



Joint Bangladesh UN-DMT Situation Report Monsoon Floods 22nd September 2004

General Situation

1. Heavy rainfall in the South, South-east and central part of the country during the last two weeks resulted in severe flooding, particularly in urban areas. This cut off many transport routes and utilities, inundated buildings, and caused further disruptions to livelihoods, compounding impacts of the catastrophic monsoon floods earlier this year.
2. Government and donor agencies are continuing relief and rehabilitation efforts following the recent monsoon floods and adjusting their activities in light of the recent flooding episodes.

Flood Forecast and Assessment

3. A depression over the south central region of the country caused a week of heavy rainfall across the south of the country and storms at port towns from 11th September. This led to immediate flooding and the disruption of regular activities, particularly in urban areas, and has further exacerbated water-logging and flood in downstream areas. The Meteorological Department reported that 341mm (13.6 inches) of rain fell in 24 hours in Dhaka on 13th, the highest amount recorded in the last 50 years.
4. Although the heavy rains have relented, severe floods are now occurring in the southwest, and further stresses have been placed on many people's lives following the recent monsoon flood episode. All monitoring points of the Brahmaputra-Jamuna and Ganges-Padma basins recorded falls as of 21st September. However, large quantities of standing water from rainfall episodes are still hampering recovery efforts, particularly in the southwest region.
5. The rains have once again seriously disrupted peoples' lives and livelihoods, as transport routes and utilities are cut off and buildings inundated. In rural areas of the southern regions, there has been considerable damage to fish farms, seedbeds and vegetable cultivation, as well as to valuable *aman* rice paddy planted after recession of the recent monsoon floods.
6. On 15 September the rain-swollen Gumti River and the Kakri burst through already weakened protective embankments and flooded 100 villages in Devidwar, Burichang, Chandina, Chouddogram and Muradnagar Upazila of Comilla District. Officials estimate the loss at 10,000 ha. of crops and loss of 700 MT fish stock. 600,000 people have been affected, thousands had to take refuge on embankments and in schools, and 6 official shelters had to reopen. NGOs and other civil society organizations have provided assistance to the affected people, and local government has allocated food and cash. As of 21 September water had receded from the village roads and most people had returned to their homes. However, water is still standing in the paddy fields and low-lying areas. Village roads are damaged, hindering transportation. This was the fourth time in the past 18 years that this particular embankment has been breached.



Response

7. After the disruption of national strikes called in response to the August 21st grenade attacks, the intense rainfalls and flooding have further frustrated the relief and rehabilitation efforts of individuals, government, NGOs and donor agencies. The rain-fed floods once again raised the issue of unregulated urban planning, which has led to a substantial decline in urban water-bodies capable of draining rainwater. Despite the existence of the Wetland Conservation Act of 2000, which prohibits the infilling of wetland, flood flow zones or rainfall catchment areas, a lack of enforcement has allowed developers and authorities to illegally fill and occupy these vitally important areas.

8. The Government is making efforts to consider longer-term measures to combat flood threats. The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management organized at the request of the Prime Minister's Office, a three-day workshop 7-9th September to provide recommendations on flood mitigation, risk reduction and preparedness measures across the country, which provided recommendations to tackle future flood episodes more comprehensively.

9. On behalf of the Disaster Emergency Response Secretariat, WFP has organised a Post Flood Assessment of Needs in 27 flood-affected districts. 75 staff from 16 organisations including UN, Donors and both National and International NGOs, participated in the Assessment. Despite interruption by incessant rain and power failure, the field phase has been concluded and the draft report will be published later today. The study provides information on the principal recovery and rehabilitation needs of monsoon flood affected areas, which will aid the implementation of ongoing activities. Cross-coordination has taken place between the DER team and the joint assessment mission of the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, due to report on 26th September following field visits and stock-taking with the ministries concerned.

10. DFID UK has announced that it will provide USD 71m in financial assistance for repair, restructuring and maintenance of flood-damaged roads under the remit of the Roads and Highways Department. An additional USD 7m has been allocated for flood damage repair works for roads, bridges, culverts or portable steel bridging. The Government of Japan has recently announced an additional \$940,000 of emergency assistance through UNICEF to provide wells for drinking water to flood affected regions of Bangladesh and \$5 million to WFP for food.

11. Meanwhile, relief and rehabilitation efforts are still being undertaken with governmental and NGO partners. The UN Flash Appeal remains active to foster pledges of international assistance to meet key sectoral needs. Donor heads will go on an aerial survey, very soon, of flood-affected areas and rehabilitation needs in person in a trip facilitated by UNDP. Participants include representatives from embassies of Australia, EU, Japan, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and from ADB and DFID.

12. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) are coordinating efforts to combat the dangers of serious malnutrition in the post flood period. UNICEF will target children and pregnant and lactating women in the most vulnerable households with fortified blended food and iron-folate supplements to counter anaemia. It will also support a nationwide campaign to provide Vitamin A capsules and de-worming tablets for children. In complementary efforts, WFP aims to provide vulnerable families with a basket of food items, including rice and wheat,



pulses, oil and salt to improve nutrition and food security. Extra rations of fortified blended food will be provided to infants and young children as well as pregnant and breastfeeding women. The agency will also distribute 750 grams of high-energy biscuits daily for over the next ten months among 80,000 primary school children in the worst flood-affected districts. Beneficiary household selection to start WFP supported Emergency Operations in October 2004 has begun in the 6 most affected districts. A total of 903,800 households (4,519,000 people) each will receive 30 kg food grain (rice/wheat) per month.