygen cylinder complete	Iron cash chest	
Saline stand	Office furniture	
Observation bed		
Bed pan		
Urinal		
Forceps		
Thermometer		
Speculum		
Stethoscope		
OT gown (cap and mask)		
Eye and ENT set		
Baby resuscitation set		
Urethral cathedra		
Foley's		
Water filter		
Centrifuge machine (Reme)		
Hoemometer		
Hasmocytometer		
ESR stand		
ESR pipette		
Spirit lamp		
Desk and chair		
Steel almirah		
Refrigerator		
Basic drugs kit		
Generator 3 KV Honda		
Revolving chair		
Dustbin (stainless steel)		