

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## INDIA, NEPAL, BANGLADESH: MONSOON FLOODS

21 July 2004

*The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.*

### In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 2/2004) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. It is anticipated that the current flood situation will further deteriorate. Currently preparations are underway for application for Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) funds for Bangladesh.

India and Bangladesh will launch emergency appeals/request for assistance in the coming days, while Nepal is considering this option. For operational reasons, these envisaged appeals or requests for assistance for Bangladesh, India and Nepal will be country-based, which will also enable donors to direct support to specific interventions. The regional delegation in New Delhi retains a pivotal coordinating role in setting strategy, shaping and reviewing key documentation and spearheading essential marketing and communications initiatives. Some 15 major media organizations (print and electronic) have already contacted the South Asia Regional Delegation to provide a regional overview of the situation.

Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) trained staff have taken part in various assessment teams. Two of the three people in the Bangladesh assessment team are RDRT trained while three in the Nepal assessment team. Four members of the Indian assessment teams are National Disaster Response Team trained.

The Federation further emphasizes that support is needed for the Bangladesh 2004 Annual Appeal (no. 01.56/2004) disaster preparedness programme.

Note also previous flood Information Bulletins 1&2 issued for Bangladesh (28 June, 1 July), and Information Bulletin 1 issued for India (25 June), and Regional Information Bulletin 1 issued 13 July.

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## The Situation

The flooding in India, Bangladesh and Nepal has now claimed approaching 500 lives and affected over 30 million people. The situation has deteriorated in India and Bangladesh in the past week where river levels have continued to rise at alarming rates, running sometimes at more than two metres above the danger level. Continued monsoon rains in some areas have contributed to the chaos and devastation. This disaster is now assuming the proportions of the worst flooding seen in these areas in the past decade. Both India and Bangladesh will launch emergency appeals in the coming days while Nepal is considering this option.

### Bangladesh

The situation is grave and is expected to deteriorate further. As of 21 July, 36 out of 64 districts had been affected, reporting severe flooding. Torrential monsoon rains over the past week have further swollen rivers already running at dangerously high levels, sparking flooding comparable to 1998 levels.

Well over four million people in rain soaked villages and towns in northern and central Bangladesh are marooned and displaced from their homes, forced to take refuge in public buildings and road embankments. Many others are stranded on small hamlets surrounded by water.

Monsoon rain swept the capital Dhaka on July 19, forcing thousand of city residents to retreat to rooftops as neighborhoods became submerged. Official reports indicates that the water gushing down the rivers upstream have inundated tens of thousands of hectares of rice paddies and thousand of kilometers of roads in over 36 districts, covering more than half the country. The death toll in Bangladesh stood at 93 as of 20 July.

Water levels are so high that boats are afloat on the runway of the Sylhet airport. All domestic and international flights have been suspended, while the domestic airport in Saidpur was also shut down. Road and rail links to Dhaka and Sylhet have been severely affected.

According to Bangladesh Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) it is expected that the situation will remain critical over the coming days and weeks including the vast slum areas of the capital and surrounding districts.

FFWC officials say the rain driven floods could assume even more serious dimensions if the water levels in the Brahmaputra, Ganges and Meghna continued to swell at the same time. The FFWC also reports that the country's central region flood situation is worsening. It says by the end of the month, 60 percent of the country may be inundated.

### India



Flooding has affected a huge area.  
Map courtesy BBC

The worst affected states have been in the north and north east, with a total approaching 30 million people affected in Assam and Bihar. The death toll in these two states is now over 200.

Assam: A total of 26 out of 27 districts are affected. There has been widespread loss of life and damage to property, standing crops, flood control embankments and other basic infrastructure. Incessant rains since the final week of June throughout the State of and catchment areas of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Bhutan, has resulted in the alarming rise in water levels of the Brahmaputra River and its tributaries.

According to the latest UNDP reports the current situation is as follows:

- Total population affected – 9.25 million.
- Total area affected – 2.2 million hectares.
- Number of villages affected – 8,522.
- Cropped area affected – 712,518 hectares.
- Number of relief camps/shelter – 1,626 with a total of 1.6 million inhabitants.
- Death toll – 88.
- Number of cattle lost – 550.
- Houses damaged – 61,407.



