

**REBUILDING LIVES
AFTER CYCLONE SIDR**

Six months on



Playground constructed by Save the Children and partners as part of school rehabilitation programs in cyclone-affected Sharankola sub-district



Save the Children

June 15, 2008

Preparedness Saves Lives



Disaster preparedness and risk reduction can be a major factor in preventing the loss of lives in natural disasters and helped save tens of thousands of people in the areas affected by cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh.

Save the Children has operated in Bangladesh since 1972 and has been working to prepare coastal communities for cyclones since 2005- including recruitment and training of local disaster management committees and over 900 emergency management and preparedness volunteers; pre-positioning of rescue boats and relief goods; and emergency cyclone drills for some 10,000 residents living in the area affected by cyclone Sidr.

The cyclone hit the southern coast of Bangladesh on the evening of November 15th, impacting 5.4 million people- half of them children- across 30 districts. Alerted to the coming storm, families quickly fled their homes, leaving behind assets and household items. The storm and resulting floods destroyed homes, household belongings, food stocks, water sources and sanitation facilities in what were already very poor communities.

Save the Children had been monitoring the path of the cyclone for several days before it struck and began responding before it made landfall- working with communities to evacuate. As a result of its preparedness, Save the Children was able to begin distributing life-saving relief goods, evacuating ill and injured survivors, and assessing the most immediate needs of children the very next morning.

Over the next six months, Save the Children reached over 200,000 families with relief and helped communities to rebuild schools, roads and sources of livelihoods in seven districts (see map).

To date, we have provided 50,000 families with emergency relief goods; 176,000 families with food and 80,000 people with medicines or other health support. Save the Children operated safe play spaces benefiting more than 20,000 children in the months after the cyclone; provided more than 12,000 families with latrines and reconstructed community water sources providing drinking water to more than 376,000 people.

Six months on, Save the Children continues to support the recovery and development of children affected by cyclone Sidr. We are helping to rebuild schools and ensure the most vulnerable families are able to recover their sources of food and livelihoods. Save the Children has a long term-commitment to children in the southern coastal regional of Bangladesh, one of the most disaster-prone areas of the world, and will continue working to increase community resilience and preparedness.



Above:

Fatemah and her son Abdullah outside their destroyed home in Patheragatha. The family received emergency medical assistance from Save the Children.

Top left:

Women receive blankets and food rations at a Save the Children distribution point in Barguna district.





Immediate Response

The day after the cyclone, Save the Children began distributing emergency household kits containing plastic sheeting, cooking utensils, water containers, rope, soap, candles and matches. As the weather was becoming cold, blankets were quickly added to the packages. We began distributing fresh water from water purification plants on November 17- just two days after the disaster- and were operating a total of five plants benefiting 15,000 families just three weeks later.

In the weeks after the cyclone, Save the Children distributed high energy biscuits obtained from World Food Program (WFP) to 93,000 families. Additional food rations, including rice, potatoes, iodized salt and cooking oil were distributed to 26,500 families over the following weeks along with oral rehydration solution and water purification tablets. This support transitioned to a six month food program providing monthly WFP rations from the to 176,000 families.

Using pre-positioned boats, we transported ill and injured people to hospitals and mobilized community health volunteers to monitor for potential disease outbreaks.

While providing this initial relief, Save the Children initiated an immediate needs assessment, dispatching 28 needs assessment teams to assess damages. The results of this assessment were shared widely within Bangladesh and became a key information source and planning tool.

Over the following months, Save the Children continued distributing relief goods which allowed families to construct temporary shelters, cook and eat prepared food rations, sanitize their living environments and remain clean, warm and dry. Six months on, we have provided:

- Hygiene kits containing soap, towels, toothpaste, water containers and other items to 50,000 families
- 75,493 blankets
- Household kits containing cooking utensils, warm clothing, buckets and other items to 35,603 families
- 29,301 Jerry Cans
- Roofing Kits containing iron sheets, fasteners and a small cash stipend to 6,558 families
- Bleaching powder to help 7,000 families sanitize overflowed latrines and waste left behind by the cyclone



Initial response activities focused on pockets of highly-affected families living in remote areas where little other aid had reached. Priority was given to the very poor, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, female-headed households, the disabled, and families who were caring for children orphaned or separated by the cyclone.

Above:

Golbanu explains: “before we received help from Save the Children we were living outside with nothing. Now, we have been able to build a shelter and have blankets to stay warm at night. Because of this help, my daughter, born two months after the cyclone, was born into a warm, clean place.”

