

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

INDONESIA: ACEH AND NORTH SUMATRA FLASH FLOODS

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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 185 countries.

In Brief

This Bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the situation and the information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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A villager cleans his house after a flood in Besitang village in the district of Langkat (REUTERS/Danang Dirgantara/courtesy www.alertnet.org)

The Situation

Since 22 December 2006, torrential rains and ensuing flash floods have deluged the eastern coast of Sumatra, across the provinces of Aceh and North Sumatra. The Indonesian Red Cross (Palang Merah Indonesia or PMI) has tentatively placed the death toll at a modest 56 and the number of missing at 224. Although the full extent of the flood's damage is still unclear, it is currently estimated that 200,000 to 230,000 people are affected in Aceh province and close to 44,500 people are displaced in North Sumatra province. Statistics from different sources vary widely at the moment but is expected to even out or rise over the next few days as more comprehensive assessment data is obtained.

Eight districts in Aceh are inundated¹, while 14 sub districts are flooded in Sumatra's Langkat district alone. Recent media coverage describe a destitute situation, with whole villages submerged together with their access roads, leaving inhabitants stranded on higher ground or trapped on the roofs of their houses.

The latest disaster is a stark reminder of a similar tragedy that struck Aceh two years ago. These recent floods have affected Aceh province the most, and have hit some of the same districts affected by the 26 December 2004 tsunami.

PMI statistics provide an indicative breakdown of the affected population in seven of the flooded districts in Aceh, these are provisional however as full data is still being collected:

Districts	Aceh Utara	Aceh Tamiang	Gayo Lues	Aceh Timur	Lhokseumawe	Biruen	Bener Meriah	Total
Families affected	37,241	8,497	157	7,328	1,263	533	31	55,050
People affected	159,840	35,351	380	33,032	1,350	1,210	115	231,278

Information flowing in from PMI chapters and branches as of 25 December 2006 report that Langkat district of North Sumatra province has also been hard hit with nine dead, five missing and an estimated 44,450 people (10,687 families) displaced. The floods have seriously damaged a critical road connecting North Sumatra to Aceh and may further hamper relief efforts.

Livelihoods and public infrastructure continue to be inundated throughout flooded areas in Aceh and North Sumatra, with 14 bridges washed away. Although water levels have begun to recede, additional information from the Indonesian meteorological department have forecasted heavy rains until the end of December, and all involved are on high alert.

National troops have joined the relief effort with the government, shipping in tonnes of food, clothes, rubber boats and other supplies using a Hercules transport aircraft. Helicopters are air dropping relief supplies to remote areas, ships and rubber boats have been mobilized, and camps are set up as necessary. In Aceh, the government is coordinating relief efforts with other agencies through an operations centre established in the SATKORLAK office. The PMI is part of this operations centre, together with representatives from the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR), SATKORLAK and the governor's office. Similar relief work is ongoing in North Sumatra.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

PMI flood response efforts have shifted into high gear over the Christmas holiday season. This is despite challenges, where the flood's geographical scale and damage to infrastructure is impeding access for assessments, data collection and information sharing. In a joint meeting, the PMI and the Federation delegation in Aceh emphasized the need for a coordinated response mechanism. The national society's senior management has advised for an emergency plan of action taking full consideration of PMI capacities and the need for a short-term approach – this is expected to be ready by 27 December.

In Aceh, PMI chapters, branches and volunteers continue to work tirelessly. In the district of Gayo Lues in particular, national society branch reports indicate that affected communities are themselves assisting in distributions. There is need for food items, and some recipient communities have thus far received rice, salted fish, instant noodles, and cooking oil from the national society. On top of that, local PMI volunteers have distributed one and half tonnes of relief material dropped by the UN helicopter on 25 December, which will continue for the next few days. Further aid is evident for flood-affected communities, with 12 Federation trucks (M6 and unimogs) carrying World Food Programme (WFP) materials currently on route to the most affected district of Tamiang. In a meeting with World Bank representatives, an agreement has been made for national society volunteers to assist in distributing a further five tonnes of food items and medicines.

¹ This is according to information from the UNOCHA Situation Report no.2 available on ReliefWeb at <http://www.reliefweb.int>. The PMI has data for seven districts, excluding the district of Langsa quoted in the UN report.

While relief and rescue is ongoing in Aceh, the PMI North Sumatra chapter and Langkat branch in particular has dispatched assessment teams to the affected sub districts. A command and information centre has been established in Langkat. Early assessments indicate affected communities and the PMI relief operation are most in need of clean water, food, emergency medicines and medical teams, tents, tarpaulins, rubber boats and fuel.

The PMI is working well with the BRR, UN agencies and local government authorities. In the meantime, the Federation delegation continues to support and cooperate with PMI, while maintaining regular communication with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) based in the affected region.

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The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to achieve the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- *Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.*
- *Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.*
- *Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.*
- *Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.*

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>