

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

THE GAMBIA: SQUALL IN UPPER RIVER DIVISION

12 September 2003

Information Bulletin N° 2/03

Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: CHF 30,000

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 180 countries.

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In Brief

This document is being issued based on the needs described below. An initial budget was prepared for activities to address these needs, and totals CHF 88,932. Based on this budget, a DREF allocation of CHF 30,000 has been released. The Federation would appreciate donors to support the local requirements of the Gambia Red Cross Society. Un-earmarked funds to repay DREF are also needed. This operation will be reported on through the DREF update.

The situation

On August 24 at 10 p.m., a squall of some 30-35 knots hit the area around Basse Santa Su in Upper River Division (URD), the Gambia. According to the Basse Hydrometeorological Institute, the squall came in from the east and severely damaged more than 100 compounds within 10 minutes, affecting more than 1,000 persons in Mansajang Kunda, Manneh Kunda, Alluhareh, Basse and Koba Kunda

Operational developments

An assessment team composed of Government, Gambia Red Cross and NGO representatives visited some of the affected areas in Upper River Division (URD) on August 30-31. The team – coordinated by CRS - also collected secondary information from the Commissioner's Office and compiled a Needs Assessment Report.

URD is divided into seven administrative districts and 14 wards. Nine of the wards have been affected. During and after the squall, heavy rains and flooding damaging crops and seeds as well as food supplies and some non-food items. Food shortage was already a problem due to lack of rains in 2002 and the fact that August-September is a "hungry" season in the Gambia. Damaged food supplies comprise of rice, millet and groundnuts (seeds). About 98 hectares of rice fields have been completely submerged for over one week. This is a matter of serious concern as the harvest is due in 6-8 weeks' time.

The team visited 47 households in 12 of the 22 affected communities. If the damage is of similar magnitude in all affected communities, it is estimated that some 800 families (8,000 persons) are suffering from the effects of the squall. An estimated 1,600 houses are partly damaged (roofing and roof construction) or completely destroyed (above all mud/grass houses). Household items destroyed and/or lost include clothing, bedding and bed-nets. Some families are trying to repair their houses, but a great majority remain displaced.

Three deaths have been reported and 19 persons were admitted to Basse Health Center. Some severe cases were treated in Bansang hospital. Some individuals are also traumatized, having been trapped inside a damaged house. Stagnant water and flooding in rice fields are increasing mosquito-breeding sites; however, no new malaria cases have been reported so far. Medical Research Council (MRC) with the Divisional Health Team (DHT) has been assigned to follow-up on the health situation.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Emergency relief (food and basic non-food items)

Objective 1: To assist 1000 persons with basic food supplies

Progress/Achievements

The National Society has distributed 1,400 kg of beans and 400 litres of edible oil to affected families from existing emergency stock. The National Disaster Relief and Resettlement Committee provided transportation. The distribution took place on August 29 in Basse town, while the beneficiaries were selected from several villages near Basse.

The Gambia Red Cross Branch Office carried out an in-depth assessment 4-6 September, in the five villages where a rapid assessment was done earlier. A member of the Gambia Red Cross national emergency response team and the Branch Officer supervised the assessment. Nine volunteers were assigned to the job, forming three teams. A format was designed and copied, concentrating on family size, number of children, damage on houses and food supply lost. The Gambia Red Cross Secretary General and the Federation Technical Advisor joined the teams on 6 September and had discussions with the Project Supervisors, the Branch Chairman and the Commissioner.

The assessment gave the following information:

Village	No of persons affected	Estimated no. of families
Mansajang Kunda	645	70
Manneh Kunda	636	66
Basse town	597	65
Alohungari	994	104
Koba Kunda	40	5
Total	2912	310

With the number of affected persons/families being three times the early figures and given the commitment of the Gambia Red Cross to the people in these five villages, it has been agreed with local government and other NGOs to reduce the quantities of food to be distributed as follows:

Commodity	Quantity/family
Rice	50 kgs
Edible oil	6 ltr
Sugar	5 kg
Smoked fish	½ box (approx 50 kg)

Procurement of supplies has been carried out on 8-11 September in Banjul area, since suppliers in Basse could not meet availability and quantity requirements.

During the assessment, families voiced their concern regarding the prevalence of malaria going high. Since bed nets also were destroyed during the squall, the Gambia Red Cross decided to include two bed nets per family in the distribution, although not foreseen in the budget.

The Gambia Red Cross URD Branch has prepared for the distribution by contacting village leaders and examining suitable distribution points. The Disaster Management Officer has compiled distribution lists, supervised the procurement and explored available transportation alternatives. The distribution is planned for 15-16 September.

Impact

The Gambia Red Cross early distribution of food, however small, was very much appreciated, being the only assistance extended so far.

Constraints

Mobility is a major problem since the Gambia Red Cross at the moment has only two operating vehicles. At Branch level, the only motorbike is shuttling volunteers to the targeted villages.



A truckload of food supplies is ready to depart for Basse, some 400 km away from Kinshasa. The roads are in bad condition, and the trip takes two days. The Gambia Red Cross volunteers are loading smoked fish to complete the food basket of rice, sugar and edible oil.



Volunteers from the Gambia Red Cross carried out an in-depth assessment in Base town and in four villages close to Basse. The head of the household/compound is the spokesperson for all the families in the compound.

Federation coordination

The Federation's Technical Advisor and the RD Disaster Management delegate met with WFP to discuss the situation. WFP has no resources available to assist in the emergency. However, due to a general food shortage in the country, WFP is providing food to vulnerable families countrywide, with CRS as its implementing agency. CRS is also running another relief program, which includes food distribution. No distributions have yet taken place in URD, but in the next six weeks some 300 MT of food is expected to be distributed there. Even if this distribution has been planned using other criteria than those of the recent emergency, it has been agreed that a close coordination is needed to avoid duplications.

NGO meetings on coordination were held on 3 and 9 September and on 4 and 10 September the NGO group met with the National Disaster Relief and Resettlement Committee. Concern Universal and Action Aid will assist affected families and would rely on Gambia Red Cross volunteers for assessments and distributions. A decision by the CRS is expected shortly.

Carry on with specific sectors of intervention and objectives established in your appeal; e.g. Water and sanitation; Relief distribution of food and basic non-food items; Shelter; etc.

National Society Capacity Building

The mobility being a major problem, funds have been allocated to the repair of the 4WD pickup, which will be used for monitoring trips and minor transport duties. A battery has been purchased for the HF radio in Basse, which secures the communication: the telephone network (landlines and cell phones) is still suffering from damages by the squall.

Communications – Advocacy and Public Information

The initial distribution of 1.4 MT carried out by the Gambia Red Cross received good coverage by URD radio and the National TV. Banners and stickers have been produced to add visibility to the planned distributions. Daily newspapers have been invited to a press briefing in connection with the transport of supplies from Banjul on 13 September.

Outstanding needs

The budget prepared prior to the request for DREF allocation, CHF 88,932, includes an intervention on repair of housing, targeting 200 families. In the 154 compounds where the 310 families are residing, a total of 286 houses were damaged. Focusing on the most vulnerable of the affected families, it is anticipated that this budget amount will be sufficient to cover these needs.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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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>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal no. 01.37/2003: The Gambia.