

Rapid Assessment Report

Floods and heavy downpour in West Bengal, India

June, 2011

Assessment conducted by



Assessment date: 24th June, 2011

Assessment team:

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Areas assessed: Moyna & Panskura Block of East Midnapore District of West Bengal.

Background:

Severe incessant rain led to a flood situation in several parts of West Bengal affecting **6,71,952** people across 9 districts. This resulted in **2,00,000 homeless** in East & West Midnapore districts of West Bengal. In addition, the cause of flooding in low lying areas in West and East Midnapur was the release of water from reservoirs (Damoda valley corporation barrage).

Rains have ceased in many parts of the state and there are reports of waters receding in some of the worst hit areas of the state. The situation is slowly returning to normalcy.



Photo showing widespread destruction due to flooding in East Chilka village

Affected areas – 200,000 people in five blocks of Moyna, Tamluk, Nandakumar and Panskura I and II in East Midnapore are displaced due to the floods. In West Midnapore, Sabong and Daspur are affected.

Government has initiated a rapid response to the floods. Relief materials distributed so far are – tarpaulin; fuel; clothing, and boats being sent in from other districts for search and rescue. There are no reports of any cash compensation being given to the affected families. Government survey of damage is currently ongoing. There are no clear indications of the WASH situation in the affected area, or of the risks that are likely to arise over the next few days.

The IAG states that the govt. has not requested for any external help to address any of the needs in the affected area.

Details of Assessment Areas:

District	Block	Panchyats	Villages
East Midnapore	Moyna	Tilkhoja, Moyna 1	East Dobandhi, Garsafat & GarMoyna
	Panskura-1	Radhaballavpur	East Chilka & East Chilka Lalchand High School Relief camp

* Information shared by affected communities
** Information received from Block office
*** SITREP, Kajla Janakalyan Samity, 22 June 2011

Field Visit Observations:

General:

During the assessment it is found that -

- Flooding has been primarily caused by breaching of the embankments; hence it is not widespread and circumscribed within specific areas only.
- Affected people have taken refuge on nearby embankments and relief centres run by different charities.
- Government response has been observed in the form of tarpaulin sheets and food items.
- Different charities are also providing cooked food to the affected people.
- Flood waters are receding rapidly and people have started returning and are in the process of cleaning their homes.
- It will be only a matter of few days before the remaining people will be able to go back to their homes.
- Repair of the breached embankments is in full swing and should be completed within the next few days.
- Affected families need basic relief only during the intervening period, and currently it is being provided by the government and other charities.
- For affected people who have lost the current crop (and harvest) may require some support until the next cropping season. Perhaps the government will compensate the loss and this should be monitored.
- Some people have lost their houses. They will need support in repair/reconstruction and this should be advocated with the government if there is no support being provided to them.



Photo showing repair of the breach in the embankment in progress in Dobandi village

Public Health-Water Sanitation:

During the assessment it is found that -

- In the affected villages several hand pumps in the affected areas are still submerged in flood water except those situated on the embankment or on higher ground.
- For last 24 hours flood water level has started to recede and many of the submerged hand pumps are becoming accessible. However, the water drawn from such sources appears to be turbid and possibly contaminated (Direct observation & Community feedback).
- In all the areas visited Government temporary



Photo showing damaged handpump at East Chilka village

health camps are operational with health sub-center staff distributing (as per need) Halogen tablets, ORS and other basic essential medicines. Discussions with community revealed that use of halogen at household level is low because of strong odour of Chlorine.

- Local administration with PRI has started hand pump disinfection using bleaching powder but household level water storage and treatment remains inadequate and inappropriate due to lack of proper Information, Education & Communication (IEC).
- As per PHC workers, no cases of acute diarrhoea are reported. However, sporadic cases are reported and almost 300 people have received medication. There are also cases of skin infections reported and medication has been distributed by the government.
- In some affected pockets, local administration supplied drinking water through tankers and distributed drinking water in plastic pouches. In Purba Chilka village, Ramkrishna Mission distributed UNICEF hygiene kits.
- Due to submergence of household pit-latrines (where they existed), affected people are resorting to open defecation on/near the embankments.
- Presently, the chances of any outbreak are low but could change if there is any spell of rain.



Photo showing people using highly turbid water at Dobandi village

Shelter:

- The shelter structures in the visited area are largely characterized by either mud houses with thatched or mud tiles roofs and few concrete houses. In areas visited, the percentages of households with concrete houses and households with mud houses are respectively 20% & 80%.
- Many of the mud houses have collapsed, and in submerged houses mud has deposited up to 3-4 feet.
- People had to take shelter in the embankment or relief camps established in schools.
- Tarpaulin has been distributed by the government to the affected families.



Photo showing structural damage to houses in East Chilka village



Photo showing people taking shelter on embankment at Moyna I GP

- It was also observed that where waters have receded, people have started cleaning and repairing their houses on their own.
- Out of the entire affected families in the villages visited, approx 20% were displaced and living on the embankments, schools or in other relief camps. With waters receding, people have started returning to their homes, thereby bringing

down the number of persons in the relief camps.

Food security and livelihood

- As per the affected people, damage to the betel leaf plantations and jute fields have caused (though short & medium term) significant livelihood problems.
- Few cases of loss of paddy seed beds are reported by community.
- In some areas, agricultural land is still water logged and expected to remain so, and as per the local people, it will not be possible to cultivate these fields at least for another year.
- However, no immediate food insecurity is observed as families are coping through existing food grain stock or available cash.
- A threat of insufficient access to food remains in case of families dependent on daily wage labour due to the sudden drop in availability of work. A large section of the affected households in Moyna 1 GP belong to this category. However, as per primary observation and information, it *may* be a temporary phenomenon.
- Local markets are functioning well and essential commodities are available. No rise in prices of essential items is reported, except for few localized agricultural products.

