



RF/DM-3/ORI-4/SUDMA

DM 9.5

SHANTI RANI BHAVAN,
GOPALPUR-ON-SEA
Sangam (Dt), - 761 002
ORISSA

(4)

Date 03-01-2000

Phone - 0680 - 282355.

To Dear Mr. J.W. Rodrigues and to all the well-wishers,
Thank you very much

We are overwhelmed by the generous response to our appeal to support the relief and rehabilitation of Cyclone victims. As a result we were able to render timely relief to the families in our villages.

We are at the initial stage of rehabilitation activities like reconstruction of houses and supporting livelihood activities for the affected families.

SAVE US LORD WE ARE PERISHING

In the name of hundreds of affected families we thank you for your contribution which has significantly mitigated the sufferings of the cyclone victims.

We will keep you informed about the on going rehabilitation activities.

Once again thanking you and wishing you a prosperous Millennium Year 2000.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Pally
Sr. Margaret

Mariamma de.
Sr. Mariamma

Sahaya
Sr. Sahaya

Sent to Kart, Reyes - over Rs. 1 lakh collected by them SHG for Orissa
Sr. Anthony's Orissa has collected over Rs 53,000/- for Orissa.

SAVE US LORD WE ARE PERISHING

Schools had Puja Holidays, our class X students were having special classes. On 28th morning at 9.00 a.m. Port Authorities asked us to stop the special classes and send the children home immediately. So we sent the children back home at 9.30 a.m. As soon as the children reached home one of the officers from 'Radar station' rang up and asked me as to why we sent the children back home within an hour when the cyclone is 550km away from Paradeep. I answered him saying that I am concerned about my children and their safety. But he was not willing to own the seriousness of the cyclone.

October 28th, 1999 marked the beginning of a prolonged disaster which robbed the people of their thatched and asbestos roofs and rendered them homeless. It was not a sudden arousal of threatening and roaring winds rather its emergence in the sea had been announced the same day. Paradip Port Officials had sounded a red alert on October 28th, warning of an impending cyclone of great intensity. The State Govt. had instructed the administration to evacuate people and stock relief materials. The Army had also been put on alert. Despite all these Govt. had no idea of the enormity of the crisis on hand. The authorities were aware that a cyclone had struck Paradip but did not immediately know that the tidal waves rising upto 12 meters had submerged several areas in Jagatsinghpur Dist. (Our Dist.) and Kendrapara Dist. The Super cyclone affected 11 districts of Orissa.

Inspite of repeated warnings the people took it lightly because the people in Paradip had experienced many cyclones but they were not as devastating and merciless as this one. The local committees and Port Trust tried hard to evacuate the people to safer places but hardly reached their goals. People paid no heed and were charged with heavy penalty.

On 28th Oct. drizzling started at 12 noon, the sky was overcast with dark clouds and it presented a gloomy scene all around. It further intensified and wind was blowing with speed between 130 to 180 km/hr.

Gale winds started to blow at 200km/hr by 2.00 a.m. in the morning of 29th Oct. It intensified with time. At nearly 4.00 a.m. emerged the furious cyclone with its devastating weapons. The electricity went off at once and we realized that we are cut off completely from outside world. Huge waves reaching up to a height of 33ft. were witnessed by the nearby people. We were busy bolting the windows and doors and tying them up tightly. One minute the wind roared; then a brief lull of about half a minute punctuated by something like a long shrill whistle; the next moment the roar was back with the wind pounding the walls. The velocity of the wind kept on increasing with heavy rains. Rain water was pouring in through windows and doors. Window panes and doors were blown off by 7.00 a.m. As we were busy putting out the rain water from our living rooms and the chapel, we could hear the computer room windows being shattered. When we came to pull out the computers,

we could see the ground floor doors being opened with locks on. It was around 8.00 a.m. when we came down we could see the water coming in through the locked doors. Hurriedly we pulled out the files from the filing cabinet and carried them on our heads because the ground floor got flooded within three minutes upto a height of 4.5 ft. We could save only the records, amplifiers, tape recorders and the telephone set. Since our library, bookstore, laboratories, storerooms and the pump sets were on the ground floor, we lost things worth lakhs of rupees. We never expected the tidal waves. Our sintex water tanks were blown off and they were carried away by the sea waves. When we looked out through the windows we could see that the compound wall on three sides was washed away. The screams of the wind were threatening to blow off anything which may come across its way.

