

BANGLADESH: CYCLONE

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The Disaster

Cyclone Storm 01B swept across the Chittagong and Cox's Bazar districts last Wednesday morning (20 May) with a reported maximum speed of 150 kph, razing houses and uprooting trees and electric poles in its path. Telecommunication with Cox's Bazar and Sandwip was cut from the evening and the electricity supply to Cox's Bazar and parts of Chittagong town was disrupted. In Moheshkhali, the coastal embankment was damaged by the tidal surge. The downpour caused by the storm damaged salt producing fields in the region. Reports from Government authorities, NGOs and the units of the Cyclone Preparedness Programme indicate that the general damage is not as extensive as originally expected since the cyclone struck at low tide and the wind speed was not as high as predicted.

By midday Thursday (21 May), the BDRCS/ CPP volunteers and the CPP zonal staff in the affected areas had collected the following statistics on the effects of the disaster:

- 11 thanas affected in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar districts
- 4 persons killed
- 504 persons injured
- 15 persons missing
- 3,178 houses destroyed and another 9,945 houses damaged
- 108,440 people (13,841 families) affected, or approximately 3 percent of the total population of the affected thanas
- 40 educational institutions damaged, and
- 3,310 hectares of crop damaged.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The BDRCS/Federation have been following closely the evolution of the cyclone from the very start and took the necessary measures before the storm made its landfall. The Federation Delegation made special flight arrangements, in order to be able to reach the affected areas should an assessment be needed. The BDRCS/ CPP volunteers (4,284 in Cox's Bazar and 4,634 in Chittagong) and the CPP zonal staff (20 in Cox's Bazar and 21 in Chittagong) started information collection on the effects of the disaster in all the affected thanas in the two districts as soon as the storm weakened. The CPP radio network functioned well during the whole process of warning, evacuation and information gathering. A total of 650,000 people were relocated to cyclone shelters/ places in advance which helped to reduce the number of casualties. The BDRCS/ CPP volunteers and the CPP staff are still taking care of those who lost their houses and are still in the cyclone shelters.

Although all radio links operated efficiently during this operation, there is serious concern that unless the Cyclone Preparedness Programme is fully funded, it will be impossible to maintain the high level of readiness demonstrated during this emergency. The radio equipment, all of which is imported, is now old,

and spare parts are becoming difficult to procure. The part of CPP's budget that is not funded by the GOB covers not only equipment, but also the many training programmes that are essential to the BDRCS/ CPP volunteers' motivation and an optimum state of readiness. In addition, approximately ten percent of the 32,796 volunteers have to be replaced each year for various reasons.

Given the level of damage, the BDRCS has decided not to make an international appeal. No more information bulletins will be issued in connection with this cyclone.

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