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bangladesh

emergency flood appeal

Work in Progress

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Introduction and the Working Group

The Bangladesh Emergency Flood Appeal (BEFA) was set up in response to the severe flooding of Bangladesh early in the summer 2004.

The flooding has been the worst in recent Bangladesh history, affecting nearly twenty million people, taking hundreds of lives, and leaving mass destruction of the town and village infrastructures.

A total of 44 out of 64 districts had been affected, 19 million people left homeless, 4,000km of roads destroyed, 17,000 bridges and culverts broken, 6,700 schools damaged and 400 schools totally submerged under water. 20 million people have had their livelihood destroyed with no access to clean water and unable to feed themselves and their families. The destruction has left lasting damage, and the same damages and the same people face another two months of the monsoon season. The people of Bangladesh require immediate relief, as well as assistance with rebuilding their lives for the long-term.

Baroness Uddin set up a Working Group, the 'Bangladesh Emergency Flood Appeal' (BEFA), in order to coordinate our contributions from Britain. The aim was to ensure maximum cooperation between all the major relief agencies, businesses and individuals active in this process.

The Appeal is chaired by Baroness Uddin, and the Working Group Members include:

Kerry Pollard MP, Lord Ahmed, Lord Patel of Blackburn, Mohammed Sarwar MP, Oona King MP, HE A. H. Moffazal Karim High Commissioner for Bangladesh, Sheikh Dr Zaki Badawi Principal of the Muslim College, Dr Al-Dhubayan Director of the Islamic Cultural Centre, Dr M. Naseem Chairman of Birmingham Central Mosque, Dr Hany El Banna President of Islamic Relief, Dr Musharaf Hussain trustee of Muslim Hands, Iqbal Ahmed CEO and Chairman of SeaMark International and Lisa Aziz of Sky News.

In addition, BEFA is being supported by DFID, Oxfam, Islamic Relief, the British Red Cross, Muslim Hands, Save the Children, Muslim Aid, CAFOD, Christian Aid and others.

Minutes

Since the Working Group was set up, the Members have met twice to discuss, and plan fund distribution strategy. The minutes of both are below:

Thursday 29th July 2004

Conference Room, No. 2 Millbank

11am - 1pm

Attendees:

Baroness Uddin, Oona King MP, Dr Zaki Badawi (Principal, Muslim College), Fuad Nahdi (Q News), Mohammed Kroessin (Muslim Aid), S. M. T. Wasti (Muslim Aid), Farid Bakht, Rohema Miah (Oona King MP's office), Taryn Khanom (BritBangla), Nazrul Islam (East End Life), Dilowar Khan (London Muslim Centre), Mary Lucas (CAFOD), Shahid Bashir (Muslim Hands), Waseem Yaquub (Islamic Relief), Ivan Scott (Oxfam Great Britain), Nadia Saracini (Christian Aid), Arun Muttreja (Save the Children), Kris Verle (Simon Hughes MP's office), Jasmin Tarique (DFID), Ian Howard-Williams (DFID), Colum Wilson (DFID), Paul Dyett (DFID), Adam Badawi (Q News), Sanjiev Johal (BBC London), Dave Perrella (BBC London), M. Choudhury (BOB Professionals), E.Rahman (BOB Professionals), S.L.Hassanain (Muslim Hands), Shabel Firuz (Islamic Relief), Cllr Murad Qureshi (GLA), Emma Delo (British Red Cross), Jill Clements (British Red Cross)

Minutes:

-Baroness Uddin welcomed and commended the efforts of the organisations as well the individuals present at the meeting. Everyone welcomed this opportunity to work together and in introducing themselves detailed the programme of their work in Bangladesh.

- Baroness Uddin explained that **The Bangladesh Emergency Flood Appeal (BEFA)** is to be a collective response from Britain ensuring everyone share knowledge and information about the aid and assistance that is being sent to Bangladesh. It is hoped that the co-ordination will assist the donor agencies in identifying the areas that are receiving help.

- BEFA will launch an appeal immediately and ask for money, clothes and foods to be donated, particularly for the some specific areas affected in Sylhet. BEFA will also be working on a website which will list all contribution and activities.

- BEFA will ensure continuous involvement of Parliamentarians, NGOs, business people and concerned individuals to maximise the benefits for those affected. Everyone recognised that the work required long term attention to bring Bangladesh back to any sense of normality - The official figure from the Bangladesh Government in damages was £3-5 billion and that the real cost would not be apparent until the water receded.

- An informal working group was proposed and accepted. BEFA hopes to ensure accountability through regular communication within the group, as well as act as a pressure group to keep Bangladesh on UK Government's agenda.

