

INDONESIA: Earthquake

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The Disaster

The Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) and the Federation's Delegation in Indonesia are carefully monitoring developments in Bengkulu province, southern Sumatra, where a sharp earthquake occurred early this morning, local time. The Indonesian Meteorological and Geophysics Agency measured the quake at 5.0 on the Richter scale, while the US, Hong Kong and Australian geological services put the quake at over 7.0. The epicentre of the earthquake was in the Indian Ocean, some 140 km off the coast of Sumatra and some 400 km west of the Indonesian capital, Jakarta.

There are no reports of casualties or structural damage, but Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) teams are continuing an assessment of the situation in Bengkulu's outlying areas. An earthquake in Bengkulu in June last year, measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale, killed more than 100 people, left nearly 2,800 injured and damaged more than 40,000 buildings.

The PMI, supported by the International Federation, closed down its relief operation in Bengkulu at the end of January this year. A Norwegian Red Cross Emergency Response Unit (ERU) field hospital, which was flown to Bengkulu in the middle of last year, was being dismantled this week; this work has been suspended until the new situation has been assessed fully. The Norwegian Red Cross ERU team currently in Bengkulu includes two medical personnel and two technicians who have just returned from the Gujarat, India, earthquake operation. All four were part of the Bengkulu operation last year.

An experienced programme delegate from the Regional Delegation in Bangkok is in Bengkulu, assisting the PMI and Indonesia delegates in establishing contacts with PMI branches and local authorities. The Federation's team could be augmented with people from the Regional Delegation and/or regional country delegations and National Societies, should the need arise. The PMI's local branches are experienced in dealing with earthquakes, as this is one of Indonesia's most earthquake-prone areas.

At the moment there does not appear to be any need for Federation involvement or support to the local PMI branch. However, this latest earthquake clearly demonstrates the need for continuing to maintain and improve the disaster preparedness and response capabilities of the Indonesia Delegation and the PMI.

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See also:

www.asgo.gov.au/ (Australian Geological Survey Organisation)

<http://aeic.bmg.go.id> (ASEAN Earthquake Information Centre)

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