

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

AFGHANISTAN: SEVERE WINTER

6 February 2006

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 183 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 2/2006) 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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The situation

Afghanistan has been suffering from extremely cold conditions since the beginning of the year. Since 1 January 2006, there have been heavy snowfalls, rain and bitterly cold conditions. On 31 January, heavy snowfalls hit Faizabad province in the northern region particularly hard. The extreme conditions resulted in 17 people dead, 30 injured and 14 houses completely destroyed in the Kohistan and Ragh districts. The injured people were transferred to hospital for treatment. There is the threat of further heavy snowfalls in Kohistan and Ragh districts and roads in these areas have been blocked.

In Sakhi camp, in Mazar-i-Sherif province, 11 houses were destroyed by the heavy snow and 25 were partially damaged. No casualties have been reported. In Bander, Gurziwan, Kohistanat and Lawlash districts in Mazar province, a total of 5,200 returnee families are living in tents and are vulnerable to the cold temperatures. The roads to these districts are blocked by snow.

Additionally, 36 houses in Sar-i-Pul and Balkh provinces have been damaged by heavy rains and the melting of the snow.

It has been reported that the Salang tunnel, which connects the northern part of the country with the south and which much of the population rely on to travel, was blocked due to snowdrift in the last week and about 15 buses were stuck in tunnel for about two nights.

Red Cross Red Crescent action

The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) Faizabad branch reported that the affected populace have been evacuated and the injured people were transferred to the hospital for treatment. Faizabad branch, along with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the ministry of rural and rehabilitation development (MRRD) distributed food and non-food items by helicopter in order to assist the beneficiaries.

The ARCS central region has been given a major role in assisting 5,018 highly vulnerable families of internally displaced persons currently living in very basic conditions in Kabul city various districts around the capital. The first round of distribution of food items and coal for 2,509 registered families have been completed and the second round of distribution is ongoing. Distribution of non-food items for another 2,509 most vulnerable and returnee families have started in various districts of Kabul.

Distribution of non-food items for 7,491 vulnerable families in 11 high-risk provinces has started. Support for the distribution of these non-food items will be provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The ARCS will be implementing the programme through the network of branch staff members and volunteers at headquarter and provincial levels.

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