- It was said that the work would require long term strategies although a number of charities and individuals had already made effort to send emergency funds for relief purposes. Baroness Uddin reported sending £5000 to the villages affected in Sunamgonj. Everyone listed their own relief effort.

- Baroness Uddin shared information received from DFID / DHAKA which was received that morning. DFID had allocated £10 million although the Bangladesh government had as yet not asked for any formal assistance; the donor agencies had met and launched their own relief efforts.

- DFID staff present reported logistical / practical problems in distribution. DFID welcomed high profile Bangladeshis in this country becoming involved in this effort as it will create the necessary pressure on banks and others that may be approached on some of the issues raised in the meeting. DFID also urged everyone to ensure all information and statistics used should be closely checked prior to quoting and without inappropriate exaggeration.

- The Representative from Save the Children suggested the importance of long term strategies for income regeneration as well as food and clothing in the immediate period.

- The Representative from Christian Aid reiterated this point and stated that long-term work to reduce the impact of disasters was their priority. Most of the organisations they work with are engaged in disaster preparedness work. This can include training community-based volunteers to ensure communities are better prepared to deal with disasters.

- The CAFOD representative added that the people did not have income for loan repayments and this needed to be raised with formal institutions such as DFID, Bangladesh Government and others involved in this area.

- Muslim Aid highlighted the problems of sending food and medicines which were over the sell by dates. He stressed that donors should preferably make donations of money rather than goods, and to help people with their loan repayments.

- Muslim Aid would also prefer monies going through relief agencies and not via individuals although recognised that would happen in many instance.

- Christian Aid stated that their strategies included long-term and sustainable development including reconstruction of houses and employment creation. Training volunteers to deal with disasters is something CA was exploring.

- Mr Yaqub from Islamic Relief agreed to take clothes and medicine at their warehouse in Birmingham. Baroness Uddin agreed to participate in their TV appeal.

- Fuad Nahdi of Q News expressed disappointment about the lack of prominent media attention on this disaster. He added that this was partly because of the logic of how the media worked. For example they had virtually all placed themselves in the current media hotspot, Darfur. To make a shift to Bangladesh would be a huge effort.

Fuad Nahdi (FN) reported the discussion in progress to set up a portal/website on BEFA.

- Dr Badawi suggested that BEFA engages in international collaboration and discussions which will raise the complex issue of flood control barriers of India. Dr Badawi stressed the need for a look at preventative methods to stop this happening every year. He suggested the need to appeal to the World Bank.

- Peter Bottomley MP suggested involvement of the Council of Churches. He also raised the issue of the use of local currency and the economic implication of foreign currency use.

- BOB Professional suggested BEFA approach some of the Banks not to make a charge when sending the donations.

- Councillor Murad Qureshi GLA stated significant donations were going to families in Sylhet from families living in the UK. He also expressed shock that there appeared to be a lack of contingency plans for evacuation given the warnings of this flood was known a month before hand. He said we should also work with Indian and Nepal Government who were also affected by floods and any controversies or politics should be put aside.

- Oona King MP - welcomed BEFA and stressed the importance of our attention to emergency aid and also reconstruction and rebuilding the infrastructure.

- Baroness Uddin thanked everyone for their effort and their agreement for a meeting in September.

Wednesday 8th September 2004

Moses Room, House of Lords

3pm - 5pm

Attendees:

Baroness Uddin, Mike O'Brien MP (Minister of State, FCO), Lord Rogan, Kerry Pollard MP, Peter Bottomley MP, Oona King MP, Jim Fitzpatrick MP, Terry Rooney MP, Betty Williams MP, Dr Al-Dubayan (Director, Islamic Cultural Centre), Taryn Khanom (BritBangla), Colum Wilson (DFID), Rowshan Hannan (DFID), David Wood (DFID), Othman Moqbel (Muslim Hands), Melanie Smith (Oxfam), May Wuas (CAFOD), Nadia Saracini (Christian Aid) and others.

Minutes:

- Baroness Uddin welcomed everyone present and updated all on the BEFA efforts thus far, commending everyone for their collaboration and contributions. She hoped everyone would assist in the fundraising dinner taking place on the 13th of September, in Canary Wharf.

- Oona King MP spoke of supporting the fundraising dinner, and the importance of BEFA. Ms King is likely to visit Bangladesh shortly.

- Kerry Pollard suggested that particular villages should be helped, rather than targeting too wide in general. Baroness Uddin agreed to explore this, although reported some discussion taking place with the likely area to be some villages in Sunamgonj / Chhatak.

