

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

India: Cyclone AILA

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The International Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation. Indian Red Cross Society will, however, accept direct assistance to provide support to the affected population in the country.

On 25 May, cyclone AILA hit coastal Bengal affecting over 1.5 million people. Up to 96 deaths have been reported so far and over 500,000 houses have been damaged either fully or partially.

The Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) national headquarters and branches responded quickly to the disaster. Preliminary assessments have been carried out and relief items including tarpaulins and clothes have been despatched from the IRCS's to affected branches for further distribution to the affected people. IRCS staff and volunteers have also been mobilized to provide support in search and rescue, distributions and medical aid.



A response team from IRCS, West Bengal state branch going for emergency assessment and to provide medical assistance. Arup Mukherjee, Indian Red Cross Society.

[click here to view the map of the affected areas](#), or [here for detailed contact information](#)

The Situation

Cyclone AILA which hit coastal West Bengal on 25 May, 2009 is described as one of the worst storms to hit Kolkata in 20 years. Over 5.1 million people have been affected in 16 districts of West Bengal. The damage impact assessment carried out by the government of West Bengal and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has reported 96 deaths, out of which 25 were caused by a landslide in Darjeeling. Over 500,000 houses are damaged either fully or partially. The storm is especially devastating for farmers who were preparing to harvest rice and other crops.

According to media sources, the Sundarbans national park was worst-hit, where as many as three million people live in the forests. Government rescue operations are underway, with approximately 60,000 people rescued and have been accommodated in government relief camps. Local media reports also indicate that food packets are being dropped by military helicopters in the affected areas.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) national headquarters has already established links with the IRCS West Bengal state branch and the disaster management centre at state branch level has been alerted. The Secretary General of the IRCS has reviewed the situation after the cyclone hit West Bengal and necessary directions have

been given to the National Society's disaster management unit which is closely monitoring the situation and is in touch with the chairman of the IRCS West Bengal branch. IRCS volunteers are also involved in search and rescue operations, distribution of relief items and are also working with the district medical teams.

IRCS assessed its disaster preparedness stocks available with different warehouses and the items were released on the basis of assessment reports and requirements from the state branch. A total of five water and sanitation units are stored in the IRCS Salt Lake warehouse in Kolkata and two units are ready for deployment if needed. The national disaster response team (NDRT) has also been alerted and will be mobilized if the situation worsens and national-level intervention is required.

Presently, IRCS national headquarters is releasing non-food items including 5,000 pieces of tarpaulin, 2,000 pieces of saree and 1,000 pieces each of gents' dhoti and children's garments, as requested by the West Bengal state branch. The total value of the relief items is approximately INR 2,950,000 (CHF 67,500), and all items are being sent from the IRCS Salt Lake warehouse in Kolkata.

How we work

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

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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[<map of affected areas below; click here to return to the title page>](#)



Bangladesh and India: Tropical Cyclone Aila

