

Alert

Sri Lanka – No. 01/2011

Sri Lanka Floods

Geneva, 14 January 2011

Brief Description of the Emergency

A persistent depression in the Bay of Bengal has brought heavy rain, causing flooding in several districts of eastern and central Sri Lanka. According to the figures released by the Disaster Management Centre (DMC), 220,219 families (835,530 people) have been affected by the bad weather prevailing in the country. Nearly 123,732 people have sought shelter in the 179 camps, 111 of them in Batticaloa district, set up by the government and welfare agencies including religious institutions. However, assessing the exact total number of the affected civilians remains difficult as people continue to move while others are living with host families.

District	Affected Families	Affected Persons	People in IDP temporary camps
Batticaloa	127,882	482,323	58,524
Ampara	81,574	312,210	25,775
Tricomalee	7,559	27,940	27,478
Polonaruwa	1,407	6,388	11,011
Anuradhapura	1,047	4,051	49
Kandy	276	854	335
Matale	182	776	560
Ratnapura	53	208	0
Kurunegala	239	780	0
Total	220,219	835,530	123,732

Source: Disaster Management Center (DMC), Colombo as of 11 Jan 2010

The meteorological department has reported that the bad weather with heavy rains and strong winds will continue with heavy rains in some places in the Eastern, North-Central, Uva, Northern, and Central provinces and in the Hambanthota District.

Impact

Eighteen deaths have been reported so far and 49 have been injured while two people are reported missing. The Eastern Province has been hit hard by the incessant rains flooding all the divisions in Batticaloa and Ampara districts. A total of 1,727 houses have been completely destroyed while 12,152 houses have been damaged. Government military forces and the Navy have been deployed for rescue

operations in several areas in Batticaloa, Ampara, Trincomalee, Polonnaruwa, Nuwara Eliya, Kandy, Badulla, and Kegalle Districts.

Transport in the flood affected areas has come to a standstill and several main roads have been completely cut off. Train services in the Eastern and Central Provinces have been disrupted. Irrigation tanks and reservoirs in many parts of the country are overflowing and the spill gates have been opened. The flood waters have caused serious damage to thousands of acres of paddy. Schools in the affected provinces have been closed until further notice.

The most urgently needed items include food, dry rations and non-food items such as mats, blankets, clothes, kitchen utensils and hygiene kits. The families are unable to return home, procure and cook food, therefore, the provision of cooked meals remains essential.

National and International Response

Cooked meals are provided by the government, while dry rations and non food items are distributed from helicopters to the areas that are inaccessible. However the need is huge and the current relief provided is inadequate. The government is therefore requesting assistance from the public. Government agents have requested non governmental organisations to help with the relief efforts. Several national and international organizations are also engaged in relief activities.

The country office of the United Nations agency World Food Programme (WFP) has announced it will provide emergency food assistance for some 400,000 flood affected people to support the government's relief efforts. A stock of 735 metric tons of assorted food commodities will be distributed among the flood affected people in the Eastern Province while 105 metric tons of food had been distributed during the last four days, the state-run radio reported yesterday.

ACT Alliance members response

According to the most recent information obtained from the partner churches, several hundred families are housed at church premises where it remains the responsibility of the respective churches to provide cooked meals, dry rations as well as non-food items to the families under their shelter. Most of the families have lost all their household belongings and are therefore deprived of basic necessities.

Planned activities

- Feeding: ACT member **the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL)** is planning to provide cooked meals for 1,620 families for two days in Batticaloa district. The respective churches will procure the food and mobilise assistance among the families to cook meals in the local kitchens that are set up and monitored by the church volunteers.
- Dry Rations: food packs comprising 3kg rice, 1 packet of soya meat, 250g tinned fish, 500g of dhal, salt packet, 250ml coconut oil, 1 packet samaposha (nutritious food for children) 2kg flour, and 500g sugar to 4,064 families. Hygiene kits comprising soap, toothpaste, toothbrush and sanitary towels will also be provided. The churches will make the necessary arrangements to provide sanitation facilities for women and for the people with special needs. In a few locations, construction of temporary toilets is also foreseen. Boiled water will be provided for infants and children.

NCCSL is monitoring the situation closely and has decided to intervene either through the Rapid Response Fund or through an Appeal.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to Jean-Daniel Birmele, ACT Chief Finance Officer (jbi@actalliance.org).

Thank you for your attention.

For further information please contact:

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