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The Food Aid Organization of the United Nations

## WFP News Release

19 November 2007

### WFP AND BANGLADESH AIR FORCE AIRDROP FOOD FOR CYCLONE VICTIMS

**DHAKA** – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Bangladesh Air Force today started using helicopters to air-drop WFP high energy biscuits to people stranded in inaccessible areas affected by last week's cyclone. So far WFP has delivered biscuits to more than 650,000 people in the worst hit areas by land, air and boat.

“WFP was able to deliver food within hours of the cyclone hitting Bangladesh, because we pre-positioned stocks ahead of the first storm warnings,” said WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran. She noted the extent of the damage and loss of life and added that WFP would be working closely with the Bangladesh Government to assess the need for longer-term interventions.

In the meantime, WFP will distribute more than 2,000 metric tonnes of high energy biscuits – crucial in the first stage of a disaster when people lack the means or clean water to prepare cooked food – over the next few days, to cover 15 days of food for the poorest. Plans are also being finalised to start distributing rice, as people start returning to their homes and villages.

“Thousands of poor families have been devastated due to the loss of their crops, livestock and in some cases, family members. We plan to continue our food assistance over the coming weeks and are actively assessing the needs for the coming months,” said Douglas Broderick, WFP Representative in Bangladesh, who was today on an aerial assessment of the affected areas.

A 12-person UN assessment team from WFP, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) is now visiting some of the worst affected districts to assess the damage and the needs of the most vulnerable. In addition, WFP has fielded five assessment teams in the field. The initial assessment reports describe the situation as ‘grim and serious’ warranting the launch of a more comprehensive appeal for assistance.

Broderick said WFP had already instructed its biscuit factories to keep producing high energy biscuits every day for next couple of weeks, without breaking the production line. WFP food assistance is being distributed by WFP staff, Government officials, Bangladesh Army, partner NGOs and community representatives.



As the death toll continues to rise – at least 2,400 people are known to have lost their lives – and the extent of damage still being assessed, WFP is planning to design a recovery programme for the affected with monthly food and cash support to enable them to rebuild their shelter and livelihoods.

“We urge donors to step forward to provide immediate funding,” Broderick said.

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WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency. Last year we gave food to 88 million people – mostly women and children – in 78 of the world's poorest countries.

WFP now provides RSS feeds to help journalists keep up with the latest press releases, videos and photos as they are published on WFP.org. For more details see: <http://www.wfp.org/english/?n=999>.

*WFP now has a dedicated ISDN line in Italy for quality two-way interviews with WFP officials.*

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