

# Information bulletin



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## India: Floods

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The floods in India this year, particularly in the state of Bihar, have caused unprecedented loss to lives and property. According to government figures, vast areas of agricultural land have been inundated and a large number of houses have collapsed or been destroyed (597,000 houses have been fully damaged while 418,497 houses have been partially damaged). With over 18.6 million people affected across India and 1,778 people killed, it has been a major blow to the country's economy and people.

The Prime Minister of India has declared the Bihar floods a national calamity. The National Crisis Management Committee carried out the latest aerial survey in the state and confirmed that the destruction is ongoing. The government has stepped up its relief efforts at all levels and the Bihar state government has sought the support of civil society organisations in stepping up its relief efforts.



Flood-affected people move to safer places through floodwaters in Araria district, Bihar (courtesy: Reuters)

The major highlighted needs remain drinking water, food and household items, together with tracing support as most of the affected population remains psychologically affected due to loss of family members. The International Federation is coordinating within and outside the Movement to support the Indian Red Cross Society in responding efficiently to the disaster.

[<click here for the map or here for more detailed contact information>](#)

## The Situation

The situation continues to look very grim. The rains have not stopped and the water levels continue to rise. The state of **Bihar** is facing some of the worst flooding in 50 years. The Kosi river coming from Nepal in the north has burst its banks causing the river to change its course, affecting new areas of Bihar less prepared for such floods (Madhepura, Purnia, Saharsa, Supaul, Araria and Katihar districts). Latest reports from the Ministry of Home Affairs indicate that over 3.3 million people from 1,849 villages in 16 districts of the state have been affected. Seven more deaths reported in the past 24 hours has taken the total death toll to 63. Two million people are estimated to have been cut off by the flood waters. The state government has said that all marooned people will be evacuated within three days (approximately 497,300 people have been evacuated so far). Infrastructure (roads, rail, water and electricity) have been completely or partially destroyed or are under water in major parts of the affected areas. The population is in immediate need of food, clean water, shelter and basic health support. Following which, in the mid-term, livelihood support will become important as field, livestock and seed supplies have been badly affected.

In severely hit Supaul district, approximately 893,790 people in 243 villages have been affected, and 22,000 people are living in 36 relief camps. Around 65,000 people have been evacuated with the help of 229 local boats and 12 motor boats. A total of 223,446 houses (temporary and permanent) have been destroyed and 13,550 cattle have

been lost. The cattle that could be saved have been shifted into animal camps. The total land under crops that has been damaged is 0.14 million hectares.

In Madhepura district, over 1 million people have been severely affected in 378 villages across 11 administrative blocks, and water logging continues to be at a level of 3-8 feet. Presently 40 relief camps are being run in which more than 27,884 people are taking shelter. More than 95,000 people have been evacuated in the district with the help of 177 local boats and 25 motor boats. The government and other civil agencies have set up almost 20 animal camps for protecting cattle and 40 medical centres for providing immediate medical aid to the affected people. District authorities have so far distributed dry ration (including 38,100 kilograms of beaten rice, 8,000 kilograms of jaggery and 5,000 kilograms of gram powder) and 60,584 bed-sheets.

In Araria district, over 0.25 million people have been affected in 30 villages. Presently 33 relief camps are functioning and providing shelter to approximately 30,000 people. About 15,000 people have been evacuated with the help of 35 boats. In addition, 33 medical centres for the affected population and 33 cattle camps have been set up.

In Saharsa district as well, over 0.25 million people have been affected in 35 villages. Presently, 7,000 people have been evacuated and provided shelter in 30 relief camps. About 7,000 people have been evacuated with 35 local boats. The district authorities have been running mobile medical teams especially to deal with snake bites.

In Katihaar district, 62,015 people have been affected in 63 villages out of which 20 villages are marooned. A total of 439 boats have been pressed into service for relief and rescue efforts in the district. In addition, 14 medical centres have been set up and have provided treatment to 5,887 people, and eight tube wells and 10 temporary laboratories have been constructed to support government efforts in the district.

In Purnia district, about 150,000 people have been affected in 20 administrative blocks and six relief camps are being set up, accommodating several people.

