

Indian Red Cross relief for AILA victims

May 27th, 2009

In West Bengal, the death toll in the devastating cyclonic storm that hit coastal districts in the State on 25th of May 2009 has gone up to 87. Sixteen have been killed following landslides in North Bengal. The storm-hit districts are Burdwan, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Bankura, North 24 Parganas, Kolkata, Howarah and the worst-hit South 24 Parganas. Normal life has been disrupted in these areas as trees have been uprooted, houses damaged and roads are blocked. Many areas are without power and water.

The cyclone also disrupted the normal life in several parts of coastal Orissa as heavy rains accompanied by high-velocity wind pounded many areas under the impact of cyclonic storm. Low-lying areas were inundated in coastal districts like Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Bhadrak and Balasore due to incessant rains since Sunday damaging around 400 thatched huts. A large number of trees were uprooted and waterlogging problem was reported in Cuttack, Paradip and Jagatsinghpur. The relief operation by the Government is going on a war-footing in Mahakalpada and Raj Nagar blocks of Kendrapada district affected by Aila.

According to Regional Meteorological Centre the cyclone has weakened and lost much of its intensity and has turned into a depression over the North Bengal.

Red Cross Action

The IRCS West Bengal State branch activated its emergency operations centre (EOC) and is closely monitoring the situation. Around 30-40 volunteers were mobilized at the block level. These volunteers are also a part of the community level Disaster response teams formed under the Disaster Risk Management Programme of West Bengal and supplemented the government efforts by flashing out the early warning and helping in evacuation of people to safer places. Yesterday, an emergency meeting was convened by the Chairman, Mr. Nikilesh Das at the State branch Headquarters in which it was decided that a team comprising of SDRT/DDRT/VCA members, may be sent immediately to South 24 –Parganas to carry out an assessment. It was also decided to keep medical and relief teams at State Headquarters in readiness with material and equipment for deployment.

The IRCS Orissa State branch activated its emergency operation centre (EOC) and is closely monitoring the situation. The branch received regular updates from the Meteorological Department of the State and regularly updated the district branches about the situation. The Red Cross volunteers have been alerted at the 65 cyclone shelters along the coast.

On the request of West Bengal State Branch the IRCS, National Headquarters has sanctioned relief items like tarpaulin sheets (5000), dhotis (1000), saris (2000) , frocks (400), shorts (350) and ezar (250) valued at to Rs. 29.50 lakhs from to be released from Salt Lake Warehouse, Kolkata.

Dr. S.P. Agarwal, Secretary General, is closely monitoring the situation and is in direct contact with the State branches. He said, “ IRCS, National Headquarters is ready to provide further assistance in form of relief items and deployment of Water Sanitation Units in the affected areas. Technical and other resources have been offered to the West Bengal branch of the Society”.