*One of the 61,407 houses damaged in Assam*

According to the latest Central Water Commission report (UNDP source) all major rivers are flowing above danger levels. Road networks at various places have been extensively damaged including eight national highways. Rail links at Lumding-Badapur have been suspended due to landslides and floods while the Rangia-North Lakimpur-Tezpur section also remains suspended. There have been 60 breaches of embankments to date this year and this contributed to the damage of vital installations such as like telephone lines, educational institutions and electricity supply infrastructure. Erosion is a major threat to villages on the banks of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries.

As all water sources have been submerged, there is a scarcity of drinking water. Some health related problems have been reported to the authorities and the likelihood of epidemics is increasing. The situation in the valley is expected to deteriorate further (UNDP source) as there have been reports that due to heavy showers in Manipur, a large amount of water may be released shortly from the Loktak Lake, the largest lake in India. The lake is at present overflowing and has threatened the embankments.

Bihar: Rains in upper catchment areas of Nepal have resulted in rising water levels of all the major rivers of Bihar. To date 17 out of 38 districts have been affected by the flood waters.

Some 19.3 million people have been affected to date. The Situation is grim with continuous rains over the northern portion of the state. The situation is likely to become critical with rain/ thunder showers forecast.

According to the Central Water Commission report (UNDP source) River Kamala Balan, Budhi Gandhak, Bagmati, Kosi, Mahananda and Adhwara group of rivers are flowing above the danger level and flooding a vast number of districts.

According to the latest UNDP reports:

- Number of districts affected – 18.
- Number of villages affected – 6,730.
- Area affected – 4.5 million hectares.
- Population affected – 19.2 million.
- Death toll – 127.
- Number of cattle lost – 992.
- Number of houses damaged – 325,633.
- Crop area damaged – 1.13 million hectares.

## Nepal

Heavy rains which began on July 3 have resulted in widespread flooding and landslides in Nepal, causing suffering to thousands of people in eastern and central regions of the country.

As of 21 July more than 280,000 people in 22 districts have been affected. The reported death toll has reached 153 and assessments indicate massive destruction of infrastructure. A further 31 persons are missing.

Several districts in the southern Terai region have been submerged by water for several days and people have moved to safer areas using schools and temples as shelters. In the hilly region several landslides have occurred and houses have been swept away resulting in casualties.

Over 14,200 houses have been completely destroyed and more than 25,000 have been partially damaged. Over 27,000 families have been displaced while there have been several deaths as a result of diarrhoea due to a lack of clean drinking water.

The weather has improved in recent days resulting in reduced water levels. It has therefore been possible to start systematic assessments and distribution of relief materials. There are still problems with transports since roads have been damaged, however the transportation links have been partially opened in most areas.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

### Bangladesh

Local Red Crescent units along with Community Based Disaster Preparedness squad volunteers have been continuously assisting affected people in shifting to safer ground. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society /Federation jointly conducted flood assessment mission from 13-17 July in the north and west of Bangladesh. On the recommendation of the team, the following distribution has been organized utilizing current buffer stocks.

District	Allocated relief goods	
	Family Kits	BP-5 biscuits
Gaibandha	500 kits	42 cartoons
Bogra	500 kits	42 cartoons
Sirajganj	500 kits	42 cartoons
Jamalpur	500 kits	42 cartoons
Sherpur	500 kits	42 cartoons
<b>Total</b>	2,500 kits	220 cartoons

Bangladesh Red Crescent relief trucks left Dhaka on 18 July for the affected areas. Distribution is being made among the most vulnerable families who have completely lost their dwellings as per the beneficiary list prepared by the local Red Crescent branch. The Bangladesh Red Crescent is also in the process of distributing 700 tonnes of rice allocated by the World Food Programme. This is being distributed in 28 districts among the 35,000 most vulnerable families. Each family will get 20 kilograms of rice.

*Government /NGOs actions:* As of 20 July the Government had allocated 3995 tonnes of rice, made cash grants of Taka 3.65 million (CHF 80,000) and Taka 600,000 (CHF 13,000) for rehabilitation of houses. The Government has already been deploying the army to assist in relief and rescue operation and airdrops in some of the worst hit districts. UN agencies, international organizations and NGOs have officially activated the Disaster Management Team to determine the severity of the current situation and coordinate appropriate responses by the humanitarian community. The World Food Programme has released 12.2 tonnes of high energy biscuits to three partner NGOs for distribution among 36,800 beneficiaries at Kurigram, Nilphamari and Rangpur.