Besides Bihar, other states have also been affected by flooding. In the state of **Uttar Pradesh** 2.2 million people have been affected in 4,461 villages in 21 districts and 732 villages are still marooned. Over 0.15 million houses have been destroyed and more than 37,000 people are still taking shelter in 438 relief camps. Since the floods began, 34,980 people have been evacuated with the help of about 4,000 boats. 178 mobile medical teams have been pressed into service in order to assist the affected people. The river Ganga and Ghaghra are still flowing above danger level mark at various places in the state.

In **Assam**, the situation is slowly returning to normal as no significant rainfall has been reported in the past 24 hours though about 0.79 million people have been affected. Approximately 20,350 people are still to be accommodated in 132 relief camps in the state. The rivers Brahmaputra, Puthimari, Pagladiya, Kushiya, Beki and Sankosh continue to flow above danger levels at various places in the state.

In **Punjab**, so far 11 districts have been affected, including Ropar, Jalandhar, Moga, Kapurthala, Tarantaran, Ferozpur, Amritsar, Mukatsar, Hoshiarpur, Mohali and Gurdaspur. The total number of people affected in the state is 0.19 million in 872 villages. About 8,615 people have been evacuated in four districts. A total of 184,132 hectares of cropped land has been affected.

**West Bengal** witnessed light to moderate rainfall in some parts, with heavy isolated showers at a few places. Approximately 3.7 million people have been affected and 119,852 hectares of cropped land has been destroyed. A total of 152 medical teams have been deployed and 26 boats have been pressed into service for rescue and relief. The river Ganga is still flowing above its danger mark in Farakkha district.

The Central Water Commission has reported that the latest position of the rivers Ganga, Ghaghra, Burhi Gandhak, Baghmati, Adhwara, Kamla Balan and Mahananda is that they continue to be flowing above their danger levels at various places in Bihar state. The latest weather predictions by the Indian Meteorological Department (valid upto 4<sup>th</sup> September) show that the current situation is likely to continue during the next 2-3 days. Fairly widespread rainfall, with isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall, is likely over the north-eastern states (including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya) and sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim during the next three days, with a likelihood of a decrease thereafter. Further, embedded cyclonic circulations persist over southwest Bay of Bengal (off the north Tamil Nadu coast) and over interior Karnataka. Under this influence, scattered to fairly widespread rains/thundershowers are likely along the west coast and over parts of the southern peninsula of India during the next two days. Scattered and fairly widespread rainfall is also likely in north-western and central India.

**Government action in Bihar:**

The Indian government has declared the Bihar floods a national emergency and put forward CHF 2.5 million as a relief package, together with 100 kilograms of grain for immediate dispatch. Trains are being mobilized with cattle feed to the affected areas. About 2,500 army, navy and air force personnel have been mobilized to support rescue operations and evacuations and 1,500 boats have been pressed into service for evacuations. An estimated 540,000 marooned people have been evacuated so far. More troops, along with boats and helicopters, will be deployed during the coming days.

The government has converted schools and colleges in the affected areas into relief camps and 16 teams of the National Disaster Response Force (comprising 701 people) have been deployed to the affected areas. The National Crisis Management Committee, headed by the Cabinet Secretary, is monitoring the flood situation in the state and carried out the latest aerial survey which confirmed that the destruction is ongoing in Madhepura, Araria, Supaul, Saharsa, Purnia and Katihar districts.

An inter-agency group at state level is mobilizing resources for response and to support the state administration. About 5,700 tents have already been sent to Bihar and another 900 will be sent shortly. There has been a strong response from some NGOs (Save the Children and Oxfam) and UNICEF and UNDP have been active in assessment and distributions.

No. of relief camps set up	270
No. of health centres functioning	206
No. of veterinary centres functioning	100
No. of food packets air dropped to date	59,613
Dry ration distributed by the state authorities	Wheat and Rice: 632,400 kilograms Gram: 32,900 kilograms Jaggery: 29,800 kilograms Salt: 1,800 kilograms Matchboxes: 134,026 Oil: 9,224 litres
No. of polythene distributed	69,235
No. of halogen tablets distributed	438,680
No. of national disaster response force members deployed	701

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) at branch level is responding with its trained state disaster response team (SDRT) members. The branch immediately sent out relief teams and goods to the six most affected districts. They have been active in rescue and evacuation, initial assessments and distributions, and the provision of first aid, health education and medicine distribution. To date, all assessment information and delivery of assistance has been carried out by trained staff and volunteers at the state level, including trained medical staff that have been providing medical assistance and information in a number of the temporary camps.

