

# ***BANGLADESH: FLOODS***

*25 August 2000*

*appeal no. 20/2000*

*situation report no. 01*

*period covered: 19 August - 23 August 2000*

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*The floods in Bangladesh are affecting well over 1.2 million people. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) has provided emergency assistance with its limited resources. Initial response to the Preliminary Appeal is encouraging. In order to support 200,000 affected people, however, additional funds are urgently needed.*

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## ***The context***

For the third consecutive year, Bangladesh is suffering from severe flooding and river erosion. The heavy monsoon rains in Bangladesh began six weeks early this year with no sign of letting up. The situation is further compounded with severe flooding in north-east India. The flood waters from India that are now making their way through Bangladesh have inundated large areas. Although the death toll is not high, river erosion has forced well over one million people to move their homes, especially in the three major basins of the Brahmaputra/Jumuna, the Padma (Ganges) and the Meghna. Most of the people have evacuated to river embankments where they live in squalor with the possessions they managed to rescue.

Due to the three-year long exposure to the seasonal extremes, the infrastructure (roads, embankments, markets and government offices) has been also severely affected. The inundation of vast areas of agricultural land has thrown millions of daily labourers out of work.

## ***Latest events***

In general, river water levels are subsiding, with just seven of 46 measurement points above the danger level. However, fresh rains in India are now raising the levels in the upper reaches of the Padma and Meghna basins. A few days of heavy rain in Bangladesh or in India would see rivers once again flowing above the danger levels at many points.

There are daily reports on river erosion consigning an increasing number of houses to the rivers. New areas are reporting serious flooding and erosion. Jessore district, previously unaffected, is now suffering from the water coming down the Kaptakkho river from India. Thousands of houses have been destroyed.

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society district volunteers, particularly those in the community-based disaster preparedness squads, have distributed initial emergency relief from their meagre stockpiles. The stock are now exhausted. Neither the BDRCS nor the Federation have enough supplies or cash in the country to meet the needs of the affected people.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

Since early June, the BDRCS and the Federation have conducted a protracted series of surveys in the flood-affected areas. The findings have been reported in five Information Bulletins presently available on the Federation web site. These findings coupled with the stream of reports from the BDRCS local units have ensured constant monitoring and accurate assessment and analysis of the evolving flooding and erosion. On 11 August, a BDRCS/Federation assessment team from Dhaka was sent out to the affected areas to conduct a preliminary survey to assess immediate needs in order to prepare the response from the BDRCS and the support from the Federation.

Flooding and erosion dramatically changed by the second week of August and reached emergency levels. The BDRCS immediately responded to the emergency by assisting in the evacuation of affected people and distributing rations.

The Federation released CHF 200,000 from the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) on 17 August. The BDRCS is currently in the process of procuring emergency food rations with the DREF funds for 500 families (2,500 persons) for one month in the following twelve districts: Kurigram, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Bogra, Chapai-Nawabganj, Pabna, Sirajganj, Tangail, Manikganj, Munshiganj and Shariatpur. Further funding will enable a longer-term support to a larger number of families.

On 18 August, the Federation launched a Preliminary Appeal for CHF 3,239,213 for 200,000 beneficiaries. Contributions to the appeal will provide beneficiaries with emergency food rations for two months as well as basic health care for one month.

By 19 August, the BDRCS distributed 20 MT of foodstuffs from its limited stocks of relief supplies to a total of 5,000 beneficiaries in four of the worst-affected districts. Fund-raising activities have been undertaken on a district level, providing not only funds but also strengthening health and safety awareness and profiling the activities of the National Society.

Assessment teams are now surveying the extensive areas affected by the floods and erosion. On 22 August, a multi-disciplinary team composed of the BDRCS staff, a Federation delegate and an Australian Red Cross representative seconded to the UNHCR left for the north bank of the Padma (Ganges) River. A similar team set off to assess the emergency in the upper reaches of the Meghna River basin. On 23 August, a team led by the Japanese Red Cross bilateral delegate undertook a survey of the Padma/Meghna confluence area and, on 24 August, the BDRCS/Federation team assessed the situation in a particularly hard-hit area to the west of Dhaka. On 25 August, a Federation /ECHO team surveyed a particularly affected district to the west of Dhaka. Four more BDRCS and Federation assessment teams will take to the field between 26 and 31 August.

The government at local level has made some distributions of food and shelter materials, but on a sporadic and loosely co-ordinated fashion. So far, only a few local NGOs have distributed relief. No action is currently being undertaken by other international NGOs.

## ***Outstanding needs***

With the monsoon anticipated to last until mid-September and with rains in India continuing unabatedly, there will be no early end to this emergency. River erosion is yet to show its real face once the river levels start falling. This will continue displacement of people to available, marginal land.

Those who return to their homes will face rehabilitation tasks (repairs, recovery of tube-wells and sanitary facilities) and a subsequent threat of waterborne epidemics. Therefore, the Preliminary Appeal calls for the creation of 20 health teams. Any serious outbreaks will require a much stronger response.

With large areas still under water and with embankments and fields destroyed, income will be scarce and food very much in demand. There are more than 1.2 million people displaced by the floods and erosion. The BDRCS requests assistance for 200,000 most vulnerable people. The Preliminary Appeal calls for contributions to meet their immediate food and basic health care needs.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

The BDRCS/Federation have maintained good relations with the government agencies, UN bodies, other NGOs and the media.

The BBC correspondent in Bangladesh and the Federation visited Harirampur Thana In Manikganj District on 17 August. A dramatic two-minute film on erosion and its victims was produced. On 24 August, the same correspondent paid another visit to a nearby area to chronicle the impact of river erosion on the population.

The Federation has obtained satellite photographs taken by the Canadian Radarsat-1 which show that the situation in the north-east of Bangladesh is very similar now to the 1998 situation, at the time of the worst floods ever in Bangladesh. Additional information is expected from the Ministry for Water Resources.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

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**This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>**

<b>BANGLADESH - FLOODS 2000</b>						ANNEX 1
<b>APPEAL No.20 /2000</b>		<b>PLEDGES RECEIVED</b>			29/08/00	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>CASH</b>						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				<b>3,293,146</b>		<b>TOTAL COVERAGE 7.1%</b>
FINNISH - RC		33,637	EUR	52,864	24.08.00	
KOREA, REPUBLIC - RC				20,000	25.08.00	
JAPANESE - RC				162,000	24.08.00	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				234,864	CHF	7.1%
<b>KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%
<b>ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
<b>THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:</b>						