*Bangladesh Red Crescent truck leaves more relief supplies*

*Coordination:* The Bangladesh Red Crescent/Federation Emergency Flood Task force formed last week and held its first meeting on 13 July. The National Society with support from the International Federation is closely monitoring the situation. Contacts have also been made with international donors, embassies, UN agencies NGO's and government disaster and relief agencies, for better coordination and information sharing. The Bangladesh Red Crescent is a member of in the Disaster Emergency Response Group (DER) and participating in the coordination meeting organized by the World Food Programme. UN agencies, donors, the Government Disaster Management Bureau, international and national NGO's are members of the DER group.

As the flood situation is anticipated to deteriorate severely, joint planning is being carried out in preparation for application of DREF funds. Preparation is also underway to launch an emergency appeal in the coming days. In this regard, donors had been contacted including the ECHO regional office.

## India

Assam: The Indian Red Cross state branch along with district branches have mobilised trained volunteers in rescue operations, shifting stranded people in marooned areas to higher ground and providing them with food.

In Nalbari the Indian Red Cross district volunteers are mobilising the community to use the raised platform (constructed by the Indian Red Cross Society during 2002 under their disaster reduction program funded by DFID). This platform, four metres off the ground, provides refuge for 3000 people.

The Indian Red Cross Assam state branch has mobilised relief to date to the value of CHF 13,500 consisting of 300 blankets, 200 mosquito nets, dry foods and utensils. Individual districts have also mobilised the community to donate dry foods and utensils. The state branch has provided funds to district branches to purchase emergency relief items from local markets for distribution.

Throughout the district branches approximately 1000 Disaster Preparedness trained volunteers, in Nalbari and Goalpara as well as branch staff have participated in first aid, rescue and evacuation operations.

To date the Indian Red Cross National Headquarters have provided Assam with;

Type of assistance	Quantity
Kitchen sets	500
Plastic buckets	1000
Female clothing	3250
Male clothing	1250
Towels	500
Cotton blankets	500
Plastic sheets (4 metres / 50 metres)	50

An assessment team led by the Deputy Secretary of the Indian Red Cross, visited Assam from 14-16 July. The team has produced a draft report which has been submitted to the Indian Red Cross NHQ for discussions on designing the relief package.

An additional consignment of 10,000 family packs will be delivered during this week, but the accessibility of providing relief goods to the severely affected areas remains an area of concern.

*National Level coordination by Indian Red Cross NHQ*: An annual conference of secretaries and relief commissioners of states and union territories was organised by the Ministry of Home Affairs, National Disaster Management Division on 3 July to discuss disaster preparedness, relief and response mechanisms. The Indian Red Cross was the only non-governmental agency to be invited to the event.

The Indian Red Cross is in the process of drafting a disaster response strategy for the current monsoon season. The Federation India Delegation and South Asia Regional Delegation of Federation had a combined meeting on April 23, in order to review the procedures of disaster response by clarifying institutional roles and responsibilities.

The European Union Humanitarian (Delhi) Office (ECHO) held a meeting on 20 July with its partners including the Federation (represented by Head of Delegation and Disaster Management Delegate) and the Indian Red Cross Disaster Preparedness Coordinator. ECHO has indicated support for both the states and discussions with the National Society and Federation Secretariat in India are ongoing.

Indian Red Cross national headquarters is also coordinating with OXFAM, UNDP and ActionAid.

A request for assistance has been sought by the national society for further humanitarian aid.

Non-Red Cross support to Assam to date has included the State Government providing:

- Helicopters have been made available for relief at Guwahati, Tejpur, Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Silchar.
- The release of CHF 13,112,244 from Calamity Relief Fund and CHF 15,589,569 released from National Calamity Relief Contingency Fund for Assam and Bihar.
- The Ministry of Petroleum has released 400,000 litres of kerosene oil as an additional allocation to the state.
- State government is mobilizing halogen tablets, oral dehydration salt (ORS) packets, and bleaching powder in large quantities.
- Army and air force is being provided for rescue and relief.
- Additional amounts of food, drinking water, medicine, fodder, veterinary care for stock is being sanctioned.
- Road restoration work is in progress.

