

# ***BANGLADESH: Floods and Storms***

*2 June 2000*

## ***Information Bulletin N° 2***

### ***The Disaster***

After the torrential early rains of recent days ( see Information Bulletin 1) further reports are coming in of widespread heavy rain, flash floods, storms and rising rivers in Bangladesh.

Yesterday (1 June) the Federation's Delegation in Bangladesh informed Geneva that a cyclone is forming in the lower Bay of Bengal and further heavy rain is predicted for Bangladesh tomorrow. Reports indicate that the cyclone developing in the Bay of Bengal is part of a major low pressure stretching over Bangladesh and India. The references so far are non-specific but clearly indicate that the depression may intensify into a cyclone at some stage. The BDRCS and Federation teams are well prepared. The Federation is supporting BDRCS with 3 Federation delegates, as well as 2 bilateral delegates.

According to the government Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) report, the rivers Brahmaputra, Jamuna, Padma, Surma and Kushiara continued to rise during the 24 hours ending at 6 p.m. on 30 May. The Manu River, however, registered a fall of a few centimetres, but was still flowing much above danger level. Of the 46 monitoring stations across the country, 29 recorded a rise in water levels while 10 recorded a fall during the same period.

Fresh areas have been inundated in Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, Comilla, Brahmanbaria and Kushtia districts. Rainfall has been reported from all over the country ranging from 30 mm in Moulvibazar to 92.3 mm in Dinajpur.

Thousands of dwellers in the township of Moulvibazar are maintaining a night vigil in anticipation of a sudden breach in the town's protection embankment, which is already leaking at several points. According to newspaper reports, thousands more have been marooned in remote villages and are awaiting relief.

Heavy rains in the northern part of the country, including Dinajpur and Bogra, signal early flooding in that region also.

If the present trends continue, and even without a cyclone, the situation could be quite serious towards the end of this month. It is important therefore that the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) thoroughly prepares itself for the likelihood of a major relief operation.

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

In reviewing current preparedness and response capabilities, the BDRCS and the Federation delegation in Bangladesh analyzed again the emergency response to both the severe 1998 floods and the less devastating 1999 floods and river erosion relief operation. This revealed that there were significant delays in getting locally purchased food to the flood victims. The first problem was the time delay between a donor announcing a possible financial contribution and it materializing, followed by cumbersome tendering procedures which required advertising "calls for tender" in the newspapers. From the day disaster victims were affected to the time they received food could take up to six weeks.

In order to speed up this process, and after discussions between the Federation Head of Delegation in Bangladesh and the Geneva secretariat on Tuesday 30 May, preparedness measures have been, in the shape of a series of units based on 10,000 flood affected families. There are three units: food unit, health unit and clothing unit.

Cost: Food Unit CHF 228,000; clothing Unit CHF 190,000; Health Unit CHF 181,000. Detailed budgets, giving items and costs, are available on request from the Secretariat

Rather than tender by newspapers, all known suppliers will be contacted individually and requested to submit spot tenders to the Delegation office, thus saving at least a week of response time

On 29 May the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society ran a food distribution ( 5 MT Dal, 2 MT Rice) for 1200 of the worst affected families at Rayerbazar, Dhaka, where high winds and accompanying rain inundated their slum village. However, this distribution has depleted the BDRCS food reserves. BDRCS branches are currently assessing flood and storm damage, plus river levels and numbers of affected people.

## *Needs*

Donors are asked to consider raising funds now for one, maximum two, units of food in order to be prepared for a speedier response in the initial stages of this unfolding flood disaster. The BDRCS estimate there are at least 20,000 families affected now by the first round of storms and flash floods and believe these numbers will rise considerably if the flooding continues.

The Federation Delegation is remaining on alert in case the situation should worsen suddenly and make an appeal necessary.

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