

INDIA : FLOODS

23 December 1998

appeal no. 27/98

situation report no. 3

period covered: 1 to 30 November 1998

Indian Red Cross Branches in four flood-affected States distributed emergency aid to victims immediately after the disaster. They are now preparing further distributions, tailored to local needs, which are expected to be completed by mid January.

The context

Exceptionally heavy monsoon rains in July and August flooded 12 states in northern India, affecting over 23.6 million people and leaving up to 8 million people homeless. Nation-wide, a total of 4.76 million hectares of agricultural land were flooded and an estimated 22,000 villages inundated. The worst hit states were Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam and West Bengal.

The Indian Red Cross Society's Branches have been providing assistance to the flood victims from the start of the emergency. An initial Plan of Action provided assistance to 20,000 of the most vulnerable families in the four worst affected States, and an appeal was launched on 9 September. The concerned State Branches of the Indian Red Cross Society have identified their respective target populations, and the national Society, in close co-operation with the Federation, has undertaken the local procurement of relief items.

Latest events

The water has receded, leaving vast areas of farmland covered by sand and mud, so that many of the farmers who lost their entire crops in the floods will not be able to cultivate the next crop. Only a few people are still living in temporary shelters on embankments and along the roadsides. In Assam, the State Government has started a cash for work scheme under which flood victims repair embankments and roads. Its main aim is to provide income for the farmers whose crops and lands were destroyed by the floods.

People whose houses were damaged by the floods have started repairing them on their own, but some can only manage to construct temporary huts. However, in Uttar Pradesh and a few other places the State Government/local bodies have provided small subsidies for the repair of houses.

With the onset of the winter season, many of the flood victims are facing difficulties and in need of assistance.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

After a strictly controlled tendering process, orders were placed at the end of November for: kitchen sets (20,000 sets) ; tarpaulins (20,000 pcs); blankets (40,000 pcs).

Since all four States covered by the operation are rice producing areas, the rice and cooking oil will be purchased directly by the Branches. This will ensure purchases correspond to local food habits, and also reduce the transport costs. The Branches have identified their target groups, and submitted lists of beneficiaries to the National Society. They are preparing to distribute rapidly, immediately the goods arrive.

To promote public awareness of IRCS disaster services, and to enhance the visibility of the Red Cross, Red Cross stickers, pocket badges and pinafores, to be used by the Red Cross volunteers in the relief distribution, have been ordered.

Blankets and tarpaulins should be delivered next week, so that the distribution to 6,000 families in Gorakhpur, U.P., is likely to take place in late December. Provided suppliers respect delivery dates, and the transport to the various distribution places goes smoothly, distributions of the remaining 5,000 family packages in Assam, 5,000 packages in West Bengal and 4,000 packages in Bihar should be completed by mid January 1999.

Assam ●

Together with the EU representative in Delhi and the Federation HoRD, the Relief Co-ordinator visited Assam in the last week of November. During a field visit to the Nalbari District, discussions and meetings were held with Red Cross officials, Government representatives and beneficiaries. The Maternity Hospital, Nursing Training Institute, Children's Home for victims of ethnic conflicts, all run by the Red Cross Guwahati Branch, were visited and the District Branch gave a brief presentation on their activities. The Central Warehouse in Guwahati is now empty since the entire stock of relief materials was distributed to the flood victims.

The Assam Branch has identified 500 vulnerable families in each of the ten worst affected districts, where it already distributed relief materials to over 17,000 families immediately after the floods (see the table below).

Since the Government has put a cash for work scheme in place, to assist the farmers who lost their farmlands and crops, there will be no need to distribute either rice or cooking oil in Assam. This was also confirmed by the Red Cross Branch and in discussions with the beneficiaries in Nalbari. On the other hand, since the identified districts are situated along the Brahmaputra river, which are highly malaria prone areas, mosquito nets are badly needed. Hence, rice and the cooking oil will be replaced by nets in the family packages for Assam.

Distribution of relief to flood affected beneficiaries in Assam, July to 30 September

District	Assorted clothes (pcs)	Cotton sheets (m)	Emergency rations (kg)	Oil (kg)	Rice (kg)	Value of drugs distr. (Rs)	No. of Families
Guwahati	1,500	400	996	300	1,100	9,000	996
Nalbari	1,000	100	2,000	500	1,200	5,000	2,240
Dhubri	3,000	100	2,000	1,340	1,000	5,000	4,800
Goalpara	1,000	100	2,000	900	300	5,000	3,580
Karimganj	500	50	480	200	290	5,000	1,020
Silchar	500	50	480	200	-	5,000	780
Jorhat	500	50	480	200	-	5,000	660
Majuli	500	50	480	200	-	5,000	590
Lakhimpur	500	50	480	200	-	5,000	580
Udalguri	500	50	480	400	-	5,000	810
Mongaldoi	500	50	480	400	-	-	850
Ronitpur	500	50	480	200	-	5,000	540
Total	10,500	1,100	10,836	5,040	3,890	59,000	17,446

Bihar ●

The Bihar State Branch carried out relief distributions to 1,500 families between 12 October and 29 November, in 10 districts covering 15 villages each (see the table below). The relief material used for this distribution was sent to the Branch from the IRCS central warehouse in Calcutta. Also, the Branch has identified 4,000 vulnerable families in Muzzafarpur district, for the distribution of the complete family packages which will take place in the near future.