Through its contacts with the government, the IRCS has been offered government aircrafts for airlifting of relief goods to the affected areas, while the railways authorities have a long standing agreement with IRCS to transport relief goods throughout the country. The Chief Minister's Secretariat in Bihar state has issued instructions to all districts that all cash donations should be made to the Chief Minister's relief funds while in-kind donations should be given to the IRCS' branches for distribution.

The IRCS national headquarters is monitoring the situation. The national society is working closely with the government ministries responsible for directing the response at both national and state levels. Further, the IRCS' Emergency Operation Cell, located at national headquarters, is working round-the-clock to monitor the situation and support the state branches, as requested. In addition, the stocks are being positioned to be sent out as requested in the coming days.

The IRCS' immediate action plan is as follows:

- Emergency assistance to continue in the most affected districts, in close cooperation with government mechanisms.
- All available relief items to be sent to Bihar and distributed by the IRCS' state branch, in coordination with the district magistrates.
- The water purification units to be mobilized to provide clean drinking water, with a capacity of 5,000 litres per day.

- Medical assistance and first aid to continue in camps (IRCS has provided qualified medical staff to support a number of camps in the affected areas).
- IRCS volunteers to disseminate information on water borne diseases, malaria, skin diseases, acute respiratory tract infections and snake bites.
- Trained volunteers to assess the needs of the affected communities for future planning in flood affected areas.
- IRCS national headquarters, through its Emergency Operational Cell, to monitoring the situation and provide help to the state and district branches, as required.
- National disaster response team to be deployed in October to assess the longer-term assistance requirements in flood affected areas.

The pre-positioned relief items, sent by the IRCS national headquarters to the affected areas, are given below:

Family pack sent to the field;	15,000
Bed sheets	
Cotton Blankets	
Gents Dhotis	
Kitchen sets	
Mosquito nets	
Sarees	
Towels	
Boats deployed;	
Aluminium boats (capacity 60)	20
Rubber boats (capacity 12)	15
Zodiac Boats (capacity 12)	10
Wat San Units to be deployed	6
Tarpaulin Rolls	2,100
Family pack pre-positioned;	15,000
Bed sheets	
Cotton Blankets	
Gents Dhotis	
Kitchen sets	
Mosquito nets	
Sarees	
Towels	

### Federation action

The International Federation's India Office is coordinating with the IRCS management on the ongoing response and current needs in the field, while technical officers are working closely with IRCS counterparts on the response.

The IRCS has requested that the International Federation provide 10,000 tents. The International Federation is exploring various financial options for this, and will be discussing with IRCS the practical modalities of resourcing the tents and organising distributions. The International Federation and partner national societies will also support IRCS to carry out more detailed assessments in the coming weeks. On the basis of assessments, further support will be planned. The Federation's India Office is also looking at various ways to assist the IRCS to have their pre-positioned relief stocks replenished. So far, IRCS has released relief items from its stocks valued at around INR 29,585,000 (CHF 737,000 or USD 661,000). IRCS is able to receive in kind donations of relief items.

A second floods information meeting of all Movement partners in Delhi has been held, in which IRCS informed all partners about the action taken so far. In the absence of a full and comprehensive assessment report by an overall assessment team, the Federation's India Office made a compilation of assessment reports received from the various smaller teams on the ground and included information received from UN coordination meetings and various discussions. This report has been shared with partners in Delhi and with International Federation offices in Geneva and Kuala Lumpur.

The head of the Federation's India Office plans to visit the disaster area next week to have a better picture of the IRCS response so far. The India Office, with support from the International Federation's South Asia Regional Office, hopes to work in the coming days together with the IRCS on a more detailed action plan and budget for the immediate and short-term assistance. As mentioned above, a national disaster response team assessment for the longer-term and rehabilitation will be put together for deployment after the flood water subsides in a few weeks.

## 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 International Federation's activities are aligned with its 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

**For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:**

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