

# 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

## AUSTRALIA: CYCLONE LARRY

28 March 2006

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 183 countries.

### In Brief

This Bulletin (no. 01/2006) is being issued for information only, and reflects the status of the situation and information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- Australian Red Cross: Mr. Greg Vickery (chairman); email: [redcross@redcross.org.au](mailto:redcross@redcross.org.au), phone: +61.03.9345 1800, fax: +61.03.9348.2513.
- Federation regional delegation in Fiji: Mr. Alberto Pasini (head of regional delegation); email: [alberto.pasini@ifrc.org](mailto:alberto.pasini@ifrc.org), phone: +679.3311855; fax: +679.3311406.
- Federation Secretariat in Geneva: Ms. Hyun Ji Lee (Pacific regional officer, Asia and Pacific department); email: [hj.lee@ifrc.org](mailto:hj.lee@ifrc.org); phone: +41.22.7304260; fax: +41.22.7330395

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

### The Situation

Cyclone Larry ripped through the far north Queensland Coast in the early hours of 20 March, tearing up roofs, plantations and local infrastructure. There have been no reported deaths and few injuries, though the cyclone has caused widespread damage to property and agriculture. The town of Innisfail has been hardest hit, with many residents still struggling without water, electricity or phone lines, while trying to access basic services and cash.

Health authorities have renewed their warnings to health threats like respiratory-related illnesses, gastroenteritis, food poisoning and waterborne illnesses, as people continue living in damp, cramp conditions and the worst areas suffer without fresh water. Authorities claim to



A mother and child receive personalized care and support from a Red Cross volunteer at one of the evacuation centres in Queensland

be doing all they can to restore basic infrastructure, and continue to drop food and tarpaulins into certain locations in Innisfail using charter and defence force planes.

The Queensland government launched an emergency appeal on the day of the disaster, 20 March, to support affected communities. According to the government website, more than AUD 6 million has been raised. Further funding of aid worth AUD 100 million has been pledged by the Australian prime minister. Four recovery centres are active throughout the cyclone-hit areas, with the Australian Red Cross (ARC) active in many of them. Discussions with the Queensland Department of Communities on the Australian Red Cross role in long-term recovery are ongoing. The department is responsible for coordinating emergency financial relief and referrals to support services for the cyclone-affected.

While Queensland deals with the aftermath of Cyclone Larry, another cyclone – Cyclone Wati – was predicted to hit the its coast, but has curved to the direction of New Zealand, bringing with it heavy rains to the northern areas. According to latest reports from the Federation’s disaster management information system (DMIS), Wati has since then been downgraded and is no longer classified as a tropical cyclone.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action



*Red Cross volunteers assist in the police room during the initial response to Cyclone Larry.*

With prior warning of the incoming cyclone, Australian Red Cross has prepared and mobilized an effective response to the disaster, both within and beyond roles pre-negotiated in local disaster plans. Red Cross staff and volunteers from Cairns, Brisbane, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast have gathered in the affected areas, working in 12-hour shifts to provide non-stop care to the affected. They also provided personal support to highly vulnerable families direct in their own homes. Indeed, communities in the badly-hit Innisfail have paid tribute to Red Cross volunteers and the state emergency services (SES), who have been providing cooked food to local residents continuously since the disaster. In some cases, local businesses have organized the food that is then distributed by Red Cross volunteers.

On Sunday (19 March), the day before Cyclone Larry hit, the Queensland Australian Red Cross Emergency Services swung into action to help prepare residents for the cyclone. The National Registration and Inquiry System<sup>1</sup> was activated as part of initial Red Cross assistance, with volunteers undertaking registrations across the region and assisting the state inquiry centre in Brisbane. Thus far, there have been 4,155 inquiries and 450 registrations, with 23 matched enquiries and 18 notifications.

Over the next two days, volunteers assisted affected residents through evacuation centres in Tully, Silkwood, Townsville and Innisfail, although most have moved from these centres after a few days. Centres in Tully and Innisfail are being re-established to cater for new needs. In the Innisfail centre especially, which has the capacity to house 1,000 people, the Red Cross has been providing care and support to up to 100 evacuees. In Townsville, ARC hosted 80 foreign backpackers who were evacuated from Tully on 21 March; numbers have currently been reduced to seven.



*Red Cross volunteers work around the clock providing shelter and comfort to victims of the cyclone.*

Red Cross volunteers from the Cairns youth group have travelled to Babinda to assist a small community, identified as particularly vulnerable in the early response and recovery phase. The volunteers have been providing meals from a local school. According to the national society website, a new community needing dire assistance has also been identified in Kurrimine.

At the onset of Cyclone Larry, the ARC headquarters activated its national crisis management plan to coordinate the society’s resources according to the Queensland division’s needs. The national crisis executive policy group met and determined support options, but no supplementation from other divisions has been necessary so far.

<sup>1</sup> A computer system used to assist in locating people who have been evacuated or relocated as a result of a major incident.

In the media, ARC volunteers and executive director have been featured prominently, especially in newspaper and radio reports in the region. The ARC national communications department has been actively supporting the Queensland division, and has sent a staff member to assist with local media liaison and communications.

The ARC will continue meeting with communities and planning with all agencies involved. The Federation secretariat is monitoring the situation through DMIS entries and continuous updates from the ARC.

[\*Click here to return to the title page or contact information.\*](#)