

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

NIAS: EARTHQUAKE

5 April 2005

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 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 07/2005) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking additional funding from donors for this operation at this time.

In the future, information related to the Nias operation will be incorporated in the Operations Updates and Fact Sheets on the overall tsunami operation as an integral part of the Red Cross Red Crescent efforts in supporting the Indonesian Red Cross (Palang Merah Indonesia/PMI) assistance to the affected population in Indonesia.

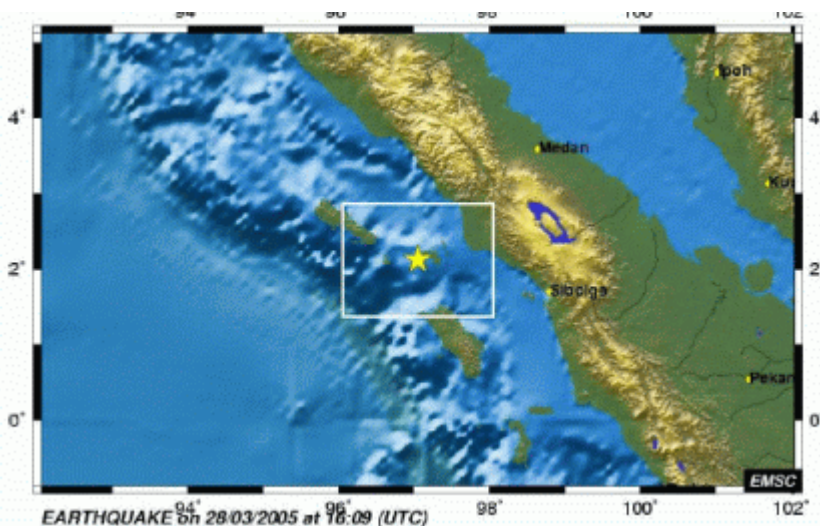
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The Situation

Following the earthquake which occurred on the night of 28 March 2005 at a measure of 8.7 on the Richter scale, reports specify a concentration of destruction across the islands of Nias, Simeulue and the Banyak group, located off the western coast of northern Sumatra. On Nias, where damage to buildings is extensive and widespread, the official death toll stands at 420, according to the Indonesian government's disaster agency Bakornas, with an additional 1,142 injured. With a further 127 dead across the rest of the effected region, the total loss of life currently officially stands at 547.



The Governor of North Sumatra has today instructed that body evacuation efforts on Nias be focused on the city of Gunung Sitoli, where it is feared many more bodies remain buried under the rubble of collapsed buildings. Some heavy machinery have begun to arrive on the island to assist in that effort.

Meanwhile, many of the survivors have been leaving the island of Nias bound for mainland Sumatra. Ferries have been transporting 800-1,000 people daily east across the straits to the port of Sibolga. Rumours are rife that another earthquake is imminent, or that the island is sinking, and the governor is asking local journalists to discourage the promulgation of such disinformation, which is adding needless stress and panic to an already traumatized population.

With this fear of another earthquake and possible tsunami prevalent amongst the populations of both Nias and Simeulue, aggravated by frequent and continuing aftershocks, the majority of people continue to sleep outdoors. Large numbers of the 78,000 residents of Simeulue are also reportedly moving to higher ground, which will potentially hamper emergency and humanitarian assistance on that island.

Medical evacuations from Nias have been continuous since 29 March, with most inbound aircraft carrying relief supplies and personnel to the islands then returning to Sumatra with injured victims mostly transported to hospitals in Medan. The arrival on 4 April of the USS Mercy and the earlier arrival of Australian hospital ship Kanimbla now make it possible to begin treating earthquake victims locally.

Assessment reports from various teams from the UN and other agencies on Simeulue are confirming indications of more severe damage on the western and southern coasts than had been thought in the early days following the second earthquake. Estimates of 70-100 percent building damage in some villages are being confirmed, with PMI staff and volunteers playing an active supporting role in the site surveys.

Specifically, UNICEF is reporting that all remaining school structures on Simeulue that had survived the 26 December quake then collapsed after the second upheaval.

The overall emergency relief response is beginning to take effect under difficult logistic constraints. High seas, broken port facilities and heavily damaged road and bridge infrastructures continue to impose serious challenges to a comprehensive humanitarian response.

While that response has been prompt, with a high degree of readiness and capacity in-country as a consequence of 26 December, the lack of access to and on the islands continues to hamper the rapid effectiveness of relief agencies. The transportation problems are exacerbated by the destruction of storage facilities, thereby complicating the logistic demands of finding adequate warehousing to position relief goods for onward distribution.

A first consignment of 300 MT of WFP food, comprising rice, canned fish, fortified biscuits and vegetable oil – sufficient to feed 20,000 people for one month – has begun to be distributed on Nias. The narrow and shattered roads throughout the island are making delivery difficult.

