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## MALAYSIA: FLOODS

*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 185 countries.*

### In Brief

Period covered by this update: 26 December 2006 to 17 January 2007.



*The MRCS is providing a steady flow of hot meals at the evacuation centres.*

#### History of this Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)-funded operation:

- CHF 50,000 (USD 41,425 or EUR 31,426) allocated from the Federations DREF on 25 December 2006 to support the Malaysia Red Crescent's initial assessment and relief effort.
- This operation is expected to be implemented for three months, and will be completed by the end of March 2007; a DREF Bulletin Final Report (narrative and financial) will be made available three months after the end of the operation.

### Background and current situation

For the past two months, floods have hit the state of Johor in Malaysia consecutively. The latest wave on 10-13 January killed 15 people and forced more than 120,000 people to flee their homes. Losses to property and infrastructure stand at RM100 million (CHF35 million), while displaced families are suffering from untold psychological stress from the successive floods. The health situation is critical as well as people are falling ill, with one death so far, from waterborne or vector borne diseases.

Local papers are rife with first-hand accounts of Malaysian who barely had time to pick up their lives after the first floods of 19 December 2005, only to be struck again by the second wave three weeks later. Information from the Malaysian Red Crescent (MRCS) Johor state branch indicate that more than 97,300 people (22,500 families) are still displaced and are spread out across 278 relief centres in the affected areas. Hundreds of schools were closed down and converted into temporary relief centres to house the displaced. Batu Pahat, Kota Tinggi and Kluang are by far the worst hit districts, with more than 42,000 people displaced in Batu Pahat alone.

Health risks from floods have the potential to drive up the death rate, as well as exacerbate the well being of survivors who are already suffering from difficult living conditions and stress. To date, there are seven cases of leptospirosis and one resulting death. Leptospirosis is spread by water contaminated

Districts	People affected	Families affected	Relief centres
Johor Bahru	7,645	1,824	12
Muar	4,580	1,076	18
Batu Pahat	42,159	9,799	121
Segamat	4,813	1,260	15
Kluang	12,543	2,893	39
Pontian	2,577	649	13
Kota Tinggi	14,281	3,162	40
Mersing	8,727	1,876	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>97,325</b>	<b>22,539</b>	<b>278</b>

Table: Statistics on the flooded districts in Johor state

with the urine of bacteria-infected animals, such as rats. In the relief centres across Johor, 2,000 cases of diarrhoea have also been reported. Flood-affected residents have further expressed concerns over malaria and dengue, as stagnant flood waters are serving as a breeding ground for mosquitoes. However, the government reports that the health situation is under control at the moment.



*Many MRCS volunteers have stepped forward during this critical time, able and willing to assist in any way*

In some affected areas, water has begun to recede and people are returning home to start up the cleaning process. This is, however, not uniform, with waters expected to subside more slowly in some areas such as Batu Pahat. The bout of flooding has been attributed to low pressure areas around the state and global warming.

The national government have highlighted the need to look into certain issues regarding the flood operations, such as poor coordination, late assistance and uneven distributions. To provide efficient and effective relief to the flood survivors, the government's social welfare department has taken the lead role in setting up a coordination bureau to manage the relief centres and coordinate the efforts of government and non-governmental agencies. It has launched several interesting initiatives to aid communities in need. Other than its regular cash disbursement programme – RM 200 (CHF 71) for every affected family – the ministry has launched an “adopt a village” programme targeted at commercial companies to support villages in the rehabilitation process. The military corp. and police force have also mobilized to advance the relief effort, dispensing boats and human resources to the flood areas.

## **Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

The Malaysian Red Crescent Society (MRCS) has been intensively involved in the flood operation from the first wave onwards. In its auxiliary role to the government, it is mandated to work with the national security council during disasters (the MRCS also has roles in other situations, such as public order disturbances).

Apart from its search and rescue work during floods, the MRCS has been working closely with the authorities to coordinate cooked food and relief in the hundreds of evacuation centres across the state. Local branches and chapters in Johor have deployed 440 volunteers across the evacuation centres, who have been working in shifts to manage six mobile kitchen units, distribute relief goods and support the operation. Communities have received up to RM 2 million (CHF 712,700) worth of goods to date.

Despite the subsiding waters, the evacuation centres still have to be managed and supplied with hot food as most inhabitants are going home during the day to clean up, only to return at mealtimes and to spend the night. The MRCS is also supplying hot meals to numerous staff and volunteers, including those from the welfare department, search and rescue, civil defence, military, police force etc. In support of the MRCS branches and chapters, the national headquarters has mobilized 15 highly skilled staff and volunteers to aid rescue and relief work.



*Boxes containing contents of the family packs all lined up and ready to go*

There are severe logistical challenges, as the MRCS transport units are stretched beyond capacity. A truck based at headquarters is making regular trips to Johor Bahru, where a warehouse has recently been established to maintain the security of the relief items. A second truck is attached to this warehouse to transport the goods to various distribution points, either at various relief centres or direct to affected villages. Three Ford Rangers add on to the logistics capacity the MRCS in Johor. In light of this, the national society has appealed for more trucks to distribute relief to the vulnerable communities.

Search and rescue has been a critical area of work, with many people reportedly stranded days into the disaster. Four boats – a large boat and two smaller ones in Batu Pahat and one large boat in Kluang – have been actively evacuating families that have been left with no escape on the higher floors of buildings or on top of houses. More boats are on standby at the headquarters, as well as the Kelantan and Penang branch.

After the immediate disaster onset, the MRCS is additionally looking into helping families overcome stress and trauma. Psychological support teams may be mobilized as needed to the affected areas once the waters have subsided. Although medical needs are currently being handled by the ministry of health, the MRCS is ready to deploy medical personnel as necessary in coordination with the ministry.

To support ongoing efforts and relief distributions of the MRCS, the Federation secretariat released CHF 50,000 from DREF, which is being used to procure items for the national society's standard hygiene kits (that also provide for the hygiene needs of women) and family food packs. The allocation will also provide for any related transportation and support costs. Additionally, in response to its domestic appeal, the Malaysian public has so far contributed RM 0.5 million (CHF 178,000) worth in donations.

## How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

### The Federation's Global Agenda

The International Federation's activities are aligned with under a Global Agenda, which sets out **four broad goals** to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

### Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

## Contact information

### For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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