



SITUATION REPORT CYCLONE AILA

OVERALL SITUATION

The severe Cyclonic Storm Aila over Northwest Bay of Bengal crossed West Bengal coast close to Sagar Islands. According to the Indian Meteorological department, the depression over Sub-Himalayan West Bengal & Sikkim weakened into a well marked low pressure area and lay centred at 1430 hours IST on 26 May 2009 over the same region. Under its influence, rainfall at most places with heavy to very heavy falls at a few places is likely over Sub-Himalayan West Bengal & Sikkim, Assam & Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura during next 24 hours. This was the last bulletin on the system.

The official death toll in West Bengal is 35. Media reports put the toll as high as 81. Almost 3 million people have been affected in 11 districts of West Bengal. 109 relief camps have been set up in two of the worst affected districts of West Bengal, accommodating around 40,000 people.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Orissa

Over 1,000 hectares of agricultural land have been inundated in Orissa. The state administrative authority has instructed District Collectors to stock sufficient relief materials at the Gram Panchayat and Block levels.

West Bengal

Assessment findings by Save the Children team (26 May 2009) -

South 24 Parganas:

- ✚ Drinking water is the primary immediate need as freshwater sources have been polluted with salt water. It is expected that the saline content will reduce over the coming days as the sea water recedes.
- ✚ Other immediate needs include food, shelter materials, hygiene kits and other non-food relief items. Many of the displaced are taking shelter in schools. It is not clear at this stage how long people will remain displaced, but assuming no heavy rainfall, returns are expected within the next 7 to 15 days.

North 24 Parganas:

- ✚ The Inter-Agency Group in Kolkata has identified considerable gaps in the NGO response in North 24 Parganas.
- ✚ Sandeshkhali I & II blocks are among the worst-affected blocks in the district. Villages are not approachable and submerged under water.
- ✚ There is an acute scarcity of food and drinking water and people are sheltering on the streets or in public buildings such as schools and PRI offices.



DAMAGE DETAILS

Damage details in West Bengal as of 27 May 2009:

S N	Item	Cooch-behar	Murshidabad	North 24 Pgs	South 24 Pgs	Kolkata	Howrah	Hooghly	Bardhaman	Birbhum	Pascim Medinipur	Purba Medinipur	Total	
1	Natural Disaster	Cyclone with heavy rainfall	Storm	Cyclonic Storm with heavy rainfall	Cyclonic Storm with heavy rainfall	Cyclonic Storm with heavy rainfall	Cyclonic Storm with heavy rainfall	Cyclonic Storm with low rainfall	Cyclonic Storm	Storm	Cyclonic Storm	Cyclonic Storm		
2	Date & time of Occurrence	25.05.09	25.05.15	24-25.05.09	24-25.05.10	24-25.05.11	24-25.05.12	25.05.21	24-25.05.22	25.05.23	25.05.26	25.05.27		
3	No. of Blocks affected	12	4	12	7		14	18	10	10	29	25	141	
4	No. of Municipality / ward affected	6		5					5		7	5	28	
5	No. of villages affected	1,384	130	198	903			224			6,310		9,149	
6	Population affected	82,000	18,675	150,752	311,466		47,770	100,928	50,000	200,000	628,545	704,500	2,294,636	
7	No. of human lives lost	1	3		11	5	7	5		2		1	35	
8	No. of houses Damaged	F	3,195	3,020	4,235	17,547		2,463	5,779	3,205	850	2,357	1,8671	61,322
		P	11,271	4,512	9,230	35,619		7,131	12,016	6,574	1,300	6,212	38,944	132,809



GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Relief efforts in West Bengal as of 27 May 2009:

S N	Item	Cooch-behar	Murshidabad	North 24 Pgs	South 24 Pgs	Kolkata	Howrah	Hooghly	Bardhaman	Birbhum	Pascim Medinipur	Purba Medinipur	Total
1	No. of Persons rescued			3,365	37,900								41,265
2	No. of Relief Camps			28	81								109
3	No. of people in Relief Camps & shelters			3,365	37,900								41,265
4	No. of Medical Camps				30								30



UN & NGO RESPONSE

In addition to the ongoing activities of UNDP and UNICEF, responses from other humanitarian agencies are as follows:

International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS)

- In India, the IRCS disaster management centre at the national headquarters is in communication with the West Bengal state branch. The disaster management team from the IRCS and the International Federation are closely monitoring the situation and is ready for any further emergency response.
- The IRCS has seven water and sanitation units pre-positioned at its regional warehouse in Salt Lake, Kolkata and can be deployed immediately along with the recently trained national disaster water and sanitation response team (NDWRT) members, should there be a requirement.
- The IRCS disaster management coordinator of the West Bengal state branch is closely monitoring the ground situation and is in regular contact with the disaster management focal points of the affected districts for any further required support. As discussed during the emergency meeting at the state branch and as directed by the state branch secretary, a medical team and some relief items will be sent immediately to the most affected areas.
- In response to the disaster, IRCS used the flood contingency plan prepared for North 24 Parganas and Purba Midnapore districts, which included district level disaster response capacity.
- The state disaster response team member from Purba Midnapore district branch, along with the local Red Cross volunteers, carried out an emergency assessment in the affected areas.
- Red Cross volunteers, particularly local junior Red Cross volunteers, were involved in disseminating early warning as well as search and rescue efforts, followed by the distribution of bleaching powder and halogen tablets among the affected people in the Chandpurvillage, Lachinpur, Sankarpur, Mandarmani and Bidyadharpur villages. The volunteers were also very active in Donipur village where they distributed medicines among the displaced villagers. Immediate distributions carried out were aimed at the affected population living in temporary shelters and was based on initial assessments which indicated that the most required items are bleaching powder, halogen tablets and kitchen sets.

