

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

SOUTH ASIA: FLOODS/LANDSLIDES

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This bulletin is being issued for information only.

The South Asia region has witnessed heavy annual monsoon rains over the past several weeks, leading to flooding and landslides. While India and Pakistan have been heavily affected, Nepal and Bangladesh have been less so. Although Afghanistan has not experienced a monsoon, the country witnessed flash floods a few days prior to the report being made. The flooding and landslides across South Asia has resulted in a large loss of lives and property affecting millions of people.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in South Asia, with the support of the International Federation, are responding proactively to the floods/landslides and taking steps to address the imminent danger of further flooding/landslides. This bulletin provides an overview of activities.



A flood affected area in Assam state in India

[<click here to view a map of the affected areas, or here for detailed contact information>](#)

The Situation

The South Asia region has witnessed heavy annual monsoon rains over the past few weeks, leading to flooding and landslides. While India and Pakistan have been heavily affected with heavy flooding reported from different parts of these countries, Nepal and Bangladesh have been less so. Many parts of Nepal experienced monsoon related floods and landslides though Bangladesh reported some rain-induced landslides and wall collapses in a few districts. Although Afghanistan is not affected by the monsoon, the country witnessed flash floods a few days prior to the date of reporting. The flooding and landslides across South Asia has resulted in a large loss of lives and property affecting millions of people. More details on country-specific situation and Red Cross Red Crescent action, as well as an overview of preparedness levels of national societies across the region can be found on the International Federation's website (three information bulletins each for India and Pakistan and one information bulletin for South Asia at the following link - <http://www.ifrc.org/where/asiapac.asp>) and the International Federation's intranet (country updates for Nepal, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan on the Disaster Management Information System at the following link - https://www-secure.ifrc.org/dmis/prepare/view_bydisaster.asp).

This year, early monsoon rains hit **India** with heavy to very heavy rainfall in 19 states, of which the five most severely affected have been Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, West Bengal and Orissa. The floods caused by the monsoon killed 1,063 people and affected approximately 7.9 million people throughout the country. A number of states (Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Kerala and Karnataka), which have not usually been prone to flooding in the past, have also been hit by floods this year, resulting in human and monetary losses as the populations in these states have not been ready to cope with such flooding. According to forecasts from the Indian meteorological department, a low pressure area is likely to form over northwest Bay of Bengal and

adjoining coastal areas of north Orissa and West Bengal. Under its influence, widespread/fairly widespread rainfall with isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely over Orissa, north Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and east Madhya Pradesh states, subsequently shifting to the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

One week after monsoon rains throughout **Pakistan** created floods situation in different parts of the country, particularly in Punjab province, North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Baluchistan province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), flood water in most of the affected communities has receded. According to government sources, the death toll reported so far totals 40 people, with thousands more affected. The Pakistan meteorological department has predicted scattered thunderstorms and rain in upper Punjab, including Islamabad, upper NWFP and Kashmir, and at isolated places in southern Punjab and southeast Sindh during the next 24 hours. Several families who were rendered homeless by the floods continue to stay on roads and other safer places. Safe water supply remains a problem. Relief operations by the government and NGOs are currently underway, providing families with food and non-food relief items, clean and safe drinking water as well as basic health services.

The monsoon started in **Nepal** a few weeks prior to the date of reporting and has already caused floods and landslides in many parts of the country. To date 30 of 75 districts of the country were reported to have been affected by floods and landslides, recording 65 deaths and leaving more than 700 families affected. In addition, 413 houses had been partially damaged and 115 houses had been completely damaged. The initial estimated loss predicated is around two million Nepalese rupees (CHF 32,000 or USD 29,000). The situation is under control at the local level.

In **Afghanistan**, though the spring flash floods from melting snows following the harsh winter and the spring rains during April-June did not come as expected, subsequent rainfall resulted in flash flooding across the country causing some damage to infrastructure and livelihoods. On 10 August 2008, it was reported that a number of districts in Jalalabad province were hit by flash floods, destroying 36 houses and partially affecting hundreds of others, though no casualties have been reported yet.