Top left:

Women collect water from a portable filtration plant operated by Save the Children in Bhola district. November 19, 2007.



Safe Places for Children

The cyclone destroyed homes, schools and other areas where children normally spend time. To meet children's immediate needs, Save the Children opened 190 child friendly spaces where 20,380 children could safely gather and play while their parents were clearing debris, building shelters and accessing relief. The spaces were located in cyclone shelters, school buildings or simple shelters constructed by Save the Children.

We recruited 657 facilitators, including adolescents and parents, to supervise children at the safe play spaces. Facilitators received small stipends, guidelines for operating the spaces and training on child protection. Each space provided children with access to sports equipment, reading materials, educational toys, safe drinking water, latrines and snacks. Many of the spaces also provided hot meals and linked with government programs to provide children and their families with access to basic medical care.

Safe spaces operated for up to three months, transitioning to after-school programs when schools reopened. In many areas, the safe play spaces continue to operate as "children's clubs" which involve children in educational play and child rights activities.

In the months after the cyclone, Save the Children conducted detailed education and protection assessments. These were among the only post-cyclone studies looking at the specific needs of children. They identified areas where children did not have access to school and highlighted challenges for teachers, the importance of community-based care for children who lost their caregivers to the cyclone, concerns around loss of livelihoods pushing children into exploitative labor, and the need to integrate child protection into national emergency preparedness planning.

Six months later, Save the Children is working with communities to repair the most affected schools and training teachers to help children cope with the changed situation. We are providing teaching and learning materials to replace what was lost or destroyed during the cyclone and training government officials, community members and children to respond to cases of child abuse and exploitation.

To decrease children's risk during future disasters, Save the Children is working with students and teachers to develop school disaster risk reduction and preparedness plans which include evacuation procedures, awareness raising and improvement of water and sanitation systems to ensure they will meet children's needs if schools are used as shelters during future disasters.



Save the Children first met Nazma (12), who lives with her family in Pathergatha, an area on the southern coast of Bangladesh near the Bay of Bengal, a few weeks after Sidr struck. Like many other children, she spent several days after the disaster without shelter and saw her school and family's belongings completely destroyed.

Six months after the cyclone, Nazma's life, in many ways, has returned to normal. For four months, Nazma and her younger brother attended a child friendly space supported by Save the Children.

"We learned to act and sing there, and could play with our friends, which helped us forget about our problems." explains Nazma. Her mother adds that adults in the community saw the spaces as important in protecting their children, "after the cyclone we were worried our children would get hurt or that we would not find them again. It was a relief when we knew they were in a safe, nearby place all day."

Above:
Nazma returns to school

Top left:
Boys draw at an after school "children's club" in Barguna district



Water and Sanitation

The cyclone damaged community wells, contaminated drinking water supplies and destroyed latrines which were essential for preventing the spread of disease.

In the immediate aftermath of the cyclone, Save the Children distributed water purification tablets, hygiene kits, bleaching powder and water containers. In areas with no sources of clean water, the agency provided 15,000 families with daily drinking water supplies for four months. At the same time, we moved quickly to begin repairing and replacing destroyed latrines and water sources, and have provided more than 376,000 people with sustainable access to drinking water.

Six months on, Save the Children has repaired 3,500 damaged tubewells- fixing or replacing concrete platforms which help protect groundwater from contamination, installing drains which keep the area around the tubewells clean and replacing pipes and handpumps. Additionally, Save the Children installed 103 new tubewells in areas where drinking water sources were completely destroyed. The agency also constructed seven pond sand filters which sanitize pond water in areas where groundwater is too sandy or saline to construct tubewells. Although this model is expensive, it has provided sustainable sources of drinking water to communities who would otherwise collect drinking water directly from ponds and ditches.

In the cyclone affected areas, natural ponds are an essential source of water for household use and rearing of small fish. Save the Children cleaned and disinfected 715 ponds, providing each with an enclosed area for girls and women to bathe and Bangla-language signs explaining that pond water is not safe for drinking.

To prevent the spread of infectious disease, Save the Children provided 8,085 very poor families with household latrines and repaired 4,905 damaged latrines- helping 12,990 families maintain clean environments.

Additionally, Save the Children repaired 261 school latrines and constructed 71 new school latrines. Repair work included plastering walls, fixing or replacing doors, and replacing missing items like vent pipes, soakwells and lids. Each latrine has two sections, one for girls and one for boys, with a bucket for hand washing inside each. Tubewell hand pumps are located nearby to provide water. All school latrines are “off-set type,” with latrine superstructures located away from the latrine pits and connected by a plastic pipe- a model which greatly increases safety and facilitates easy cleaning.



