

OPERATIONS UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

SRI LANKA: FLOODS AND LANDSLIDES

23 May 2003

Appeal No. 13/2003; Operations Update no. 1

Appeal launched on 20 May 2003 for CHF 1,212,000 (USD 934,598 OR EUR 801,424) for three months for 125,000 beneficiaries. This operation will be revised and scaled-up based on the results of the ongoing FACT/RDRT assessment.

Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 50,000

Period covered: 20 to 22 May, 2003

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 180 countries.

For more information: www.ifrc.org



In Brief

Appeal coverage: 10.6%; for details please refer to the attached list of list of contributions which are also available on the Federation's website.

Outstanding needs: CHF 1,084,000

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: 2003 Annual Appeal for Sri Lanka (no. 01.57/2003)

Operational Summary: Assessments continue as operational structures have been agreed and put in place to facilitate the response effort and support of the Movement components to the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS). Because the disaster situation is evolving, outstanding needs continue to change. Meanwhile, the SLRCS has efficiently mobilised its volunteers and has been providing food packets and water to the most vulnerable families in the five affected districts, of Kalutara, Hambantota, Matara, Galle and Ratnapura.

Operational developments

The floods that began on Saturday, May 17, have left 255 people dead, with over 50,000 houses destroyed and over 175,000 families affected. Some 109,000 families are homeless. This has been the most severe flood in more than 50 years, and conditions are worsening in low-lying areas of Galle, Matara and Kalutara. This has hampered efforts to assess the overall needs of the affected communities. Helicopters can only access certain areas. In Diniyay, near Kutapula, people had not eaten in 3 days.

Several meetings have taken place during last two days with Government officials, UN representatives, NGOs and donors. Federation delegates and staff have supported the establishment of a support structure by the UNDAC team that arrived on May 21 for the government. A joint Government, Red Cross, and UN assessment has been completed in all the districts and the outcome has been shared with other agencies. The situation remains unstable, with water receding in higher areas but still rising in lower areas. The flooding in the coastal districts has been exacerbated by high tides, preventing the water from naturally receding. Many villages are cut off, with populations isolated and without sufficient food or drinking water.

A Taskforce constituted by the Director General of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) will coordinate and support the Red Cross assistance to the most vulnerable people. This task force is comprised of two FACT members, two RDRT members, four Sri Lanka Red Cross Staff members (of whom, one is also RDRT-trained) and the Spanish Red Cross. The ICRC has agreed to support this task force in the Health area as required.

During flood disasters diarrhoeal disease and pneumonia are the most common health issues. In Sri Lanka it is anticipated that the affected population will also suffer from scorpion and snake bites as people, animals, insects, and reptiles tend to flee to or seek refuge on high ground. It is also expected that when water recedes stagnant pools be created which serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes, potentially causing the outbreak of diseases such as malaria, cholera, and diarrhoea. The contamination of water sources (boreholes and wells) is also a cause of concern. The ICRC has also extended its logistical support to the Sri Lanka Red Cross to get the relief commodities supplied in the flood-affected areas. The ICRC has also made available its relief stocks presently in Aman.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action - objectives, progress, impact

The provision of drinking water is emerging as a critical need of the affected population. The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) and other humanitarians are transporting both bottled water and water bowzers to the affected people. A previous donation from the Iranian Red Crescent of jerry cans for water and water tanks was immediately utilised.

Based on the assessments and negotiations with other partners, a programme is being developed to arrange the cleaning of wells



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by the SLRCS, with technical support from a German Government Agency, supported by Spanish Red Cross with financial support from ECHO. USAID has provided funds to begin cleaning 100 wells, which are important for meeting the drinking water needs of the population. USAID is also providing for emergency food, bottled water and clothing. The funds released from the Federation's DREF is now being used for assisting the vulnerable population with food and drinking water.

