

BANGLADESH: CYCLONE

23 November 1998

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The Disaster

A Severe Cyclonic Storm, designated 07B, which developed on 19 November, 1998 from a depression over west central Bay of Bengal weakened with the onset of heavy rain, and crossed the Sundarban-Barisal coast in the afternoon of 22 November.

Government Action

An emergency meeting was called by the Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MDMR) on 21 November in the Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) office, attended by representatives from BDRCS and the Federation Delegation. According to information provided, the cyclone was moving at a speed of 15-20 kph, and expected to strike around midnight the same day (21 November) with a possible surge of up to eight feet in the Sundarban-Barisal coast. The maritime port of Mongla was advised to hoist Danger Signal Number Seven (7), Chittagong - Danger Signal Number Six (6) and Cox's Bazar - Local Warning Signal Number Four (4). The meeting instructed that people in the low-lying coastal areas should be warned to start preparing for evacuation to safer places.

The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) is now co-ordinating preparations for the forthcoming cyclone among the ministries and organisations concerned. An inter-ministerial meeting was held at 7 p.m. on 21 November at the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. By the morning of 22 November, the danger signal had been raised to 10 at Mongla Port and 9 at Chittagong, by which time most of the 33,000 CPP volunteers were in action or on standby.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

All 116 HF and VHF radio stations operated by the BDRCS had completed their notification process within the first hour of the cyclone warning received from the GOB. Safety warning for all offshore islands and low-lying coastal areas has been transmitted again from BDRCS national headquarters to CPP local units at 12:00 hours on 21 November, through the same night, as well as on the 22nd. Flag warning signals were hoisted. The CPP volunteers, and in some places also with community-CBDP volunteers, were mobilised to warn the local population by loudspeaker, and by door to door approaches and to assist the people to reach cyclone shelters. BDRCS's CPP Operations Room was fully manned and all stations were under a full state of alert. An estimated 121,000 people were assisted in reaching cyclone shelters. Truck loads of relief material were loaded and ready to be despatched, and disaster assessment teams and medical teams were put on stand-by.

Needs

Damage has been reported as minimal. Some areas reported 3 - 4 feet of water covering the fields as a result of water surging at high tide. The districts of Khulna, Bagerhat, Pirojpur, Satkira and Barguna

were the most affected. The many fishermen in the area, estimated at about 60,000 took shelter in inland creeks. Losses reported by CPP Stations and BDRCS Units include damage to crops which were nearing maturity and ready for harvesting, damage to 200 tons of dried fish, and damage to mud-fabricated houses. Requests have been made to BDRCS for relief supplies, including food.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director,
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Hiroshi Higashiura
Director
Asia & Pacific Department