Above:

17 year old Moriam and her neighbors collect drinking water from a pond sand filter constructed by Save the Children.

Top left:

Children play at a tubewell installed by Save the Children in Barguna district.



Healthy Families

Save the Children is protecting the health of children and their families with a special focus on Barguna and Patuakhali districts- two highly-affected coastal areas where the risk of disease outbreak is high. Our emergency health and nutrition program has transitioned from meeting urgent health needs in the aftermath of the cyclone to longer-term revitalization and improvement of health services in remote, disaster-prone communities.

After the cyclone, Save the Children helped ensure government and non-profit healthcare facilities could meet the needs of survivors by providing clinics in the worst-affected areas with medicines, blankets and other supplies. Over six months, this strategy helped government and non-profit health workers reach more than 80,000 people.

Save the Children also recruited and trained community health volunteers, establishing a network of 450 volunteers less than a month after the cyclone.

Each health volunteer works with between 150 and 200 families. She makes house to house visits and holds community meetings to provide health advice, distribute oral rehydration solution, and refer ill or injured people to appropriate health facilities.

The volunteers particularly focused on the needs of mothers and newborns in hard hit areas. Each volunteer identified all pregnant women in her community and worked with families, traditional birth attendants and local health facilities to ensure pre-natal care, transport mothers and newborns to the hospital when needed, and ensure post-natal and newborn care.

Additionally, Save the Children provided the volunteers with 13,000 newborn kits containing caps, mosquito nets and other items to care for newborns along with 8,250 clean delivery kits. These kits were distributed among new and expectant mothers in the cyclone-affected area.

The emergency health and nutrition program will continue working through 2008 to rebuild community health by supporting community health volunteers and improving the quality of local health facilities.



To support water, sanitation and health activities, Save the Children conducted school-based awareness sessions for children and community-based sessions for women. Save the Children and its local partners used pictorial tools and demonstrations to explain proper handwashing techniques, appropriate use of latrines, and the importance of drinking and cooking with safe water. A total of 25,000 women and 73,000 children participated. During the awareness sessions, 10,000 women were provided with soap and cloth napkins for hand washing. Additionally, 300 water point management committees were formed, trained and provided with tool kits to ensure the long-term maintenance of community tubewells.

Above:

Fatema explains handwashing techniques to Limon and Nayeem (both age 8) at a school-based awareness session.

Top left:

Vaccination at a government health clinic supported by Save the Children.

Means to Live



Even before cyclone Sidr, the southern coastal region was among the poorest areas of Bangladesh. Alarming high rates of malnutrition among children indicate pervasive poverty and, according to the World Food Program, five of the area's six districts are at very high risk of food insecurity.

The cyclone damaged food stores in family homes and local markets. The main rice crop, a primary (and in some communities only) annual source of food and income, was in the fields at the time of the cyclone. The impact of the cyclone combined with extensive flooding in the summer of 2007 and rising food prices to cause ongoing food shortfalls in some communities.

As communities begin to recover, Save the Children is focusing on helping to rebuild livelihoods. We are paying 1,500 people to repair school grounds and roads; this provides the poorest families with a needed source of cash while helping communities rebuild after the storm. Our cash for work programs involve a large number of women and include safe and appropriate jobs for the neediest community members, regardless of age and physical ability.

Save the Children is helping families gain longer term access to food by distributing vegetable seeds for household gardens, small fish for which can be reared in household ponds and cows which provide milk for consumption and sale.

These emergency livelihoods activities will continue for at least six more months with extended cash for work activities, distribution of rice seeds and other items to help small farmers begin planting again, provision of boats and nets to fisher families, and cash grants to help the poorest families replace income-earning assets such as rickshaws.

Emergency and recovery activities are linked to Save the Children's long-term development efforts in the area, and as recovery continues the agency is exploring additional ways to support increase incomes for the poorest families, reduce the risk of hunger, and mitigate the economic impact of future cyclones.

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David Greedy: Page 2, page 3 (left)

Jeffrey Holt: page 3 (right), page 4 (top left), page 5, page 6, page 7 (top left)

Erica Khetran: page 4 (right), page 7 (right)



Above:

Jannat uses a road repaired under Save the Children's cash for work program to get to school each day. Now, her walk to school takes half the time and she does not have to travel along through isolated fields or other unsafe areas.

Top left:

Jaynob instructs cash for work participants planting grass along a roadside as part of Save the Children's cash for work program.