Emergency relief (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: To ensure the affected population to be assisted by the Red Cross is provided with essential food, non-food, clothing, water and health needs to survive the immediate weeks.

Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

Since the beginning of the relief operation on May 19, the SLRCS, supported by the Federation, has distributed the following relief food and non-food items in all five districts:

Relief items	Bread (loaves)	Seenisambal (packets)	Food parcels	Water cans (20 litres)	Sugar (kgs)	Rice (kgs)
Rathnapura District	12,275	12,000	4,000	350	80	600
Galle District	3,000	2,000	0	128	0	0
Matara District	2,800	0	0	300	0	0
Kalutara District	3,000	0	2,000	95	0	0
Hambantota district	used clothing	0	0	0	0	0

In addition, supplies of used clothes, dhal, pasta, soap, biscuits, paracetamol panadol (aspirin), candles, and matches have been distributed. An average of 60 volunteers in each of these districts are supporting various Red Cross operations.

Impact

The distribution of the food and non-food relief has had a strong and immediate impact on the affected people, most of whom had been marooned and are located in inaccessible areas. The Red Cross relief efforts have been covered extensively in the local media. The identification of selected areas for the Red Cross operation has alleviated pressure on the Government structure, which is over-stretched due to the overwhelming situation. The government has extended support for logistics with helicopters for relief distributions. Isolated villagers are cooperating in clearing access roads to their areas so that distribution of assistance can take place.

Constraints

The situation continues to evolve, and water receding from high lying areas is causing a high volume of run-off. High tides are further aggravating the situation, creating logistical constraints in the relief operation. As a result, the use of a Sri Lankan Air Force helicopter has facilitated the operation as the main roads are gradually cleared.

Federation coordination

The SLRCS task force, which has been constituted to coordinate the relief operation, is comprised of two FACT members, two RDRT members; four SLRCS staff members (of whom, one is also RDRT-trained) and the Spanish Red Cross. While contributing its time to the Task Force, the presence of the Spanish Red Cross will contribute to one common action plan, including potential assistance from ECHO and other bilateral aid (mainly from European countries). The ICRC has agreed to support the task force in the health sector.

The Federation and the SLRCS participate regularly in the government's coordination meetings. The Federation's Regional Disaster Response Delegate conducted an assessment of the flood-affected areas with the island's Social Welfare minister who heads the government's coordination of relief in the country. The Disaster Response Delegate together with an SLRCS representative also attended the coordination meeting called by the country's Prime Minister on the morning of 22 May. Effective coordination is also taking place with other humanitarian actors, including the UN's UNDAC, in the field as well as in the capital, Colombo.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement -- Principles and initiatives: The relief operation is reaching out to the most vulnerable people in the affected area. In the coming days there will be a conscious effort to disseminate the movement's Fundamental Principles.

National Society Capacity Building: The operation is drawing heavily on the SLRCS's capacity built over many years. The Hambantota District was affected by a drought for over four years, and SLRCS volunteers and officials of the Red Cross were trained in assessments and relief distribution. Though this capacity exists, there is a need to expand it in the light of the latest disaster. Similarly, the Spanish Red Cross had also carried out extensive capacity building as part of Disaster Preparedness programme in the districts of Rathnapura, Galle and Kaulutara. This training has also been useful for the Red Cross. The present operation will emphasise building the capacity of the SLRCS.

Communications – Advocacy and Public Information: The Federation and the SLRCS are in regular touch with the media in Sri Lanka. Interviews have been given to the international media from Colombo, mainly to the BBC and CNN.

For further information please contact:

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

Sri Lanka - Floods and Landslides

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 13/2003

PLEDGES RECEIVED

23.05.2003

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

						TOTAL COVERAGE
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				1'212'000		10.6%
SWEDISH - GOVT		800'000	SEK	128'000	08.05.03	RELIEF ITEMS, TRANSPORT, STORAGE & DISTRIBUTION
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				128'000	CHF	10.6%

KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%

ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	