

BANGLADESH: FLOODS

20 October 2000

appeal no. 20/2000

situation report no. 6

period covered: 11 - 19 October 2000

It is estimated that over 4 million people have been made homeless by the floods and river erosion in Bangladesh. Although the water levels are receding in some areas, flooding still continues in some of the western districts. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society has distributed food supplies to the most vulnerable. However, the needs are overwhelming as stagnant waters increase the risk of outbreaks of epidemics and rehabilitation of houses lost in the disasters cannot begin until the waters have subsided. Contributions are urgently needed to come to the aid of the worst hit disaster victims.

The context

This year Bangladesh suffered from early monsoonal flooding caused mainly by water draining from north-east India, Nepal and Bhutan into the Bay of Bengal through the major river basins of Bangladesh. This flooding caused massive river erosion which is continuing and has forced around 1.5 million people to flee their homes. On 29 August, a tidal surge in the Bay of Bengal caused severe damage to Sandwip island and nearby areas and rehabilitation efforts are still continuing. On 22 September, flood water from West Bengal in India surged into western districts of Bangladesh, inundating areas that have seen no serious flooding since 1945. Because of the traditional manner of construction, the houses' thick mud walls liquefy when exposed to water and consequently, the number of houses lost in the western districts is substantial. As the area has little of the water-courses common to most of Bangladesh, there are few boats in the area and thus rescue and relief efforts are hampered by transportation difficulties and flood waters are taking time to recede. Overall, these monsoon-related disasters have left some 4 million people homeless.

Latest events

The situation has improved in all districts, with the exception of Satkhira and Jessore where new areas continue to be submerged; 21 villages in Keshabpur sub-district of Jessore were inundated on 18 October.

The government reports the situation in the nine worst-affected western districts is as follows:

District	Start date	Name of the affected sub-district	No. of affected unions	Affected families	Affected population	No. of deaths	No. of shelters	No. of people in shelters
Satkhira	27/9/2000	Kolaroa Sadar Tala Assasuni Debhata	31	106,768	527,942	2	391	464,729
Jessore	23/9/2000	Monirumpur Keshobpur Chowgacha Jikorgacha Sharsha	29	125,803	542,050	3	412	296,163
Jenaidah	24/9/2000	Meheshpur Courtchandpur	17	54,275	301,979	17	167	210,921
Chuadanga	23/9/2000	Sadar Damurhuda Jibonnagar Alamdanga	17	135,500	450,000	6	224	100,000
Meherpur	17/9/2000	Sadar Mujibnagar Gangni	18	43,800	219,000		4	1,000
Kustia	17/9/2000	Sadar Kumarkhali Koksha Bheramara Daulatpur Mirpur	42	40,755	250,335		1	200
Magura	30/9/2000	Sadar Shalikka	11	14,440	58,566		4	385
Rajshahi	17/9/2000	Poba Mohanpur Bagmara Godagari Tanoor Durgapur Potia Bagha Charghat	64	69,185	361,358	2	8	1,050

-Nawabgonj	Sibgonj Gomastapur Nachol Bholarhat						
Total		274	649,431	3,045,785	31	1,211	1,074,448

Source: Relief Control Room, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, 15 October, 2000

Because of the lack of natural drainage in the western districts, flood waters are taking time to recede. The government has undertaken a programme of breaching embankments to allow the water to flow more easily to the sea, but in some areas this policy has met violent resistance by people who do not want to see their homes and fields flooded as a result of these releases of water. The consequence of this slow rate of drainage is that the threat of water-borne diseases is increasing. The government states that 25,817 people have contracted diarrhoea, but the number may well be far higher since flood victims who have not relocated to camps cannot easily be identified and have less access to medical assistance. The threat of an outbreak of epidemic proportions is very real.

The cost of food bought in the open market is increasing (the price of rice has risen by at least 15%), but the price of cattle and poultry has fallen dramatically because of lack of fodder and space to keep animals. Food trucks and godowns (warehouses) have been looted by hungry people, and officials and speculators have been attacked in Benapole and Jhikargacha in Jessore.

Throughout the country, river erosion continues to take its toll. Every day, local Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) units and local newspapers report on severe erosion. As an example, a report dated 18 October states that around 2,000 hectares of land at Haimchar in Chandpur district have dissolved into the Meghna River during the last month, making some 10,000 people homeless.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

A total of 1,002 tonnes of food purchased by the Federation has been sent to the units for distribution:

District/unit allocation and distribution of relief materials

Sl. No.	Districts/ Units	Relief Materials (metric tonnes)				
		Rice	Lentils	Flattened rice	Molasses	Total
1	Satkhira	90.00	16.00	50.00	10.00	166.00
2	Chuadanga	70.00	11.00	15.00	3.00	99.00
3.00	Meherpur	65.00	10.00	15.00	3.00	93.00
4	Jessore	90.00	16.00	30.00	6.00	142.00
5.00	C N Ganj	40.00	8.00	20.00	4.00	72.00
6.00	Kushtia	20.00	4.00	10.00	2.00	36.00
7.00	Jhinaidah	40.00	6.00	10.00	2.00	58.00
8.00	Magura	10.00	2.00			12
9.00	Rajshahi Zila	20.00	4.00	5.00	1.00	30.00
10.00	Kurigram	20.00	4.00			24
11.00	Lalmonirhat	20.00	4.00			24
12.00	Nilphamari	20.00	4.00			24
13.00	Gaibandha	20.00	4.00			24
14.00	Bogra	20.00	4.00			24
15.00	Pabna	20.00	4.00			24
16.00	Sirajgonj	20.00	4.00			24
17.00	Tangail	20.00	4.00			24
18.00	Munshigonj	20.00	4.00			24
19.00	Chandpur	20.00	4.00			24
20.00	Shariatpur	20.00	4.00			24
21.00	CCMC Jessore	20.00	4.00	5.00	1.00	30.00
Total		685.00	125.00	160.00	32.00	1,002.00

