Alert

India

Ethnic Violence in Assam

Geneva, 31 July 2012

1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

The ethnic violence in Assam refers to a series of ongoing violent attacks that flared on 19 July 2012 in the Indian state of Assam. The violence arose from a long history of ethnic conflict between indigenous Bodos and migrant Muslims from Bangladesh. As of 28 July 2012, at least 59 people have died and over 400,000 people have been displaced, from almost 500 villages, taking shelter in 270 relief camps.

2. Why is an ACT response needed

In view of insufficient basic amenities available at the relief camp sites, managed by the government, where people are suffering from inadequate food, water, clothing and space for safe shelter, there is dire need of external responses to augment the relief efforts of the government. ACT India Forum members - Lutheran World Service India Trust (LWSIT), Churches Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA), CNI-SBSS and UELCI have either their own presence or the presence of their network partners/ Churches in the riot hit region. The immediate and urgent unmet needs include food (including baby food), water, clothes, sleeping mats, mosquito nets, hygiene kits and other household items. In order to avoid overlapping of assistance to the affected population, coordination among Forum Members will be done to render relief to the people living in various relief camps in different locations. Provision of these basic items will help these populations to live with dignity till the situation restores to normalcy and enable them to return to their home.

3. National and international response

The Central Government deployed Para Military forces and 13 columns of the Indian Army on 24 July 2012 to the affected districts. On 26 July, indefinite curfew and shoot-at-sight orders were enforced in Kokrajhar district along with night curfew in Chirang and Dhubri districts. On the same day Chief Minister of Assam announced INR 600,000 (USD 11,000 approx.) as compensation to the closest kin of those who were killed. The Prime Minister visited the riot hit area of Assam and said that the central government will closely work with the state government to provide a sense of security to all affected people. He announced INR 100 crore (USD 18 million approx) for relief and rehabilitation of the affected people in the six affected districts, INR 100 crore as Special Plan assistance for development programs in the affected areas and another INR 100 crore under the Indira Awaas Yojana (for shelter). INR 30,000 (USD540 approx) each would be given to those whose houses were completely damaged, INR 20,000 (USD 360 approx) under the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund to those whose houses were partially damaged. The prime minister ordered an inquiry committee to be set up to

look into the violence and directed the state government to provide security to the affected people so that they can go back home.

4. ACT Alliance response

ACT Alliance India Forum members; LWSIT, CASA and CNI-SBSS are planning to respond to the current emergency situation of those, who have taken shelter in the relief camps or living in their native place without adequate basic amenities. While LWSIT has already initiated a rapid assessment by deploying their field team based at Kokrajhar, CASA and CNI-SBSS are in touch with Church of North India and partners respectively. UELCI is apparently in touch with NELC. All of these members are in touch with the coordinating agency of ACT India Forum in terms of coordination and response for taking the issue forward.

5. Planned activities

Members of ACT India Forum i.e., LWSIT, CASA and CNI-SBSS are in the process of preparing action plan either for RRF or preliminary appeal based on the rapid needs assessment carried out by each of the member which will be firmed soon. However, as per preliminary assessment done by LWSIT team during their visit to a number of camp sites in Kokrajhar district, there is need of food, NFI, water, hygiene kits, clothes (for women, gents, children), sleeping mats, mosquito nets, and other household items for daily necessities.

6. Constraints

Since the riot-hit areas are under a tense and fearful atmosphere, such situation may lead to further conflict while the people living in the relief camps return home without security being guaranteed to them. As such, they may need to continue to live in the camps which may affect their lives and livelihood security. This unstable/unsafe atmosphere may also disrupt the relief operation. Mobilization of funds in time is extremely urgent to support the affected population to meet unmet needs.

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

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