

INFORMATION BULLETIN



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

INDIA: ORISSA FLOODS

19 July 2001

Information Bulletin N° 1

This Information Bulletin is

- being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider international support through an Appeal.

The Situation

Forty-five people are reported to have died as torrential rains cause heavy flooding in the state of Orissa, along India's eastern coast. Vast tracts of lands are under water and five million people have been affected. The floods are the worst since 1982. There have been 16 major breaches along main river banks and several minor ones too. Many of the flood victims are still recovering from the devastating cyclone of 1999 as well as last year's flooding.

Seventeen districts have been affected, the worst being Puri, Cuttack, Khalahandi, Bolangir, Kendrapada, Koraput, Jagatsinghpur and Jajpur. The government has advised people in low lying areas to move to safer ground to minimize further emergency evacuations. In some cases, the police have forcefully evicted the population.

Fishing communities have kept boats ready for evacuation and riverside communities have reinforced embankments with sandbags. The armed forces have been requisitioned to assist in flood relief and rescue operations. The state government has requested four helicopters for the operation.

Some areas have received two times the average rainfall in June. From 4 July the rains intensified throughout the southern, eastern and western parts of the state, peaking on 8 July. The region is in the catchment area of the Mahanadi river system. A second wave of flooding peaked on 16 July, prompting the state government to sound an official 'Red Alert'.

There is also concern over pressure building in the Hirakud Reservoir in western Orissa. Fifty-one of the 64 sluice gates of the reservoir have been opened and the authorities may be forced to open more. These releases are causing devastating flash-floods along the river and worsening the situation in coastal towns and villages.

Latest reports estimate the discharge from the reservoir as exceeding 1.2 million cubic sq feet per second (cusecs) and warned that this could increase. It is feared the situation downstream could worsen tomorrow (20 July 2001) if high tide conditions make it difficult for the river water to flow into the sea.

The latest government figures on the disaster are:

No. of people affected:	five million
No. of people marooned:	one million
No. of people dead:	45
No. of houses damaged:	18,233
Loss/damage to private property :	INR 20,413,000 (CHF 817,000)
Loss/damage to public property:	INR 254,289,000 (CHF 10,172,000)
Cultivable area affected:	355,758 hectares
Agricultural loss:	INR 201,289,000 (CHF 8,052,000)

Orissa is India's second poorest state with more than 47 per cent of the population earning less than one US dollar a day. In the coastal regions approximately, 75 per cent of the affected population depend on fishing for their livelihood while the rest depend on agriculture. In inland regions, 30 per cent of occupations are related to fishing and the other 70 per cent mainly to agriculture.

Communication has been severely affected in coastal and western areas and basic food prices have begun to skyrocket because of increasing scarcity.

The most immediate needs for vulnerable people are the provision of shelter, food, drinking water and sanitary measures to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases. Gastroenteritis and other ailments are being reported mainly because of contaminated drinking water. With the large scale crop damage, food scarcity could become more of a problem.

Interagency Coordination:

UN House, the state coordination body of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in Bhubaneswar called a meeting on 10 July with NGOs and humanitarian organizations. The Orissa state branch of the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) and a delegate of the Spanish Red Cross took part. Assessment teams, working to Oxfam's civil society assessment format, were formed to operate in their respective districts. The first stage is due to be completed by tomorrow (20 July). It was agreed to employ the Minimum Standards of SPHERE as a guideline for all participating organizations.

Regular updates are shared through the interagency coordinating team. The Orissa disaster mitigation authority (OSDMA) has called for a daily meeting to discuss developments and coordinate the response of different organizations.

On 16 July, the state branch assumed the coordination of the packaging and dispatching of relief material (mainly food material for air-dropping) as requested by the UN and Orissa government.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The IRCS Orissa state branch responded immediately. On 11 July, the branch, together with a delegate of the Spanish Red Cross already based in Orissa, mobilized three assessment teams covering Kakatpur and Astaranga blocks in Puri district; Balikuda and Kujanga blocks in Jagatsinghpur district; and Mohakalpada block in Kendrapada district. The Indian Red Cross has launched a flood damage assessment using the cyclone shelter disaster preparedness committee's framework in the coastal villages.

The Red Cross began an interim relief operation on 13 July for the worst affected coastal block of Kanas in Puri district, providing 258 families in six villages with plastic sheeting, high calorie biscuits, water purification tablets, clothing, candles and matchboxes. The navy was also deployed to rescue people in the most affected villages.

A second relief operation by the Orissa Red Cross branch in the western district of Kalahandi on 16 July reached 870 villages in 13 affected blocks, assisting 35,000 people. At least 2,900 houses have been destroyed and 8,340 are damaged. The state branch supplied 2,500 plastic sheets, 2,400 dhotis and sarees, 5,100 oral rehydration

solution packets and 48,000 water purification tablets. The Red Cross district branch chairman will supervise distribution in Kalahandi.

On the same day, the Red Cross branch was approached by the Orissa state government to help pack relief materials so that emergency food rations can be airdropped to marooned families. Since then, the Orissa State Red Cross and its volunteers have been the focal point of implementing relief operations.

The UN also requested Red Cross volunteers to assist in the Erasama block of Jagatsinghpur district, an area severely hit by the cyclone of 1999. The Red Cross volunteer task force is comprised of those trained in rescue operations after the cyclone.

In addition, Bhubaneswar volunteers of the junior Red Cross and the youth Red Cross are involved around-the-clock in packing relief materials for transport to Bhubaneswar airport for airlift operations.

Survivors in coastal Orissa are seeking refuge in the 25 Red Cross cyclone shelters. The shelters are also being used as distribution points for emergency relief materials.

Red Cross communications is coordinated by the Orissa State Branch, IRCS national headquarters, International Federation, Spanish Red Cross delegation and the German Red Cross' programme coordinator in Bhubaneswar.

The Indian Red Cross national headquarters has deployed a relief delegate who will arrive tomorrow (20 July). The Federation has deployed an assessment delegate, information delegate and information officer to assist and communicate findings to the disaster preparedness delegate in Delhi.

The Spanish Red Cross delegation in Bhubaneswar is working closely with the state branch to gather the necessary information to develop a bilateral relief operation.

The German Red Cross programme in Bhubaneswar has indicated a willingness to release funds from its emergency fund if needed. The Orissa State Branch has submitted an immediate proposal for DEM 1000 to the German Red Cross .

For further details please contact :

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are 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 operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

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