

# Bangladesh Cyclone Appeal Summary

On 15th November 2007, cyclone Sidr with strong winds over 155 miles per hour crossed from the northern Bay of Bengal triggering a high tidal surge 15 feet high which swept inland and devastated a total of 30 districts of Bangladesh. On 22nd November, the DEC launched an appeal for funds from the public to enable Member Agencies to respond to the need of the affected communities. The DEC has raised £6 million to date of which £5 million has been allocated to the Member Agencies. The appeal will close at the end of August 2008 and a final allocation will be made.

## Below

Halim sitting by a partially built home. Halim received 18 pieces of metal sheeting, screws, nails and timber from Oxfam to build his new house. Because of his carpentry experience, he also received a carpentry toolkit that will enable him to help others in the community rebuild their homes in return for a small fee.



Oxfam

## Background to the Appeal

Bangladesh is the 7th most populous country in the world, and is one of the countries most prone to natural disasters.

Despite huge efforts to put in place disaster management plans, the tremendous force of Cyclone Sidr still resulted in a trail of death and destruction; approximately 3,275 people were killed with a further 39,773 injured. Millions of families were left homeless, children orphaned, women widowed and many left with disabilities. In total around 5.5 million people were and continue to be affected and half a million homes destroyed. Roads and bridges were swept away and trees uprooted.

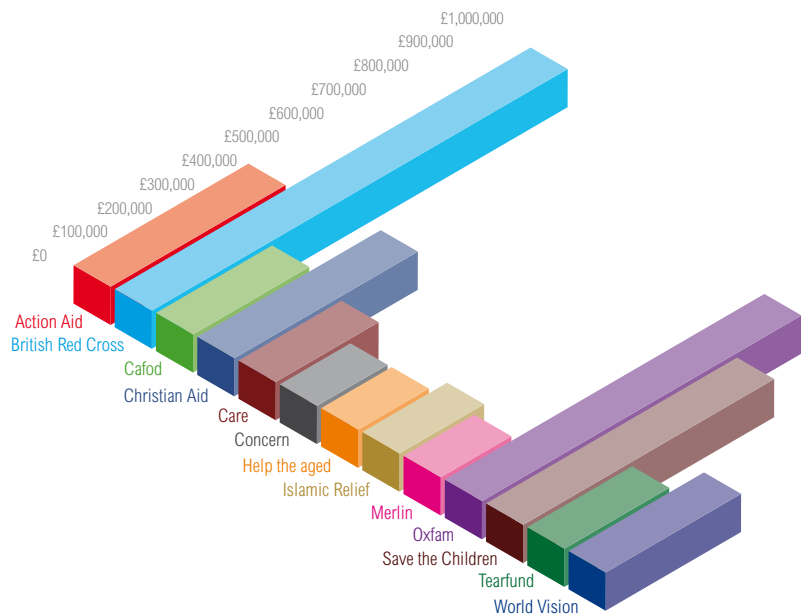
Not only were lives lost and people injured, their livelihoods were also ripped apart; crops planted on 1.61 million hectares of agricultural land were damaged, with crops on at least 0.2 million hectares completely destroyed. Large numbers of cattle, buffalo, goats and poultry were killed with numerous animal carcasses found floating in the rivers or washed up on the river banks.

Community infrastructure was swept away, schools, hospitals and clinics lost, along with all the equipment. As is usually the case children under 5 and women, especially pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, people with disabilities and elderly people are most affected. Children as well as adults were left in a state of shock from the overwhelming physical destruction.

### Who is benefiting from this response?

The people living in the 9 coastal districts were the most severely affected by the cyclone, namely Bagherhat, Barguna, Barisal, Gopalganj, Khulna, Madaripur, Patuakhali, Pirojpur and Shariatpur. DEC Member Agencies concentrated on 5 districts, however Christian Aid also worked in the remaining 4 districts and Merlin undertook a health needs assessment right across the region to inform medical response.

**Figure 7:**  
Allocation of funds to Member Agencies



## Programme progress

The initial swift allocation of funds to Member Agencies followed the standard criteria as set out in the DEC Operations Manual. However, due to a larger and longer than expected flow of income a second allocation was made in January 2008. Two Member Agencies elected not to take up these funds, which were then apportioned to the remaining 11.