Source: BDRCS relief control room and relief department, 18 October, 2000

All relief items for the western districts are being channelled through the control, co-ordination and monitoring centre at the local BDRCS unit in Jessore. The emergency rations of flattened rice and molasses issued to those who have lost their domestic goods are sufficient to feed 64,000 families (320,000 persons) for 2 days, while the rice and lentils, issued to those with cooking pots and fuel, will provide sustenance to 34,250 families (171,250 people) for 15 days.

A total of 14 medical teams are operating as follows: 3 in both Satkhira and Jessore, 2 in Chapai-Nawabganj, Meherpur and Chuadanga, and one in both Jhinaidah and Kushtia. Each medical team consists of a doctor, a paramedic, a male Red Cross youth volunteer and a female volunteer. Each team is equipped with basic medicines and also oversees the distribution of oral rehydration salts (ORS) and water purification tablets (WPT).

Outstanding needs

The government plans to issue either 10 or 16 kgs of grain per family per month (either 67 or 107 grammes per person per day) to the worst affected people. However, it is obvious that those who have lost everything will be in need of much more food. Furthermore, conditions are ripe for epidemics

and medical aid is not reaching many of the hundreds of thousands who are not living in camps. As a result, more mobile medical teams, together with WPT and ORS, are a priority.

The problems of rehabilitating displaced families are daunting. Little agricultural work is available for day labourers and this will be the case for at least two months. There are therefore few opportunities to earn a living. No reconstruction of the thick mud-walled houses, a lengthy process, can begin to take place until the waters have receded and in many areas this is weeks away. The cold season will begin in November. Thus there is an immediate and pressing need for temporary shelter materials, primarily polythene sheeting, and longer-term shelter in the form of corrugated iron sheeting.

The appeal has, to date, received only 43.6 per cent funding coverage.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The BDRCS and the Federation continue to liaise with governmental agencies, UN bodies, ECHO, NGOs, diplomatic missions and the media. The relief delegate has attended a series of co-ordination meetings organised by WFP at which it was decided to conduct a post-flood rehabilitation needs assessment starting on 26 October over a 10 day period. Organisations that have so far committed to participate include the FAO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank, the EC Food Security Unit, DFID and the Federation.

The Chairman and the Secretary General of the BDRCS, accompanied by the Federation head of delegation, made a series of calls on eight Ambassadors and High Commissioners in Dhaka to request their governments' support for the appeal.

A press conference held on 17 October and attended by some 20 reporters brought about major coverage of BDRCS relief activities. The aim of the conference was to report on BDRCS activities and to make a national appeal for local funding. Bangla TV ran the story for six minutes at 8 pm and for four minutes in English at 10 pm, showing parts of the video of the recent flooding produced by the regional information delegate. The four major English language papers featured the story as did most of the national newspapers, many with accompanying photographs.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The situation in the western districts remains desperate. Although water levels are descending, this is taking place very slowly. The spectre of disease is now added to that of hunger and rehabilitation needs are overwhelming. The BDRCS network of staff and volunteers reaches to the grassroots level in the stricken areas and is prepared to deliver emergency relief and subsequent rehabilitation aid. However, the commitment of international donors is awaited in order to continue the purchase of much needed supplies.

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

BANGLADESH - FLOODS 2000						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No.20 /2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED				10/25/00
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						TOTAL COVERAGE
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				3,796,936		43.6%
AUSTRIAN - RC		25,000	EUR	38,933	20.09.00	
BRITISH - RC		45,000	GBP	113,400	25.08.00	
BRITISH - RC		55,000	GBP	142,450	25.08.00	FOOD & OPERATIONAL NEEDS
CANADIAN - RC		20,000	CAD	23,068	15.09.00	
DANISH - RC		277,500	DKK	56,777	16.10.00	
FINNISH - RC		33,637	EUR	52,864	24.08.00	
GERMAN - PRIVATE/RC		400,000	DEM	312,440	23.10.00	
HONG KONG - PRIVATE		100,000	BDT	3,284	20.09.00	
ICELANDIC - RC		200,000	ISK	4,295	22.09.00	
IRANIAN - RC		50,000	USD	88,675	24.10.00	
JAPANESE - RC				162,000	24.08.00	
KOREA, REPUBLIC - RC				20,000	25.08.00	
LIECHTENSTEIN - RC				50,000	02.10.00	
LUXEMBOURG - GOVT		5,000,000	LUF	189,340	10.10.00	
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		1,250,000	SEK	233,875	18.08.00	FLOOD RELIEF OPERATION
SWISS - GOVT				100,000	11.10.00	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				1,591,401	CHF	41.9%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
IRANIAN - RC		37,169	USD	63,652	23.09.00	TENTS, BLANKETS, RICE, TEA, OIL, CLOTHES, SLIPPERS, SOAP
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				63,652	CHF	1.7%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						
PBD526						