Information Bulletin
The Republic of Korea: Ferry Disaster

16 April 2014

This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Korean Red Cross, with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has determined that external assistance is not required, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

A passenger ship with 459 people aboard, mostly high school students, sank in waters off South Korea’s southwest coast Wednesday morning, leaving four dead, 15 injured and 291 others missing.

A total of 50 Korean Red Cross volunteers arrived at the site immediately shortly after the accident happened. A total of 500 blankets have been distributed. A mobile kitchen has also been set up to provide hot meals.

The situation

A passenger ship with 459 people aboard, mostly high school students, sank in waters off South Korea’s southwest coast Wednesday morning, leaving at least 4 dead, 15 injured and 291 others missing as of 7 pm.

The 6,325-ton passenger ship “SEWOL” was capsized and sank down into waters near Jindo Island, just off the southwest corner of the Korean Peninsula, at around 11:30 a.m. local time Wednesday.

Korean Red Cross volunteers preparing hot meals in the mobile kitchen. Photo: Korean Red Cross

1 http://world.163.com/14/0416/08/9PUK60MQ00014OQQ.html#p=9PUNQ8PV00AG0001
as it was travelling from Inchon to the holiday island of Jeju.

The ferry, which was carrying 325 students, 15 teachers, 89 other passengers and 30 crew members, sent out a distress signal at about 8:55 a.m. and drifted for some two and a half hours before finally sinking.

The vessel was believed to have run aground in the waters after some of the rescued passengers said the ship began to careen to the port side after they heard a banging sound on the bow.

At least four people, including a female crew member and a high school male student have been found dead. A total of 164 people were confirmed rescued as of 7 p.m.

After receiving the distress signal, the South Korean authorities, including police, fire brigades, coast guard and navy, dispatched 24 rescue ships and 16 helicopters to the scene to carry out rescue operations.

**Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

The Korean Red Cross has deployed 50 volunteers and seven staff from the Gwangju, Jeonnam Chapter to the Jindo county gymnasium, a temporary situation centre where family members of the ferry’s passengers are waiting for more news and also meeting with the rescued passengers. The Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter has also set up a temporary relief unit to respond to any needs for the rescued and other hundreds of waiting families there.

As of the reporting period, the National Society has distributed 500 blankets to the survivors and waiting family members. A mobile kitchen has been set up in the gymnasium and is providing hot meals to at least 1,000-1,500 family members, volunteers and others, who are waiting for news of the rescue operations. Korean Red Cross staff and volunteers are on stand by and coordinating with local authorities to provide psychosocial support if needed.
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All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC’s vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC’s work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.