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Information bulletin

Afghanistan: Floods and Avalanches

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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This bulletin is being issued for information and it reflects the current situation based on information currently available. Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and other partners has delivered the most essential assistance to the beneficiaries. At this stage, external donor support is not envisaged. Furthermore, no government appeal has been launched because in addition to its current stocks, UN and other humanitarian organisations are reported by OCHA to have sufficient in the country for the ongoing intervention. Meanwhile, ARCS is in the process of preparing an emergency plan for the anticipated spring seasonal floods during March to June 2015 where external support may be expected.



The ARCS Disaster Response Unit (DRU) team and volunteers loading relief items into a helicopter for air drops to inaccessible areas in Panisher province during avalanches. Photo: ARCS.

The situation

In Afghanistan, weather patterns have for the last three to five years changed due to effects of climate change. The last winter season that often ends in January has extended into March. As a result, the rising temperatures (15-20 degrees centigrade) in some parts of the country have led to melting of snow which have triggered localised flash flooding and additional rainfall in north-eastern and central provinces and western region of the country.

On Monday, 23 February 2015, avalanches and floods hit the north and northeast regions in Badakhshan and Takhar provinces, central northwest region in Panisher, Bamyán and Parwan provinces and western region in Badghis province. Due to blockade of access roads by the avalanches, emergency teams sent to the Panisher valley were unable to reach the snow-swept towns that lie in a narrow valley surrounded by two mountain

ranges, for rapid assessments. Helicopters were used to deliver medicines, blankets, and other humanitarian assistance offered by relief agencies to the remote areas. According to OCHA's report on 16 March, 254 people were killed and 72 people were injured, 1,312 houses were completely destroyed and 5,285 houses were damaged in 120 districts in 22 provinces.

Primary focus of the emergency relief has been on distribution of food and non-food items (NFIs), evacuation and provision of emergency health services, i.e. first aid, and referrals to hospitals.

Forecasts indicate that the prolonged winter resulted in heavy snow piled in the mountains at the beginning of spring will lead to increase cases of severe flash floods as temperatures continue to rise in the affected provinces in the coming weeks.

The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) is therefore preparing to activate its response plan. ARCS has sent alerts to branches in eastern region – one of the high risk areas – to warn of the anticipated flash floods. The current NFI stocks with ARCS and IFRC country delegation may not be sufficient to meet emergency needs for an estimated 2,000 affected households (14,000 people).

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) has been at the forefront in mobilizing resources to assist the population in the six provinces affected by the floods as well as those in Panisher province who are affected by the avalanches. Below is a summary of ARCS action to date:

- A total of 120 volunteers have been deployed to assist with relief distribution and to provide first aid services to the affected population.
- Blankets as part of the emergency relief and response to the affected populations in Panisher province have been airdropped soon after the avalanches, with support of helicopters from the ministry of defence.
- One Disaster Response Unit has been deployed to Panisher province on 27 February to be on standby and to assist in the emergency phase if needed.
- Four Mobile Health Teams (MHTs) have been deployed to Panisher and Saroibi districts of Kabul province.
- Allocation has been made from the ARCS's Extra Emergency Fund and transferred to Panisher province to cover emergency response activities.
- Two branch assessment teams have been deployed to Parwan and Darah districts of Panisher province for rapid assessment following the clearing and opening of blocked roads.
- Daily Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) meetings organized and chaired by Secretary General to assess current situation and action to be taken by RCRC Movement partners.
- Non-food items have been dispatched to Panisher province.

Table 1: Summary of NFIs and food items distributed between 16 February and 3 March

Province	Tents (Pcs)	Blankets (Pcs)	Tarpaulins (4x6m) (Pcs)	Kitchen Sets	Cooking Sets	Jerry Cans (20L) Pcs	First Aid Kits (Pcs)	Rice (24 kg-bags)	Cash (AFN)
Panisher	4	1014	184	38		188	134		900,000
Takhar	1	6	2	1		3			
Nimroz	52	180	36	38	36	72			
Badakhshan	22	132	23	23		5			
Bamyan	1	6	2	1		3			
Nangarhar	60	786	131	131	131	131		131	
Baghlan		12	2	2					
Kabul	57	1378	689	689					
Nooristan	14	162	27		27	27		648	
In stock (IFRC) Kabul		2,132	1,409	1,028					

Note: Also in stock for with IFRC/ARCS are Health related items for the anticipated response to flash floods: WatSan 8 kits, Medicine 260 kits, Hygiene 260 kits, Psycho-social support for volunteers 500 kits and Psycho-social support for children 5000 kits.

Table 2: Summary of patients treated by MHTs deployed between 27 February and 18 March

No	MHT existing location	Location in which MHT was deployed	No. of patients treated by MHTs
1	Qarabagh MHT	Dara district (Abdullah Khail village) Aabshar district	901
2	Parwan MHT	Khinj district (Tol and Aray villages) Paryan district (Kohsoor, Shaani, Rangi and Qazi Khail villages)	697
3	Kapisa MHT	Khinj district (Borjaman village) Paryan district (Deh Paryan and Zerya-e-Paytaab villages)	483
4	Panisher MHT	Bazarak district	This MHT plays the role of coordination and to supply of medicines to the other MHTs.

The President of Afghanistan has expressed appreciation to ARCS for serving its auxiliary role in responding to this emergency and the services provided to the affected population.

Some of the relief and response commitments from the Movement partners include the following:

- 20,000 canned beans, 500 tarpaulins, 500 blankets and 170 tents donated by the Iranian Red Crescent Society
- 6,500 blankets currently being procured under the winterization plan supported by the Norwegian Red Cross through IFRC.
- 1,020 jerry cans, 1,994 tarpaulins, 6,640 blankets and 1,000 kitchen sets handed over to ARCS by the IFRC country delegation for replenishing the National Society's disaster preparedness stocks.

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to

inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives.
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**
and a culture of
non-violence and peace.



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