

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

BANGLADESH: COLD WAVE

22 January 2003

Information Bulletin N° 2

Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: CHF 50,000

This Information Bulletin is being issued in support of needs described below. A DREF allocation of CHF 50,000 has been made by the Federation to facilitate action and donors are strongly urged to reimburse the fund as soon as possible. The allocation will also enable the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society to increase the level of its buffer stocks of blankets in advance of any future cold spells or similar emergencies.

The Situation

Since 15 December 2002, a severe cold spell has been sweeping Bangladesh, a country with a tropical monsoon climate where winters are generally mild and short. The single figure temperatures have been recorded throughout the country. The Meteorological Department reported that the temperatures have been dropping to below 6 degrees Celsius in some areas, and to 8-11 Celsius in others. According to the same source this is one of the coldest waves since 1968. Although the most affected are the northern and north-western districts of Bangladesh, the cold wave has been affecting many districts all over the country. The cold wave has been worsened by thick fog paralysing normal life and has kept daytime temperatures very low, also life and causing massive damages in the agricultural sector.

The wind coming from the north and flowing over the northern and south-western part of the country enhanced the intensity of cold. These temperatures are perceived as severe cold by the general population, who are used to much warmer weather, even at this time of the year. It is causing extreme hardship for undernourished and underweight members of the population. These include people who lost their homes and possessions during the floods 2002. Thousands of people suffering cold related diseases (cold, fevers, pneumonia, asthma, respiratory complications) in many affected districts have approached medical centres for treatments. There have been more than 600 cold related deaths to date. The death toll is continuously raising as more information in coming. During the last two weeks, every single day at least 25 people have died, according to local news agencies.



According to the Meteorological Department, the cold wave will continue and possibly intensify (5-7 Celsius) and is likely to continue up-to the end of January.

The Bangladesh Red Crescent and the Federation have been closely monitoring climatic and situation developments. In early January, once the situation started to deteriorate showing no signs of improvement, the death toll started to increase and requests from Districts Units (assessment reports) started to come in, as an immediate response to the arising emergency, the Bangladesh Red Crescent, from its own emergency stock, distributed 4,000 blankets, 1,500 pieces of second hand clothing and limited quantity of high protein biscuits to 5,500 beneficiaries in the northern-northwestern districts of Thakurgaon, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Sirajganj, Panchagar and an orphanage in Jamalpur district.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

In Dhaka, since 3 January, twelve teams of four Red Crescent Youth and volunteers have been involved in collection of secondhand clothing through door-to-door visits in the prestigious areas in the capital, including many schools. The response to the Red Cross Youth appeal for warm clothing in Dhaka city was very good. Up-to-date, more than 10,000 pieces of secondhand clothing have been collected. All collected materials are being/will be distributed immediately as per growing needs of the most underprivileged population in the affected districts.



During the **First Phase** of this relief operation, the Bangladesh Red Crescent and the Federation have utilized the disaster relief emergency funds of CHF 50,000 for procurement and distribution of 5,500 blankets in the fifteen districts in the north and northwest (Panchagar, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha, Nilphamari,

Rangpur, Joypurhat, Sirajganj, Jamalpur, Naogaon, Chapai- Nawabganj, Rajshahi, Natore and Pabna). Immediately after the Information Bulletin No. 1 was published the Swiss Development Corporation through World Food Program donated high protein biscuits to the Bangladesh Red Crescent to distribute along with 5,500 blankets.

In addition to these efforts, very rapid and generous contributions provided by the Swiss Red Cross, Danish Embassy and Australian High Commission in Bangladesh and German Red Cross as well as some private donations, have enabled the Bangladesh Red Crescent to assist a total number of 9,500 families or approx. 42,000 beneficiaries so far. Each family received a blanket, 1 kg of high protein biscuits (donated by the Swiss Development Corporation through WFP) and 7,700 families received some secondhand clothing items (as per availability). It is important to mention that many local garment export companies have approached Bangladesh Red Crescent/Federation to make donation in warm clothing. Several thousands of winter jackets were donated directly to the Bangladesh Red Crescent national headquarters by some garments companies based in Dhaka. Currently, the Society is trying to obtain a tax exemption document from the government for the donation of 18,000 PCs (worth USD 54,000) of children clothing donated by "Farkantex Ltd.", an export garment company from Chittagong, as per recommendation of the German Embassy in Dhaka. Once all necessary documentation is obtained, all clothing will be distributed immediately to the most affected children.



Meanwhile, as the prolonged cold wave continued to sweep throughout Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Red Crescent national headquarters kept receiving requests for assistance. In addition to already assisted 15 districts with limited winterization items, request have arrived from 35 more districts from Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong divisions. On the needs basis and availability of funding, the Bangladesh Red Crescent /Federation in the 2nd Phase have decided to target ten districts, in particular those that have received very little or no assistance by any other agency or government.

The Bangladesh Red Crescent and Federation objectives for the **Second Phase** are to:

- Deliver emergency assistance to additional ten districts in Khulna and Dhaka division, target areas with most urgent assistance needs and relatively high death toll recorded.
- Immediately assist additional 10,000 families or approx. 40,000 beneficiaries in the ten targeted districts of: Jessore, Satkhira, Chuadanga, Jhinaidha, Meherpur, Kusthia, Tangail, Khulna, Narail and Mymensing by providing a blanket per family, warm clothing and High Protein Biscuits (HPB- 14 packets per family or 1 kg) donated by Swiss Development Corporation through World Food Program and second hand clothing (collected by Red Crescent Youth and Volunteers).
- Complete the relief assistance within ten days.

A generous donation of 2.4 million BDT (approx. CHF 60,000) from the Danish Embassy in Dhaka will be used for the procurement of 6,500 pieces of blankets ensuring the successful implementation of the Second Phase of Cold Wave relief intervention.

Tentative budget for blankets procurement.

Item	Quantity	Price (BDT)	Total (BDT)
Blankets	6,500 pieces	320	2'080'000
Transport	5 X Truck	8'000	40'000
Loading/off-loadig/distibution	6'500	5	32'500
Monitoring/Information/Visibility			81'500
PSR (6,5%)			156'000
Total:			2'400'000

The Bangladesh Red Crescent/Federation logistics departments have started the process of local procurement of the blankets.

Conclusion

After experiencing the lowest ever-recorded temperatures and most prolonged Cold Wave since 1968 in Bangladesh, it is yet difficult to say if the situation would further deteriorate. Current emergency assistance provided by DREF and generous donations of Swiss RC, German RC, Danish Embassy in Dhaka, Australian High Commission in Dhaka and private donations would cover the most immediate needs of the additionally targeted number of suffering population and hopefully continue to reduce the death toll. If the situation changes, an update would be issued immediately with a request for further assistance.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org or www.bdracs.org

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation web site at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programs, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

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