

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

SOUTH AFRICA: EARTHQUAKE

10 March, 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. 01/2005) is being issued based on the information available at this time. CHF 70,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). The Federation does not anticipate further needs. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the DREF update.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct¹ and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response² in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

On Wednesday 9 March 2005 around midday, an earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale occurred at 2.4 km below the surface at a mining area in Stilfontein, and the neighbouring Klerksdorp and Orkney towns. The epicentre of the quake is located in the North West province, some 200 km from Johannesburg. The tremor was also felt in Zimbabwe, in the southeast Masvingo Province.

Some 3,200 gold miners employed by a private mining firm working underground near Stilfontein at the time were initially trapped; 2,380 were brought to the surface safely by 6pm on 9 March. Some 40 miners were trapped about 2.4 km (1.5 miles) underground due to rock falls in access tunnels. Latest reports indicate that 36 were brought to the surface earlier or during the course of today. One minor remains trapped, and one death has been confirmed. Search and rescue teams continue efforts to rescue the remaining person. Over 24 injured men were stabilized

¹ Code of Conduct - <http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/>

² Humanitarian Charter - <http://www.sphereproject.org/>

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underground by paramedics before being brought to the surface. There is no shortage of local volunteers to provide assistance since more than 100 workers, including rescue volunteers from other mines in South Africa, worked underground to free the trapped men

Residents of four nearby apartment blocks, two schools and an old age home have been evacuated from the damaged buildings. The local authorities have provided assurance that people who have no homes to go to will be relocated. The executive mayor of Klerksdorp has commended the disaster management teams of the mining company and the municipality for effective management of the disaster. It is important to note that Stilfontien experiences these tremors periodically, but this was stronger than previous cases.

At the same time in Zimbabwe, a tremor was felt in the Chivi District of Masvingo Province. The local population close to the area do not feel safe, and have expressed a desire to be relocated soon. Monitoring is underway.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The South African Red Cross Society (SARCS) has been in contact with the disaster management authorities in the mining area. The SARCS's nearest local branch in Krugersdorp has been immediately mobilized to support the rescue and evacuation efforts led by the local authorities when needed. The national society has put relevantly skilled volunteers on standby just in case their services are needed.

The Zimbabwe Red Cross Society (ZRCS) immediately sent a disaster management officer to join the civil protection officers in conducting an assessment in the Chivi area. The Southern Africa regional delegation has offered to assist the South African and Zimbabwe Red Cross Societies if needed and will continue to closely monitor the information from the two countries. This minor disaster occurred when the Federation is conducting a regional information workshop for all national societies' information officers in Johannesburg. The participants are monitoring the situation with keen interest and this serves as a practical example of handling information gathering and dissemination in a disaster situation.

The International Federation has released CHF 70,000 from its DREF for this minor emergency. A plan of action has been formulated, including;

- CHF 30,000 retraining/refresher of new members of regional disaster response team (RDRT).
- CHF 30,000 regional telecom.
- CHF 10,000 research, review, assessment of earthquake and consequences in South Africa.

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