

INDIA: FLOODS

15 October 1998

appeal no. 27/98

situation report no. 1

period covered: 22 September - 1 October 1998

As flood waters have begun to recede in some of the 12 states in India affected by the floods, the extent of damages to homes, crops and infrastructure is now becoming more evident. Relief assistance being provided by the Indian Red Cross Society and the International Federation will be adjusted to reflect the oncoming winter weather.

The context

The exceptional heavy monsoon rains flooded 12 states in northern India, affecting over 23.6 million people and leaving up to 8 million people homeless. The situation was particularly grim in the four states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam and West Bengal. An estimated 22,000 villages were inundated. Nation-wide, a total of 4.76 million hectares of agricultural land have been flooded causing the loss of vital food crops.

Branches of the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) have been providing assistance to the flood victims from the beginning. The Appeal, to provide assistance to 20,000 of the most vulnerable families in the four worst affected states, was launched on 9 September 1998.

Latest events

Most of the heavy monsoon rains have now ended. On 27 September 1998, the IRCS Assistant Director and the Federation's Relief Co-ordinator conducted a field trip to Gorakhpur District, in Uttar Pradesh state. At the time of the visit, the water had receded from the flooded areas, and according to the Gorakhpur District Government only 13 of the previous 1,145 villages were still submerged. The various means of communication to the Gorakhpur District (roads, electricity, telephone etc.) that had been completely cut off since 23 August, when the river Rapati broke through the embankments, have recently been restored. Villagers have started to return to their villages. The water level in the river Rapati was back to normal, but quite a vast area of crops is covered by mud and sand and hence destroyed. Many houses have collapsed. The Government plans to resettle some of those villages located along the river to new areas outside the river's embankments. Despite the very high water level during the flood, 4 meters above normal, only 181 people died due to the flooding according to Government figures.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Indian Red Cross Society, as a quick emergency response, sent relief items from their national headquarters' warehouses to the most affected State Branches for further distribution in early September.

Relief items distributed by the IRCS HQ •

Items	Unit	Assam	Bihar	Uttar Pradesh	West Bengal
Emergency Ration	Kgs	9,996	26,000	1,050	2,000
Rice	Kgs	5,000	10,000		10,000
Towels	Pcs	500.00	--	200.00	
Cloth Sheeting	Mtrs	1,000	1,000	1,216	2,000
Assorted Clothes	Pcs	9,000	3,000	16,000	2,000
Blanket	Pcs	--	500	5,050	400
PVC roll	Rolls	--	20	--	50
Kitchen set	Sets	--	--	200	--
Ground sheet	Mtrs	--	--	300	--
Calcium Hypo chlorite	Kgs	--	--	2,000	125
Bed Sheet	Pcs	--	--	500	--

On 28 September, the Gorakhpur Red Cross branch conducted a relief distribution to 681 families in seven villages most affected by the floods. The family package distributed was comprised of 15 kg Rice, 2 Blankets and 3 pieces of clothing. Simultaneously, the branch carried out an immunisation campaign and provided medical service through a temporary mobile clinic. The State branch will furnish the IRCS headquarters with a detailed distribution report in the next week.

Similar distributions have been carried out by the Red Cross branches in Assam, Bihar and West Bengal, and reports are expected in the very near future.

In discussions with the Gorakhpur District Government, the IRCS/Federation was informed that the Government had sufficient food supplies to cover the immediate needs of the flood victims and that the need of tarpaulins was no longer acute. Hence, the composition of the Red Cross family package was revised for this district.

Outstanding needs

The information gathered in Gorakhpur indicates that there is a need to revise the composition of the Red Cross relief material in order to better meet the present needs. The local procurement of relief material is expected to take place by mid-October.

As a result of the planned visits to Bihar and West Bengal and a meeting with the State Branch Secretary for Assam next week, it will be possible to be a bit more specific regarding the outstanding needs.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

According to the Commissioner in the Gorakhpur District, the Government has put an assistance scheme in place by providing food, (5,000 metric tonnes of rice), emergency shelter material to 34,000 families and INR 1,000 (approximately CHF 34.6) to each family whose income per annum is less than INR 15,000 (CHF 519). Additionally, the Government has announced a payment of INR 50,000 (CHF 1730) to each family who lost a family member in the floods, and INR 100,000 (CHF 3460) if the head of the family died due to the floods. For each head of cattle lost in the floods the Government will assist with INR 2,000 (CHF 69.2) per head.

There are 12 local NGOs reported to be operating in the Gorakhpur area but no international organisation was present.

In meetings with Government representatives for the Gorakhpur District, the Divisional Commissioner expressed the need for reconstruction of the collapsed houses. Estimated cost for such reconstruction was said to be INR 25,000 (CHF 865) per house. He also expressed the need for boats as part of the disaster preparedness stock for the district.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Thanks to the improved situation, since the water has receded, the composition of the family package should be revised. Since there is no acute food shortage reported in Gorakhpur and the fact that people now are returning home, it is suggested that the rice and the tarpaulin be replaced by more plastic buckets, jerry cans, bed-sheets and blankets for the oncoming cold weather.

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