

WELCOME



SSVK Bihar - Bihar Floods, 6th August, 2007 – An Update context

Incessant rains, both in the upper and lower catchments of the North Bihar rivers, since the third week of July 2007 have caused serious flooding in the North Bihar plains affecting as many as 19 of the 38 districts in the state causing extensive damage to infrastructure, human lives, livestock, crops and other property and assets. According to the initial estimate made by the disaster management department of the state government about According to govt. sources one crore & forty four lakhs people of 1958 panchayat, 7302 village, 188 blocks of 19 districts are flood affected. Death of 217 persons and 108 animals reported officially. No of houses 133050 of estimated value 10023.37 lakh have been damaged. 26618.89 lakh rupees of 1.3111 lakh hect crop has been effected. But similarly unofficially sources said it may be 4 times more. Death figure is more than 1000. For an example state Govt. reported deaths of 51 in Darbhanga District and other hand Hindustan Dainik news paper Darbhanga reporter Mr. Satish reported 100 death of 18 blocks of Darbhanga District. The list of the death people due to flood has been also published block wise. The districts are Muzaffarpur, Sitamarhi, Saharsa, East Champaran, Supaul, Darbhanga, Patna, Bhagalpur, West Champaran, Katihar, Madhubani, Samastipur, Sheohar, Nalanda, Khagaria, Gopalgang, Madhepura, Araria, Begusarai

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Several persons have lost their lives. Boat Capsizes in Samastipur around 125 persons were washed away. Few could save the life. Government figures are unreliable. If a boat capsizes, government estimates death count on the basis of its capacity, which is ridiculous. The government ignores that even though a village boat has capacity of fifty persons, not less than 150 persons board it. It is a village boat & not some flight that you get exact estimate of the persons boarded through passenger list. The bureaucracy & other government departments are not fully involved in the flood relief work. The helicopters were also deployed quite late. Only few helicopters are deployed in entire Bihar. Latest figure of total death is 260 officially and un officially is above 1000.

Current Situation

Hundreds of thousands of people in Bihar have been displaced by severe floods and are without food, shelter, drinking water and essential medicines for days. Many are living dangerously on embankments, highways, rooftops and any high place they find to keep alive. While dozens drowned in floodwaters, some died of starvation. Others breathed their last after catching diseases like malaria, kalaazar and diarrhoea. Some were bitten to death by snakes. In the last five days, several newborn babies died due to absence of health care in areas that have become isolated islands. Many elderly people were hit hard, with many tragically left behind in inundated villages by younger members of families eager to escape.

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According to Marzio Babilie, Unicef's health chief in India who is coordinating UN work in Bihar, in the 15 days to August 2, 90cm of rain had fallen in Bihar's worst affected areas, compared to annual average rainfall of 1.3m. He said aid agencies and authorities must do more to prevent outbreaks of measles, gastroenteritis, dengue fever and other diseases, or "we will see many deaths". He said 20 helicopters were needed in Bihar, whereas presently only 4 had been pressed into service. "The scale is massive, the challenge is enormous for the government and those who are helping," he said in Patna, Bihar's capital.

Many of the displaced are yet to get any food packets or water. Most are fighting for survival with virtually nothing to eat. They are sleeping under the open sky and forced to drink the polluted flood water. Help from the sky is their elusive last hope. There is acute shortage of essential medicines as well as doctors in rural areas hit by floods. Reports pouring in from different flood-hit areas paint a harrowing picture of the miseries of the people. In fact, the United Nations has now described the situation coupled with other parts of South Asia as one of the worst floods in living memory. (NDTV August 5,2007)

State Response

The situation has become all the more grim because the state government was initially unresponsive when things were more manageable. With the Chief Minister away on a visit to Mauritius, the state administration maintained a pretence of being adequate to the task without undertaking any concrete action at the ground level. Confronted with the mounting pressure from the opposition parties and the growing anger of the affected people, the Chief Minister, on his return on August 2, set the relief operations rolling by undertaking an aerial survey of the flood relief districts to have an appraisal of the gravity of the situation. Subsequently cabinet ministers were made specifically responsible for each of the affected districts to coordinate relief operations and an additional post of Special District Magistrates, each responsible for a cluster of affected districts, was created to deal with a calamity of this scale. The assistance of the army was requisitioned. The relief operations that way got off to a planned start from August 4 onwards.

