

INDIA/GUJARAT: EARTHQUAKE

6 February 2001

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period covered: 3 - 5 February 2001

Red Cross Red Crescent activities are now in full swing, centred on the stricken town of Bhuj, which lies just 20 kilometres from the quake's epicentre. The International Federation's Secretary General visited Bhuj over the weekend and also met with the President of India in Delhi yesterday (5 February). More than 150 Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) volunteers are working in the affected area. The Indian authorities have requested that the Red Cross hospital in Bhuj serve as the principal referral hospital in the disaster zone.

The context

At 08.50 hours on Friday, 26 January, a series of powerful earthquakes struck Gujarat state in western India, peaking at a massive 7.9 on the Richter scale, with tremors being felt across several states as well as in Delhi and Mumbai (Bombay) and in neighbouring Pakistan. The epicentre of the quake was 20 km north-east of the town of Bhuj (population of 150,000), the district headquarters of Gujarat's Kutch district and seriously affected all the area within the range of 100 km from the epicentre including Ahmadabad, the state's largest city.

According to latest reports, some 90 per cent of the buildings in Bhuj have been severely damaged and 10 per cent have collapsed completely. A large number of people of Bhuj left the town immediately after the quake. As the search and rescue operation has progressed and the teams have reached places further away from Bhuj, it became evident that a number of outlying population centres, including Anjar, Bhachau, Gandhidham and areas around them have been equally, if not even more, affected.

Infrastructure across Gujarat has been severely damaged, resulting in large scale collapse of buildings, mine cave-ins, train derailments and power failure, cutting off the water supply. A series of aftershocks has hit the region, with 19 tremors registering over 5 on the Richter scale.

According to latest government figures, the death toll from the quake stands at 14,281, with 30,529 people injured.

Latest events

By now, the full magnitude of the disaster is being revealed. Hope of finding more survivors buried under the rubble has faded. Search and rescue teams are leaving Gujarat, as are many local people in search of shelter, food and relatives. The odour of decaying bodies continued to linger over Bhuj and the Federation advised the authorities to start liming the area. On 5 February, the town was heavily sprayed. In addition, the authorities are providing residents of Bhuj with ration cards in order to ensure a fair distribution of food.

With all three main hospitals in the Kutch district severely damaged, at a meeting with the International Federation and IRCS, senior local officials requested an extension to the mandate of the recently installed Red Cross field hospital - made possible due to an important contribution from ECHO - to become the district's main referral hospital and remain operational for 12 months. At the same time, the authorities asked for 250,000 tents and one million blankets from the Red Cross Red Crescent. The financial and operational implications of meeting both requests are being reviewed.

A meeting was held with the police commander in Bhuj, resulting in the assignment of 12 policemen to the Federation operational site in two shifts of 12 hours per day to ensure security.

On Friday, 2 February, the President of the Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates visited Bhuj and witnessed the work carried out by the IRCS/Federation.

Over the past weekend, the International Federation's Secretary General visited Bhuj to see for himself the scale of the disaster. Accompanied by senior officials from the IRCS and the Federation's South Asia regional delegation, an intensive programme covered meetings with community leaders, earthquake victims and Red Cross Red Crescent staff and volunteers. On his return to Delhi, he met with the President of India to discuss with him first hand the role and involvement of the IRCS, its sister Societies and the International Federation in responding to the disaster.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Logistics •

The logistics team was further strengthened over the weekend by the British Red Cross ERU members who dealt with all logistics requirements in Ahmadabad and Bhuj. Twenty trucks arrived in Bhuj during Saturday and Sunday carrying relief items provided from the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran which had sent in supplies with two flights to Ahmadabad. Another 30 trucks will be rented in Ahmadabad to facilitate a smooth relief chain between Ahmadabad and Bhuj (distance 475 km - 8 to 11 hour drive).

Health •

A meeting with the representatives of the Israeli field hospital was held. By mutual agreement, since the hospital will close on 9 February, all outpatients have been transferred to the Red Cross hospital with immediate effect while the hospitalised patients will be transferred as of today, 6 February.

