

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

EAST TIMOR: FLOODS

17 March 2004

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organisation and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 03/2004) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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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](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

The flood disaster in Cailaco, Maliana district in December, involved some 400 victims – a heavy challenge for the fledgling national society of East Timor, Cruz Vermelha Timor Leste (CVTL) with little training and experience in disaster management.

Soon after the Maliana flooding, Hatuodo in the Ainaro district was hit by floods affecting approximately 450 people and destroying crops and livestock. Notified by the government's National Disaster Management Unit (NDMO), a CVTL assessment mission supported by local volunteers and local authorities found 15 houses destroyed. Although there were no human casualties, flooding remains extensive with many people falling ill with stomach pains and malaria although it was difficult to ascertain whether this is entirely due to the floods.

Weeks later storms swept through the town of Los Palos damaging houses and displacing people and CVTL has been called into action, again, to support the small population of people affected.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

In Maliana, CVTL distributed family kits and clothes (the latter in conjunction with the nuns of Santa Cruz in Maliana). A third distribution, consisting of food aid and seeds, is now being prepared. The food aid will be adapted to support earlier food aid provided by the NDMO which has only addressed some of the needs (standard distribution of rice: 15 kg per family for one month, regardless of family size.)

Villagers in the Ainaro district presenting with health problems have been treated. Volunteers have encouraged people to visit the local health station in Hatuodo for follow up treatment. At present it is difficult to assess how

much of the victims' health problems were related to the disaster, but the stagnant water clearly provided breeding ground for mosquitoes. No effective water and sanitation measures are yet in place compounding the vulnerability of people. An assessment of the water and sanitation situation will be carried out by CVTL.

In addition to the demand for mosquito nets, there is a need for family kits. CVTL will try to address these needs as well as ascertain food requirements as many crops were destroyed.

CVTL has been called by the district administrator to address the situation in Los Palos and plans to conduct an assessment as soon as its capacity permits, given the engagements in Maliana and Ainaro.

Conclusion

Vulnerable people affected by the series of disasters in districts of East Timor have received assistance through the disaster management unit of the CVTL and its volunteers. Extensive media coverage has raised the profile of the CVTL as a humanitarian organisation with a clear role in disaster relief. However such publicity places further strains on an already stretched national society. While many of these disasters may not compare to other disasters around the world in scale, within a small developing country such as East Timor with a new national society, delivering relief to vulnerable people becomes a serious challenge.

Current relief operations and budgets for the Ainaro flood and the Los Palos storm are being reviewed following new assessments. Support for these operations can be made through the [2004 annual appeal](#).

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.

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

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