

INDIA: CYCLONE

appeal no: 20/96
8 November 1996

THIS PRELIMINARY APPEAL SEEKS CHF 1,000,000 IN CASH

Summary

A cyclonic storm hit the coastal districts of the Southern Indian Province of Andhra Pradesh on 6 - 7 November. Initial estimates put the death toll at 400, with many thousands more left homeless. This is the second time in the last 20 days that the State has been affected by storms. The Federation is despatching a delegate to work with the Indian Red Cross on an assessment of needs.

The Disaster

A violent cyclone storm, labelled 07B, struck the South Indian State of Andhra Pradesh on 6 - 7 November. It swept over the coastal region at speeds between 130 - 160 kmph, dumping torrential rains on 15 districts and leaving a trail of devastation. The worst-hit districts were those of East and West Godavari and Kakinada.

The initial death toll is already at least 400 but this figure could rise substantially. Unknown numbers of fishermen are reported missing at sea. Thousands of houses have been destroyed, their inhabitants in many cases crushed to death.

So far 75,000 people have been evacuated from the worst hit areas. Train services and road traffic are paralysed and the power supply and communication networks have been knocked out. Over 150,000 acres of paddy, 70,000 acres of sugar cane, 12,000 acres of banana crops and 15,000 acres of vegetable crop have been lost.

The storm comes hard on the heels of another disaster -- torrential rains caused by a depression that on 18 October hit nine districts and killed at least 350 people, including 200 people who died when three water reservoirs were breached in Prakasam district.

The Response so far

Government Action •

The State Government has moved 75,000 people to safer places and is supplying food and medicines. A relief grant of Rs. 1 lakh each (CHF 3,450) to the families of those killed has been announced, as has the planned distribution of 25 kgs of grains to each of the affected families.

Indian Red Cross action •

District Red Cross workers have been helping the local authorities to rescue and evacuate marooned people. Indian Red Cross cyclone shelters situated in the coastal areas were opened in advance of the storm and gave shelter to local residents. Medical teams are providing care to people in the shelters. The shelters however do not have any stocks of medical or relief goods. According to initial reports received by the Indian Red Cross national headquarters, emergency food supplies, including milk for infants, are needed for the evacuees.

The Needs to be met

Assessment of Needs •

The Federation Secretariat is sending Eric Jensen, its Head of Delegation in Sri Lanka , to India for one week to conduct an assessment and provide the necessary information for an appeal. Mr. Jensen will work closely with the Indian Red Cross Society in determining immediate needs. The Federation's Delegation in India will provide the necessary back-up support.

Red Cross Objectives

Objectives will be defined and a detailed plan of action and a budget drawn up once the assessment has taken place.

Immediate action

In addition to measures taken by the Indian Red Cross, the Secretariat has released CHF 250,000 from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to the National Society. It hopes that additional funding will soon be secured from donors.

Conclusion

Given that more than one thousand people may have died and that many tens of thousands more have lost their homes and possessions, emergency assistance needs to be provided as quickly as possible. The Federation Secretariat will provide further information as it becomes available and will endeavour to give a more precise picture of needs as soon as possible.

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