

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

MADAGASCAR, MAURITIUS, REUNION: CYCLONE DINA

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This Bulletin is intended for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

The cyclone season in the Indian Ocean area lasts roughly from January until mid-April, and meteorological services have predicted that this year's season will be very active. The latest storm, Cyclone Dina, hit the islands of Mauritius and Réunion late in the evening of Wednesday, January 22. With wind speeds of over 200 kms per hour Dina is considered one of the most violent cyclones to hit Réunion since 1994. The eye of the storm passed within 25 kilometres of the coast causing widespread destruction of shelter and infrastructure, with four people dead in Mauritius and many injured on both islands.

Cyclone Dina subsequently moved 170 kms to the west of Réunion, and continued to move away in a south westerly direction. Though the weather on the island remains unstable the red alert has been lifted from both Réunion and Mauritius, a cyclone warning remains in effect for the island and all traffic is severely restricted. Another cyclone is reportedly forming 650 km north-west of Réunion.

Mauritius

The Mauritius Red Cross Society (MRCS) reports indicate that four people have been killed, with many more injured. Roads have been cut, the electricity network has been severely damaged (30% of the grid remains out of order), the water distribution network has been damaged, and many homes and buildings have lost their roofs in the high winds. The Government of Mauritius disaster relief agency is currently evaluating the damage to determine the most urgent needs of the population. An MRCS decision to mobilize more of its volunteers is pending the result of this evaluation.

Réunion

On Réunion the damage is also considerable and an evaluation of the situation is underway by relief services. Some fifty per cent of the population is without electricity, 2,800 people have fled their homes and are accommodated in centres, many roofs have been destroyed, many roads are either cut or difficult to pass, numerous people have been injured, and though exact numbers are not available the fire department has treated close to 300 people and the ambulance services have made 509 interventions on the island. The French Red Cross on Réunion has lost one vehicle (damaged) and their radio transmitter has been knocked out of commission. Relief operations are being co-ordinated by the Civil Security Agency with the support of the police and other government agencies.

Madagascar

Of all the Indian Ocean islands Madagascar is most vulnerable to cyclones, and the last major Federation relief and assistance operation there responded to Cyclones Eline and Gloria in March, 2000 (see the Federation's Emergency Appeal no. 06/2000: Madagascar: Floods and Cyclones). Cyclone Dina is continuing to head southwards and is unlikely to hit Madagascar. The east coast of the island is however currently experiencing strong winds and heavy rains as a result of the storm. Madagascar's west coast was struck by a less severe cyclone (Cyprien) on 2 January 2002 which caused serious damage.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Teams of Mauritius Red Cross volunteers are distributing food and clothing to the 500 people who are accommodated in shelters. The French Red Cross on Réunion has been available to provide assistance throughout the storm period and is waiting for the final evaluation. A team of 25 people has been put at the disposal of the accommodation centre of the communes. Further action of the French Red Cross will depend on the further information and the evolving situation. The French Red Cross regional office for the Indian Ocean remains mobilized to provide assistance as needed.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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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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