



UPDATE 8

DATE: August 28th, 2008

SITUATION

The Prime Minister of India has declared Bihar floods a national calamity. After an aerial survey he announced a relief package of one thousand crore rupees and ordered release of over one lakh tons of food grains. Army columns, helicopters and motorboats are deployed and further reinforcements have been sought. Red alert sounded in Madhepura, Supaul, Saharsa and Araria and massive evacuation, one of the biggest in the history of Bihar is underway. The surging water is engulfing all that is coming on its way.

The State Government of Bihar has termed it a catastrophe and appealed to the people of the nation to offer support for the victims. The State government, based on the reports of IMD, has issued a statement that says that the incessant rains in the catchment basins of the river Kosi in Nepal and in eastern Bihar indicate that more than nine million cusecs of water may badly affect 5-6 districts. So far 87 human lives have been lost and 26,25,000 people from 1598 villages of 15 districts have been affected.

In Punjab and Uttar Pradesh light to moderate rainfall with intermittent heavy falls have been reported in some parts of the State. So far 16, 28, 621 people from 3686 villages in 21 districts in Uttar Pradesh and 194675 people from 849 villages in 11 districts in Punjab have been affected.

According to the report of Disaster Management Division of the ministry of Home Affairs, so far incessant rains and flash floods have engulfed 1594 human lives, affected a population of 126, 26,252 estimated livestock loss is 18,859 and demolished/damaged 4,81,258 houses in 11,054 villages of 106 districts in the country.

According to the India Meteorological Department there is a warning for isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall over Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Bihar and Indian river catchment areas in Nepal.

RED CROSS ACTION

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS



“ We are deeply concerned about Bihar’s situation, which is getting worsened day by day. It is one of the worst floodings in our memories. IRCS Bihar State branch is into rescue and relief operation. The National Headquarters of IRCS would soon be releasing tarpaulin sheets (1000), tents (250) and deploy three watsan units in the flood-affected areas. Flooding is associated with

STATE BRANCHES

Bihar

Supaul District branch mobilized 10 volunteers and eight boats. The volunteers helped in saving the lives of 60 marooned people by shifting them to safer zones.

There was pre-stocking of relief material, which included shelter and family packs in Saharsa,

<p>increased risk of infection, therefore, efforts should be made in controlling the outbreak of water & vector-borne diseases". He said "We are in touch with the branch and all necessary support will be provided to our teams working in the affected areas".</p> <p>The National Headquarters released 500 mosquito nets valued at Rs. 1,07,500 to Punjab State branch.</p> <p>The National Headquarters is in touch with the flood-affected States and is monitoring the situation.</p>	<p>Purnia and Khagaria. This is now being used for immediate relief to the victims.</p> <p>The District branches at Supaul, Purnia, Araria and Khagaria have medical centres with doctors and para-medical staff, which have been kept in readiness to support the Government health teams that are awaiting deployment. The St. John Ambulance, which is the first-aid and ambulance wing of the Red Cross has trained first-aid and relief workers and is mobilizing its cadres for rescue and relief work. The volunteers in the districts are supplementing the rescue and relief work started by the Government.</p> <p>The worst affected Madhepura district has no experience of flooding. Hence there are no boats available, which are hindering the rescue work.</p> <p>In Saharsa, 300 families evacuated from Madhepura have been provided shelter in the school opposite the Red Cross office at the district headquarters. Red Cross is helping the government in the arrangement of food and medical care for these people.</p> <p>Punjab</p> <p>The IRCS Punjab State branch has successfully distributed relief items sent from the National Headquarters in the districts of Ferozepur, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar and Kapurthala. District Secretaries of the respective districts headed the relief operation and were accompanied by staff members and volunteers. The volunteers in these districts are also helping in running the community kitchens set up by the local communities.</p>
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Working in Partnerships: The National Headquarters of the Indian Red Cross Society is coordinating and sharing information with the communication and disaster management unit of International Federation, India office, International Committee of the Red Cross and the Partner National Societies in New Delhi.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION: National Disaster Management, India & IRCS State branches and National headquarters Disaster management team.