During the first half of July this year, rain-induced landslides and wall collapses in three locations of the Cox's Bazaar district of **Bangladesh** reportedly killed 16 people and displaced more than 450 families. Another three people died in similar wall collapses in Sirajganj and Comilla districts. According to the government's flood forecasting and warning centre, the monsoon is currently moderately active across the country with most major rivers continuing a moderate fall in their levels.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

As indicated in the previous information bulletin, the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in South Asia, with the support of the International Federation, are responding proactively to the floods/landslides and taking steps to address the imminent danger of further flooding/landslides. In their efforts, the national societies have relied on large networks of volunteers living and working in the affected communities, thus ensuring commitment to, and ownership of, long-term disaster management efforts.

To date the national societies have responded to the floods by distributing non-food relief items to affected communities from their pre-positioned stocks; mobilising their national, state and district disaster response teams and deploying these where required; deploying medical teams to provide basic health care and treatment to affected communities and to distribute free medicines among them; providing safe drinking water to affected populations and undertaking water purification measures; and coordinating with the governments of their respective countries as well as Movement and non-Movement partners involved in flood response activities. National contingency plans for flood response are being developed/finalized and in some cases, for instance in Pakistan, have already been activated.

India

The Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) disaster management centre (DMC) has been activated and members of the IRCS' national disaster response team (NDRT), state disaster response team (SDRT) and district disaster response teams (DDRT) are being organised for deployment, as required. Of the 43,000 non-food family packs pre-positioned as disaster preparedness stock by the national society at six strategically located regional warehouses, the IRCS' state branches in Assam and Bihar have requested for 30,000 and 10,000 family packs respectively.

In addition, health check-up camps are being organized in the affected areas to cope up with health related problems and free medicine distribution camps are being organized in cooperation with state health departments, for instance in Assam. Water purification measures have been taken up and nine water and sanitation units are ready for deployment, if required. Awareness camps on chlorination and filtration techniques are also being

conducted in affected areas to avoid water borne diseases. In Bihar, three IRCS rubber boats were deployed to ferry people from the affected localities to safer destinations. The IRCS has set up a disaster management control room in Orissa, which is working round the clock and monitoring the situation. The International Federation is supporting the IRCS in setting up an emergency operation centre in Bihar.

The national society is in the process of developing a national contingency plan for floods. One of the major learning from the 2007 floods were the continued support from the International Federation in pre-positioning disaster preparedness stock in the regional warehouses and the capacity building of the IRCS district branches in forming state and district disaster response teams. This proved beneficial for effective and immediate response.

The IRCS disaster management team, with support from the International Federation's India Office, are monitoring the overall flood situation of the country and are in regular touch with the disaster management focal points from the affected state branches. The IRCS and International Federation disaster management teams and information focal points are also producing daily flood updates for information sharing. The national society organised a flood coordination meeting on 6 August 2008 to update Movement partners on IRCS' flood response and to review the situation. The main recommendation of the meeting was to carry out an immediate assessment in Uttar Pradesh and since the British Red Cross is already working in the state branch they would be instrumental in carrying out the assessment with support from the International Federation. A number of Movement partners like the American, Canadian and British Red Cross Societies, as well as the ICRC, have shown their support for helping the IRCS to respond to the given situation.

Pakistan

The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS)/International Federation national and provincial disaster response teams have completed their assessment and have distributed 200 packs of non-food items/family kits and 1,000 bags of flour to affected families in Punjab province, as well as non-food items to 900 affected families in NWFP, to 190 families in FATA and to affected communities in the northern areas. More relief goods will be distributed in NWFP during the coming days, including by the ICRC which will provide an additional 2,000 blankets for the affected population.

In addition, in NWFP, the PRCS, with the support of the International Federation, established one medical team with two ambulances, six medical officers and medicines with the support of the Canadian Red Cross and German Red Cross. The team treated 3,522 patients during the first five days (common diseases treated were diarrhoea and skin infections such as scabies, boils and allergies) as well as distributed 10,000 chlorine tablets and 700 bed nets. Similarly, another health team treated and provided medicines to 600 patients in FATA. The FATA branch is coordinating with the ICRC for relief distribution and medicines. Top priority at present is the provision of safe drinking water and regular monitoring of water quality, as well as strengthening of disease early warning system in flood affected areas in NWFP and implementation of the same in Punjab province, to prevent potential outbreak of communicable diseases.

