

UNITED NATIONS



জাতিসংঘ

জাতিসংঘ আবাসিক সমন্বয়কারীর কার্যালয় - বাংলাদেশ

OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATOR IN BANGLADESH

MEDIA RELEASE

Attn: News Editor / Chief Reporter

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UN RESPONSE CONTINUES WITH FOOD AND OTHER AID FOR CYCLONE SIDR VICTIMS

DHAKA – The United Nations increased its Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) allocation to a total of US\$14.7 million to pay for international relief assistance for victims of Cyclone Sidr. This brings the total UN system response to about US\$35 million, and this figure will continue to rise over the next few weeks.

“This funding will enable UN system to provide life-saving drinking water equipment for communities at risk from water-borne illness and other vital assistance,” said Renata Lok Dessallien, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh. “The CERF funding is crucial for preventing epidemics of water-borne disease in the Cyclone-affected areas and for saving lives at this moment.”

Dessallien also reported that the UN’s initial rapid assessment mission that surveyed damages and needs in nine districts badly affected by the Cyclone, with the following critical recommendations for immediate needs:

Immediate, life-saving food assistance for more than two million victims: Food and water are the highest priority needs to sustain the most vulnerable of the affected people. Following the present and continuing distribution of dry, ready-to-eat foods to Cyclone victims, the assessment identified the rapid need to expand the distribution of nutritionally balanced rations of rice, pulses, oil and other food stuffs.

Immediate drinking water supplies are needed for an estimated 1.2 million people. In some of the worst affected areas, water wells were contaminated with saline water, and canals and other fresh water sources have been polluted by the cyclone. Where piped water exists, the lack of electricity or its erratic supply present creates major challenges in terms of access to safe drinking water. This is a critical survival need.

Emergency shelter and housing reconstruction assistance: Materials such as tents, tarpaulins and corrugated iron sheets, wood, poles and tools are high priority items in the worst affected districts, where houses located in very close proximity to shorelines and in open wind exposed areas were the most damaged. This is particularly urgent since temperatures are dropping with the advent of winter. Blankets and warm clothing are also important in this regard.

Medical assistance and disease prevention: Support to the Government’s medical teams, including smooth supply of essential drugs, is vital. Quick repair of medical facilities and health clinics, restoration of electric power in support of medical services and assistance in re-establishing sanitation facilities is also important.

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Livelihood regeneration: Enabling cyclone victims to re-establish their sources of livelihoods is also vitally important, both to sustain household consumption needs as well as to gradually re-establish some degree of normalcy in people's lives. Rebuilding of damaged or destroyed schools, roads and embankments across the worst affected districts will also be important in this regard.

In the immediate aftermath of the Cyclone, UN agencies including UNICEF, UNDP, WFP and WHO were extremely quick to respond in support of Government relief efforts. Pre-positioned WFP trucks of high-energy biscuits began their dispatches one day after the Cyclone, and when road blockages prevented access to the more remote areas, WFP immediately began coordinating with the Bangladesh Military authorities. "The UN WFP is working closely with the Bangladesh Armed Forces to ensure ready-to-eat foods get to those people who need our help the most," said Douglas Broderick, WFP Country Representative. "In addition to High Energy Biscuits which continue to be air-delivered by Military helicopters, today we have begun the road and boat transport of 750 tons of rice for the five worst-affected districts."

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