

# 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

## PAKISTAN FLASH FLOODS

16 November 2002

*Information Bulletin N° 2/02*

*Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: CHF 55,500*

*This Bulletin is for information only. It focuses on the relief support provided by the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) to the worst-affected victims of the horrendous flash floods, that struck Pakistan twice over the last two years; the first one in the summer of 2001 and the second, more recently, in August 2002. Assistance was given to over 9,000 beneficiaries. Funds for the operation were initially provided by the Federation Secretariat from the DREF fund and were subsequently reimbursed in full by the Swiss Red Cross. The Federation is not seeking any additional funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.*

### *The Situation*

More than 230 people were killed in Pakistan after the heaviest rains for 100 years caused flash floods in the country's twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, and neighbouring areas in Punjab and North West Frontier Province (NWFP) in the summer of the year 2001. In Islamabad alone, there was 620 mm of rainfall on 23 July 2001. While the better equipped and well planned capital city had comparatively little damage, Rawalpindi - a city 25 km north of Islamabad - was brought to its knees by 170 mm of rainfall.

Several people drowned in the main street of Rawalpindi and the whole village of Dadar was washed away in the worst affected district of Mansehra in the NWFP, 80 km north of Islamabad. Built on a dried up river bed, the village was hit by a torrent of water 30 foot (9 metres) high. Huge rocks and trees carried along by the raging water, knocked down all its path, destroying the village, killing 170 people and injuring many more. Generally in rural areas houses are traditionally built of mud and are particularly vulnerable to such extreme weather.

In Rawalpindi, business losses in one main bazaar area ran to billions of rupees. Stock damage was particularly heavy because many stores were in the basement. Throughout the city, 5,000 houses were damaged and more than 1,000 cattle lost.

The same storms also affected some of the densely populated poor urban areas in the Punjab Provincial capital of Lahore. It should be noted that assistance to the Lahore floods-affected communities was not initially planned or included in the first Information Bulletin, but the National Society subsequently provided some relief items when specific needs had been identified and the capacity was available to assist.

Following the provision of DREF for relief assistance to the flash floods of 25 July 2001, the Swiss Red Cross fully reimbursed DREF. The total cost of the relief operation amounted to less than the CHF 55,500 originally requested. Swiss Red Cross agree to the PRCS procuring 98 extra tents for future preparedness stocks to be utilised within the year. The additional 98 tents were procured in August locally and were then stored in the warehouse of the PRCS National Headquarters. Availability of these tents greatly enhanced the response time during the floods of mid August 2002.

This time heavy downpours affected the districts of Mardan and Sofaid Sung in NWFP, destroying houses and leaving their inhabitants without shelter. The most serious damage was to agriculture. There was a heavy loss of livestock and irrigation canals and cultivation have been badly damaged or destroyed.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

Pakistan Red Crescent Society's NWFP Branch officials were among the first to reach the disaster-hit area in Mansehra and in Rawalpindi. The PRCS federal capital branch's ambulance service remained on standby throughout the day and night transporting victims of the disaster to hospitals. Following the immediate dispatch of 200 blankets, 960 meters of unstitched cloth and towels and 20 tents to the worst affected area of Dadar in NWFP, another similar consignment was sent to the Buner area each one providing relief to 34-40 families. In Punjab Province 60 tents and 100 blankets were distributed in the affected areas of Lahore providing relief to 60 families. In the Nullah Lea area of Rawalpindi, 300 blankets were distributed. Food distribution in Rawalpindi was also carried out and 1,300 food parcels were distributed among 1,300 families.

*Relief assistance provided to the victims of the Flash Floods in July 2001*

Location	Item	No. Families	No. Beneficiaries
<b><i>Floods of July 2001</i></b>			
Dadar & Buner, NWFP	Blankets x 40 Tents x 40 Cloth x 1,920m	80	480
Lahore	Tents x 60 Blankets x 100	60	360
Rawalpindi	Blankets x 300 Food packs x 1300	0 1300	300 7800
<b><i>Floods of August 2001</i></b>			
Mardan NWFP	Tents x 50	50	300
Sofaid	Tents x 48	48	300
<b>Total</b>		<b>1'538</b>	<b>9'540</b>

Funds (CHF 55,500) for the flash floods operation in 2001 were initially provided by the Federation Secretariat from the DREF fund and were subsequently reimbursed in full by the Swiss Red Cross.

As the total cost of the above items amounted to less than the CHF 55,500 originally requested and as the full amount was available at that time to the National Society, the PRCS was able to procure 100 extra tents for future preparedness stocks and gave a written undertaking to utilise these stocks within one year of receipt in to the warehouse.



The additional 100 tents were procured by the PRCS locally in August 2001 on a repeat order and were then stored in the warehouse of the PRCS National Headquarters. Availability of these tents greatly enhanced the response time when such another emergency occurred again in mid August 2002.

This time heavy downpours affected the districts of Mardan and Sofaid Sung in NWFP, destroying houses and leaving their inhabitants without any shelter. The most serious damage was to agriculture. There was a heavy loss of livestock and irrigation canals and cultivation have been badly damaged or destroyed. The PRCS responded rapidly and effectively. The NWFP Provincial Branch volunteers and staff were the first to reach the disaster areas, where the floods had caused harrowing damage.

Following assessments and consultations with the district authorities as well as village elderlies, a PRCS team of volunteers identified the most pressing needs. These were shelter and food. The assessment mission found some 100 families needed immediate help. Without delay 50 tents, that had been procured with the Swiss Red Cross funds as preparedness stock in 2001, were dispatched to Mardan district, while another similar consignment of 50 tents was sent to Sofaid Sung. The PRCS volunteers were working around the clock to provide support to the victims of devastating flash floods that followed torrential rains.

Within 48 hours after the disaster, the PRCS Provincial Branch with their own resources arranged for the local procurement of basic food commodities, including flour, salt, oil, pulses, rice, sugar and tea. The food items were packed into 100 carton boxes and distributed to the same beneficiary group along with 2,000 metres of unstitched cloth from the PRCS's existing stock. The distribution was carried out by the PRCS team of volunteers. The food items provided for one family for up to two months, while livelihoods are re-established.

During both disasters, the floods of 2001 and the more recent one in 2002, the National Society co-ordinated well with the Government, who was the main provider of assistance for this crisis. Due to significant Government assistance to the flash flood victims, it was agreed that Red Crescent action should be limited and the National Society provided assistance as per the action plan reported on above.

PRCS interventions were very much appreciated by the beneficiaries. They expressed their satisfaction with the items. The assistance, provided within the framework of the operation, offered a minimum level of sustenance and dignity for the target group. There was a huge media coverage in local newspapers on efficiency and effectiveness of the PRCS action in the disaster hit areas. Letters of acknowledgments were received from the Governor and Chief Secretary of the NWFP. The distribution greatly boosted the PRCS's image and public awareness. Stronger links and confidence was established between the Red

Crescent and Government authorities. It also lifted the PRCS's credibility among other organisations operating in the area. The operation once again underlined how significant a role preparedness can play in responding to disasters and demonstrated the National Society's important role in assisting victims of disasters.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

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*All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*

*For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>*

*For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.*

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