

# Information bulletin



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Bangladesh: Severe food crisis

Information bulletin n° 1  
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This bulletin is used for information only. Initial rapid assessments carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) show that 25,680 households from 642 villages have been affected and are under severe food crisis due to bamboo flowering. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has been asked to join the joint assessment team for further investigation into the prevailing situation.

[Click here to view the map of the affected area, and here for detailed contact information](#)

### The Situation

Bamboo flowers once in a plant's life cycle (for further information on this process please go to [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/06/0621\\_bamboo.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/06/0621_bamboo.html)). The process started this year in India's northeastern state of Mizoram, adjacent to the Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) area of Bangladesh. The flowering cycle usually varies from 40-80 years. After the flowers have 'sprung' the bamboo plant dies (or becomes dormant) for three to four years. During this period, the soil around bamboo plants can become bare, and vulnerable to soil erosion, flash floods, landslides etc. This situation can be aggravated due to rats feeding on bamboo flowers and fruits, thereby increasing their birth rate from the breeding norm of two times a year to as many as six to eight times. The increased rodent population can destroy green and ripe paddy fields, vegetable saplings, and other crops, leading to severe food availability constraints.

The CHT's entire eastern belt bordering the state of Mizoram has been severely affected, and threatens to spread to the rest of the CHT. Seven *upazilas* (sub-districts) in the hill district are already severely affected. Initial rapid assessments carried out by UNDP show that 25,680 households from 642 villages in the seven upazilas are the worst affected. These areas are remote and people there depend on *Jhum* (traditional cultivating method). Since the increased rat population has consumed most of the *Jhum* fields and other vegetable plants, people have been unable to harvest this year. As a result, people of the affected areas are facing a severe food crisis.

**Table: Extent of affected villages and households**

District	Upazila (sub-district)	No. of affected villages	No. of affected households
Rangamati	Baghaichari	181	7,240
	Barkal	166	6,640
	Jurachari	20	800
	Bilaichari	25	1,000
Bandarban	Rowangchari	80	3,200
	Ruma	100	4,000
	Thanchi	70	2,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 Upazilas</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>25,680</b>

Rice production is a major source of livelihood for the CHT people. Preliminary assessments shows an immediate need for rice (*Atop*), shrimp paste (primary source of protein and used as an essential ingredient for cooking all kinds of vegetables by the hill tribes) and rat traps. Paddy seeds are also needed for the next season.

The government has taken some initiative and distributed food to a limited number of affected households. However, initiatives taken are inadequate and the crisis is considered far bigger than what was initially thought.

UNDP and the World Food Programme (WFP) have distributed small quantities of food. UNDP has distributed rice and shrimp paste to 7,000 families in seven upazilas. Two rat traps to each of these 7,000 families will also be distributed shortly. Initial estimates of WFP shows that at least 25,680 of the worst affected households need food support for the next six months

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

A joint Bangladesh government–donor needs assessment mission is planned from 8-12 April 2008. UN agencies such as UNDP, WFP and UNICEF, along with AUSAID and ECHO are planning to join the team. The International Federation has also been invited to join the joint assessment team. The relief delegate and public health officer from the Federation will join the team to conduct a detailed assessment in the remote affected areas of CHT.