Relief distribution District	12 October (kg)	Emergency rations (kg)	29 November sheeting (m)	1998, Bihar State Branch (pcs)	1998, Bihar State Branch (pcs)	No. of Families
Darbhanga	1,000	400	200	200	50	150
Muzzafarpur	1,000	400	200	200	50	150
Kishanganj	1,000	400	200	200	50	150
Sitamarhi	1,000	400	200	200	50	150
Madhubani	1,000	400	200	200	50	150
Samastipur	1,000	400	200	200	50	150
Purnia	1,000	400	200	200	50	150
Katihar	1,000	400	200	200	50	150
Khagaria	1,000	400	200	200	50	150
Sheohar	1,000	400	200	200	50	150
Total	10,000	4,000	2,000	2,000	500	1,500

Kerala ●

In the second week of November, the Relief Co-ordinator visited the State of Kerala, reported to have been hit by floods. Together with officers from the Kerala State Branch, the delegate visited several villages in three districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kottayam and Allapuzha. Although the flooding was not as serious as feared, a small number (500-1,000 families) of the most vulnerable who lost all their belongings and all their crops in the floods need assistance. The Red Cross in Kerala was found to be well organised, and managed from its own resources to give some assistance to victims during the acute emergency phase.

Uttar Pradesh●

In the first week of November, the Federation Relief Co-ordinator, along with an IRCS officer and the Swedish Red Cross Desk officer, visited Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), one of the flood affected areas. Meetings were held with the IRCS Branch representatives and Government officials. Some of the worst affected villages were visited and the situation and needs of the people were assessed.

The Swedish Desk officer and the Federation Relief Co-ordinator also visited the IRCS Central Training Institute and the Central Warehouse near Delhi. The warehouse was found to be well managed, but with very limited stocks of relief supplies. It urgently needs restocking.

The U.P Government has provided substantial assistance to the floods victims both in kind and in cash. Hence, only blankets are required and will be distributed to 6,000 vulnerable families in Gorakhpur, identified by the Red Cross Branch.

The U.P. Red Cross State Branch conducted a quick emergency relief distribution which started on 7 September, 1998. The items distributed were partly received from the IRCS warehouse in Delhi and partly provided from the Branch's own resources.

Relief material distributed in Uttar Pradesh 7 September to 1 November, 1998

District	Rice (kg)	Emergency ration (kg)	Blankets (pcs)	Clothes (pcs)	No. of Families
Gorakhpur	12,000	144	2,160	2,154	1,080
Deoria	-	66	100	125	50
Kushinagar	2,270	90	350	545	184
Faizabad	-	60	50	125	25
Unnao	-	-	50	73	25
Total	12,270	360	2,710	3,022	1,364

West Bengal ●

The State Branch of West Bengal has identified 2,500 vulnerable families in each of the Districts of Murshidabad and Malda who will benefit from the next distribution of family packages. Only two of the District Branches in West Bengal have submitted reports on the distribution of relief material that took place September to November, (see the table below).

Distribution of relief material in West Bengal for the period September-November 1998

District	Rice (kg)	Emergency ration (kg)	Oil (kg)	Tarpaulins (pcs)	Blanket (pcs)	No. of Families
Malda	11,750	480	600	100	-	1,350
Murshidabad	5,000	320	-	1,100	100	1,100
Total	16,750	800	600	1,200	100	2,450

In addition to the above distribution, the Murshidabad District Branch has distributed cooked food to approximately 12,000 people. The food items were provided by the IRCS warehouse in Calcutta and from the Branch's own resources.

Outstanding needs

The target number of beneficiaries, presently 20,000 families, can be expanded since most of the relief items will cost less than budgeted. This should help to cover the needs of a small number of beneficiaries in Kerala (500-1,00 families).

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Government representatives at all levels continue to assist the Red Cross and to give assurances of their full co-operation and support once the full scale distributions commence.

The ECHO representative in Delhi accompanied the HoRD and the Federation Relief Co-ordinator to Assam where a thorough briefing was organised by the Assam Red Cross Branch, as well as a field trip to one of the flood affected areas.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Through its Branches and its disaster preparedness capacity IRCS has managed to assist over 22,000 vulnerable families (110,000 beneficiaries) in the flood affected areas in the four States of Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. This has, however, wiped out IRCS reserves of relief materials and consideration must be given to re-establishing them.

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