The intensified cyclone gained stability due to which the gusty winds blew for a long period with a velocity of 320 km/hr. There were no trees left in the vicinity. Since we are surrounded by creeks the tidal wave rose quickly and we could not come out of the building. There were snakes, animal carcasses, dead bodies and added to it, a crocodile 10 ft. long in the creek surrounding our campus. The crocodile was spilt out from Nehru park of Paradip. Since the current was very strong we could not bring the parish priest to our building. He was with his cook in the parish house. The Whole of Paradip was flooded with sea water nearly about 48 hours. One can imagine us in Noah's Ark, water all around and also within as our windows were not very strong. We could only pray to the Lord in our helplessness saying "Lord save us we are perishing. We could not sleep the whole night. On 30th morning we could see only water everywhere. The people in the slum areas rushed to take shelter in the schools, colleges & in pakka houses on 29th night. But most of them were washed away by the strong current. It seemed that Paradip was an island in the Bay of Bengal. Though there was water all around still there was no water to drink. As the water receded on 31st early morning, there was looting and robbery. People who left their houses on ground floor and occupied the first floor of their neighbour, lost everything due to tidal wave and robbery. We collected the rain water to drink. The water on terrace & the water in the classrooms in the second floor was used to bathe, to wash & to clean till 2nd of November. Our school had knee deep slush & dirty mud on the ground floor.

On 31st October when we went out we could see the death and devastation. Paradip township was completely devoid of the green colour. The rotting bodies and carcasses posed a major threat to the survivors of the Super Cyclone. Paradip was inaccessible for the first four days. As the roofs of godowns were blown off, the food grains & vegetables were rotten which gave rise to food problem. All electric installations were uprooted. The electric substations were badly damaged. The water supply, dredging channels, godowns, all had fallen to the nature's fury. Paradip Police Station, Telephone and Television towers have been badly damaged. All kinds of communication was disrupted.

In Paradip Port no damage to ships and P.P.T buildings was caused. Several tugs and trawlers sank in the Paradip Port. Boats and nets were damaged on a large scale. Tiny villages along the coast have been turned into lakes blotting out all signs of human habitation. Debris of houses were found floating in the water. Bodies were found trapped under the debris. As the water began to recede, the stench of putrefied bodies and carcasses pervaded the air. The Paradip creek reeked with bloated bodies. More than 700 people were reported to be dead in Paradip alone. Movers and dumpers scooped them up, while Port employees cremated them. The survivors, meanwhile looked around for food. Man came to his primitive self, search for food and shelter began. It was at this time that we all realised that this super cyclone not only caused death and devastation but it has also given rise to many problems like food, water and shelter. It not only made many people homeless but also orphans. The total loss in Paradip is estimated to be about 70 crores.

Added to all inconveniences we were worried about our Sr. Agnes who had gone for seminar on B.C.C to Mangalore and was supposed to leave for Paradip on 28th Oct. She had not reached till 2nd Nov. Thank God she reached Paradip on 2nd Nov. after facing the looting on the way. Her train was diverted to Sambalpur and she didn't even know about it until she was asked to get down at Sambalpur. There were two families who were travelling to Cuttack along with her. They brought her safe to Cuttack. And the road to Paradip was opened on that day. Hence, she could travel to Paradip but she was forced out of the bus twice on the way and was asked to surrender her belongings. By the grace of God and with the powerful protection of Father Founder she could manage to come back home safely.

Our students who had gone for athletic meet on 27th were held up at Cuttack till the 2nd Nov. We could not comfort the parents. we could only assure them that we could bring them as soon as the roads were opened.

At the back of the school there were 37 dead bodies in the creek. There was looting everywhere and we were not able to move freely. On Nov 2nd evening the Army moved into Paradip and the District administration requested us to give them the shelter. Once the Army moved in, all the looting was stopped. One of the Captains, Capt. M.S. Reddy from 201 Engineering Regiment had dared to take his jawans along with Additional Teshildar of Kujang to the God forsaken villages of Ersama block and he saw thousands of bodies lying all around. He came back and narrated the same scene to us. Hence I accompanied them on the 2nd day i.e. On 6th Nov. and saw for myself thousands of bodies in water, bloated and upside down. I got choked and stopped counting. When I reached Ambiki young and old hugged me specially the ladies. Because I was the first lady to enter those villages. I had tears but they had no tears. Their tears were exhausted. There was fear and shock on their faces. They were shaken up. People were or-

phaned. Parents were without children, children without parents, wives without husbands, husbands without wives and children. My heart sank and I decided to be with these people. Human dead bodies and carcass of animals were lying side by side. People in these villages who are washed out caught hold up coconut palms or terraced roofs and were there for four days without food and water. People are burried along with cattle under the debris.

Of all the regions, the Ersama block of Jagatsinghpur dist. was the most affected. Out of 24 Panchayats in Ersama, Ambiki was worst affected with 2750 deaths followed by Padmapur with 2040 deaths and Joppa with 2006. Ersama block alone has a death toll of 20,000. A total of 50 villages were completely washed out in Ersama, Balikuda, Kujang, Tirtol and Nuagaon blocks.

The estimated loss in our dist. is about 800 crores. 25 lakhs kutcha houses or huts are damaged and 50,000 cattle are reported to have died. The tidal waves completely washed away the mud houses and the wind also helped it by carrying away the roofs of the houses. There was not a single thatched house to be seen in the area. All were gone forever. The people in thousands took shelter under concreet roofs. All their belongings were carried away by the cyclone. There was no one to cry for them, no one to care for them, no one to look after them and no one to bother them. There was no one to feed them, no one to provide them clean drinking water. They had to starve for three or four days. At the loss of near and dear ones, shelter, food grains and all life sustaining belongings, a large section of people have been upset mentally. They are frightened at the gloomy future. The number of such psychological patients have been increasing. Within a month, more than 100 people have committed suicide out of frustration. Schools have been damaged. Diseases like Jaundice, Typhoid, Malaria, caught, cold, diarrhoea and other ailments are common.