- Christian Aid had not specifically set up an appeal for Bangladesh, however they had assisted with emergency food distribution. They also concluded that the reconstruction work programme needed to be implemented would take up to 2 years to get back to where Bangladesh was before the floods, taking into account the varying needs.

- CAFOD – stated their Food Aid for 10,000 families would be increased and spoke of setting up a ‘food for work’ programme, and constructing low cost housing. A credit and saving programme was also illustrated to be a viable long term option of assisting victims of the flood.
- Muslim Hands highlighted the benefit of rebuilding housing for long term assistance, and used their efforts in Sudan to demonstrate this.
- Britbangla reminded us about raising donations, raising awareness, and brought attention to their own efforts and website.
- Oxfam, announced that they were working with other NGOs in Bangladesh. They spoke of assisting 50,000 families with food, clothes, and water purification tablets.
- DFID, spoke of their continued support for Bangladesh, and the transition from emergency response to development phase. DFID confirmed that the best means of assistance was money rather than donations in kind.
- The meeting noted the massive efforts of individuals and groups country wide, with many people raising money and sending it directly to their relatives. The need to solve the root of flood problems was highlighted, rather than merely reacting to it only once it has taken place. It was further noted that the Cornwall flooding of two days was given more media coverage than that happening in Bangladesh, and therefore media liaison was raised as an important way of flagging more support.
- Everyone agreed that some efforts needs to be made with regards to the political solutions which are needed with regards to management of the dams
- Dr Al-Dubayan – spoke of the importance of raising awareness, and informed us that after opening a campaign for the appeal, he had raised £6,000.
- Mike O’Brien MP – said “the flood situation is of enormous concern”, and stated that the geographical location of Bangladesh was its main cause of flooding, rather than dams being open and closed wrongly; he said he would investigate this further for clarification. He highlighted the slowness of Bangladesh Government to ask for assistance, but understood that they didn’t want to be seen as a basket. He went on to praised DFID and their good response, and welcomed the BEFA effort.
- Baroness Uddin circulated a paper with the proposal for distribution of the funds and concluded the meeting.

Objectives

Through consultation within the Working Group, and priority guidelines identified by major relief agencies, the following objectives will guide the use of all funds raised by BEFA:

- Assistance will focus on immediate relief as well as long-term rehabilitation.
- Investment will be targeted both at individual as well as long-term collective benefits.
- Priorities for long term investment will be identified through local consultation
- Priority will be given to sustainable solutions.

Target Area

Chhatak Upozilah in the greater Sylhet district will be the area where BEFA funds will be predominantly invested. Chhatak is located on the northwest region of greater Sylhet and is one of the Upzillah (sub-district) in SunamGonj district. The Upozillah has a population of 219, 583 spreading over 13 Union Parishads and 566 villages. Like most area of greater Sylhet Chhatak was devastated by the Flood in August. Two other areas identified are Gobingonj and Balagonj. It is hoped that an area based approach will have a better chance of making a more meaningful and visible impact in the lives of people and communities than spreading resources thinly across a larger area.

Focus of Investment

BEFA funds will be focused on helping families and communities to overcome loss and rebuilding lives. Priorities will be given to the following activities:

- Immediate relief (food, medicine, clothing etc)
- Provision of safe drinking water (Deep Tube Wells)
- Re-building of homes destroyed by floods
- Re-building of damaged social or communication infra-structure (schools, roads etc)

Appeal Attention

In efforts to raise awareness about the Bangladesh floods and BEFA, the following media outlets have given coverage:

- GMTV Interview
- ITN Interview
- BBC Asian Network Interview
- Bangla TV Interview
- ARY Digital Interview
- Vecton Interview
- BBC London Interview
- Sunrise Radio Interview
- Club Asia Interview
- Bangla Post Newspaper
- Bangla Mirror Newspaper
- Jonomot Newspaper

