

MINOR EMERGENCY



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

GEORGIA: FLOODS

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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

CHF 50,000 (USD 41,918 OR EUR 32,460) HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO RESPOND TO THIS OPERATION.

UN earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

A period of torrential rain in late April has caused the worst flooding situation in recent history in Georgia. Initial reports indicated that the Racha-Lechkhumi region (Oni, Ambrolauri, Tsageri), the Svaneti region (Mestia, Lentekhi), and the Imereti region (Khoni, Tskaltubo, including Kutaisi city) were most affected. Basic infrastructure (roads, electric lines, and communications) has reportedly been seriously damaged because of the rising water levels, and resulting landslides.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action taken so far

CHF 50,000 was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), and a Federation Field Assessment and Coordination Team (FACT) was deployed. Based on the following initial information from the assessment, it is anticipated that an Emergency Appeal will be launched.

While one sub-team of the Federation's FACT mission left for Kutaisi in west Georgia, the rest of the team remained in Tbilisi to continue meetings with key informants. On 3 May, 2005 they met with representatives of the WFP and United Methodist Committee on Relief - Georgia (UMCOR). The WFP, jointly with the UMCOR, had conducted a rapid assessment in the flood affected areas in western Georgia within the framework of the DMT. Specifically, they focused on the Racha-Lechkhumi and Ajara regions. Their findings show that the worst affected areas are Tsageri and Lentekhi towns and four villages - Glova, Chiora, Ghebi and Ghona in Racha-Lechkhumi.

In Lentekhi, no casualties were reported. However, the number of patients with acute phases of chronic diseases and signs of stress has increased twice after the floods. No signs of acute malnutrition have been observed. The cold chain is working effectively and there is sufficient stocks of vaccines. Health personnel are in place though with limited capacities. There are concerns related to low stocks of essential medicines and medical supplies. UNICEF, however, indicated that they might be able to cover the needs provided that the Government ensures a smoother transition of the incoming relief goods through customs. The main hospital in Lentekhi does not have electricity; the electricity supply system was damaged by the floods. The hospital is functioning with a small generator. Over 100 families have been evacuated, most of which found shelter with their relatives and neighbours. Some livestock was killed (the numbers are not available). The water supply system is reported to be destroyed and latrines have been washed out. There are fears of an outbreak of communicable diseases. The rain has not stopped and the weather forecast is not promising. This, it is feared, might further aggravate the situation with more respiratory infections expected to be recorded. The water supply system was reported to be completely demolished in Oni too.

Another WFP/UMCOR team is currently in Ajara, in west Georgia, doing assessments. A full report is expected to be shared shortly. Preliminary data shows that the situation there is more serious than it had been initially reported. WFP also shared the assessment report from CHF, which includes mainly numbers of damaged houses and evacuated families. It does not however elaborate on the details of the damage and the needs.

According to the WFP there is no immediate need for food in the assessed areas. If there is a need, they believe they will be able to meet them with their contingency stock. WFP is working on identifying target groups for food distribution and seeks more comprehensive information on the needs as well as plans of other organizations. According to the WFP, some organizations allegedly have already started distributions, e.g., CHF received USD 50,000 from the USAID. However, consolidated information on all distributions is not yet available.

WFP is planning in the near future to dispatch additional teams to other regions too (no specific plans exist yet) to conduct a more comprehensive assessment.

EU food security: the team met with the Food Security programme manager at the European Commission (EC). The EC is supporting the state budget and is not operationally involved in food security activities. The amount of the support given is approximately 6 million EUR and represents almost 50% of aid to Georgia. Any damage to cereal stocks will have a significantly negative impact on the population in the west, where cereals are estimated to be 65 to 70% of the average calorie intake of families. Out of some 850,000 metric tonnes of wheat that are needed for the consumption, only 200,000 metric tonnes are produced by the country, while the rest is imported either by the Government or through parallel mechanisms. Any loss of existing stocks should, therefore, be perceived as important. The FACT team will hence check whether any warehouse or silos containing wheat were damaged by the floods.

FAO

The team also met with the assistant FAO representative in Georgia. The FACT team discussed with mainly agriculture in mountainous, i.e., the worst affected areas. He reminded the team that many of these areas had already been affected last year. As a result the FAO has decided to provide 1,500 households each with 100 kg of potato seeds, the main staple food. The seeds are still on their way, expected to arrive the last week of May 2005, i.e., before the planting deadline, which is 30 May. In that part of the country there is only one planting season and harvest, because the soil is covered by snow during nine of 12 months. Indeed, given that potatoes will need 60 to 80 days to yield to maturity, planting any later might result in having the harvest lost due to frost. In the actual situation, with the seeds arriving late and the high level saturation of the soil, even those families who will receive the seeds will probably have only marginal harvest. Other families who will not receive the seeds will not have any harvest at all. Their capacity to compensate the loss by purchasing food is furthermore endangered since they have

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also lost a part of their livestock, which they normally sell to purchase additional food. The affected population will hence definitely depend on food aid. While WFP has food stocks in the country, it can not yet be concluded whether these are sufficient since the total needs by far have not yet been quantified.

DFID

The FACT team met with the DFID Development Officer and a DFID focal point for the response to floods. DFID has so far not received any requests for funding. They were contacted by the UN to ensure coordination of any efforts. So far, DFID is waiting for more information with regards to the needs and has not yet developed any further initiatives. It does not have small grants schemes since this will be transferred to the British Embassy. Whether that is already in place with the embassy is unknown. Georgia has been identified by the DFID as the priority in the sub-region and might be interested in funding a relief operation in floods affected regions if justified by the needs.

DMT/UN coordination meeting

A meeting was called to ensure coordination between various existing and incoming partners (Italian civil defence, the Federation etc). Various organisations provided information on their assessments. Most of the information, however, is preliminary and will hopefully be further clarified in terms of exact damage and specific needs of the population. One major issue that was flagged was the importance to ensure the continuity between any relief and longer-term rehabilitation efforts. In that context, the meeting discovered that there is a lack of water and sanitation engineers in the humanitarian community. Since the Emergency Situations and Civil Safety Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs has repeatedly pointed at the need for heavy duty water filters and water treatment plants that deficit in expertise should immediately be provided. For that reason, the FACT team has requested from the Federation Secretariat in Geneva the immediate deployment of a water and sanitation engineer. Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, such as the Spanish Red Cross, possessing mobile water treatment facilities, should be alerted that deployment of their equipment might be requested in the near future.

The head of the Emergency Situations and Civil Safety Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs flagged the major needs Government experts have identified include the lack of food, water filters (read water treatment), construction materials and money for construction work. The lack of food was explained with the lack of physical access to the floods affected areas. The meeting was informed that the Government might launch an appeal for food aid in the coming days. The Prime Minister has also instructed various agencies to provide a full picture of the damage and the needs in the affected areas within 10 days.

The CHF fears that the situation might worsen due to the damage to the dams and continuing rainfall. They also confirmed that plantations with spring potatoes have been destroyed in Ajara region, which combined with delays in planting for the next harvest will result in longer-term food insecurity.

The Tbilisi office of the WHO was informed about the Federation's FACT team work and plans.

Today (4 May 2005), the FACT team is holding further meetings with the SCD, CDC-Georgia and the Ministry of Health. After the meetings, on 4 May, the remaining team members will leave Tbilisi for Zugdidi to start the assessment in Mestia, in Svaneti regi

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