

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

DJIBOUTI: FLOODS

20 April 2004

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 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 02/2004) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 30,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). The Federation does not anticipate further needs. Un-earmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the DREF update.

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The Situation

Torrential rains and high winds hit Djibouti town and the surrounding areas between Sunday 11 April and Tuesday 13 April. The storm brought down telephone poles, resulting in a near-total communication blackout. The rains caused flash flooding in Djibouti town. As flood waters surged along the dry river bed between Djibouti town and Balbala suburb many homes were washed away. The Amboseli Quarter of Djibouti town was most seriously affected. Electricity supply had been cut off to many parts of the city but partly restored by Tuesday 13 April.

The Djibouti Ministry of Health has organized inter-agency meetings; key players in the response are the Ministry, the [Red Crescent Society of Djibouti](#), the Federation Eastern Africa Regional Delegation, UNICEF, WHO and USAID. The Government is focusing efforts on clearing up the flooded areas. U.S. military forces stationed in Djibouti are pumping water back into the river; the national army is clearing up schools to get them back into operation.

The Federation Regional Disaster Management Coordinator arrived in Djibouti and has visited the affected areas where the river overflowed its banks and swept away small settlements. Although there is still water standing in some parts over 1 m deep, the major flooding seems to be subsiding and will probably evaporate in due course. The destruction from the flooding is becoming more evident. The railway line and some roads are badly damaged, walls have been torn down, and in some areas refuse and vegetation are strewn around.

It is estimated that 70 people have died in the flooding. Some bodies are still being found, and this may impact health concerns. To this end, USAID has provided the Ministry of Health with USD 300,000 for cholera kits, public information efforts, etc.

Currently 1,500 people have been evacuated to two schools. Efforts are underway to relocate them to Balbala, an area on higher ground and not affected by the flooding. This would allow the schools to re-open. UNHCR and others have provided 160 family tents and a further 100 are needed. The Federation Regional Delegation is currently taking steps to procure these, optimally in country. Alternatively, a loan from Kenya Red Cross/ICRC of 100 tents may be pursued, but these would need to be transported from Kenya to Djibouti; UN OCHA may possibly airlift these tents.

Overall, the current situation seems well in hand. UN agencies are assisting with the material needs, but needs still exist for equipment, fuel, vector spraying etc. The Federation will not deploy personnel for RDRT or for [FACT](#); a previously-proposed water and sanitation [ERU](#) will also not be deployed. An airlift from Dubai will arrive with considerable materials, thereby mitigating the need for additional non-food items.

The health situation is not considered serious, and the needs are being addressed. The clean-up effort – mopping up, refuse removal - will directly address the key health concerns. There is currently no indication of cholera, but there have been some cases of diarrhea reported. The Ministry of Health is monitoring this situation closely.

The water and sanitation (WatSan) situation is also under control. Water and electricity supplies have been largely restored. WatSan supplies are available from UNICEF and WHO; the Federation may support this through the procurement and distribution of water chlorination tablets.

The Government has notably proposed a new resettlement and rehabilitation project. The settlements that were the most affected by this flooding were declared illegal after similar flooding in 1994; the Government legislated that these areas were not to be settled, but this was not enforced. Houses built there were very temporary; proving the loss of this type of house would be difficult, thereby limiting any assistance the Government could offer. As well, the Government took steps in August 2003 to identify and deport illegal immigrants.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Red Crescent of Djibouti has a small presence in Djibouti town but has good relationships with the Government. The national society has been coordinating with the Government and attending inter-agency meetings to agree its role as defined by the Government. The national society has previously assisted with non-food item distributions for displaced people and fire victims, with the assistance of ICRC/Djibouti; they recently recruited a disaster management officer and an information officer.

Red Crescent of Djibouti initially mobilized 40 volunteers and dispatched them to their dispensary in Balbala. The national society made itself available to assist with non-food items' distribution.

The Federation has allocated CHF 30,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). As mentioned, the Regional Disaster Management Coordinator is currently in Djibouti; the Regional Delegation is working on the procurement of family tents, and will coordinate their transport to Djibouti. Coordination is strong between the Red Crescent of Djibouti, the Federation and ICRC; this is also the case with the key players in this response, most notably the Ministry of Health, UNICEF, WHO and USAID.

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's [Annual Appeal for Djibouti no. 01.02/2004](#).

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