

Alert

India

Cyclone 'Vardah' batters Tamil Nadu

Geneva, 13 December 2016

1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

The Severe cyclonic storm 'Vardah' made landfall near Chennai, the capital city of South Indian State of Tamil Nadu with winds around 140kmph for about 90 minutes during the afternoon of 12th December 2016, until it crossed the city and travelled inland, bringing at least 10 cm rainfall and claiming 10 lives. According to the recent weather forecast, light to moderate rainfall will occur in Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram and Villupuram districts of Tamil Nadu in the next 12 hours.

At least 10 people, including a 3-year-old child and four women died in separate rain-related incidents in Chennai city. Skymet Weather chief meteorologist said, "Vardah did not weaken significantly as expected. The very severe cyclonic storm was still a severe cyclonic storm when it made landfall at north of Chennai." Many arterial roads were blocked with fallen trees causing traffic havoc. Several houses were destroyed, especially in coastal parts like Kottivakkam, Palavakkam, Foreshore Estate and Royapuram. Several incidents of wall collapse were reported across the city¹. The cyclone has caused severe destruction by uprooting trees, damaging houses, disrupting power services, land and air transport and throwing normal life out of gear.

2. Why is an ACT response needed?

There are thousands of people affected by cyclone 'Vardah' are taking shelter at various camps and NDRM team have evacuated them from low lying areas. In view of such circumstances, the support provided through government machinery is inadequate. Hence, there is dire need for external support for which ACT Alliance members intervention is imminent.

3. National and international response

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister has announced that, Rs 400,000 or about 6,000 USD each will be given to the family members of those who died due to Cyclone Vardah from the state disaster relief fund." The government has deployed 7 NDRF (National Disaster Response Force) teams and 2 each of SDRF (State Disaster Response Force) and Army columns, who were conducting the necessary rescue operations. Observing the current cyclonic situation, the Home Minister of India spoke to Tamil Nadu state Chief Minister and enquired about the situation in the aftermath of Cyclone Vardah crossing Chennai and Tiruvallur. Sri Lankan Airlines said, all its Chennai-bound flights were cancelled till Tuesday morning after authorities issued a red alert due to severe cyclonic storm "Vardah" which made a landfall in Tamil Nadu. The services at the Chennai Airport has been suspended till 9 pm on 12th December 2016. Schools and colleges in Kanchipuram and Tiruvallur have also been ordered to remain close till Tuesday (13th December 2016). Fishermen were also asked to not venture out into the sea since 30th November 2016. Director

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General of NDRF has said that, they are closely monitoring the situation and teams have been propositioned to act swiftly if any untoward incident takes place. The Tamil Nadu government has said that 7,357 people have been evacuated to 54 relief centers safely so far.

4. ACT Alliance response

The ACT Alliance India Forum Members such as United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (UELCI), Churches Auxiliary of Social Action (CASA) and Lutheran World Service India Trust (LWSIT) along with their partners have their presence in the disaster affected areas and are now assessing the cyclone situation very closely.

5. Planned activities

UELCI, CASA, and LWSIT may respond to the cyclone situation in Tamil Nadu either through an ACT Rapid Response Fund (RRF) mechanism or ACT Preliminary Appeal depending upon the intensity and scale of disaster if situation so warranted. As of now, the emerging primary needs includes; food, drinking water, non-food items and temporary shelter materials.

6. Constraints

There are several roads have been blocked due to fallen of big trees caused by cyclone 'Vardah'. As a result, transportation of relief materials to the cyclone affected slums in Chennai city and rural communities in adjoining districts would be the primary challenge for relief distribution. The problem may be further exacerbated if more rains caused in next few days due to impact of cyclone.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to the Head of Finance and Administration,
Line Hempel (Line.Hempel@actalliance.org)

For further information, please contact:

ACT India Forum, Rev. K. Y. Jacob (CARD), ACT India Forum Coordinator (bnb@lws.org), Contact No: +91 3322849730 / Mobile: +91 9831277852

ACT Regional Representative, Anoop Sukumaran (Anoop.Sukumaran@actalliance.org)

ACT Regional Programme Officer, James Phichet Munpa (James.Munpa@actalliance.org)

ACT Web Site address: <http://www.actalliance.org>