

BANGLADESH: CYCLONE

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The emergency

A severe cyclonic storm 2B hit the Southern coast of Bangladesh early on 27 September. The mainland areas of Potuakhali, Bhola, Sitakundu and Noakhali, plus the offshore islands of Hatiya and Sandwip and the many chars of the river Megna estuary, were hardest hit. The storm weakened into a land depression and moved north-northeastwards. Initial damage reports received through the Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) network as at 1300 hours on 27 September gave estimates of 1,529 people injured, 27 deaths, 71,800 houses destroyed and 70,600 damaged. Approximately 750,000 people had taken refuge by the time the cyclonic storm crossed the coast. Much of the affected area is highly exposed and not easily accessible.

Damage assessments began the next day. The Logistics Delegate of the Federation Delegation joined CARE Bangladesh in an aerial survey of Bhola Island, identified as an affected area. They were unable to identify damage on the scale of initial reports. A mobile Delegation team has been in the field since 29 September, concentrating first on the area of Southern Lakshmipur around Ramgati, Char Abdulla and Char Gazaria. They too have been unable to discover damage on the scale previously reported. The team is continuing to survey the area and to contact local authorities to determine the extent of damage. A report from an Action Aid representative who has carried out both an aerial and ground survey also indicates a low level of damage.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Federation Delegation has purchased 7.5 tons of chira and 2.5 tons of ghur for 1,500 families (rations for five days). This relief, plus buffer stocks of plastic sheeting for approximately 1,000 families, will arrive in the affected area today, 1 October. Distribution through the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) Branches of Lakshmipur and Bhola, under the direction of BDRCS NHQ Officers, will begin immediately.

Outstanding needs

As reports are received and confirmed a decision will be made on whether the operation should be expanded. It is clear in any case that this will not now be a major relief operation.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

A Delegation representative attended an initial meeting with the Association for Disaster and Development (ADAB) on 28 September. The Delegation continues to exchange information with the Government, UNDP and NGOs through the Disaster Forum. A Federation Delegate attended a UNDP Co-ordination meeting on 29 September when participants gave their view that there was no substantial emergency to be addressed at this time.

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