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Information bulletin

Sri Lanka: Flash Floods

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Date of issue: 18 May 2016

Number of people affected: 346,000 (According to government figures)

Date of disaster: 14 May 2016

Host National Society: Sri Lanka Red Cross Society

This bulletin is issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has analysed that the available information points toward significant humanitarian needs. A scaled-up response requiring IFRC support is envisioned.

The situation

Sri Lanka is experiencing heavy rains since 14 May 2016, due to the disturbance in the Bay of Bengal to the South east of the country. It is the highest reported rainfall since 2005 and brings a cascade of rain causing floods in many areas in Colombo city and the country. Water levels of the rivers have gradually risen with the opening of the spill gates. 22 districts have been affected by flash floods and landslides.

As of 18 May 2016, there are more than 346,000 affected people¹.

According to Meteorological Department of Sri Lanka, the low pressure area is moving away from the island, hence rainy conditions over the island will be reduced to some extent, but strong windy conditions will continue for some more days. Showers or thunder showers will occur at times in the northern, north-central, north-western, western, central and Sabaragamuwa provinces and in the Galle and Matara districts.

Disaster Management Centre is coordinating response activities and rescue operations with three-forces of the country, and police through District Secretariats and District Disaster Management Coordinating Units. meanwhile alerts have been issued by both National Building Research Organization (NBRO) and the Water & Irrigation Department requesting the public to be caution of over the possibility of landslides or busting of river banks due to overspilling of rivers.



Sri Lanka Red Cross volunteers providing relief items to affected people.
Photo: Sri Lanka Red Cross Society.

¹ According to the Government figures.

Table 1: Summary of Sri Lanka Disaster Management Centre² situation report as of 18 May 2016

Province	#	District	Affected		Deaths	Injured	Missing	Houses damaged	
			Families	People				Fully	Partially
Western	1	Colombo	35513	171135	1			1	14
	2	Kalutara	1196	5083		1		20	235
	3	Gampaha	19174	76810	1			1	50
Sabaragamuwa	4	Rathnapura	1968	7760		10		13	103
	5	Kegalle	2318	8873	4		2	42	853
	6	Nuwara Eliya	95	387				0	12
Central	7	Kandy	301	1383	3	3	3	6	117
	8	Matale	40	156				0	33
Southern	9	Galle	473	1822	1			9	112
	10	Matara	2	10	1			0	2
	11	Hambantota	31	138				2	29
North Central	12	Anuradhapura	1141	3724	1			1	10
	13	Polonnaruwa	8	28				1	7
North	14	Puttalam	6101	25084	3	6	1	11	23
Western	15	Kurunegala	2172	7549	4			3	22
Northern	16	Vavuniya	1130	4127				32	103
	17	Mannar	1466	5085				19	66
	18	Jaffna	1572	6085		1		19	220
	19	Mulaitivu	1414	3891				22	188
	20	Killnochi	5085	17047		2		9	225
Eastern	21	Trincomalee	16	64				0	12
Uva	22	Badulla	38	142				3	35
		Total	81,254	346,383	19	23	6	214	2,471

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) has worked closely with the government authorities. Twenty four hours prior to the declaration of a cyclonic condition by the Meteorological Department, the SLRCS Disaster Management Department was prompted to put all branches across Sri Lanka on alert. Accordingly, branch disaster response teams and disaster assessment teams alongside volunteers were put on stand by to respond to any disaster. They were shortly requested to do assessments and provide relief assistance to the affected people. In order to assess the situation, 24 hours assessment and 72 hours assessments were carried out by trained Branch Disaster Response Team (BDRT) members of Matara, Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, Mannar, Kegalle Kandy and Colombo branches.

Colombo branch distributed dry rations to 800 people in Wadulla Waththa in Kolonnawa division. The President of SLRCS, Mr. Jagath Abeysinghe was also present during the distribution. This is one of the most affected areas where shanty dwellers live and the Red Cross has been working closely in the communities since a long time.

SLRCS' national headquarters (NHQ) warehouse dispatched non-food items (NFIs) to Kegalle and Kandy branches (Adult relief packs – 300, baby relief packs – 70, kitchen sets - 100 and tents - 5). Transport of the items was provided by World Vision Sri Lanka. In the same areas, the BDRT assisted families to evacuate after they were affected by floods. Steps were also taken to provide support to families who are now being housed in a temporary camp.

SLRCS search and rescue teams joined government authorities in the wee hours of 18 May 2016 in search for over 200 families missing since a massive landslide that struck on the Siripura, Pallegage and Elagipitya villages in Aranayake located in the Kegalle district. They have currently assisted the authorities to rescue over 180 people³.

² http://www.dmc.gov.lk/index_english.htm

³ <http://www.redcross.lk/main-news/180-persons-rescued-from-aranayaka-landslide-rescue-missions-well-underway/>

In the meantime, the IFRC country cluster support team (CCST) based at New-Delhi is coordinating with IFRC country team in Sri Lanka, as well as SLRCS to ensure that there is adequate technical and financial support for the response. A coordination meeting between SRLCS, IFRC and ICRC was being organized on 18 May 2016. A DMIS update was posted on 17 May by SLRCS and a second one is expected in the next 24 hours. At the request of SLRCS, IFRC is supporting the National Society in finalizing a plan of action for which the support of in-country partners or IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) will be sought. The CCST New Delhi is keeping the IFRC Asia Pacific regional office, in Kuala Lumpur, informed of the developments.

Contact information

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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 (NGO's) 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.**
