

BANGLADESH:FLOODS

appeal no: 24/99
23 September 1999

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 2,019,000
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES
TO ASSIST 523,200 BENEFICIARIES FOR 6 MONTHS***

Summary

In contrast to the dramatic nature of the 1998 floods, this year's flooding has been less spectacular, but rather a slow, unfolding disaster which started in July and has been gradually worsening over a two and a half month period. The first heavy rains in July affected hilly areas, followed by the inundation of areas not normally considered as flood prone. The force and turbulence of the river water has caused massive erosion, and in the first two weeks of September, 21 new districts have been severely affected from a mixture of water levels and high tides in the Bay of Bengal which have obstructed the natural flow of rivers to the sea. The Federation responded initially to the disaster by providing immediate relief assistance to some particularly vulnerable groups. However, there are hundreds of thousands more who have not received any relief supplies after the first round of flooding and whose survival is now threatened.

The disaster

This year's monsoon arrived early, and from late June onwards, flooding and river erosion have caused significant damage to 41 out of the country's 64 districts. Victims of the 1998 floods (poor village day labourers, farmers and fishermen) were just beginning to recover economically, but are now struggling once again with the loss of livelihoods.

In June alone, about 400,000 people were rendered helpless by the first spate of floods that hit nine districts, including the hilly tracts of Chittagong.

The flood situation worsened in July as major rivers continued to rise due to heavy rains in neighbouring states of India, and soon after in Bangladesh. More low-lying areas submerged one after the other bringing to 18 the total number of districts affected by mid-July. Houses were washed away by sweeping floodwaters as thousands of people rushed for refuge to higher grounds.

The worst incident occurred on 12-14 July with the unprecedented collapse of the Gumti river embankment due to the rapid onrush of water from upstream. The collapse of the embankment immediately caused huge flooding in many areas of Comilla district, affecting 470,000 people who were caught totally unprepared. Government records showed this incident alone devastated more than 133,000 acres of rice land, 1,760 kms of road, and destroyed 41,386 houses.

In August, as predicted by weather experts and the Flood Information Centre (FIC), the monsoon further intensified bringing heavy downpours throughout most of Bangladesh which triggered more significant rises in major rivers, floods and severe erosion.

Several bridges were badly damaged, some of which were rendered impassable to heavy vehicles. Ferry terminals and railway lines were likewise affected disrupting vital means of transport. Also disrupted were communication and power facilities making it doubly difficult for people to move and find means to survive.

To this date reports compiled by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) local units and verified in the media, the number of flooded districts has risen to 41 while the number of people affected swelled to 3.5 million, a large majority of whom were rendered homeless. Further unconfirmed reports received from BDRCS local units showed:

- { 19 confirmed dead;
- { 1,100,000 acres of crops damaged;
- { 126,000 houses damaged;
- { 1,509 kms of roads damaged;
- { 1,622 kms of embankment damaged;
- { 922 bridges/culverts damaged.

The disquieting aspect to this year's flooding is the extensive river bank erosion which has affected millions of acres of land and swept away houses. Much of the land lost was highly fertile, and the flooding and erosion has deprived farming day labourers and local fisherman of their source of income. These workers have turned to relatives, friends and neighbours who have attempted to help with their limited resources. Other people who earlier had offered help eventually also became victims of the floods.

More recently, eight districts (Bogra, Rangpur, Sherpur, Jamalpur, Manikganj, Madaripur, Narsingdi and Nilphamari) were flooded again. Some newspapers report that due to lack of food and potable drinking water, more flood affected people are now suffering from various intestinal diseases including dysentery and diarrhoea. Cases of jaundice have also been reported in some areas. The local Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) said that in Manikganj district, 1,530 hand-driven tube wells have been put out of order during the current flood, as well as 2,512 shallow and 850 deep tubewells which have been submerged by floods.

The government's Fisheries Department reported that more than 350 fish projects were completely washed away as the flood control embankment collapsed due to the onrushing water in the Padma and Jamuna rivers during the first two weeks of September.

In Bogra district, the District Relief and Rehabilitation Office (DRRO) and the Agriculture Extension Department indicated that a total of 699,665 people were seriously affected by the flood and are in dire need of food assistance. The damage to 100,000 hectares of *Aman* (rice paddy) and other seasonal crops as well as the infrastructure to transport crops will further impact the lives of those in the area.

In Nilphamari district, a 700 foot long portion of the main flood control embankment situated on the right bank of the Teesta river was washed away, affecting at least 500 families. According to the Water Development Board, the floods have washed away about 3,000 feet of the embankment located in the Dimla area, and inundated several villages.