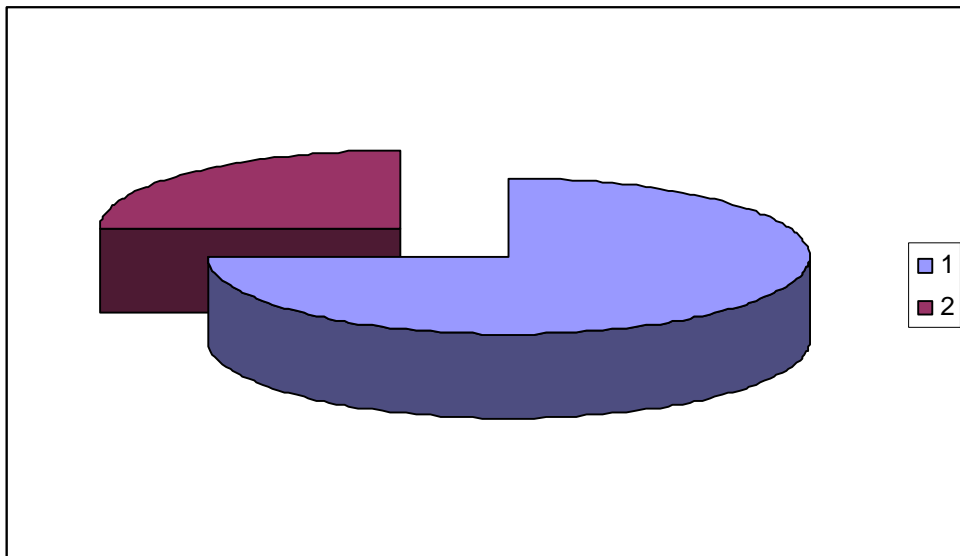
Appeal Funds Raised

Since BEFA's launch on the 29th of July 2004, a number of strategies have been employed to raise awareness and money; appealing to the national and local media, approaching individuals, Community Organisations and businesses, and a fundraising charity dinner.

The general appeal raised an approximate sum of £45,000 (1).

The fundraising dinner, raised a sum of £15,000 (2).

BEFA Funds Raised - Illustration



In reaching such amount, our special thanks go to everyone for their donation and supporting the dinner.

Bagri Foundation, Lord Bagri
Central Jamia Mosque, Ghamkol Sharif
Dr T Beedham
Elrahma Trust
George Iacobescu, Canary Wharf
Glaxosmithklein
Hendon Mosque and Islamic Centre
Islamic Relief
Lord Ahmed
Lord Sainsbury of Turville
Mr and Mrs Bassett
Mr Iqbal Ahmed
Ms M Ali and Ms S Parveen
Muslim Hands
Muslim Welfare Association, Wembley Central Mosque
Muslim World League
Pakistan Muslim Association, Newcastle Mosque and Islamic Centre
Pride of Asia
Qibla Cola
The Allen and Overy Foundation
The Birmingham Central Mosque
The Jamia Mosque and Bangladesh Islamic Centre
The London Central Mosque Trust and Islamic Cultural Centre
The Muslim College
The Tula Trust
The Watford Mosque
The Yeatman Foundation
Watford Mosques and Welfare Association

Distribution

August, September & October 2004 :

We digressed on our initial plans for building one large shelter due to the advice we received from all participating in the working group. The conclusion was that funds raised would be used to meet immediate relief.

Providing immediate relief, yet abiding to the objective for longer term rehabilitation and collective assistance, it was decided that making provision for clean water was the first priority. To this end, 10 Tube Wells were placed in 10 villages, with each Tube Oil serving up to 10 families in one area.

Further to this, emergency relief was distributed to 4,000 individuals, with clothing, rice, and 400 Taka each.

In meeting the long term objectives and needs of some families, 4 Sewing machines and 4 Rickshaws were also given in order to provide earning capacity. Individuals were chosen on the basis of recommendation by local village and union representatives.

We also collaborated with Muslim Hands, installing further Tube Wells in 24 more villages. Alongside Islamic Relief we distributed further relief of clothing and rice to an additional 600 individuals.

November, December 2004 & January 2005 :

Baroness Uddin visited Bangladesh in December to inspect the work which began in October. She commissioned a further 50 Tube Wells, began the house reconstruction programme for 40 families, with 3 schools receiving financial support for rebuilding the damage suffered from the flood. One school was more substantially damaged and will have to be rebuilt from scratch. In addition, 200 women will receive financial support to establish work related activities. This may mean purchasing goods or materials which they can buy and sell. We also intend to purchase a number of additional sewing machines and.

In addition, we have also identified two areas in Gobingonj and Balagonj where more relief work will be undertaken. We will ensure the report of work is distributed to all the members on our return.

A full financial breakdown will be made available once the programme is completed.

Conclusion

In response to the severe flooding in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Emergency Flood Appeal through a journey of six months has contributed considerably to the overall efforts of consolidating the devastation in Bangladesh.

In a short space of time, BEFA has assembled a Working Group which has brought much expertise and dedication to the cause. BEFA has successfully collaborated the work of individual, businesses, community organisations and major relief agencies, co-ordinating and channelling their progression, and in doing so, acting as an umbrella organisation. BEFA has also raised a fair amount of funds, and although this it has not been the biggest contributor in terms of donations, the sum of £60,000 has and will continue to significantly bring relief to the suffering of many in particular areas.

Baroness Uddin thanks everyone for all their time, efforts and generous contributions in assisting with the Bangladesh Emergency Flood Appeal.