

# 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

## **INDIA: COMMUNAL UNREST IN GUJARAT**

10 April 2002

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*Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: CHF 50,000*

*This Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below. A DREF allocation of CHF50,000 has been released, and while the need for further resources currently is not anticipated, unearmarked funds to reimburse the Federation's grant would be much appreciated. This operation will be reported on through the quarterly DREF update and, as circumstances demand, information bulletins and/or the regular updates on the India earthquake rehabilitation operation (appeal no 20/01).*

### ***The Situation***

Since 27 February, India's western state of Gujarat has been subjected to serious communal unrest and violence following the attack on an Ahmedabad bound passenger train at Godhra railway station, resulting in significant death and injury. Thousands of houses, shops and buildings have been destroyed and many people left homeless.

According to latest reports, the death toll in the state has reached 800 and about 100,000 people are homeless. At least 45,000 people are living in 44 camps in Ahmedabad - some estimates are much higher - and the numbers increase daily. The situation in Ahmedabad and surrounding areas shows few signs of returning to normal, with a nightly curfew in place and, despite a recent visit by the country's prime minister, the trouble has not abated.

The state Government is providing food (rice, atta, dal oil) and Rps 5 per day per person for the purchase of spices, vegetables, firewood etc. The municipal corporation is providing drinking water, medical services and other health/sanitation facilities. In recent days, the prime minister's office has sanctioned a grant of Rps 10 million (CHF 370,000) to the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) to cover the unmet needs of the affected people living in different camps.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The IRCS has remained in a unique position to provide succour to victims, whatever their ethnic background - adhering particularly to the Fundamental Principles of Impartiality and Neutrality - and has been tasked by the Indian government accordingly. The Society was quickly into action providing relief to the affected population with assistance received from the International Federation's DREF grant of CHF 50,000. IRCS Gujarat state branch staff and volunteers have distributed relief, shelter and medical/hygiene/household items including food, tea, tents, tarpaulins, blankets, plastic buckets, tubing, pitchers and mugs, rope, salt, soap and nearly 400 first aid kits. Remaining quantities of high protein biscuits donated by the Danish Red Cross following last year's earthquake in Gujarat have fulfilled a need at a critical time.

The Society has dispatched from Delhi, 7,000 sarees, 7,000 metres of cloth sheeting, 25 tents, 100 kitchen sets, 100 buckets and medicines and Rps 300,000 (CHF 11,100) in cash. Meanwhile, 110 tents and 25 plastic tarpaulins have been released from the Red Cross warehouse in Virangam, Gujarat, together with various stocks from the state branch's warehouse in Vasna.

Some 200 radio sets and 30 traditional birth attendant (TBA) kits requisitioned from Bhuj have been distributed in the camps. The IRCS is now planning to conduct refresher TBA training to attendants in the camps to facilitate normal deliveries.

Since the start of the crisis, IRCS national headquarters and state branch personnel have visited all camps in Ahmedabad to assess needs and the Society's secretary-general, accompanied by senior officials from the International Federation, will be there again tomorrow (11 April). An IRCS tracing officer, funded by the International Committee of the Red Cross, has been assigned to the camps.

Towards the end of March, 52 IRCS volunteers participated in a training course covering general hygiene and sanitation. The trainers comprised health workers from Bhuj and Rajkot, putting into practice lessons learned from the earthquake operation. Nearly 150 IRCS volunteers, drawn from within the camps, have benefited from the training since the unrest began and are using their newly-found knowledge to help their fellow victims.

In the coming weeks, utilising funds from the prime minister's office grant, the IRCS will be distributing 15,000 family packs comprising: clothing, bedding, footwear and toiletries; general water-sanitation and hygiene items for the camps will also be provided.

An IRCS programme implementation committee, including national headquarters and state branch officials, has been established to oversee all activities, including liaison with the prime minister's office and compliance with the Society's procurement procedures.

IRCS volunteers are moving freely within the camps and interacting with the camp population 'under the banner of the Red Cross', according to a fact sheet issued by the Society. Selecting volunteers from within the camps to work with the Red Cross team has 'created a sense of ownership and community participation', the document notes.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

*For further details please contact:*

- *The Indian Red Cross Society National Society; Phone 91 11 371 6441; e-mail [indcross@vsnl.com](mailto:indcross@vsnl.com)*
- *Floyd Barnaby, Head of Delegation; Phone 91 11 322 4206; e-mail: [ifrcin85@ifrc.org](mailto:ifrcin85@ifrc.org)*
- *Charles Eldred-Evans, India desk; Phone 41 22 730 4320; e-mail [eldred@ifrc.org](mailto:eldred@ifrc.org)*

*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](http://www.ifrc.org)*

*For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.*

John Horekens  
Head  
Relationship Management Department

Simon Missiri  
Acting Head  
Asia Pacific