

Situation Report Shelter Working Group – Cyclone Aila

03-07-2009

KEY POINTS

1. The impact of Cyclone Aila has been more significant than first thought.
2. The Cyclone Aila team and CCCM teams are operating broadly within the existing SWG cluster for monsoonal preparedness
3. Emergency shelter provisions are continuing to be distributed including tarpaulins and tents
4. Provision of shelter-related non-food items such as sleeping mats, sheets, sarongs, cooking utensils, and hygiene parcels is ongoing.
5. Investigation of option for possible temporary settlements to be undertaken by CCCM
6. Distribution data is now being received from Cluster operational agencies
7. GoB emergency and transitional shelter strategy remains unclear.

OVERALL SITUATION ANALYSIS

Damage

The existing Shelter Working Group (SWG) is being supported by the IFRC coordination team with a focus on the response to Cyclone Aila. IOM is also supporting the existing SWG with a focus on options for temporary resettlement.

The effects of Cyclone Aila are greater than first assumed. Whilst the cyclone (Category 1) did not impact with wind speeds of Cyclone SIDR (Category 4) some 18 months previously it did create very significant tidal surges. These tidal surges both breached and destroyed large sections of the system of embankments present in the affected regions and vast areas of land were inundated with water. In many places this water has been unable to drain away and areas remain submerged. In areas where the embankments have had sections destroyed there is repeated inundations via natural tidal movements preventing people from returning to their homes. It appears that many of the houses in the two worst affected districts, Khulna and Satkhira are constructed mainly using mud for walls. The initial, ongoing and repeated inundations have caused the majority of these houses to collapse. The continued presence of saline water is prolonging the duration of displacement, contaminating fresh water ponds and agricultural areas.

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) damage assessments show that some 247,000 houses have been totally destroyed and some 382,000 houses have been partially destroyed. The main areas of damage have occurred in the Districts of Khulna, Satkhira and Barisal. Apart from anecdotal evidence and brief assessments from member organisations (including IOM and Oxfam), the Shelter Coordination Team has yet to amass enough data to confirm these figures. It has been noted by the agencies involved in the response to Cyclone Aila that, given the amount of time which has passed, these figures will need to be updated, preferably via a more detailed multi sector analysis.

Combining the housing figures above, would indicate some 630,000 families were affected, equalling roughly 3 million affected people¹. Various assessments and appeals from responding organisations² would indicate that there are approximately 75,000 families which have been identified as being the most vulnerable and in need of priority assistance. These families tend to be those seeking refuge on the embankments and accompanying ring roads.

¹ Based on an average family size of five.

² Reports and appeals from IFRC, IOM and Oxfam

Return to land is further complicated by the tidal surges flowing into areas which previously had been protected by the embankments. It is unlikely that the system of embankments will be repaired in the coming months. Therefore, IOM is exploring an option of temporarily relocating the most vulnerable families from high-risk areas to transitional settlements in lower-risk areas. This option was presented by IOM to Usman Qazi from the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, at an IOM briefing on 28 June 2009.

Current Distributions

At the present moment³, figures show that as of mid-June some 23,000 families had received some sort of NFI distribution. Some 13,000 families received plastic sheeting, as well as basic household NFIs, including clothing, jerry-cans and blankets. The remaining families received a mix of NFI support from different agencies. Agencies reported in these preliminary figures include: GoB, IFRC/BDRCS, BRAC, CARE, Rupantar, and Uttaran.

Without making allowance at this stage for those living with host families or multiple families co-habiting as one 'household', the gap in emergency shelter materials is approximately 50,000. Currently it is difficult to compile a detailed figure for possible gaps by location. This figure of approximately 50,000 is reflected in a document received from the UNDP which is based on data from the GoB showing some 53,228 'most affected' families in the 'worst affected unions'⁴.

Further distribution data is expected in the coming days from operational actors including: Oxfam, CARE, World Vision, Save the Children USA, MSF-Holland, Muslim Aid, Habitat for Humanity, BRAC, Concern Worldwide, CARITAS, and SUK.

The Shelter Coordination Team (SCT) will be compiling this new data for analysis and dissemination at the second Shelter Coordination Group (SCG) meeting, scheduled for 7th July. This will include the first gap analysis of the affected districts.

Despite these shortages, affected communities are now rebuilding on remaining sections of the embankments using bamboo, recovered timber, tarpaulins, and fixing materials supplied by government, aid agencies or by civil society organizations.

Temporary Shelter Centres

Due to the nature and repeated inundation in many of the affected areas it may be required to establish temporary shelter centres in locations as near as is practical and safe to the affected populations current positions. IOM is leading this initiative with updates expected in the coming days.

ASSESSMENT & MONITORING

Currently there appears to be minimal support regarding joint and detailed assessments. Agencies have conducted their own rapid assessments and been providing them to the Emergency Shelter Cluster. Meetings planned this week should begin to clarify these issues.

³ Figures are still in the draft stage, with a number of actors in the process of forwarding their distribution data.

⁴ According to GoB, the worst affected Unions are: Gabura, Padmapukur, Burigualini, Protapnagor, Sreeula, Khraza, Kamarkhola, Sutarkhali, Tildanga, Uttar Betkashi, Dakhin Betkashi, Koira Sadar.

CHALLENGES, ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS

- Continued tidal surges and daily flooding ensures large areas remain uninhabitable.
- Accounting for distributions is challenging with distributions difficult to track in all areas.
- The temporary/emergency settlements on the embankments further reduce the embankments stability and accelerate further deterioration.
- Limited safe land available in the surrounding areas with field observations indicating that meeting accepted SPHERE standards may not be possible.
- Local material resources are in short supply
- Embankment repair is expected to take many months due to resources and the current monsoon season

FUTURE PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Advocate with RC and GOB temporary shelter centres
- Confirm distribution data
- Ensure shelter-related non-food item distribution data
- Plan for a joint multi sector analysis with the GoB, other lead and cluster member agencies
- Consistent and complimentary messaging on the state of the affected area
- Large geographical area, introduce concept to get agencies to take lead in certain districts
- Confirm specifications and standardisation of NFI packages related to shelter