



## FIRST STATUS UPDATE REPORT - OCTOBER 31, 2008

### Flood Relief Operations in the aftermath of Kosi Floods with 4000 families in Kumarkhand Block of Madhepura District

Implemented by Samajik Shaikshanik Vikas Kendra

Supported by United Way of Mumbai & Monsanto

#### Background and Context:

A human tragedy of unparalleled dimensions unleashed itself on millions residing in the 7 North Bihar Districts of Supaul, Araria, Madhepura, Saharsa, Purnia, Khagaria and Katihar due to a breach in the in the eastern Kosi embankment upstream of the Indian border at Kushaha in neighbouring Nepal on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, 2008. Following the breach, River Kosi, often referred to as the "sorrow of Bihar", picked up a channel it had abandoned over 200 years ago, drowning towns and numerous villages coming in the way of its newly acquired course, affecting more than 3 million people.

Samajik Shaikshanik Vikas Kendra, which already had an operational presence in the affected areas, immediately went in appeal for flood relief assistance and had United Way of Mumbai as among the first to be responding to its appeal. SSVK followed up by sending an overview of the situation emerging from the floods and the desired interventions along with a budget line for the various activities that needed to be funded. Two representatives of United Way of Mumbai undertook an assessment mission to the proposed intervention area and on their recommendation United Way decided to enter into a collaboration with SSVK for the latter's proposed intervention in Kumarkhand Block of Madhepura District. The decision to enter into this collaboration was premised on the following parametres:

- Extent and intensity of inundation
- Isolation of the affected families owing to their displacement from their original habitation and their socially disadvantaged status
- The virtual exclusion of the affected families from the government relief intervention owing to the latter's limited outreach
- The vulnerabilities to which the affected families are exposed given the inhospitable conditions they are having to endure
- SSVK through whom the relief is to be operationalised having a long standing experience of having carried out flood relief operations in the past
- SSVK has a resource pool of technical manpower to take care of medical care related interventions
- SSVK had a sustained presence in the proposed intervention area in the aftermath of the disaster. Its engagement varied from need assessment to leveraging support from external sources to carrying surveys to identify the still unreached or poorly reached groups. This had helped build up its credibility in the intervention area. It had kept the district authorities informed about its activities and had also set up a local office in Saharsa and engaged the services of local volunteers.
- Media accounts and government's own admission also made up a case for the intervention.

#### The Intervention

##### Goal

The overall goal is to enable the poor and marginal families to break out of the current crisis resulting from the floods

##### Objectives

1. Relief support during the crucial period of non availability of food and water by ensuring availability of both
2. Making accessible a package of medical relief and assistance
3. Providing temporary shelter and cover to the homeless



### Project Description

The intervention is being carried out in Kumarkhand block of Madhepura district which has been significantly impacted by the marauding waters of River Kosi. The site for relief operations is on the western embankment of MBC canal which takes off in a North-South direction from the Eastern Kosi canal running in a West to East Direction from the pre-breach Kosi course right after the barrage. People, whose habitations are still submerged in water, have taken refuge on this embankment in large numbers and hail from several villages. Relief work is being carried out with 4078 families. In isolating these families emphasis has been laid on clusters that have a pre-ponderance of people from socially disadvantaged groups because of which their access to relief support has been circumscribed. These 4078 families have been grouped into 8 relief camps details of which are depicted in the following table:

Name of Camp	District	Block	No. of flood affected families being covered
1/8 on MBC Canal	Madhepura	Kumarkhand	595
2/8 on MBC Canal	Madhepura	Kumarkhand	510
3/8 on MBC Canal	Madhepura	Kumarkhand	603
4/8 on MBC Canal	Madhepura	Kumarkhand	565
5/8 on MBC Canal	Madhepura	Kumarkhand	277
6/8 on MBC Canal	Madhepura	Kumarkhand	507
7/8 on MBC Canal	Madhepura	Kumarkhand	611
8/8 on MBC Canal	Madhepura	Kumarkhand	410
Total			4078

The intervention is being operationalised through organising the targeted 4078 families with a total population of around 20,500 into 8 relief camps as detailed above. Though the needs are manifold, the intervention has been prioritised and confined to addressing the food, drinking water, shelter and health related needs of the people in light of the limited resources available for the moment and would extend over a one month period from October 19, 2008 to November 17, 2008.

The intervention accounts for one wholesome meal a day through setting up of community kitchens. The cooked meal consists of rice, pulse and one vegetable. Community kitchens have been preferred over dry ration support as the latter leaves the beneficiaries with the difficult, if not impossible, choice of arranging for fuel. Moreover, the engagement of the victims in various tasks associated with running the community kitchens has helped maintain a modicum of community conviviality which is also helping the victims in overcoming their enormous grief.

At each camp provision has also been made for one hand pump and five water storage containers to address the drinking water needs and prevent the outbreak of water borne diseases.

All the 4000 families are to be provided with a polythene sheet measuring 15 feet by 12 feet to account for their shelter related needs. The distribution of the polythene sheets has already been initiated and is being done against production of the token that has already been given to the 4000 families. At each camp provision has been made for 2 gas lamps to keep the site illuminated during night thus ensuring greater safety of the residents. Additionally 4 torches have been provided per camp for running errands after dark.

The intervention also provides for medical relief and assistance. Having run a community health programme in the past, SSVK has a trained cadre of community health workers adept in symptomatically diagnosing the commonly occurring health problems during floods and prescribing non prescription drugs for the same. They are addressing the health needs of the affected families. One health worker each is in charge of 4 of the 8 camps.



In order to address some of the contingent needs which are not being addressed by the afore discussed interventions, SSVK is in an advanced stage of negotiation with UNICEF for providing the same. These include:

- Provision of supplementary feed to address the specific dietary needs of pregnant and lactating women and malnourished children.
- Provision of ORS satchets, halozene tablets and bleaching powder

In fact with stocks made available for other camps being run by SSVK, the task of spraying bleaching powder to ensure environmental sanitation has also been carried out by SSVK at all these 8 camps.

SSVK at its own initiative and with its own resources has opened a non formal education centre at each of the 8 relief camps wherein the education needs of children in the 6 to 14 age group are being addressed.

The Intervention through Photographs



Flood Victims being fed



The Flood Refugees



An Operational Hand Pump



A Community Kitchen at Work



SSVK Volunteers' ferrying fuel wood for the Community Kitchen



Cooked Meal Being served at another camp