The PRCS' 2008 floods contingency plan, which was activated, and the formation of an Emergency Operations Committee by the national society, which met regularly following the floods, enabled the joint team of the PRCS, International Federation and partner national societies working in the country to meet the immediate needs of the affected population.

Nepal

The Nepal Red Cross Society's (NRCS') national headquarters and district chapters have been monitoring the situation. Based on the monitoring reports, the national society has to date dispatched to its district chapters 2,700 kits of non-food relief items from its stock of 25,000 packages in central, regional and zonal warehouses. NRCS has already distributed approximately 300 non-food packages and 255 tarpaulins to affected communities.

Members of the regional disaster response team (RDRT), national disaster response team (NDRT) and district disaster response teams (DDRT) have been alerted to be standby for mobilisation, if required. The NRCS' national headquarters and district chapters have also initiated coordination with the government and other stakeholders to develop effective response plans at district level. The NRCS has recently finalized an earthquake contingency plan, which will also support other emergency working procedures during disasters like floods and landslides. The national society has an emergency fund of approximately two million Nepalese rupees (CHF 32,000 or USD 29,000) at its national headquarters level to speed up the processes of assessment, coordination, transportation and dry food distribution.

Afghanistan

The Afghan government has assigned the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) the lead role in coordinating assessments and distributions of non-food items, as required, due to the national society's extensive volunteer

network. The national society has pre-positioned stocks in five regions (Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar and Jalalabad) for 10,000 families and has a big warehouse in Kabul, besides 10 equipped emergency mobile units. All response activities are to be coordinated with other agencies involved in the response process such as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), key government ministries and the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authorities (ANDMA). Regular coordination meetings are held within the Movement and all disaster management activities of ARCS, International Federation and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are harmonised.

Bangladesh

A team from the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), with support from the International Federation, conducted an initial assessment in the landslide affected areas, based on which 60 boxes of BP-5 biscuits and 350 family kits were sent to the affected families. In addition, BDRCS volunteers carried out rescue operations, provided first-aid to the injured and evacuated hundreds of families to safer areas.

All the 43 BDRCS units prone to floods been informed and they are monitoring the situation. The International Federation's Bangladesh office is participating in the Disaster Emergency Response (DER) group meetings every month for better preparedness and response in a coordinated way among all stakeholders.

Coordination

In all countries close coordination is maintained with government authorities, both at national and provincial levels, and with other Movement and non-Movement partners involved in responding to the floods. In addition, coordination between the disaster management teams of the International Federation's regional and country delegations and the headquarters of the national societies continues. The South Asia regional and country delegations and national societies will continue to work together closely to monitor the progress of the monsoon and keep all partners up to date with preparedness and response activities in the region.

