

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

COMOROS: KARTHALA VOLCANIC ERUPTION

07 December 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 183 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 1/2005) is being issued for information only, and reflects the status of the situation and information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- **In Comoros:** Mohibaca Baco, President, Comoros Red Crescent, Moroni; Email: crco@snpt.km; Phone +269.73.35.16; Fax +269.73.06.64
- **In Kenya:** Susanna Cunningham, Head of Indian Ocean Islands, Sub-Regional Office Nairobi; Email: susanna.cunningham@ifrc.org; Phone +254.20.283.52.21; Fax +254.20.271.27.77
- **In Geneva:** Amna Al Ahmar, Federation Regional Officer for Eastern Africa, Africa Dept; Email: amna.alahmar@ifrc.org; Phone +41.22.730.4224 ; Fax +41.22.733.03.95

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

On the night of 24 November 2005, the Karthala volcano on the Comoros Islands erupted for the second¹ time this year, spilling ashes over the south part of the Grand Comore Island and its capital - Moroni. According to government estimates, 245,000 people were affected.

In addition to disrupting the normal social and economic activities, the ash spill poses a significant health risk to the population. Of immediate concern is water pollution and aggravating environmental hygiene conditions resulting in respiratory problems.

While volcanic activity continues to be observed by the *Observatoire National du Karthala*, no further lava flows and ash spills have been reported since 27 November 2005.



¹ Observatory for the Karthala volcano had earlier (on 16 April 2005) noted abnormal seismic activity. The resultant volcanic eruption was localized to the interior of the crater and its surroundings in the afternoon of 17 April 2005- without lava flow. For more details refer to Information Bulletin no. 1/2005- http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?rpts05/km050427.pdf

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

In partnership with the Comoros Red Crescent and in collaboration with the Federation regional delegation in Nairobi, the Indian Ocean Regional Disaster Response Platform [*Plate-forme d'intervention régionale pour l'océan Indien* (PIROI)] and the French Red Cross conducted an assessment to determine the immediate impact of the Karthala volcanic eruption and to identify the populations at risk.

PIROI identified cleaning of water tanks and provision of clean water to the affected population as areas of priority intervention. The assessment has been confirmed by the UN, which has estimated that 175,000 people could face a shortage of potable water. In addition to deploying a water and sanitation engineer who is already on the ground, 40 Comoros Red Crescent volunteers have been mobilized and the French Red Cross has sent a team of two water engineers and two doctors to evaluate the situation. Some water treatment equipment is already stationed at the national society's headquarters. The French Red Cross has put additional equipment on standby at its base in La Réunion, awaiting the first report of the assessment team. PIROI is preparing to send water transport equipment, medical and logistic kits. A logistician has been deployed as of 5 December 2005.



Red Cross/Red Crescent volunteers clean a water tank.

Furthermore, PIROI and the Comoros Red Crescent undertook the following activities:

- In collaboration with the *Observatoire Volcanologique*, samples of ash were taken and sent for analysis to La Réunion.
- A kit of drugs has been sent in order to increase frontline health services capacities for disease control.
- Protective masks have been made available to volunteers and other people involved in ash cleaning operations.

The objective of the first emergency response is to secure a minimum of one water tank for each of the 75 affected villages. A post emergency operation involving placing covers on community water tanks and boreholes is planned, and will continue for several months.

The regional delegation in Nairobi is coordinating exchange of information with key partners (including UN agencies and scientific institutions) and is providing technical support to Red Cross/Red Crescent field personnel.

The Comoros Red Crescent is also involved with government authorities and local communities in clean up activities in social and administrative infrastructures, including schools, to prevent children's excessive exposure to volcano ashes. UNICEF has provided 280,000 litres of water.

[Click here to return to the title page or contact information.](#)