The Japanese Red Cross medical team has treated some 170 patients in the hospital at Sukhpur village. In addition, over the weekend, five patients were transferred to the Red Cross hospital in Bhuj.

In Bhuj at the Red Cross hospital, some 530 outpatients have been treated and 39 in patients received, while 22 surgical operations and two deliveries have been carried out. Morbidity statistics show large numbers of trauma patients with infected wounds.

Information about the Red Cross hospital facilities and their location will be published in local newspapers and announcements will be made on television and radio in order to direct all those seeking medical assistance to the nearest facility. Government assistance and transportation facilities are needed to reinforce this service.

The capacity of the water purification system (water and sanitation ERU) has been increased to 40,000 litres of water. This quantity will enable the field workers to supply a part of Bhuj town with clean drinking water. On 5 February, a water assessment was carried out in Bhuj, showing that the main difficulties relate to distribution of water.

Sanitation and waste control is of growing concern. An increase in the number of cases of diarrhoea and respiratory tract infections is expected in the forthcoming period. Two cholera kits have been requested in this regard.

Assessment and Relief •

Due to the extreme emergency, assessment and relief activities have been undertaken simultaneously in the last few days. According to the reports from the area north of Bhuj (visited over the weekend), smaller towns are much more affected than the rural areas. Houses in rural areas are constructed in the traditional manner and were not so severely damaged; family tents and blankets remain the priority for smaller towns. In Khavda (population 8,000), for example, there were 240 deaths with several thousand people injured; most were evacuated to Bhuj after the initial medical treatment. Around 20% of the houses were destroyed and 40% damaged.

Overall statistics from this assessment are as follows:

Village	Population	Dead	Injured	Houses lost
Lodai	5,000	22	100	750
Clanedper	500	2	10	150
Khengarpur	500	9	30	250
Beda	300	4	0	60
Vanfara	150	2	4	45
Dharanpur	700	5	30	150
Jawaahansgur	1,500	60	122	400
Draug	600	11	25	250
Kotay	1,700	21	22	200
Dhori	2,300	19	35	400
Kunaria	950	0	20	250
Sumaraser	3,650	15	0	400
Habay	1,700	6	70	350
Kali Taravadi	1,800	17	80	360
Zikadi	800	17	40	300
Lakhendi	1,700	25	105	370
Ratanal	8,000	225	1,220	1,250
Kakana	2,500	40	210	550

The following quantities of relief items were distributed in Lodai, the largest town surveyed in the area:

Blankets	1,800
Ten-bed tents	22
Rolls of plastic sheeting	3
Plastic sheeting	255 pieces
Clothes	95 packs

On 5 February, distributions took place in Khambhara, Ninual, Lakond and Anjar where a total of 1,036 tents, 7,500 blankets and 1 new emergency health kit were provided.

Telecommunications •

Based on the approval of the local authorities, the Federation is deploying an emergency response telecommunications unit to Bhuj, which arrived yesterday (5 February). The team consisting of two Austrian Red Cross specialist will install the VHF radio network and provide additional technical support to the operation. The Spanish Red Cross is also providing necessary components for the efficient functioning of the VHF radio network.

Indian Red Cross Society •

The number of IRCS volunteers in the affected area currently stands at 150 and rising; a kitchen has been set up to feed volunteers and patients in the hospital. A key element of the visit of the International Federation Secretary General (see above) was discussions on the further integration of the IRCS within the operation, also to ensure a smooth hand-over of activities in the future.

Tracing •

As earlier requested by the IRCS, a delegate (seconded by the British Red Cross) arrived to support the National Society in tracing and family linking activities.

Outstanding needs

Unearmarked cash contributions remain a high priority for ensuring the overall viability of the International Federation activities in support of the IRCS earthquake response operation, including local procurement. The content and schedule of all consignments of goods should be reviewed with the Secretariat's logistics department as far in advance as possible.

Additional requests for experienced delegates in the field of logistics, relief, administration, finance, procurement, telecommunications have been already issued by the Secretariat.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Bhuj •

The first co-ordination meeting of NGOs (including various UN bodies and OCHA) took place over the weekend. It was pointed out by the Red Cross representatives that good co-ordination is crucial in order to avoid duplication of activities. Fixed sectoral meetings for medical, relief, logistics and general issues will be held.