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

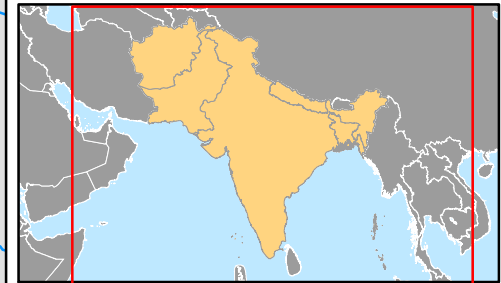
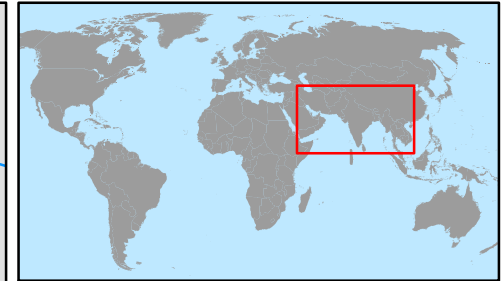
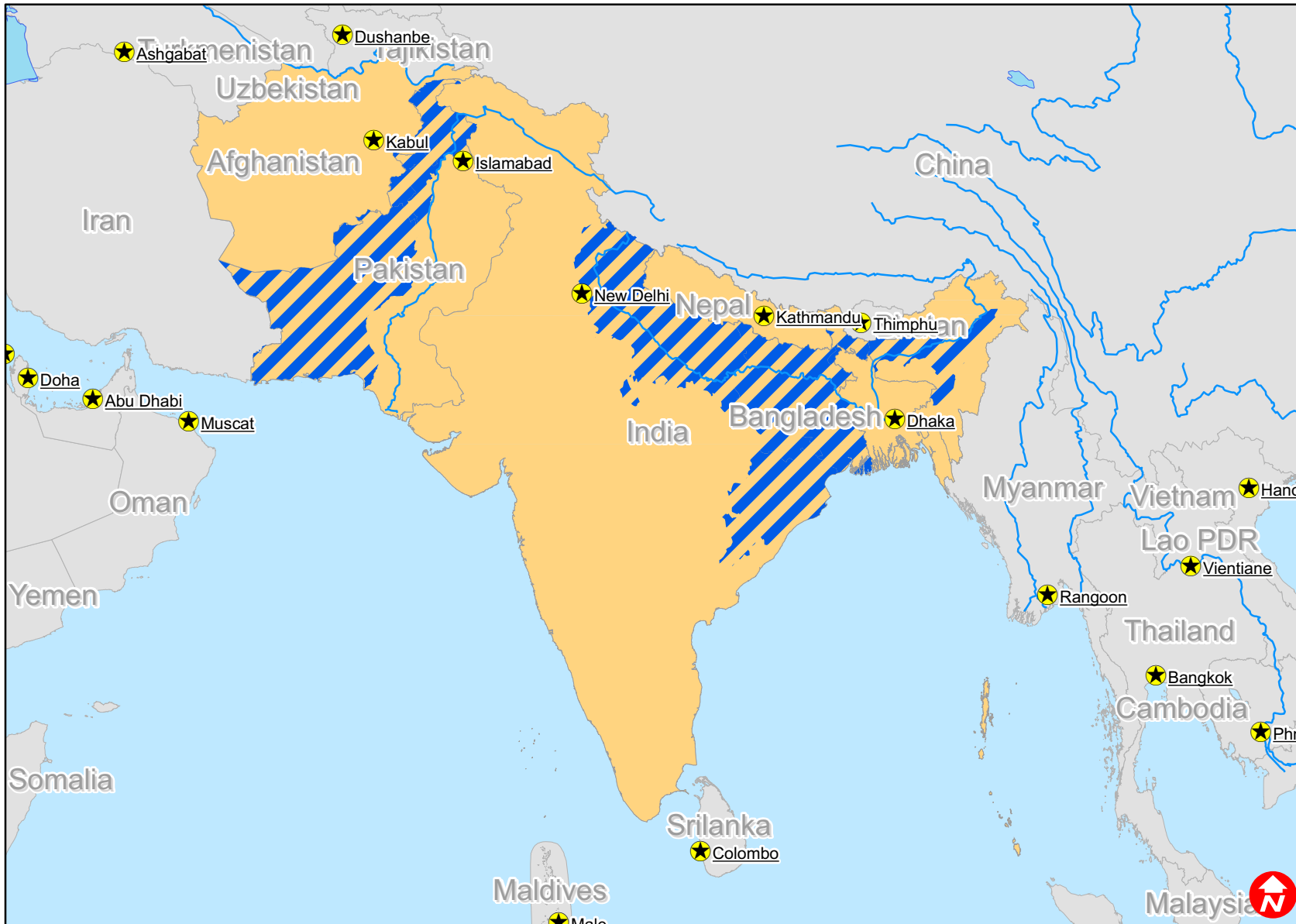
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[map below; click here to return to the title page](#)



South Asia: Floods/Landslides



- Capitals
- Most affected areas
- Affected countries

The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.
Map data sources: ESRI, DEVINFO, International Federation, 2008Floods.mxd