On 7th Nov. two of us went to N. A. C. office and met the A. D. M. project Director and the additional Teshildar and told them that if the dead bodies are not disposed off, then there is every possibility of the epidemic. I told them that if we do not act immediately we may kill those who are alive. Then the additional Project Director Mr. G. Singh asked us to go ahead with the disposal of the bodies. He promised all kind of support; hence we were the ones who initiated this process in Ersama and around. The Collector came to thank us personally for this work.

DETAILS OF THE DISPOSAL OF DEAD BODIES AND CARCASSES (by our team)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Dead bodies</u>	<u>Carcasses</u>
8. 11. 99	Thalkonda Canal	27	35
9. 11. 99	Sourabha	46	83
10. 11. 99	Sourabha Chakka	61	60

11. 11. 99	Way to Nagari Bridge	101	136
12. 11. 99	Nagari, Kiada	131	82
13. 11. 99	Kiada	76	72
14. 11. 99	Kiada and Way to Ambiki	60	38
15. 11. 99	Way to Ambiki	95	88
16. 11. 99	Ambiki	76	147
17. 11. 99	Sanga(Ambiki)	81	102
18. 11. 99	Godo Vishnupur (Way)	98	137
19. 11. 99	Bengali Pada(Ambiki)	97	168
20. 11. 99	Kankan	62	88
22. 11. 99	Kankan	16	34
23. 11. 99	Ramtara	11	14

We teamed up with M. C Brothers and 60 volunteers from Catholic Relief Services, and literally lifted the bodies, either cremated or buried them.

We had 36 local volunteers. We organised them in each village and gave them incentives like food for work, clothing, utensils etc. . We helped the villagers to rebuild their houses, taught them hygiene and made them to clean their surroundings. We have made them to construct the approach roads with the help of our volunteers. We & M. C. sisters went from place to place distributing medicines and rations. Now that the preliminary needs are met, we have the long term rehabilitation i. e. , providing shelter to the orphans, educating the villagers. We also picked up the mentally disturbed people and sent them for treatment. We have the co-operation of S. O. S villages to take care of the orphaned children. For the re-habilitation of the villages and schools we have enlisted the co-operation of L&T Paradip, H. P. Paradip, O. C. P. L Paradip & Jayashree Trading Corporation, Paradip. We thank them for their support in the relief work.

Another one year they can not grow anything in the paddy field because saline water has caused devastation. The salt making process of the costal area has been badly affected. Due to the upsurge of the high tide, the prawn culture fields have been inundated by the sea water and have been washed away causing serious loss to the people engaged in prawn business. The huge loss of boats, nets, ropes and fishing articles has put a question mark on the livelihood of thousands of poor fishermen of the costal belt. We have gone 100 years back and will take many more years to make up the loss.

What next ?

Provide winter clothing

Provide utensils

Try to make available interest free loans.

- fertilizers to cyclone affected areas.
 - provision of seeds.
 - employment
 - safe drinking water
 - mosquito oil or nets
 - food for work
- check air and water pollution.
 - reconstruct schools and colleges.
 - construct cyclone relief centres which can function as schools
 - provide school going children with books and bags.

We have re-opened our school on 1st Dec. Around 300 students have lost their houses, clothes and books. We have provided them with books, clothes, uniforms, shoes, tarpaulines, blankets and stoves. We also provided food for some families. None of our student is lost. But one of our Mauseris (IV class employee) is washed away with her husband. One of our student's father is lost in the sea during the cyclone. He has not come back from fishing. The student is in class I.

We are sincerely thankful to our Provincial Superior for her sincere concern. She is the first one who wrote to us expressing deep anxiety and concern. Her letter did bring us consolation and affirmed that we are precious and cared for. She sent Sr. Miriam and Sr. Jane Chantal to see how we were. Sr. Miriam stayed with us for a week and joined us the relief work. Sr. Nora had asked Berhampur sisters to visit us. They visited us twice and brought with them provisions for us. We do appreciate their kind gesture. We are also thankful to Sr. Alodia, Staff and students of St. Theresa's Convent School, Karnal for sending Rs. 50,000 for our needy people. This amount will be utilized for rehabilitation and reconstruction specially for the school going children.

We thank the Lord for keeping us from all harm and danger. In Our agony and despair our one and only comfort and hope was Jesus. Our loss is repairable but the loss of our people is irreparable. "Comfort my people, comfort ----" says the Lord. The world around us is full of misery. How can we be sleeping --- ? Millions have been left destitute and families are torn asunder. Our people are struggling to cope with the ravages of a devastating Super Cyclone. Let's be the partners in the process of restoration, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

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