

INDONESIA: LANDSLIDES

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The Disaster

At least 70 people are dead and over a hundred missing in landslides and floods in Sumatra, Indonesia, following days of heavy rain in two provinces, West Sumatra and Aceh. Several landslides fell in the two provinces on Saturday, 25 November, causing extensive damage to properties and infrastructure. Dozens of people are feared to be buried under tonnes of mud and rocks. Thousands have been evacuated to safer ground in Sumatra. The rains continue in West Sumatra, but the floodwaters have now begun to recede in Aceh and people are beginning to move back and start to repair their homes.

The disaster left many areas crippled with loss of power and telephone lines, adding further to the difficulties already encountered by the population. Information from the affected areas is still limited, but as more details become available, it appears that the landslides and floods have had a major impact. In West Sumatra, at least 9,600 hectares of rice and irrigated fields have been swept away by the floodwaters, over 2,000 homes are inundated and some 60 km of the road connecting Solok and Padang have been seriously damaged. In several places the floodwaters on the road are as high as one metre.

According to the first reports from the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) chapters in Padang, the five worst hit districts are Solok, Pesisir Selatan, Tanah Datar, Padang Pariaman and Pasaman. In Pesisir Selatan, south of Padang (West Sumatra's provincial capital), the landslides and the flash floods killed 57 people and left 22 missing, most of whom were buried under mud and liquid earth. In the Padang Pariaman district six people were swept away by flash floods and perished, while in Tanah Datar district floods and landslides have killed five people and left 25 others missing. Nearly one hundred houses in Tanah Datar were swept away and some 800 people are still trapped by high water levels. In Padang City itself, two people are confirmed dead and another 24 are missing.

In South Aceh the worst affected districts are Banda Aceh, Pidie and North Aceh. Communications with the province were re-established on Sunday, 26 November, after three days of total isolation with flooded roads, the airport closed and a breakdown of electric communications. Land transportation between Medan and Banda Aceh is still hampered by damaged roads and flooded highways. As yet, there are no confirmed reports of the number of victims or those missing in Aceh.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Indonesian Red Cross Society (PMI) chapter in West Sumatra has sent a mobile emergency vehicle unit (MEUV) to Pesisir Selatan district to assist the local PMI branch to set up a field kitchen for people who are being accommodated in temporary shelters. The PMI chapter has appealed to the community for assistance. Clothing and basic food items, donated by unaffected communities, have been distributed to victims in Pesisir Selatan.

In Jakarta, the PMI headquarters is preparing to transport ten MT of rice to the stricken provinces and has procured medical supplies in anticipation of possible outbreaks of waterborne diseases following the immediate emergency. A local company in Padang has donated over one thousand hygiene kits which will be distributed in Padang without delay.

Upon the request of PMI Chairman, the Federation will now coordinate the disaster response in cooperation with the ICRC and the National Society. The operation in Aceh will be coordinated by the ICRC which has a field office in the province and a close working relationship with the local authorities, PMI Chapters and branches, while the Federation will coordinate the response in West Sumatra.

The PMI's Head of Relief and the Federation's Liaison delegate in Jakarta will travel to the disaster zone in West Sumatra on Tuesday, 28 November to assess the situation and facilitate the initial response. The PMI Chapter in Banda Aceh, assisted by the ICRC's field office personnel (three expatriate staff), is collecting information in the field to determine the response in that province.

Needs

The needs are currently being identified. However, it is clear that the victims will need food, clothing, shelter and medical treatment. Further information will be provided on the situation in the coming days. Discussions are currently underway with the PMI and may result in the launching of an international appeal.

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