*Other agency support to Assam has included*

- UNICEF supported supply of 700,000 halogen tablets, 12 tonnes of Ferric Alum, 5 tonnes of bleaching powder and 5 tonnes of lime for purifying drinking water. An additional one million packets of ORS sachets are being provided to the government of Assam.
- The Royal Danish Embassy has extended support of approximately CHF 62,000 through a local NGO for carrying out relief operations in the Sonitpur district.

Bihar: The Bihar state branch has responded so far by distributing the following relief material:

Type of assistance	Quantity of assistance
Tarpaulins	5000
Kitchen sets	2000
Male clothing	2500 pieces
Female clothing	4000 pieces
Used assorted clothes	15000 pieces
Plastic buckets	2500
Life jackets	25
Boats	65

The Bihar district branches have distributed the following relief material which was locally mobilised:

Type of assistance	Quantity
Food packets	91 metric tons
Tarpaulin sheets	9000 sheets
Kitchen sheets	2000 sets
Male clothing	5000 pieces
Female clothing	8000 pieces
Used assorted clothes	30,000 pieces
Boats	105

The state and district level volunteers have organized medical camps and to date 21,000 people have received services at various locations.

*Indian Red Cross NHQ response to Bihar*: three member NDRT was despatched to Bihar. The team is made up of highly trained disaster management cross sectoral professionals who are skilled in the latest assessment techniques for a rapid assessment. The assessment was carried out from 16-18 July and a draft report was submitted on 19 July to NHQ. Discussions between the Indian Red Cross NHQ, branches and Federation are ongoing to design the type of assistance needed.

National headquarters has released 10,000 pieces of tarpaulin (shelter material) for Bihar. A consignment of 10,000 family packs will be released on 22 July for assistance in Bihar.

*Government measures in Bihar:*

- The state administration has been carrying out relief and rescue work with the help of the army and air force. The Central government has supplemented these efforts by deploying additional power boats and 37 helicopters have been put into service.
- Details of boats deployed, relief camps and material distributed are as follows:

*Other NGO assistance to Bihar:*

- OXFAM is providing 6000 dry food packets to the flood victims of the Madhubani district.
- UNICEF is supporting the state government by supplying 50,000 kilograms of bleaching powder, 300,000 ORS sachets and 400,000 halogen tablets for distribution to the flood-affected communities through ongoing programmes.

**Nepal**

The Nepal Red Cross has been continuously monitoring the situation and has mobilised volunteers and staff in rescue, relief and assessment activities. Five to eleven survey teams have been formed in each affected district and reports are now being received by National Headquarters regarding the situation.

There are difficulties in communication with some of the hilly and remote districts which lack roads and good telephone lines. It should be remembered that many of the districts are also affected by the ongoing conflict situation, which makes it more difficult to move about districts to collect information. Reports from all districts regarding the current situation should reach the HQ by midweek this week. Based on this information decisions will be taken regarding the continued disaster response operation and possible rehabilitation activities.

During the early days of the flooding the Nepal Red Cross focused on immediate response with supply of food items purchased locally and water purification liquid. Districts mobilized local resources and reached over 2000 families with food items during the first few days of the disaster.

Up to 21 July 5703 family packages had been distributed and another 3000 packages have been dispatched to districts and will be distributed as soon as possible. This is out of a total relief stock held by the Nepal Red Cross sufficient for 10,000 families. It is estimated the National Society will require at least a further 25,000 family packages for distribution.

The Society has also supported 800 families in the central and eastern region with plastic roofing sheeting. The Regional DP-NET, Nepalgunj (Mid-western Region) has supplied relief packages for 250 families and NRs. 700,000 (approximately CHF 11,700) to the affected districts to purchase food and medicine.

Coordination and information sharing is taking place at national level with the Home Ministry as well as UNDP, WHO, USAID, DP-NET and other actors.

July is still early in the monsoon period and further flooding and landslides are likely to occur. Since a large part of the relief stock has already been used, the Nepal Red Cross is therefore requesting support to restock relief material to be able to continue to support disaster victims during the two months of the monsoon period. The Nepal Red Cross is also planning to provide locally sourced housing materials/local housing to an initial number of 2000 families. An international appeal is now under active consideration.

The Government has started reaching the affected areas by helicopters and commenced distribution of dry foods. However the assistance needs to be expanded to all affected areas. The Ministry of Home affairs has also released Rs. 3 million (CHF 50,000) to assist those affected.

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