

# ***INDIA: HEAT WAVE***

*11 June 1998*

## ***Information Bulletin N° 01***

### ***The Disaster***

The heat wave in India has claimed over 2,500 lives according to media reports. On Tuesday 26 May, Delhi recorded its second highest May temperature this century: 46.2° C (115.8F), the hottest since 1944. In many areas this is the first time in 50 years that the temperature has stayed above 46 degrees for more than three consecutive days. In western Orissa, the most affected area, temperatures remain at around 47 degrees. The high temperatures are occurring in the whole of northern India, with very hot surface winds sweeping across some parts. Many areas, particularly Delhi, are suffering from severe power and water shortages.

The Indian Red Cross Society has provided the following information, compiled from official meteorological reports :

STATE	DEATHS	MAXIMUM TEMP C°/F°
Orissa	1154	47.6/118
Andhra Pradesh	576	45.7/114
Rajasthan	410	49.8/122
Madhya Pradesh	97	46.0/115
Uttar Pradesh	270	46.0/115
Gujarat	34	45.4/114
<b>TOTAL = 2541</b>		

The deaths are caused by heat-stroke, and heat-induced diarrhoea and vomiting. In addition, hundreds of people have been admitted to hospitals and small clinics, particularly in Orissa.

The Federation Delegation visited two of the large slum areas surrounding Delhi during the extreme temperatures and found conditions aggravated by the searing temperatures that barely drop during the evenings. In one slum people who are totally reliant on collecting and recycling garbage to survive live and work surrounded by flies and rats. This unsanitary environment is made worse by the high temperatures that have severely affected the availability of clean water.

In general, the situation is extremely difficult, particularly for those in the poorer areas. The heat speeds up the contamination of food and water supplies. With increasing shortages of clean water and power, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain even the most basic hygiene precautions.

In addition to the deadly heat, a cyclone tore through Gujarat on 10 June, reportedly resulting in more than 200 deaths.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

Local volunteers of the Orissa State branch of the Indian Red Cross have been providing assistance for over two weeks. Their help has been mainly centred on the Orissa state hospital, where the Red Cross has been providing saline solution and equipment for infusions. Vehicles have been made available to transport the severely ill to hospital. Small quantities of ice have been provided for cooling purposes.

## ***Needs***

No external assistance has been requested. This bulletin is for information only.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Director  
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Hiroshi Higashiura  
Director  
Asia & Pacific Department