Many of the media representatives left Bhuj on 3 February. However, there were a substantial number of foreign television and press representatives to cover the activities in the Red Cross hospitals as well as distributions. While in Bhuj on 4 February, the International Federation's Secretary General of the was interviewed by a number of international and local networks.

Ahmadabad •

Meetings with representatives of DFID, ECHO and Oxfam were held in order to exchange information and establish coordination of activities. Other international agencies are presently setting up operations.

Delhi •

A press conference was held in Delhi on Monday, 5 February with the presence of the Federation's Secretary General and the Secretary General of the IRCS. Both international and national press interest remains high.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details. The appeal coverage currently stands at 64.4 per cent.

Conclusion

The IRCS/Federation emergency response activities have gained momentum after an intensive first week during which the operational structure and logistics pipeline was set up. The sanitation situation poses problems and cannot be resolved rapidly. Furthermore, there are continuing concerns over the overall health situation and a need for close surveillance. As people are sleeping outside and the nights are cold, cases of respiratory tract infections may increase.

Peter Rees-Gildea
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This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)							
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT	
BELGIUM - GOVT		600,000	BEF	22,881	30.01.01	3 WHO KITS, TRANSPORT/INSURANCE	0101166
BELGIUM - GOVT		8,800,000	BEF	335,588	31.01.01	40 MT BP-5 HIGH PROTEIN BISCUITS, INCL. TRANSPORTATION	0102007
BELGIUM - GOVT		2,050,000	BEF	78,177	02.02.01	6 WHO KITS, TRANSPORT/INSURANCE	
BRITISH - GOVT/ DFID		320,969	GBP	773,535	31.01.01	107250 BLANKETS, 600 TENTS, TRANSPORTATION	0102043
BRITISH - GOVT/ DFID		30,270	GBP	72,950	31.01.01	12480 BLANKETS, TRANSPORTATION	0102045
BRITISH - GOVT/ DFID		146,328	GBP	352,650	01.02.01	400 TENTS, 3'870 BLANKETS, 840 JERRYCANS, 1'000 TARPULINS, CHARTER	0102046
BRITISH - RC/DEC		100,926	GBP	243,231	01.02.01	200 TENTS, 3'300 BLANKETS, 1'200 JERRYCANS, 1'000 TARPULINS, CHARTER (PART SHARED WITH LOGS ERU)	0102047
FINNISH - RC / ECHO		1,500,000	EUR	2,307,600	27.01.01	EQUIPMENT AND 15 PERSONS FOR 2 MONTHS	NO PMN
GERMAN - RC / ECHO		1,910,000	DEM	1,502,406	27.01.01	WATER & SANITATION EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL, PARTLY FUNDED BY ECHO (DEM 1'000'000) & GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTRY (DEM 750'000)	NO PMN
NORWEGIAN - RC / ECHO		14,700,000	NOK	2,750,252	27.01.01	EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL	NO PMN
SPANISH - RC		50,000,000	ESP	462,300	03.02.01	AIRLIFT OF MATERIAL	NO PMN
SAUDI ARABIA - RC		2,234,400	SAR	969,859	03.02.01	FOOD, TENTS, BLANKETS, CARPETS	0102040
SWISS - GOVT/SDR				67,872	29.01.01	3'280 BLANKETS, 50 ROLLS PLASTIC SHEETINGS, TRANSPORT/INSURANCE	0101165
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				9,939,301	CHF		38.8%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET							
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT	
CHINA - RC		50,000	USD	81,400	27.01.01	BILATERAL	NO PMN
SPANISH - RC		15,000,000	ESP	138,690	03.02.01	BILATERAL	NO PMN
SPANISH - GOVT		18,000,000	ESP	166,428	03.02.01	BILATERAL	NO PMN
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				386,518	CHF		
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:							
PIN514							
SWEDISH GOVT/RC		16,000,000	SEK	2,779,200	30.01.01	RELIEF ITEMS	
SWISS - RC				80,000	29.01.01		
WHO - VOLUNTARY EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND				2,500	02.02.01		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				6,547,460	CHF		25.6%

