

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

MALDIVES: COASTAL 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 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.

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 15 to 17 May 2007, a series of wave surges of varying magnitude hit approximately 88 islands across 18 atolls, with some of the surges reaching as far inland as 600 metres. Southern atolls, especially Seenu and Gaafu Dhaalu, were particularly affected due to their flatness and their location in the open sea. The wave that affected the southern atolls had a wavelength of 350 – 433 meters, which also doubled in height as it approached the coastline.

There were no human casualties, although four people were wounded and 1,649 were evacuated.¹ 217 housing units were damaged and 258 more were affected by the flooding. Three days of wave swells caused extensive damage to private gardens and other means of livelihood. The disaster partially damaged a number of harbours and jetties and eroded sections of beaches and coastline walls.

The seawater incursion contaminated wells and the groundwater table, causing a shortage of drinking water on some islands. Septic tanks were damaged or filled with seawater, causing sewage to flood some areas. The tide also swamped some landfills and scattered trash throughout the affected area, raising sanitation concerns. Clean-up operations are in progress.

Healthcare facilities were not damaged, and have been able to provide necessary assistance to affected communities. No major outbreaks of disease have been reported. Nevertheless, cases of disaster-related trauma among the population, including children, have been reported. Schools were not affected and continue to function on schedule.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The government of Maldives has provided emergency relief assistance (food, water and mattresses) to affected communities. A mobile water desalination plant was dispatched by the government's national disaster

¹ Population of the Maldives is estimated at 369,000.

management centre. American Red Cross-trained volunteers as well as other community volunteers have supported island offices and police teams with evacuations, the placing of sand bags against water surges, food and water distributions and initial efforts to clear debris.

Rapid Assessment Team

A rapid assessment team, comprising government personnel as well as International Federation and UN staff, was deployed to Gaafu Dhaalu atoll on 19 May 2007 to conduct an assessment of five affected islands: Fares-Maathodaa, Fiyoare, Rathafandhoo, Nadellaa, and Madaveli. The rapid assessment focused on infrastructure, health, water and sanitation, livelihoods, environment and emergency relief needs.

The final report from the rapid assessment team has been shared with stakeholders on 24 May 2007. The team has identified the most urgent need as clean drinking water. Specifically, communities on Fares-maathoda and Nadalla are in urgent need of additional community water tanks to be filled with clean water from mobile desalination units. A request for additional tanks (three for each of the two islands) has been made. Detailed assessments will determine further needs.

The report also identified a need for school-based psychosocial activities to support children traumatized by the flooding, as well as the provision of information on post-traumatic stress so that parents can provide support. In addition, the report emphasizes the importance of local disaster management capacity building. The government of Maldives has issued an appeal for assistance to the international community.

The International Federation and its member national societies are continuing to coordinate with the government and UN agencies to determine future response and required interventions. Additional and more detailed sector-specific assessments have been recommended in order to define longer-term effects to livelihoods (e.g. home gardens and fish processing) and to building structures.

How we work

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.

The Federation's Global Agenda

The International Federation's activities are aligned with under a Global Agenda, which sets out **four broad goals** to meet 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.

Contact information

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