

Situation Report: 1

Type of Disaster: Cyclone

Date of the event: 12th December 2016

VARDAH Cyclone:

The Cyclonic Storm “NADA” formed over southwest Bay of Bengal in the first week of December which was initially “Cyclonic Storm” under the category of Cyclonic disturbance weakened gradually into a deep depression brought some showers to Chennai and neighboring districts. Just after couple of days Tamil Nadu witnessed the second Cyclonic Storm “VARDAH” disrupted the life of the people, causing a major jolt to public infrastructure,

Shelter, water supply, power and communication lines and Livelihood. On 8th the depression over Southeast Bay of Bengal intensified into a deep depression and further intensified into Severe Cyclonic Storm. Cyclone Alert was given to Andhra Pradesh



coast and was likely to cross south Andhra Pradesh coast between Nellore and Machilipatnam. On 11th December it intensified into Very Severe Cyclonic Storm and warning was given to South Andhra Pradesh and North Tamil Nadu coasts. On 12th December Very Cyclonic Storm moved nearly westwards and crossed north Tamil Nadu coast close to Chennai as a Severe Cyclonic Storm with wind speed of 100 to 110kmph gusting to 120 kmph. ¹“Cyclone VARDAH went rapid intensification in the last hour just before the landfall as Very Severe Cyclonic Storm. Cyclone did not weaken as expected

¹ Tamil nadu weatherman

in the morning till 6.00 am on 12th December and the intensity was 75 knots (Very Severe Cyclone). Then came slight dip the intensity from 6.00 am till 11.00 am as the intensity reduced to 63 knots (Severe Cyclone). And then there was significant increase in the strength with sudden drop in pressure to 973 mb and the intensity was at 85 knots (Very Severe Cyclone). Cyclone Vardah did pack a punch at time of landfall, the pressure of 973 mb and intensity of 85 knots (157 km/hr)".

Cyclone Impact:

The impact has been two-fold for the coastal districts of Chennai, Kancheepuram and Thiruvallur district with continuous rain and strong gusty winds disrupting the normal life with death toll rising to 18 people. On receiving the warning the State government and NDRF evacuated people from low lying areas which resulted in less human casualties.

The initial report from the government and media says the human life loss is 18 people, uprooting of over 12000 trees and roads have been blocked due to water logging and uprooting of trees. Electricity supply and communication lines have been cut off in many parts of Chennai, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram districts. It caused damages to coastal infrastructure, particularly to kutcha and semi-pucca houses due to high speed winds and associated rainfall. As per the govt records more than 7000 huts damaged due to the gusty winds and falling of the trees and electric poles over the house. The people were evacuated and were made to stay in the school building, cyclone shelter and safe buildings temporarily. In most of the places people have moved back to their respective places except for few relief camps which continue to exist in Kancheepuram and Thiruvallur districts. Despite of all the precautionary measures taken by the state and district administration there was an extensive damage to road infrastructure and public property. The extensive damage caused to transmission lines, transformers, distribution lines, and power supply was cut off in most of the places in Chennai, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram districts. As per the media reports more than 10,000 electric poles have been wrecked and more than 800 transformers damaged and extensive damage to the sewerage facilities drinking and water infrastructure affecting the water supply to the

people. The state government is making all efforts to clear the roads blockage, rectifying the powerlines, phone lines and water supply. Boats and nets were damaged and washed away in the coastal areas mostly in Pullikat area.

Report from IGSSS intervention area:

Exactly a year back Tamil Nadu had witnessed massive flooding which affected the people and left a trail of destruction. As people were recovering from the loss of December 2015 floods, the community witnessed yet another disaster on 12th of December which once again disrupted the life of people. Cyclone Vardah that crossed northern Tamil Nadu on 12th December 2106 caused damage to the kutchra and semi – Pucca houses due to the high speed wind and rainfall. The areas that were assessed were mostly the tribal belts and the predominant type of housing structure is the thatched huts. A total of 46 huts in 9 tribal hamlets were damaged where in the roofs were blown away by the fury of the wind speed of 120 Kmph. Few of the huts were damaged due to the uprooting of the trees and electric poles which collapsed the wall and the roof.

Immediate Needs

- Due to the low coping capacities of affected Tribal communities there is an urgent need of food assistance - Dry ration supply for 2 weeks [In one village where people are now managing through community cooking with support from the well-wishers]
- Provision of NFIs- Emergency Shelter materials for the affected people in the Tribal Hamlets.
- Conditional Cash support to the families with damaged huts for repair work.
- Distribution of Books and stationary items (Books + Pencil + School Bags + Uniform) to all the students from affected villages.
- Drinking water supply for minimum of 2 weeks until the power and water lines are restored.
- Hygiene Kits
- Cash for work for clearing the debris

PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION

IGSSS has been coordinating with IAG-Tamil Nadu, to monitor the situation from the times of warning given by the MET Department. IGSSS is also part of the Emergency Coordination meeting held on 14th December 2016 in CASA office. The initial assessment done by the IGSSS team was shared in the meeting. It was agreed the agencies would share the assessment report done in their respective area which would be consolidated and shared.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The State and district administration was on high alert and on receiving the warning evacuated around 7357 people living along the coast of Tamil Nadu to the relief camps. Schools and Colleges were closed, advisory was issued to the private undertakings and establishments to allow the employees to permit their staff to avail holiday or work from home. National Disaster Response Force [NDRF] and Indian Army/Navy were stationed in Chennai, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur districts as a precautionary measures. Immediately after the landfall and during the lull period the state and district administrations and NDRF started clearing the debris especially the clearing the trees uprooted by cyclone Vardah. Over 9000 workers have been engaged to undertake repair and restoration of power cables and electric poles. More than 100 relief camps have been set up in different locations and around 14581 food packets were supplied in the camps.

State Government announced 400000 each to the family of the deceased. Government allocated Rs. 500 crore for relief and infrastructure works in 3 districts of Tamil Nadu.

IGSSS IMMEDIATE ACTION

IGSSS local team on issue of cyclone alert disseminated the early warning and evacuation messages to the communities specifically the VDC and taskforce members. The VDC members kept a watch on the situation and moved vulnerable people to a safer location. People whose house were damaged in the last floods and were at risk were moved with neighbours and relatives. In few villages the people were evacuated to the relief camps set up the district administration at nearby schools, Balwadis etc.

13 houses in Sankarapuram were severely hit and the gusty winds uprooted the roofs/Sheets from all 13 houses and people were immediately shifted to the panchayat building. At present the people are not having the food supplies and a local group is providing the food. There is total power shut down and communication line breakdown in the area. IGSSS immediately supported them with candles and dry ration. The VDC formed by IGSSS from neighbouring villages is supporting the said village through community cooking.

Additional Sources: NDMA, The Hindu, Sphere India, IAG- TN, RMSC, IMD, INCOIS, Time of India, PTI twitter.

Link to Media Report on Sankarapuram - <https://in.news.yahoo.com/one-day-inauguration-homes-tribals-182717536.html>