

BANGLADESH

POST CONFLICT REHABILITATION, DISASTER RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

CHF 5,419,000
for 3,400,000 beneficiaries

Programme no 01.30/99

The Context

The frequency and magnitude of natural disasters in Bangladesh each year are among the highest in the world. In 1998, the country was struck by a severe cold wave, a cyclone and the worst floods in its history. Drought, hailstorms, tornadoes, river erosion and flash floods are also frequent, and the country lies across an active earthquake zone. It is also surrounded by areas of internal conflicts in India and Myanmar. Within Bangladesh, the conflict between the tribal population of the Chittagong Hills and the Government recently ended with a peace agreement after 25 years. The population of Bangladesh has one of the lowest per capita incomes and one of the highest rates of malnutrition in the world.

In 1998 alone, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), with Federation support, implemented four emergency relief operations targeting more than 2.5 million beneficiaries in all 68 districts of the country and refugees from Rakhine state in Myanmar.

The Operations

Because of the country's vulnerability to disasters, the Society's first priority is to strengthen its overall organisation, its National Headquarters and the local Branch network, and its management, staff and volunteers in order to achieve the characteristics of a well functioning National Society. Its second priority is to strengthen its disaster preparedness capacity, both at National Headquarters and at Branch level, in order to increase protection and assistance to the most vulnerable through appropriate disaster response and disaster preparedness measures. Its third priority is to improve its health and blood services.

Objectives of the Operations

- Disaster Preparedness and Response

To distribute food and other essential goods to 20,000 refugees from Myanmar in camps in South East Bangladesh (MRRO)

to continue assistance to returnees in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area and building of disaster preparedness and institutional capacity for the three BDRCS branches in the area (PCR)

to develop the disaster response capacity of the NHQ, the branches and the vulnerable communities in 38 high-risk disaster prone districts (CBDP)

to create a system of well trained and equipped community based volunteers in the most cyclone prone areas in 10 districts in the coastal belt (CPP)

to strengthen the capacity of the population around cyclone shelters in three thanas in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar districts (IFAD Programme).

- Institutional Development

to improve the organisational capability and capacity of the BDRCS in accordance with the guidelines of the Federation for a Well Functioning National Society (IDNHQP)

- Health

to provide health services to rural and urban poor, focused on mothers and children

to provide additional, high quality blood services to the population in Dhaka and in Khulna Division in the west of Bangladesh.

Plans of Action

- Myanmar Refugee Relief Operation (MRRO)

The BDRCS will continue to ensure distribution of food supplied by WFP and other relief items to the

21,850 refugees in the last two camps. Current personnel, 21 staff and 31 volunteers receiving a small daily allowance, will be adequate to maintain the programme at the current level. In 1998, 2,439 MT of food and around 2,000 MT non-food supplies were distributed. If the number of refugees declines in the course of the year, one camp may be closed and BDRCS staff reduced accordingly. Food items will be distributed weekly and other non-food items biweekly and monthly. In the case of repatriation, a two weeks ration will be supplied to each returnee immediately before departure.

- Post Conflict Rehabilitation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

In February 1998, the Federation launched an Emergency Appeal, No 09/98, for an operation to assist returnees with supplementary food rations for one year; provide community service activities for an additional 120,000 beneficiaries; and introduce disaster preparedness and health programmes benefiting a very large part of the total CHT population of one million people.

The food, community service, disaster preparedness and Branch Institutional Development Programme will continue in 1999 and 2000. In 1999, the BDRCS will provide supplementary

food for twelve months for 12,000 returnee families in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and for six months for families of 1,949 demobilised Shanti Bahini; it will provide health and social services for 300,000 beneficiaries.

The BDRCS will also continue to reinforce NHQ capacity to provide operational advice, supervision and support to the three branches in Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban, and to give them the necessary Institutional Development support in accordance with its branch Institutional Development component objectives.

- Community-Based Disaster Preparedness Programme (CBDP)

In view of the many disasters - flooding, tornadoes, river erosion and drought, which, in addition to cyclones, hit Bangladesh each year - the main aim of this programme is to develop the Disaster Preparedness capacity of BDRCS Branches in highly disaster-prone Districts. It will promote a more decentralised, flexible and cost-effective approach to disaster response.

Each Branch will develop a District Emergency Plan and build the human and material resources necessary for its implementation. With local fund-raising for this plan, awareness of DP as well as the profile of the Branch can be raised. CBDP squads with volunteer members are now active. The Branches will be supported at NHQ level by the Disaster Management Division, a Disaster Advance Response Team (DART) and a Disaster Health Response Team. A very important component of this programme is the continuous institutional development of the structure and core activities of the Branches.

The most vulnerable communities in each of the Districts are targeted. Work began in 1997 and 1998 on sanitation projects and health awareness in 18 communities and a further five communities will be selected for the construction of tube-wells and latrines in 1999. Other activities focus on awareness raising, community-based first aid, disaster early warning and training to assist communities to withstand and to cope with disaster. Since all BDRCS members are volunteers, co-operation and co-ordination with other organisations with professional staff and capacity for long term socio-economic development is a part of the programme and strongly encouraged.

BDRCS will continue to develop NHQ capacity for providing operational advice, supervision and support to 23 Branches within the CBDP in 1999, plus support in accordance with its Branch Institutional Development objectives.