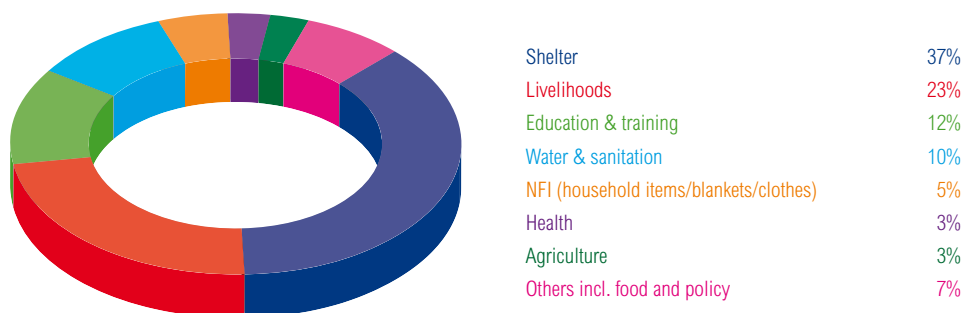
At the 3 month stage 25% of the funds have been spent. This may appear lower than expected and can be explained as being due in part to use of funding received from other sources to provide for the early interventions. In addition, the more costly shelter and reconstruction and livelihoods programmes will be implemented during the remainder of the response period.

## What programmes are being undertaken?

Figure 8 shows how Member Agencies have allocated programme funds to different types of support. Due to the higher costs associated with providing shelter, this is the highest percentage.

The priority immediately after the cyclone struck was to protect lives and minimise the suffering of surviving families. Member Agencies supported the Government of Bangladesh by assisting with the provision and distribution of food rations; providing access to emergency healthcare; distributing clothes and bed nets to protect against disease carrying mosquitoes; providing clean drinking water and lime to purify ponds and distributing temporary shelter material such as plastic sheeting or tarpaulin. An effective way Member Agencies assisted communities was through programmes which provided cash for work. This enables people to meet their own individual needs, helps keep the local economy running and assists in the clean up operations following the massive destruction of community infrastructure.

**Figure 8:**  
Use of funds by sector of activity



## Headline achievements (3 months)

### Relief Items Distributed

Food packs to 36,138 households  
Clothing to 55,056 households  
Kitchen utensils to 18,000 households  
7,500 blankets  
3,000 jerry cans

### Water and Sanitation

Chlorinated water distributed for  
30 days to 13,500 households  
19,500 hygiene kits  
Water pond treatment for at least  
48,339 households  
67 tube wells repaired or cleaned  
Hygiene education sessions held

### Livelihoods

Emergency cash for work for  
around 28,500 households  
Seeds for 21,596 households  
310 fishing nets

### Shelter and Education

Tarpaulins to assist 3,600  
households  
140 transitional houses set up  
Corrugated iron sheeting provided  
to 1,414 households  
190 safe spaces set up for children

### Health

Improved access to health care  
systems for 104,503 households  
Emergency medical assistance  
provided to 58,278  
Oral rehydration solution  
distributed to 5,000 older people  
2,000 mosquito nets

At the 3 month stage the emergency relief phase has been officially closed by the Government of Bangladesh with Member Agencies now laying emphasis on livelihoods and shelter programmes that will reduce the risks associated with future disasters.



## Challenges faced by the Member Agencies

One of the early challenges identified by the Member Agencies is the speedy progression of their medium term livelihoods and shelter programmes. The Bangladesh NGO Bureau requires that all such plans are submitted and approved by them before they can start implementation. In addition, stringently applied regulations have led to changes being made to the planned shelter programmes resulting in fewer households benefitting from the Member Agencies' support.

## Review activity and lesson learning

A DEC Monitoring Mission identified that almost all Member Agencies appropriately used cash transfers and vegetable seed distribution to help with the early recovery, enabling communities to quickly re-establish gardens for the planting season. Three Member Agencies drew on lessons from previous disasters and targeted their shelter efforts on quality transitional materials to provide adequate protection against the impending monsoon. There was good evidence of involvement of beneficiaries in the disaster response with a high awareness of gender issues and the importance of respecting local customs and culture.

Delays were noted, however, in the transition from relief to recovery with some Member Agencies citing government indecision over standards and approvals as well as the challenge of recruiting personnel to scale up operations.

The Mission identified that the majority of Member Agencies failed to plan adequately for affected people who owned no land and who risk being left unsupported when the response is phased out. Recommendations include that any further allocation is targeted directly to this vulnerable group.

## Conclusion

Cyclone Sidr caused huge damage to the coastal area of Bangladesh, with considerable loss of life; however, the losses were significantly less than in the cyclone of 1991 when more than 100,000 people perished. The reduction in the death toll is due largely to the efforts of the Government of Bangladesh and the International Community, including DEC Member Agencies, to put in place Disaster Risk Reduction plans. Their presence in the country and long standing relationships with partner agencies enabled many of them to utilise resources promptly in the early phase of the relief activities.

A number of DEC Member Agencies have planned to use the funds raised to assist with medium to longer term interventions such as rehabilitation and reconstruction of infrastructure and limited housing projects. Due to constraints around planning and permissions, these are taking longer to get off the ground.