

INDIA/GUJARAT: EARTHQUAKE

1 February 2001

appeal no. 04/2001

situation report no. 4

period covered: 31 January - 1 February 2001

Search and rescue efforts are being scaled down. At the same time, needs assessment teams are now reaching more remote, less accessible areas in the district of Kachchh. A joint Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), Federation, Belgian Red Cross and Japanese Red Cross team is undertaking health and sanitation assessments. The Federation has a small team based in Anjar, south east of Bhuj, which is badly affected. The emergency response unit (ERU) referral hospital in Bhuj is currently being established and the Finnish Red Cross component of the hospital is expected to be operational today. The warehousing, office and accommodation facilities on the Red Cross site in Bhuj have now been set up. Diesel and raw water are supplied daily by the government in accordance with the agreement reached.

The context

At 08.50 hours on Friday, 26 January, a series of powerful earthquakes struck Gujarat state in western India, peaking at a massive 7.9 on the Richter scale, with tremors being felt across several states as well as in Delhi and Mumbai (Bombay) and in neighbouring Pakistan. The epicentre of the quake was 20 km north-east of the town of Bhuj (population of 150,000), the district headquarters of Gujarat's Kachchh district while, at the same time, seriously affecting all the area within the range of 100 km from the epicentre including Ahmadabad, the largest city in the State of Gujarat.

Infrastructure has been severely affected, resulting in large scale collapse of buildings, mine cave-ins, train derailments and power failure, cutting off the water supply. A series of aftershocks has hit the region, with 19 of them registering over 5 on the Richter scale.

It has been reported that some 90 per cent of the buildings in Bhuj were severely damaged and 10 per cent have collapsed completely. The old city of Bhuj, home to between 60,000 and 70,000 families, is deserted as survivors gather any belongings they can salvage and flee. The wider and largely inaccessible area surrounding Bhuj is yet to be visited by search and rescue teams.

Latest events

Whilst the Defence Minister of India estimates that the final death toll could exceed even 100,000, the officials in Gujarat indicate that the death toll figures remain relatively low - between 15 and 20,000. Search and rescue efforts are now being scaled down. However, the death toll will indeed rise further once the rescue teams reach smaller, more remote and less accessible areas in the wider district of Kachchh.

In the area of Bhuj, local NGOs, religious and political organisations continue distributing limited quantities of available food.

Foreseeing increases in the number of wounded and bearing in mind the fact that hospital buildings in the district of Kachchh have been seriously damaged, the government of India has shown interest in additional emergency response referral hospital beds, estimating that at least 1,000 more beds are needed.

A small Federation team has established itself in the town of Anjar (south-east of Bhuj) as it is also badly affected. This morning, the Times of India runs the heading "Anjar now a mass grave, almost 25,000 people dead, 1,000 still buried". The Federation regional information delegate reports today that the town of Bhachau (east of Bhuj) might be the worst affected town in the area.

Communications in Gujarat state have now significantly improved, facilitating the Secretariat's liaison with delegates in the field. Furthermore, communication facilities for delegates in Bhuj have been improved through the presence of a Federation expert in telecommunications.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Logistics •

While the distance between Ahmadabad and Bhuj is 475 km, it presently takes 8 to 11 hours to cover that distance by car. Therefore, most of the relief supplies and equipment continue to be flown into Bhuj either via Delhi or Ahmadabad or directly from abroad.

The Finnish Red Cross emergency response (ERU) referral hospital is expected to be operational as of today (1 February) followed by the German Red Cross ERU water and sanitation unit. The Norwegian Red Cross component of the emergency referral hospital landed in Bhuj earlier today. The Spanish and Danish Red Cross teams with logistics expertise and equipment, as well as the Belgian health team, are currently joining the operation in Bhuj.

The living and office quarters for an increasing number of delegates and ERU staff as well as the warehousing facilities, have been set up at the operational site. The Indian Red Cross Society was yesterday granted 200 litres of diesel and 25,000 litres of raw water per day for the ERUs by the government

As the lack of vehicles represents a considerable constraint, seven additional locally manufactured four-wheel drive vehicles have been ordered and ten more are planned to be purchased through the Indian Red Cross Society.

The director of the Japanese Red Cross relief department who is presently in Bhuj, offered an additional supply of shelter material and medical supplies, according to needs. At the same time, the Japanese Red Cross is ready to finance regular charter flights (18 to 20 seats) to Bhuj starting this week. Practical arrangements will be made through the Indian Red Cross Society.

Procurement of relief supplies including further quantities of blankets, clothing and shelter material will be made through the Indian Red Cross Society.

Indian Red Cross Society •

The good cooperation of the IRCS with the government at national level was again emphasized through an offer by the government to make available 150 ambulances and ten additional trucks. As regards the relief items, the IRCS has been granted a considerable amount of space on Indian air force flights to the affected area.

The Indian Red Cross health coordinator presently in Bhuj is closely cooperating with the Federation team leader as his direct counterpart in the field.

The arrival of a number of additional volunteers including store-keepers has been reported.

Health •

A joint team comprising Indian Red Cross, Belgian Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross and Federation representatives has started health and sanitation assessment activities as a follow-up to the initial search and rescue operation.