While the government is providing some emergency food and other NGO's have also been trying their best to cope with the situation, the need for immediate assistance has become enormous. Cash assistance from sister Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies will be of particular significance to thousands more victims who have not been reached.

On 18 September further heavy rainfall was experienced in many districts, causing a slight rise in the level of the Ganges River and causing more flash flooding in northern districts and affecting the new crop of winter rice. Fortunately, on 19 September the FIC predicted an improvement in the overall flood situation in the country.

The Response so far

Government Action

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina along with senior government officials visited the affected areas between July 18 and 25, particularly the district of Comilla. Foodstuffs were distributed to the worst hit families in the district as well as in other affected areas. Other government Ministers have visited flood affected areas. The government has likewise pledged to provide food grains to families in priority areas.

The Department of Public Health Engineering is installing tubewells and latrines at various temporary shelters.

As of 15 September the government had allocated a total of TK 120,000 (CHF 24,000) in cash and 625 MT of rice (valued at CHF 272,127) for flood victims in the northern and central districts of Bangladesh.

On 1 September, the Prime Minister called an Inter-Ministerial meeting (including an invitation extended to the BDRCS Acting Secretary General) to co-ordinate efforts and resources of all concerned agencies in the wake of the flood situation. The BDRCS in particular has been urged to provide relief assistance to complement the government's limited efforts.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Immediately after the first serious floods of 1999 struck, local BDRCS units in affected areas mobilised squad units and volunteers to help in the evacuation of the displaced families. Utilising locally available resources, BDRCS units distributed compressed rice to displaced people in the hardest hit areas, serving 10,000 families. This was closely followed by the distribution of 60 MT of rice, 15 MT of dal, 15.5 MT of flour and a quantity of aluminium drinking cups, rolls of plastic sheets, vegetable oil, buckets, and clothing from stocks available in the BDRCS warehouses.

At the same time, the Federation delegation in Bangladesh drew up an initial detailed operational framework based on the situation during the first wave of flooding. Previous experience gained from the 1998 floods led to a decision to assign a Federation media and information officer.

An allocation of CHF 100,000 from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) as well as another CHF 170,000 from other National Societies allowed the timely procurement of further relief assistance consisting of 300 MT of rice and 60 MT of dal.

On 1 August the BDRCS also assigned 10 medical teams to Comilla district for a period of 15 days. Each team was composed of one medical doctor, one paramedic, one midwife, and one Red Crescent Youth (RCY) volunteer, and treated an average of 100 persons a day (primarily children) with various medicines valued at CHF 3,800 to treat cold, fever, fungal skin infections, and diarrhoea. The distribution of medicines has been completed, but is reflected in the attached appeal budget as an expense to be covered by donor support. There are no further medical needs envisioned in this appeal.

The BDRCS and Federation Head of Delegation have carried out three extensive field trips to the affected areas to support and motivate BDRCS volunteers in district units -- the front line workers in this disaster.

The combined initial relief efforts of BDRCS disaster stocks and funds from DREF and other National Societies allowed the delivery of emergency assistance to some 183,000 people.

BDRCS relief and Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) personnel as well as the Federation disaster preparedness delegate, relief officer, and media and information officer have visited many of the flood affected districts in the past three weeks for further assessments of the situation.

Co-ordination w

In addition to co-operation and dialogue between the BDRCS headquarters and Federation country delegation and among the BDRCS local units, close liaison is maintained with the central government authorities and disaster co-ordinating agencies such as the Disaster Management Bureau, the Water Development Board, Flood Warning Centre and the Ministry of Relief. Contacts have also been made with the UNDP, the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), and the Disaster Forum.

The Intended Operation

Assessment of Needs w

According to initial assessment reports, over 3,500,000 people are affected, and 1,110,000 acres of seedbed, vegetables, and paddy land damaged in 41 districts. The BDRCS district units have been working in close collaboration with authorities in assessing the impact of the flooding by gathering and recording data of where the floods and river erosion are occurring.

After analysing the 41 affected districts and taking into account its current capacity, the BDRCS has decided to focus its efforts on the 25 worst affected districts to 523,200 people.

Initial assessments indicated that food was the priority consideration. The poor hygiene, water and sanitation situation in the flooded areas could also provoke the outbreak of water borne communicable diseases (dysentery and diarrhoea), however reports from the GoB Ministry of Health and Family Welfare indicate the health problems are currently being met by government health services at the district level. BDRCS health teams are on standby and will be sent immediately if required.

Immediate Needs w

Survey teams have reported that many families have lost bedding and mattresses, and with the summer now over and cooler nights prevailing, there is an urgent need for 10,000 blankets to distribute to those flood victims who have lost all their bedding. Food is also a significant concern, and following initial distribution of rice and dal, an additional 1,000 MT of rice and 200 MT of dal remains to be procured and distributed. Note that the budget reflects the 300 MT of rice and 60 MT of dal already procured.

