

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

AFGHANISTAN: EARTHQUAKE

5 March, 2002

Information Bulletin N° 1

This Bulletin is intended for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

At 16:40 on 3 March 2002, an earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter Scale shook Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. The epicentre was deep in the Hindu Kush Region of Afghanistan, about 75 km south-southwest of Feyzabad and 240 km north-northeast of Kabul. Reports indicate that the worst affected area was Samangan Province, Mazar Region.

In Sari Kunda, Samangan Province, about 25 km south of Aybak, the earthquake caused a massive landslide from a neighbouring mountain. Rubble estimated at 3-4 metres high, 6-8 metres wide and 150 metres in length, has completely blocked the river. This blockage is causing water levels to rise and places about 500 homes, and about 400 acres of land, at severe risk from flood waters. As the river is the main water source for many of the surrounding villages (an estimated total population 5,000) there are also urgent health concerns regarding the potential lack of water.

Initial reports confirm 8 bodies pulled from the rubble, and indicate about 100 people are still missing. Some 100 homes are reported to be completely destroyed, and another 300 homes partially destroyed. A number of livestock have also been lost. The main road is impassable due to the landslide, and a minor road is impassable as it is believed to be mined. Initial reports indicate it is possible to pass the blockage on the main road by use of donkeys.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Afghanistan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) staff from the Aybak clinic in Samagan were first on the scene, offering immediate assistance to the injured. Fifteen of those injured were treated by the clinic staff. ARCS volunteers have been assisting affected families and also helping in the search for bodies.

Two UN helicopters were used to assess the affected area on 4 March. The ARCS branch president and Federation delegate (involved in the training programme for emergency mobile units in Mazar), and an ICRC water and habitat engineer were among the members of the assessment team aboard the helicopters.

The ARCS, supported by the Federation, is delivering and distributing food and non-food items, tents and blankets as immediate assistance to the survivors. The ARCS Health Emergency Mobile Unit has been deployed to the area this morning (5 March) with health and CBFA staff along with basic medical equipment. Technical staff are looking at the solution to the problem of the blocked river and the prevention of flooding. Solutions may include airlifting a mechanical digger to the area. The Federation, the ICRC and the ARCS in Kabul are in regular contact with the Mazar offices and are monitoring the situation.

In Kabul there are reports of 6 injured people hospitalised. 32 families are reported to have lost their homes. The ARCS made a survey yesterday (4 March) of the affected areas and found 14 houses destroyed in district eight, 3 houses destroyed in district three, and 4 houses destroyed in district five. The ARCS have already made donations of food and non-food items to all the affected families identified.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

For further details please contact: Andrée HOULE, Phone 41 22 730-4316; Fax 41 22 733 0395; email houle@ifrc.ofg

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

John Horekens
Head
Relationship Management Department

Hiroshi Higashuira
Head
Asia and Pacific Department