

INDIA: CYCLONE

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The Disaster

In the morning of 9 June, a cyclone with windspeeds of 130-150 kms/hour swept across the north-western coast of India, killing more than 200 people and injuring several hundreds. Given the level of destruction, the death toll is expected to rise as bodies are recovered. In some areas, the high winds lasted for up to seven hours. Power lines, crops, trees, houses and other structures were destroyed. The ferocity of the cyclone created a storm surge with very high waves and the first casualties were reportedly 30 workers at salt ponds near the seashore. The worst affected districts are Porgandar, Jamnagar and Junagarh. Less affected, but still substantially damaged, are Nurinder Nagar, Kutch, Bhavnagar, and Ameroli. The cyclone has weakened to a tropical storm after moving through Rajasthan state districts of Jalor, Barmer, and Jodhpur. Early warning in these areas resulted in a much lower casualty toll.

The Government of Gujarat was unable to initiate its disaster evacuation plan due to the extremely high winds and speed of the storm, but local authorities managed to evacuate over 10,000 people. The Government is continuing search and rescue operations and providing aid for the victims. Shelters have been set up for the homeless and ex-gratia funds for the next of kin of the deceased have been released.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Indian Red Cross branches in Jamnagar, Porbandar, and Junagarh rushed personnel to the area as soon as the high winds subsided. One branch official explained: "When the fury of the wind was at its peak no relief operation was possible". The branches, which can call on staff and volunteers trained in first aid, ambulance services and a blood bank, sent in relief teams with sufficient dry rations, cooking oil and clothing for 20,000 homeless. The Indian Red Cross Society Headquarters is monitoring the situation closely and remains in communication with its branches in the affected area. Additional information is expected.

Needs

Victims of this disaster need basic relief items - food, clothing, shelter, and medical care - but external funds are not being requested for the moment, pending an assessment.

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