



MEDIA RELEASE

Growing Need to Assist Bangladesh Cyclone Survivors

Australian international aid organisation, Austcare has launched an emergency appeal in response to Cyclone Sidr, which devastated the capital and south-west coast of Bangladesh.

An estimated 3000 people have lost their lives, with authorities estimating the figure could go as high as 10,000, with hundreds of fishermen still missing. Some organisations have estimated that over 1 million people are now homeless, and up to 7 million lives have been affected.

The area is one of the most impoverished parts of Bangladesh, itself one of the world's poorest countries. The recent floods in July caused significant crop loss in northern and central areas.

"The combined impact of these two disasters to this country is predicted to be massive. With the predicted affects of climate change, Bangladesh is likely to see more such disasters in the future" says Paul Smart, Austcare's Disaster Management Advisor.

In partnership with ActionAid, Austcare is supporting organisations on the ground in Bangladesh assisting in the rescue effort, providing food, cooking materials, water, clothing, medicine and trauma counselling. The aid will be focused in two of the worst affected districts, Khulna and Bagerhat. In line with Austcare's approach to emergency response, our aid will be directed to those who are most vulnerable; women, children, the elderly and disabled.

ActionAid's International Director for Emergencies, Richard Miller, says "This is a major disaster and children are as ever the most vulnerable. Not only have they lost homes and parents but they are always more prone to diseases such as cholera. They need help now."

He added: "The suffering of the Bangladeshi people will continue once the immediate relief effort is over."

Austcare is also looking at longer term recovery options, such as livelihood regeneration programs to rebuild lives.

Donations to Austcare's appeal can be made now by calling 1300 66 6672, visiting www.austcare.org.au to provide emergency assistance to vulnerable people in Bangladesh. As little as \$70 could provide basic medicines and health care for 100 families.

Any excess funds from the Austcare Bangladesh Cyclone Appeal 2007 will be dedicated to our Emergency Fund, which enables us to respond immediately to future emergencies.

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