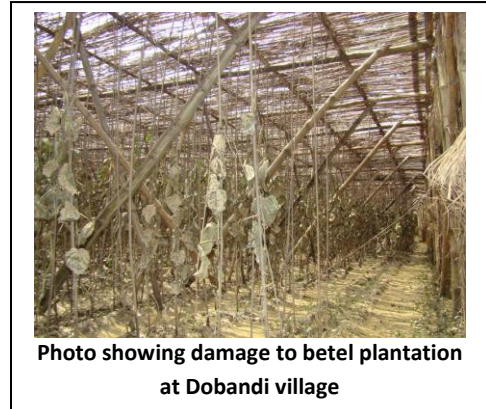


Photo showing damage to betel plantation at Dobandi village

Child Protection

Through the assessment it was found that -

- **Separated children:** There are no reported cases of children who are by themselves (with no adult care).
- **Physical safety:**
 - It is found that children are with their respective families and are spending their time with their families whereby risks to physical safety is minimised
 - There are no places for children to play now. Some children are spending their time on the embankment where they and their families have taken temporary shelter. Many children and families are still in their houses though houses are not completely dried out of flood water and cleaned.
- **Psychological concerns**
 - Interaction with several children showed no perceptible signs of psycho-social stress. However, psychological stress *may* manifest in adolescent girls as there is no privacy for them while accessing toilet facilities (primarily open defecation now), bathing facilities (ponds).
- **Child Rights**
 - In relation to health/education/shelter/food no grave risks to fulfillment of rights were found. However, access to schools is temporarily disrupted, which is likely to resume soon. In the mid-term there *maybe* threat to food security in case of children in the daily wage labourer families due to resultant livelihood/household economic crisis.

- There are no existing social forums or spaces for children's participation within the affected population
- **Vulnerable groups:** The already existing patterns of and vulnerability are caste, age and gender based.
 - Other Backward Class (Muslim) and Scheduled Caste (SC) communities are found to be affected the most and also more vulnerable. The reasons are, first, majority of the affected communities are either OBC or SC; second, because majority of families in these two communities are economically vulnerable who do not have land and depend on daily wage labour or migratory semi-skilled labour work.
 - A sizeable section of the upper age group children in these two affected communities are found to drop out of school and start working. Girls get engaged in household work and boys start working to earn a livelihood.
- **Existing and potential resources:**
 - There are no agencies providing any protection services
 - It is found that the likelihood of any teachers, spiritual leaders and others who can recognize and assist children with developmental and behavioural problems is very low

Education

- **Access to education services:**
 - Education is not accessible to all children though flood water has receded from schools
 - Few primary schools are still submerged in flood-water
 - Schools will reopen, according to community members and PRI members, within 7-15 days.
- **Impact on education provision**
 - 6 schools are reported by the community to be partially damaged Purba Deoband and Purba Deoband Patna Villages
 - Teachers are not directly affected by the emergency but in case of some schools they are able to access the schools

Role of Government

- In the assessed areas, as of now local administration has distributed one tarpaulin sheet to each affected family.
- Local administration has also distributed 1-1 ½ kg of flattened rice, 250 grams jaggery, 1-2 kilograms of rice per family in the affected community.
- Health department temporary field medical camps are operational in different blocks and with supplies of essential medicines, field health workers and ASHA workers are closely monitoring the overall health condition.



Photo showing health department workers present at Dobandi village

Role of NGOs and INGOs

- Charities like All India Minority Association (AIMA) are running community kitchens in some pockets for last 3 days. They have also provided electricity generators and lighting facilities in East and West Chilka relief camps on the embankment.
- Through the charity Ramkrishna Mission, UNICEF distributed Hygiene Kits to the community in East Chilka.
- Sporadic relief distribution by local clubs and individuals are also reported.



Photo showing AIMA-run community kitchen near East Chilka village

Overall Recommendations-

Sector	Short term (next 15 days)	Mid-term
WASH	Ensuring safe drinking water possibly through both source and household level treatment to remove turbidity and any faecal contamination; provision of temporary toilets (very difficult given the space constraints on the embankments)	Decide on need for any intervention if the situation worsens due to heavy rainfall in future or pending repairs of the breaches in the embankments which are the cause of the current flooding.
Shelter	No immediate shelter aid is necessary	Monitor the implementation by PRI and local administration of any compensation package declared by government. If not, advocate for a compensation package for the affected families
Food Security and Livelihood	There is no immediate unmet need of external food aid	Detailed Livelihood sectoral assessment may reveal the long term impact of the crop loss and the intervention need either directly or through advocacy.
Child Protection	Advocate with the district and local administration to install temporary, secure toilet blocks, especially targeting adolescent girls and women Advocate with the district administration to resume ICDS centres as soon as possible	If heavy rainfall changes the situation to worse, then a detailed assessment would be necessary to prevent existing child protection risks
Education	To advocate with the state, district and block administration that till schools resume temporary educational spaces are initiated	If necessary,

Key Local Contacts GO/NGO-

Sl. No	Name	Organization/Designation	Contact No
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4	Mr. Ganesh Chandra Nayak	Health Assistant- ACMHO office East Medinipur	09930309761
5	Mr. Tapas Jana	Staff, Kajla Janakalyan Samity, Contai, East Medinipur	09732525931
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