

SRI LANKA: FLOODS

12 August 1998

Information Bulletin N° 02

The Disaster

The very severe rains in July that caused flooding in south-western Sri Lanka (see Information Bulletin No. 1 of 23 July) have abated slightly although regular showers are still occurring in most of the affected areas. It should be borne in mind that the south-western monsoon season normally lasts until September/October.

After further discussions between the Ministry of Social Services and the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS), and based on new needs assessments, it has been agreed that the SLRCS will concentrate its efforts on the Districts of Galle, Gampha and Kalutara.

Currently the Government, through the Ministry of Social Services, and the SLRCS are assessing the situation in the Districts of Galle, Gampha and Kalutara, in order to identify any further immediate needs, as well as to establish the need for housing reconstruction support for the most affected families in some or all of these three Districts.

Sri Lanka Red Cross/Federation/ICRC Action

With the cash contribution immediately made available by the International Federation through its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), it was possible for the SLRCS to rapidly purchase and begin distribution of some food items, medicine and drinking water, in close co-ordination with the Ministry of Social Services and other local authorities. ICRC provided plastic sheeting for temporary shelter, donated by the ICRC Delegation in Colombo, which was also distributed, as per needs, to affected families in the Districts of Galle and Kalutara.. The distributions were initiated on 25 July and, in some less accessible areas, continued throughout the weekend of 1-2 August.

The relief items and quantities procured/received by SLRCS, are as follows:

- Powdered milk	10,000 packets
- Biscuits	1,900 Kg
- Paracetamol	15,000 tablets
- Aspirin	3,000 tablets
- Plastic shelter	1,000 sheets

SLRCS decided to purchase the above mentioned items, with the exception of the plastic sheets, directly from the manufacturers. Due to the urgency, the National Society's Finance Committee was not summoned, as per normal procedures, but quotations were called for as usual and tender procedures were followed as much as possible. The final selection was made jointly by the Treasurer General, the Secretary General, the Director of Finance and the vice-president of SLRCS.

According to the latest information received by the SLRCS NHQ from their District Branches, and subject to final information after conclusion of distribution, the number of families receiving Red Cross assistance is as follows:

DISTRICT	FAMILIES AFFECTED	FAMILIES ASSISTED BY SLRCS (as of 3 August)
Colombo	6,798	n/a
Galle	6,407	1,698
Gampha	7,550	527
Kalutara	5,950	1,043

The total number of affected families (excluding Colombo) is 19,907; of these 3,268 (approx. 16%) have received assistance from SLRCS.

The distribution of the Red Cross commodities is being supervised by SLRCS NHQ staff who have been dispatched to the Districts, with support from some 10-20 volunteers from each of the concerned District Branches.

The Federation's Information Bulletin No 01 was distributed by the Federation Delegation in Colombo to the diplomatic missions, UN agencies, IOs and internationally active NGOs, in addition to being sent to the media outlets. Local media coverage has been quite good, especially considering that the peak of this emergency relief operation coincided with the 10th SAARC Summit, which took place in Colombo between 29 and 31 July and, naturally, dominated news during that week.

Needs

Depending on contributions, the SLRCS intends to provide approximately 3,000 of the most affected families with one set of clothes for each adult family member, two for each child, a bed sheet and a towel. Also as per the original plans and if the necessary funds are forthcoming soon, the SLRCS would like to provide 1,000 families with corrugated iron sheets, allowing them to construct temporary dwellings while they reconstruct their homes with funds to be made available from the Government. *As of today, no funds have been pledged in support of this operation.*

Further needs may be identified by the government and SLRCS survey mentioned above.

The non-food needs, identified in Information Bulletin 01, remain the same, namely:

Rubb halls (2)	CHF 40,000
Tin sheets (10,000)	46,400
Clothing and bedding parcels (3,000)	35,000
Transportation, procurement, distribution, admin.	12,000
Federation technical support and monitoring	15,000
 Subtotal	 CHF 148,400
 Total cost of this relief operation, including funds already disbursed for food items and fever reduction tablets:	 CHF 178,400

Depending on the meteorological forecast and the above mentioned assessments, a limited buffer stock for SLRCS should also be considered. There is an already identified need for two Rubb halls and guidelines for other items can be given on request.

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