Save the Children

- Save the Children is planning to provide relief to children in Sandeshkhali I & II blocks of North 24 Parganas. This is likely to include food, water and shelter materials. As the rapid assessment is completed, the response strategy will be finalized in a day or two.

MEDIA REPORTS

West Bengal cyclone death toll mounts to 82: Kolkata and some districts, devastated by cyclone Aila on Monday, 25 May are yet to come to terms with the reality, even as the death toll shot up to 82. Fresh areas in the north were reeling under the impact of the cyclone's after-effects on Tuesday. More than 2.2 million people have been affected. Heavy and incessant rain in Darjeeling triggered landslips, which claimed nine lives. At least six people are reported missing. The highway connecting the hills to the rest of the State was blocked at several places. Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has apprised Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of the situation. While Kolkata limped back to normal, vast areas of the districts hit by the cyclonic storm on Monday were under water that gushed in through breaches in the embankments. Army and Border Security Force personnel are assisting in rescue operations in Darjeeling and North and South 24 Parganas districts. Two MI-17 helicopters of the Air Force are airdropping relief materials and carrying out evacuations in inaccessible areas in South and North 24 Parganas. Certain areas, including Patharpratima in South 24 Parganas district, remain inaccessible. The Chief Minister visited some of the worst-hit areas in the district. So did Trinamool Congress chief and Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee later in the afternoon. Attempts were being made to restore power and drinking water was also being supplied in pouches. Ms. Banerjee suggested that a master plan be drawn up for flood and erosion control. She criticised the State government for not opening adequate relief camps. (The Hindu)

Centre sends National Disaster Response Force: The Centre has despatched Air Force helicopters to cyclone-hit West Bengal to help the local authorities in rescue and relief operations, and rushed 400 personnel of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). The Home Ministry asked the Sikkim government to take precautions



as cyclone Aila could hit the hill State also. "Air Force helicopters have been pressed into service for supplying essential commodities and rescuing the marooned," a Ministry official said. The NDRF personnel are operating in South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas along with the Army. The Centre had already despatched 200 personnel of the riverine units of the BSF based in the Sunderbans, West Bengal. (The Hindu)

IAF drops food in Aila-hit areas: The Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopters on Tuesday started air-dropping food packets in Bengal's South and North 24 Parganas districts, the areas worst affected by Cyclone Aila, even as large pockets of the Sunderbans remained marooned, causing anxiety to the administration. People carrying their belongings waded through flooded roads to safer places on the outskirts of Siliguri in West Bengal on Tuesday. Reports from Gosaba in the Sunderbans said the headmaster of a school desperately called up district officials and newspaper offices, claiming that nearly 3,000 people who had taken shelter in three school buildings were in danger of being swept away following a steady rise in the water level. Two Army columns, one each in Sandeshkhali and Kultali of North and South 24 Parganas districts, have been carrying out rescue and relief operations, defence spokesman Wing Commander Mahesh Upasani said. Six more Army columns, which were on stand-by, have been advised to start work while two MI-17 helicopters have been air-dropping food packets in the hardest hit areas of the districts, Upasani said. The IAF has also kept its transport aircraft and helicopters of the Eastern fleet on standby. (Deccan Herald)

Cyclone Aila swallows Sunderbans tigers: It's not just residents of Kolkata who bore the brunt of Cyclone Aila. Forest wardens fear that as the cyclone tore through the Sunderbans flooding the mangrove forests, it may have killed more than a dozen of the highly endangered Bengal tigers. As the human toll from Monday's cyclone rose to 64, beat officers and range officials in the Sunderbans feared hundreds of herbivores and at least a dozen tigers might have been swept away by the giant waves that lashed the forests. While a tiger had sneaked into the Jamespur village wading through the flood waters and was tranquillised early on Tuesday morning, 20 crocodiles and two spotted deer were found dead. The full extent of the damage will be known only after an assessment by forest teams. As per the last census, the Sunderbans had 265 tigers. "A storm like this has never hit the Sunderbans in the last three decades. Going by the extent of damage to the villages, the state of the forest could be terrible. Forests remained under eight feet of water till late Tuesday afternoon. Immediately after Aila hit, it had gone up to 20 feet," said Mrinal Chattopadhyay of the Institute of Climbers and Nature Lovers. (Times of India)

SOURCES & CONTACT DETAILS

Sources:

- Indian Meteorological Department (IMD)
- Regional Meteorological Centre, Kolkata
- UNDP Orissa office
- Save the Children Emergency Information Report No. 2

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