### How we work

*All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

#### Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

### Contact information

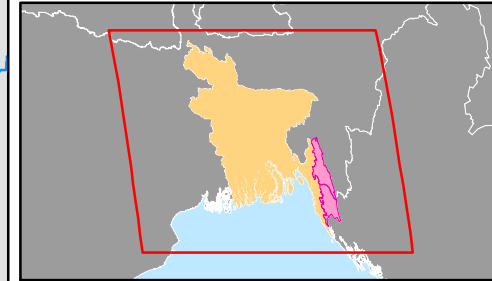
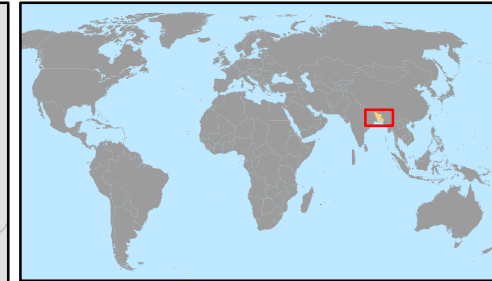
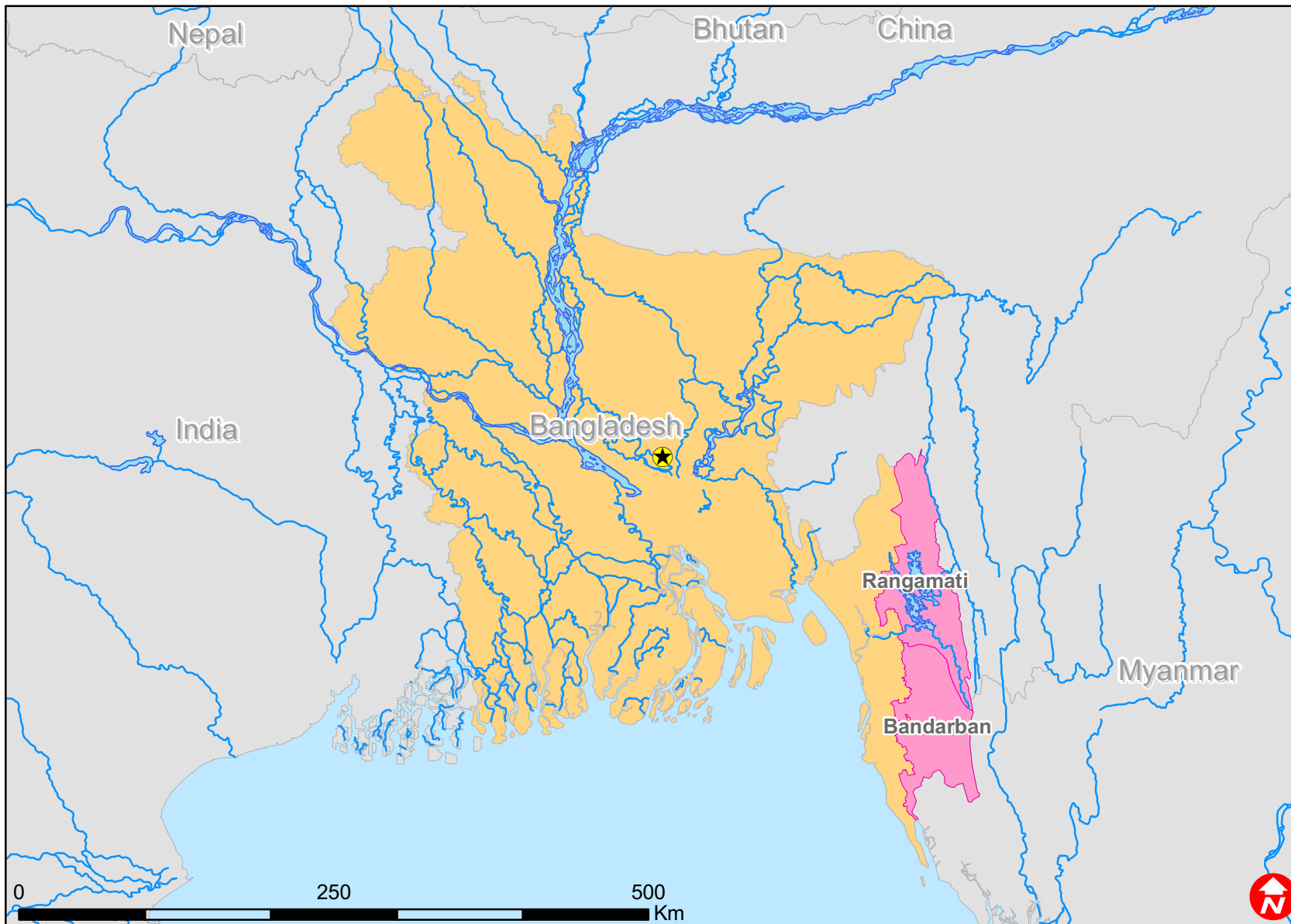
**For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:**

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- Country office in Bangladesh: Mr. Selvaratnam Sinnadurai (head of delegation), email: [selvaratnam.sinnadurai@ifrc.org](mailto:selvaratnam.sinnadurai@ifrc.org), phone: +88.02.933.7314, fax: +88.02.934.1631.
- South Asia regional office in Delhi: Mr. Al Panico (head of regional office), email: [al.panico@ifrc.org](mailto:al.panico@ifrc.org), phone: +91 11 2411 1122, fax: +91 11 2411 1128.
- Asia Pacific zone office in Kuala Lumpur: Disaster management unit: Mr. Latifur Rahman (Regional disaster management delegate), email: [latifur.rahman@ifrc.org](mailto:latifur.rahman@ifrc.org); phone: +603.9207.5723, mobile: +60.12.975.0144, fax: +603.2161.0670

**[<Map below; click here to return to the title page>](#)**



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 Affected districts