The relief interventions being undertaken by the state government include the following:

- Opening up of relief camps –Muz-15, Sitamadhi-9, Saharsa-2, E.Champ-37, Supaul-5, Darbhanga-231, Bhagalpur-2, W.Champ-19, Katihar-6, Madhubani-62, Samastipur-276, Sheohar-30, Gopalganj-10, Madhepura-2, Begusarai-10
- Setting up of medical relief teams -Muz-10,E.Champ-2, W.champ-17, Supaul-7, Bhagalpur-4, Dharbhanga-18,Katihar-9, Madhubani-21, Gopalganj-8, Samastipur-22 Sheohar-5, Madhepur-4, Begusarai-8
- No. of boats deployed for evacuation -Muzaffarpur-558, Sitamarhi-346,Saharsa-174, E.Champ.-394, Supaul-143Darbhanga -547, Patna-21 Bhagalpur-22, W.Champ-118, Katihar-109,Madhubani-102, Samastipur-413, Sheohar-85 Nalanda-39, khagaria-119,Gopalganj-90, Madhepura-88, Araria-20, Begusarai-40
- Details of distribution of essential commodities -Wheat-15731.50 qtls, Rice-13221.00 .qtls, Chura-3185.18 qtls,Gur-566.02 qtls,Sattu-45.45qtls., Candles -89757, Match Box-47213, Salt-231.10qls & Polythene Sheets distributed-25126, Cash distribution (Rs. In Lakh)-140.01,6080 food packets Air dropped in Darbhanga, Madhubani,E.Champdistrict,1000 packets distributed by Begusarai Distt.

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Apart from supply falling grossly short of demand, there are certain areas that have as yet to be addressed like drinking water and temporary shelters. With regards to the latter, the process of procurement from the neighboring states has been initiated. With large areas still under water, the state is having logistical problems in reaching out relief to the people given the grossly inadequate number of boats that the government has at its disposal. The state government is presently busy consolidating the estimates of damage caused by the floods in order to make that into a basis for requisitioning assistance from the Calamity Relief Fund of the Prime Minister.

Response of other actors

Realising its limitations, both physical and financial, in dealing with a calamity of this magnitude, the state has gone in appeal to other actors, including those from the civil society. Some of the players who have taken up cudgels are UNICEF, OXFAM, British Red Cross, CASA, TDH, Magen David Adom (MDA), Evangelical Fellowship of India, Indian Commission on Relief (EFFICOR), Action Aid, Oxfam Hong Kong, Caritas India, WHO, Indian Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross but the actual relief operations either actually have to roll out (with agencies still appraising or having gone in appeal with funds still to be raised) or are very few and far between.

Immediate Interventions

Given this state of affairs, the people continue to languish. Our feedback from the field and from media reports is that, in order of priority, what is most required on an urgent basis are the following:

- Community Kitchens and dry ration support
- Polythene Sheets for temporary shelters
- Medicines to combat the outbreak of epidemics
- Safe drinking water
- Restoration of loss of personal assets like clothes and cooking utensils
- Country Boat

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So much so for addressing the immediate relief needs. However, there still remains enormous need on the ground which calls for extension of relief support. The Chief Minister has gone on record stating that the timing of the floods has also been unfortuitous as it has excluded the possibility of re-undertaking kharif cultivation. With no kharif cultivation, the landless would be robbed off wage earning opportunities in agriculture till September. Hence, relief support would have to be more extended for such families. For the time being the marginal and small farmers who have suffered crop losses have been promised cash compensation at the rate of Rs4000/hectare.

Updated Data:

This up date is up to 13th of August 2007

- Total 188 blocks of 19 district of north bihar are badly flood effected.
- 6652 villages in 1288 Panchayats of 19 districts of Bihar were severely affected by floods. As per the estimates done by department of disaster management of Govt. of Bihar about 144.54 lakh persons were affected. About 125459 houses damaged estimated Rs. 9609.61 lakh sand crop in 11.18 lakh hectares damaged estimated value Rs. 26307.13.

S.N	District	No. of Blocks	No. of Panchayat	No. of
1	Muzaffarpur	12		
2	Sitamarhi	17		
3	Saharsa	6		
4	East Champaran	23		
5	Supaul	6		
6	Darbhanga	18		
7	Patna	6		
8	Bhagalpur	11		
9	West Champaran	11		
10	Katihar	13		
11	Madhubani	20		
12	Samastipur	10		
13	Sheohar	5		
14	Nalanda	7		
15	Khagaria	7		
16	Gopalganj	8		
17	Madhapura	3		
18	Arariya	1		
19	Begusarai	6		

Source: Disaster Management Department, Government of Bihar

HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE RELIEF OPERATIONS 2007

The Challenge- Massive Devastation:

- Floods 2007: Most devastating in the recent memories.
- 22 districts, 264 blocks, 3547 Panchayats, 11850 villages and 245.585 lakh populations affected. About 48 lakh families in need of assistance.
- Crop loss: 17 lakh hectares, loss value approx. Rs 1332.04 crore; House damage: 6.90 lakh worth about Rs. 990.98 crore; Human lives lost 967 (including 70 deaths due to boat mishaps); animal pop. affected 15.15 lakhs, 988 deaths. Massive damages to infrastructures, such as roads, embankments, school buildings, etc. Some of these are shown in a comparative way over a few select years, especially those when flood was also massive (though not as big as the current year's).



Bihar Flood 2007- SSVK



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