

INDIA: CYCLONE

23 June 1998

Information Bulletin N° 2

The Disaster

A powerful cyclone ripped through the coastal state of Gujarat in West India on 9 June, reportedly killing at least 1,100 persons and injuring another 4,000. The local population, however, estimates the death toll to be nearer 3,500. Katra village in Kandla port area in the Kutch District was the worst hit. There, at least 850 persons are feared to have been killed by tidal waves seven metres high that washed away up to 2,000 houses.

The cyclone inflicted damage to public property estimated at INR 35,000 million. Damage in Kandla port alone is put at over INR 15,000 million.

Municipal water supplies have been restored in some areas while most other areas are receiving fresh water by tankers. The power supply is likely to be restored to some areas in a couple of days.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Indian Red Cross workers in all the 13 affected districts worked closely with the local administration in rescue and relief work. In the first five days after the tragedy, three District Red Cross Branches ran soup kitchens for 5,000 people who had lost almost everything.

In the Kandla Port trust area, the Gandhidham branch set up dispensaries that gave medical care to 200 people every day for the first five days. In addition, 4 tonnes of milk powder and 10,000 food packets were distributed. The three ambulances of the Gandhidham Sub-District Branch ferried more than 300 casualties to hospitals. The Branch's relief teams are continuing daily distributions of relief items such as food grains, milk powder, vegetables and high protein biscuits in Katra village and adjoining hamlets.

The Maharashtra State Red Cross Branch and the Indian Red Cross National Headquarters sent truck loads of relief items -- milk powder and emergency rations, cloth sheeting, rice, cotton blankets and bleaching powder -- to the stricken area.

Needs

The homeless urgently need cooking utensils, clothing, edible oil, dry rations and shelter material. The Indian Red Cross is anxious to respond to these needs by carrying out relief distributions to as many as possible of the 20,000 roofless victims. The District Branch and the State Branch are raising funds and collecting relief materials, and community philanthropists are coming forward with generous donations, but undoubtedly these will not cover all the needs. Unspent funds (approximately CHF 80,000) remaining from the Cyclone 07B operation will be made available for this relief operation unless specific contributing National Societies advise otherwise. The Indian Red Cross will provide a plan of action for the use of these funds.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Hiroshi Higashiura
Director
Asia & Pacific Department