The BDRCS will also organise basic health care education for families covering personal hygiene, water and environmental sanitation, mother and baby care and taking care of the sick and the elderly as a long term community service.

Housing is also a priority for many. The BDRCS has planned a limited housing programme for the worst affected districts. Fifteen districts (Bogra, Chandpur, Chapi Nawabganj, Comilla, Gaibanha, Gopalganj, Jamalpur, Kurigram, Manikganj, Munshiganj, Norshingdi, Pabna, Siraganj, and Shariapur) have been identified as the worst affected. Each of the above districts, except Comilla, has CBDP units, providing the means for effective monitoring.

Red Cross Objectives w

The BDRCS and the Federation have established the following immediate objectives:

- { Distribution of food and blankets
- { Provide housing in 15 districts
- { Monitor the health and nutrition situation for ongoing or emerging needs

National Society/Federation Plan of Action

Following the initial distributions of 300 MT of rice and 60 MT of dal (at a ration of 10 kgs of rice and 2 kgs of dal per family), 1,000 MT of rice and 200 MT of dal remain to be distributed (at a ration of 20 kgs of rice and 4 kgs of dal per family) to cover the needs of 340,200 people for one month. This food assistance is considered essential to people facing harsh economic difficulties, and will be a survival package allowing victims to get through this crisis period until family members are able to find work. Ten thousand blankets are also urgently needed, and remain to be distributed. Fifty houses with separate latrines are planned for each district, a total of 750 houses. In addition to the 10,000 families who will receive blankets and 750 families who will be the recipients of houses, the assistance will reach a combined beneficiary population of 340,200.

The BDRCS will be responsible for organising the distribution at the central level, while various branches will carry out the task at the district level.

A Relief Delegate will be recruited for three months to assist the BDRCS in implementing the operation. Support will also be provided by the Disaster Preparedness delegate. Currently two delegates in Dhaka are working on the relief operation.

The BDRCS has developed its operational capacity and organisational strength through extensive Institutional Development and Disaster Relief and Preparedness programmes over the last few years. Its leadership, officers and volunteers have wide-ranging operational experience in disaster relief which has been demonstrated in previous successful emergency operations, but the need for continued institutional development at the Headquarters level remains.

The Federation has a well established delegation with close and effective relations with the BDRCS, currently staffed by a Head of Delegation, a Disaster Preparedness delegate and qualified local staff. An Information Delegate is temporarily assigned in Dhaka.

Budget summary

See Annex 1 for details. Please note that the total appeal budget is CHF 2,019,000 of which CHF 167,886 has already been contributed for the initial phase of this operation.

Conclusion

The widespread devastation caused by the flooding has left a total of some 3.5 million people hungry and homeless. As the situation of flood victims worsens, there is an urgent need to respond to the present needs of the target beneficiaries (183,000 from the first phase and 340,200 from the second phase) with this appeal. Donors are encouraged to support this operation, therefore enabling the BDRCS to fulfil its role as the primary humanitarian organisation in the country.

For further information please contact Kentaro Nagazumi, Desk Officer, Tel: 41 22 730 4273 (email: nagazumi@ifrc.org) or Bob McKerrow, Head of Delegation Bangladesh, Tel: 88 02 835 401 (email: ifrcbd@citechco.net).

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BUDGET SUMMARY
Bangladesh: Floods

APPEAL No. 24/99
 IN CHF

ANNEX I

RELIEF NEEDS

Food items

Rice (1300 MT x 500 CHF)	650,000
Dal/Lentils (260MT x 1150 CHF)	299,000

Non food items

Blankets (10,000 x 10 CHF)	100,000
Houses (750 x 625 CHF)	469,000

<u>Medical items</u>	4,000
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TOTAL RELIEF NEEDS	1,522,000
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Transport, storage & vehicles costs

Airfreight/Seafreight/land	65,000
Storage/Warehousing costs	55,000

Vehicles costs

Personnel

Expat staff	20,000
National staff	72,000

Training

Administrative, office & general services

Travel & Communications	20,000
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Assessment/Survey mission/Evaluation

Printing Costs/Information/Visibility	2,000
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General admin costs	7,000
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Secretariat operational support	53,000
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<u>BDRCS Operational support</u>	116,000
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<u>BDRCS Capacity building</u>	87,000
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TOTAL OPERATIONAL NEEDS	497,000
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TOTAL APPEAL CASH & KIND	2,019,000
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PLEDGES ANNOUNCED	168,000
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OUTSTANDING BALANCE	1,851,000
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All items are to be purchased locally