



Ritinjali's Disaster Relief Efforts in Bihar: Part II **October 1, 2008**



Volunteers displaying Ritinjali Banner

Ritinjali responded to the emergency situation in Bihar in the first week of September by rushing a first consignment of relief material and money to provide food and medicines to the people affected by floods. The Ritinjali Newsletter sent out on September 13 described some of the team's experiences, summarized the programs being implemented by Ritinjali and listed some of the immediate needs of the communities in the camps.

Though reports in the media and elsewhere suggest that the River Kosi is receding and that the flood situation has eased considerably Ritinjali takes a long term perspective to disaster relief and will continue its ongoing efforts in Bihar. An important part of this effort is keeping Ritinjali members apprised of progress made and ongoing challenges through regular dispatches and updates.

The Journey to Khagaria district

On a mid-September morning, Ritinjali volunteers loaded all the relief material collected from different parts of Delhi on a truck. The consignment was booked to be sent by train to the Khagaria district in Bihar and contained a total of 162 boxes weighing around 6450 kilos. Our members had donated the following items:

Medicines
Food (Rice, Pulses, Wheat flour, Salt, Sugar, Cooking Oil, Biscuits)
Clothes
Candles
Matchboxes
Baby Food
Footwear
Durries
Tents
Books
Stationery (Pencils, notebooks, erasers, crayons)

The materials arrived at the Khagaria station a day later and were unloaded with the support of 4 police personnel sent by the Superintendent-of Police, Khagaria, Dr. Kamal Kishore Singh. Thereafter, the materials were loaded onto a truck and handed over to Mr. A. Gufar, the SHO of Maheshkhunt, a town about 20 km away from Khagaria.



Relief materials donated by Ritinjali members

Education at Zero Mile

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, much of Ritinjali's work is going on at Pansalwa camp, also known as *Zero Mile* camp, in Kharagia district. While the numbers of evacuees appeared to have declined from the 3000 originally reported to about 1600, there are still many children under the ages of 15 needing educational services. On our last visit, we had identified 5 young adults from the camp (Ms. Sita Kumari, Ms. Poonam Kumari, Mr. Vinay kumar, Mr. Nand Kishore and Mr. Vipin)

who would facilitate teaching and learning of children in this camp. For their services they receive a monthly stipend of Rs.500.

We were able to see about 350 kids studying in temporary shelters set up to provide teaching and learning. In fact, when Ritinjali's truck full of relief materials was brought to Zero Mile by Dr. Kamal Kishore Singh, one could see the books and stationery being used by the children in these make shift classrooms.



Books and stationery distributed at Zero Mile Camp

Providing Vital Health Services

Ritinjali volunteers met with the people in the camp and representatives of local NGOs working there to do a rapid assessment of the situation and needs of the people. Based on needs identified there, we met with a team of doctors from the NGO *DoctorsForYou* (DFY). Dr. Ravikant, the Chief Coordinator of DFY had assembled a team of 5 doctors to support their work in the various camps set up for the flood-affected people.

Our volunteers including the team of doctors led by Dr. R.N. Kango, Dr. Vilas, Dr. Sesh, Dr. Vishal and Dr. Mahesh first examined children and adults at Zero Mile. Based on these diagnoses, a list of medicines was prepared by the team of doctors, which our team then purchased immediately from Khagaria. Once distributed at Zero Mile, the group, including the DFY doctors moved onto the next camp. The need for medical help was great as witnessed by the numbers of people that lined up to seek treatment from the doctors.



Getting treated by DoctorsForYou team

Developing Action Plan and the Continuing Need for Help

Crucial to any relief efforts is remaining closely connected to the needs of the people on the ground. As part of that, volunteers from Ritinjali visited camps set up by Patanjali Yogpith (Baba Ramdev), Ram Vilas Paswan and Dera Sacha Sauda and spoke to evacuees and local NGOs to conduct a needs assessment and develop an action plan for future efforts.



Flood evacuees arriving by boat or by foot

And though the waters are receding, the flood has affected a total of 45.72 lakh people from 2,502 villages. Over 3.66 lakh people have taken shelter in 372 relief camps. **Relief and rehabilitation efforts for these families will continue to be essential.** We will keep you updated with details of our effort and you please keep up your contributions as there is a huge amount of work to be done in the next couple of months.

Please call Anju Dhar at 9312211876, Deepika Nanjappa at 9811066550 or Ashish Alex at 991144046 with questions or contributions.