A further tragedy occurred on Saturday, 2 April, with the deaths of nine personnel from the Australian Defence Force, when their Sea King helicopter crashed and burned on approach to the village of Amandraya, just outside Telukdalam in southern Nias. The helicopter had been transporting an emergency medical team to the island from the Australian ship Kanimbla.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Red Cross Red Crescent emergency relief operations for Nias and Simeulue are now well underway. To date, Federation pipeline reports itemize the following, having arrived for distribution to beneficiaries or pre-positioned for transportation to the affected areas:

Item	Quantity
Family tents	3,100
Tarpaulins	25,000
Blankets	25,000
Food parcels	13,700
Kitchen sets	25,000
Hygiene kits	21,200
Jerry cans	20,000
Insecticide-treated mosquito nets	20,000

Note: actual quantities delivered will be based upon results of current ongoing assessments and coordination with UN and other agencies

A Rubb Hall from the Danish Red Cross is being installed at the port of Sibolga on the west coast of Sumatra across the straits from Nias, which will be used to pre-position relief supplies for transport to Nias. Additional Rubb Halls will be set up at a distribution hub at Teluk Dalam on Nias itself, in order to expand warehousing capacity on the island.

Current plans call for the initial emergency relief supplies to be transported by small boats and landing craft along the east and west coast of Nias, and by larger sea-going vessels to Simeulue until road conditions permit the use of heavy trucks.

The Spanish Red Cross telecommunications emergency response unit (ERU) is in the process of setting up full-fledged operations at Nias airport, based on an initial assessment by the Federation's telecommunications delegate from Banda Aceh. The plan is to establish communications on Nias, on Simeulue, and with the Federation's emergency operational centres on Sumatra, in Jakarta, and in Geneva.

Logistics hubs are being set up on Nias in Gunung Sitoli and in Teluk Dalam, including office and warehousing facilities sufficient for an anticipated long-term rehabilitation and recovery programme. In addition, the Federation has two temporary sites operating: one at the airport to receive relief supplies and other equipment arriving by air, as well as to assist partner national societies (PNS) to get established, and a second camp at a high school on the outskirts of Gunung Sitoli. This second base camp is also being used as a residential compound for the Federation, PMI and PNS staff and volunteers. In addition, it serves as a temporary warehouse. A team from the PMI's Medan chapter is managing this second camp, with assistance from their Federation colleagues.

The Federation has rented a number of motorcycles so that PMI volunteers can travel the damaged roads on Nias to perform relief work and to conduct additional assessments. A further two cargo trucks have been rented to start shuttling relief supplies arriving at the airport to various identified distribution points. These vehicles will be supplemented by Federation jeeps and trucks as soon as these arrive on Nias.

The first shipment of 350 family tents bound for Simeulue arrived yesterday by boat at the island's port city capital of Sinabang. PMI volunteers have also been distributing tents and tarpaulins on Nias.

Japanese, Singaporean and French Red Cross medical teams remain active on Nias treating residents injured in the earthquake.

In total, some 2.4 MT of relief items, including food parcels, medical supplies, water and sanitation equipment and telecommunications equipment have arrived by small aircraft on Nias since the Red Cross and Red Crescent emergency response operations commenced.

The Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) with personnel from Malaysia and the Philippines dispatched to Nias is now actively involved in assessments across the island, as well as coordinating the distribution of family tents along with their PMI counterparts.

According to the Spanish Red Cross water and sanitation delegate, the population in southern Nias is relying on water drawn from wells unaffected by the earthquake. The delegate is currently travelling in the northern part of the island to assess potable water requirements in that area.

Outstanding needs

Immediate outstanding needs include the delivery of additional tents, tarpaulins, jerry cans, family kits, food parcels and recovery tool kits to Nias Island using all available means of transportation.

All goods are being provided from the existing stock and there is no need for additional mobilization of supplies beyond those already held.

Coordination and information sharing

The Public Health Office of Nias is assessing the condition and capacities of the 28 health centres on the island in order to identify the extent of damage and subsequent needs. When the results of that assessment are known, the NGO community will be invited to help in the re-institution of health services to the island's population.

Because a number of people are now sleeping outdoors, there is concern of an increased risk of exposure to malaria amongst the population in southern Nias, where the disease is known to be more endemic. Consequently, UNICEF will be distributing an initial 6,000 insecticide-treated nets, and WHO is providing anti-malarial drugs and rapid diagnostic kits. Environmental conditions continue to be closely monitored to determine if further intervention by other supporting agencies may be required.

UNICEF is preparing for a mass measles vaccination on Nias over the next few weeks, which may require active assistance from other humanitarian actors as many district health staff members have left their posts.

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.

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