

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

THE GAMBIA: SQUALL IN UPPER RIVER DIVISION

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Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: CHF 30,000

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 180 countries.

For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

This document is being issued based on the needs described below. A DREF allocation of CHF 30,000 has been released. The Federation does not anticipate further needs. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the DREF update.

The Situation

On August 24 at 10 p.m., a squall of some 30-35 knots hit the area around Basse Santa Su in Upper River Division (URD), the Gambia. According to the Basse Hydrometeorological Institute, the squall came in from the east and severely damaged more than 100 compounds within 10 minutes, affecting more than 1,000 persons in Mansajang Kunda, Manneh Kunda, Alluhareh, Basse and Koba Kunda. Many old trees fell on houses and government offices, blocking roads, cutting off electricity and telecommunication. Collapsing buildings killed two persons and more than 100 were injured with severe cases referred to Bansang hospital. The homeless with their relatives have sought refuge in schools.

This time of the year is known as the "hunger season" in the Gambia. The storm destroyed the few remaining reserves of families' food supplies, which makes provision of food the most urgent need until next harvest in October-November. Other needs are shelter and material for repair and reconstruction of houses, clothing and malaria drugs.

The detailed information available so far (accessible villages) comprises the following:

Village	No. of compounds	Houses demolished	Houses damaged	People affected	People injured/killed
Mansajang Kunda	20	13	16	160	10/0
Manneh Kunda	15	4	9	100	17/0
Alluhareh	29	10	12	480	50/1
Basse	30	5	25	160	20/1
Koba Kunda	8	3	5	30	5/0
Total	102	35	67	930	102/2

In addition, government offices and residences, army headquarters and a rest house were also damaged.

The URD Branch office further estimates that some 30 more villages have been affected, although not as heavily populated as those near Basse. The total number of affected people is expected to exceed 2,000.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Gambia Red Cross Society (GRCS) branch Office in cooperation with the Division's Commissioner has carried out a rapid assessment. On the request of the URD Commissioner, the GRCS assembled 10 teams of 2-3 volunteers each to visit affected villages. With the help of the fire brigade and army personnel, some fallen trees were cleared from the roads.

The National Disaster Relief and Resettlement Committee appointed the Chief Fire Officer to coordinate assistance to victims in URD. Following a meeting with NGOs at the office of the Vice President of The Gambia on August 29, an assessment team will complete the rapid assessment carried out by the GRCS.

Immediate needs

Immediate needs are provision of basic foodstuff for 200 families for six weeks, clothing and malaria drugs. For the restructuring of damaged homes, building material is needed. The GRCS headquarters has dispatched a truckload of clothing, beans and edible oil from their emergency supplies with the logistical support of the Disaster Relief and Resettlement Committee.

National Society Capacity building

In connection with GRCS national headquarters monitoring missions, a refresher course in Disaster Management will be carried out for 50 volunteers. The telecom set-up at the branch office will be improved. The GRCS double-cabin will be maintained and assigned to the monitoring team.

Co-ordination

The GRCS is working in close contact with the National Disaster Relief and Resettlement Committee both in URD (via the Commissioner) and at the national level. Coordination with NGOs is made via TANGO, the NGO umbrella organisation in the Gambia. With WFP, appropriate food baskets are being discussed.

Monitoring and evaluation

The GRCS National Disaster Management Office has been called back from his annual leave to lead a headquarters-based task force of three people to be responsible for procurement outside Basse area and for all monitoring, reporting and supervising of project activities.

Capacity of the National Society

The GRCS is currently in a transition period and capacity is limited. However, as mentioned above, a national task force has been established to coordinate the operation of responding to the needs of the affected population. The task force will ensure full control of the disaster response actions. On the ground in URD, the GRCS has a sufficient number of volunteers capable of carrying out the planned activities.

Present capacity of the Federation

During the initial phase of the action, the Federation has a technical advisor based in the Gambia. He will assist the GRCS in setting up the monitoring and in preparing project reporting. The Federation Regional Office in Dakar is planning a visit to the Gambia in September or early October.

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For a full description of the National Society profile, see 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 number 01.37/2003: The Gambia.