- Cyclone Preparedness Programme

The CPP is a well established, key activity within BDRCS, the administration of which is partially funded by the Government. The BDRCS CPP, with its network of 33,000 volunteers, is the only programme for warning and evacuation of the population in the high risk cyclone area with more than ten million people. The CPP radio communications system, the largest in Asia, provides the only reliable means of communication pre- and post-cyclone for the entire coastal belt.

The focus in 1999 will be on increasing the effectiveness of the warning systems through community awareness and through extension and upgrading of the system and equipment, including the radio network; post cyclone damage assessment will also be improved.

Refresher training for all volunteers including the 5,466 female volunteers, and basic training of newly recruited volunteers, will be carried out. The need for integration of women into the programme has been recognised and efforts intensified to increase their participation. The training of CPP staff officers will continue and the programme will be reviewed and evaluated to ensure better responsiveness and flexibility. The offices in some Thanas and in the NHQ will be upgraded.

National Headquarters Institutional Development Programme

During 1996-98, considerable progress was made in the Institutional Development of the NHQ. Priorities for 1999 focus on the need to continue to strengthen governance and management functions and to reinforce resource development. In-house and external training of key officers on the basis of revised job descriptions will be continued. Major efforts will be made to develop a comprehensive fund-raising plan and to step up in-country fund raising initiatives, as well as to formulate a long-term strategy for widening the financial resource base towards self-reliance.

Some parts of the National Headquarters will be refurbished in order to provide a safe and functional working environment. (The current premises have deteriorated and in some areas are unsafe.) This would involve a combination of renovation, maintenance and a small degree of construction. Additional space and facilities for staff is also essential.

The Second Phase Feasibility Study on Property Development will concentrate on an assessment of the BDRCS properties in Dhaka with the exception of property included in the 1996 study. There will also be an overview of BDRCS properties outside Dhaka. The results of the study will be used to prepare a proposal for financial resource development.

- District Branch Institutional Development

In order to implement successfully the relief operations, Disaster Preparedness programmes, Health programmes and Community Services programmes, BDRCS must develop a network of 68 strong and proactive district Branches. Institutional Development of the Branches is not a separate programme, but a component of all BDRCS development programmes and emergency relief operations. The focus of this Programme component is on:

- Creation of the necessary infrastructure and capacity to manage sustainable activities;
- Dissemination of RC/RC principles and International Humanitarian Law, targeting members, volunteers, students and the public;
- Re-activation of existing youth groups and promotion of new volunteer groups;
- Intensified fund raising;
- Promotion of a broadbased and active membership;
- Improved functional facilities of the operating Branches;
- NHQ support, training, monitoring and evaluation.

- Health Programme

Despite considerable progress in National Health and Family Planning programmes of the Government and the health programmes of a large number of NGOs, less than 40% of the population has access to basic health care.

In 1997-98, BDRCS began a process aimed at decentralising and developing its health activities, focusing on its 60 Maternity and Child Centres (MCH), and hospitals and clinics. Following a comprehensive review of its health activities in early 1998, it developed a five year Plan of Action for enhancing the services of all MCH centres, and a detailed Plan of Action for 1999. 22 MCH centres in western Bangladesh are funded through a bilateral Agreement with the Japanese Red Cross Society (1999-2001). The German Red Cross is considering support to the BDRCS health sector in the eastern districts. In the central and north-western districts, the BDRCS faces financial and organisational constraints and is seeking external funding for its PHC and MCH centres in Dhaka Division and the Bogra cluster under Rajshahi Division.

In the two project areas, BDRCS intends to help reduce infant and maternal mortality and strengthen its capacity to deliver services at the village and domiciliary level, including ante- and post natal care, awareness raising for immunisation, nutrition, family planning, prevention of communicable diseases including HIV/AIDS and STDs, village sanitation and primary treatment of simple ailments. BDRCS will renovate/reconstruct the existing Centres, and develop the technical and managerial skill of the providers. NHQ support to Branches will be reinforced in accordance with its Branch Institutional Development objectives.

Capacity

- The Operating National Society

BDRCS has a HQ staff of 216. It operates in all districts of the country through 68 Red Crescent units.

It has 45,000 members, 150,000 RCY volunteers, 32,000 cyclone preparedness volunteers and 2,000 paid staff country-wide. It is well known and regarded in the country, by the Government and other organisations and by the general public.

- The Federation

The Federation Delegation in Bangladesh will require the following staff in 1999:

A Head of Delegation, with a three person support team, including a locally recruited Senior Programme Advisor for Institutional Development.

A Finance/Administration Delegate, with a four person support unit.

A Disaster Preparedness Delegate, assisted by two Programme Officers.

A Telecommunications Delegate for approximately two weeks to keep current systems operational and to install new material and train personnel.

Information and Health Delegates will also be needed for short missions; regional resources will be utilised whenever possible.

- Other Red Cross/Red Crescent Resources

The BDRCS counts on the services of the Delegation and through its intermediary, on the services of the Secretariat. It also receives support from the ICRC, and from the South Asia and the South East Asia Regional Delegations in Disaster Preparedness, Health, Information and Institutional Development.

Co-operation

The BDRCS and the Federation maintain close relations, co-ordination and co-operation with the GoB, National and International NGOs, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, bilateral delegations in Bangladesh and with the ICRC regional delegation in New Delhi.