

India

Floods in Southern-Odisha

Bangkok, 21 July 2017

1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

The state of Odisha has been witnessing heavy to very heavy rains since 16 July 2017. These heavy rains have triggered flash floods in parts of Rayagada, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur and Malkangiri districts of the state of Odisha in India. Swollen rivers have become a cause for concern in the state. While the Thuamul-Rampur area of Kalahandi received 260 mm rainfall in the past 24 hours, the Kashipur block of Rayagada recorded 237 mm rainfall during the same period, causing flash floods in the Nagabali and Kalyan rivers. The Nagavali and the Kalyani rivers have risen, due to which many areas in Kalahandi and Rayagada were inundated. In Kalahandi, the water level in the river Hati is rising. The flood has claimed the lives of 4 persons and above 100 animals so far. As many as 28,000 people in 70 villages have been affected in the Rayagada district. In addition, in the Kalahandi district, the administration evacuated 5,731 people to safe places due to flood in Hati, Tel and other small rivers¹.

2. Why is an ACT response needed?

People in the flood affected districts of Odisha are very poor and do not have adequate coping mechanisms to deal with the situation. This part of Odisha is a drought prone region and people have mechanisms in dealing with drought but are ill equipped for torrential rains and flooding. While ACT members are educating people to adopt Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) practice to combat drought situations, the current flood situation is just exceptional. Therefore, the unprecedented rains in the region that are creating floods are putting lives and livelihoods of people at risk. A large number of people in the affected districts belong to poverty-stricken communities that are particularly vulnerable, and have very limited coping mechanisms to deal with the scale of the disaster. They are seeking support from government and non-government organizations including Churches for their survival and recovery from the critical situation. The state government initiated relief programs but these are yet to reach the remote villages.

3. National and international response

Due to torrential rains over the region, the government asked the help of the Indian Air Force as well as the Indian Army to rescue people who are marooned. They even asked the central government to provide helicopters for speeding up the relief and rescue operations. The Odisha Rapid Action Force (ODRAF), the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and three units of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams are involved with rescue and relief operations with the revenue department of the state government. As the situation continued to be grim, four helicopters of the Indian Air Force have been engaged for air dropping food packets and rescuing people. The people are taken to the higher ground and temporary relief camps created in government schools and offices. Cooked food has been distributed among the affected people.

1 <https://thewire.in/159583/odisha-floods-relief-reaches-dongoria-kondh-tribe-situation-improves/>

4. ACT Alliance response

The United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (UELCI), member Church Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC), Jeypore, Odisha are present in the flood-affected areas and requested UELCI to extend support with relief assistance. The Lutheran World Service India Trust (LWSIT) is present in the undivided Kalahandi and Balangir districts, where long-term development projects are operational. Looking at the current weather situation, LWSIT has alerted people to remain watchful to the flood situation and shift to safer places. So, the ACT Alliance India Forum members – UELCI, LWSIT and Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) are observing the current flood situation and may go for a response if the situation so requires.

5. Planned activities

ACT Alliance India Forum members would like to respond to the flood situation if the situation so requires. In this context, UELCI member church JELC has requested to save 4,000 worst floods affected households with support of food and non-food items. Similarly, LWSIT would like to support the flood-devastated households with food, non-food items and livelihood restoration activities, while CASA is planning to support the flood affected families with food and non-food items.

6. Constraints

The flood-affected villages are marooned to a large extent, while connecting roads and bridges have been washed away, which is a cause of concern. Consequently, the mobility to remote villages would be the greater challenge. The electricity and communication in flood-affected areas are disconnected, which is exacerbating the situation.

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