Tracing •

As requested by the IRCS, a team lead by an experienced tracing delegate is being dispatched to the region to evaluate the situation with regard to reestablishing family links. At present, due to population displacement in the immediate area and movements into neighbouring regions or states, there is no possibility of tracing people in the field.

As soon as feasible, it is envisaged that a system will be set up to allow local residents of the affected area to inform their relatives elsewhere in India or abroad of their well-being. An enquiry based system is not foreseen for the time being, though this possibility will be assessed later.

Until further notice, tracing services in Red Cross Red Crescent Societies are advised not to accept enquiries from family members, but explain that due to the situation, a means of sending outgoing messages will be put in place when circumstances allow.

Outstanding needs

Potential donors are strongly encouraged to commit contributions in cash to support procurement of shelter and relief material. Procurements will be arranged locally by the Indian Red Cross Society. Donor Societies wishing to provide funding for consignments of relief materials are requested to coordinate with the Logistics department of the Secretariat. As a result of congestion at the airport in Bhuj and the difficulties encountered in off-loading goods, it is essential that vital relief materials only are flown in to Bhuj. At present, the most pressing needs are for funds to purchase 5,000 litre capacity collapsible water tanks, plastic sheeting and cholera kits.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Since the disaster, relations with the Indian government at national level have been largely maintained through the Indian Red Cross Society. As a consequence, the government has engaged its air force capacities for Red Cross shipments. At the state level, a small Federation logistics support team is liaising with the Red Cross state branch while major liaison is carried out by the Bhuj team leader with the district collector.

An NGO coordination meeting was hosted today by the WFP in Delhi. In future, coordination meetings will be held on regular basis. The EU, the Australian and US Embassies, CARE India, Handicap International, ActionAid, Oxfam and Save the Children were represented at the meeting. WFP confirmed that the first of its relief flights would reach Bhuj today. Warehousing facilities are being set up by CARE and Save the Children in Ahmadabad and Bhuj. Oxfam will be focusing on water and sanitation issues in the field, whilst local NGOs in the field will be supported in counselling activities by Handicap International and ActionAid. The main concerns identified at this meeting were the treatment of orthopaedic patients, control and coordination of relief distribution, the lack of drinking water and food as well as the number of orphans and widows in the area after the disaster.

Over 90 interviews have been given by the Federation's regional information delegate to international media. All major media representatives are currently based in Bhuj and flights continue to bring in further media teams.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

All situation reports are regularly shared with the foreign missions in Delhi as well as with the ICRC office. The Embassy of the People's Republic of China was among the first to hand over a donation of USD 50,000 to the Indian Red Cross Society for the relief operation in Gujarat. The Federation delegation has received a further amount of DDK 250,000 from the Danish Embassy in Delhi.

Conclusion

The IRCS/Federation continues to mount a relief operation to meet the needs of 300,000 survivors of the earthquake. The logistics base in Ahmadabad and the operational site in Bhuj are being reinforced by additional specialist personnel and work is ongoing to ensure rapid and effective delivery of relief to the most vulnerable. The ERU referral hospital in Bhuj with a capacity of 350 beds, will play a major role in treating the injured. The IRCS/Federation are presently conducting health and sanitation assessments in Bhuj and the surrounding areas.

Peter Rees-Gildea
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This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

India earthquake						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 04/2001						PLEDGES RECEIVED
						02/01/01
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				25,596,629		TOTAL COVERAGE 42.2%
CASH CARRIED FORWARD						
INCOME FEDERATION						
						ERU LOGISTIC
AUSTRIAN - RC		500,000	ATS	55,899	28.01.01	
CANADIAN - RC		100,000	CAD	108,250	29.01.01	
CANADIAN - GVT		200,000	CAD	216,500	28.01.01	
DANISH - RC		185,000	DKK	38,110	29.01.01	
DANISH - GOVT		1,187,500	DKK	244,625	30.01.01	
KOREA, REPUBLIC - RC				50,000	29.01.01	MATERIALS FOR SHELTER
KOREA, REPUBLIC - PRIVATE		10,000,000	WON	12,650	29.01.01	
MONACO - RC		400,000	FRF	93,800	28.01.01	
NETHERLANDS - RC		100,000	NLG	69,808	26.01.01	
NETHERLANDS - GOVT/RC		500,000	NLG	349,041	26.01.01	PURCHASE OR RELIEF ITEMS & TRANSPORTATION
NEW ZEALAND - RC		100,000	NZD	72,140	28.01.01	
NORWEGIAN - RC		250,000	NOK	46,773	29.01.01	
SWEDISH - GOVT		1,000,000	SEK	173,700	28.01.01	RELIEF ITEMS
SWEDISH GOVT/RC		16,000,000	SEK	2,779,200	30.01.01	RELIEF ITEMS
SWISS - RC				80,000	29.01.01	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				4,390,496	CHF	17.2%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
BELGIUM - GOVT		600,000	BEF	22,881	30.01.01	3 WHO KITS, TRANSPORT/INSURANCE
FINNISH - RC		1,500,000	EUR	2,307,600	27.01.01	EQUIPMENT AND 15 PERSONS FOR 2 MONTHS
GERMAN - RC		1,620,000	DEM	1,274,292	27.01.01	WATER & SANITATION EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL
NORWEGIAN - RC		14,700,000	NOK	2,750,252	27.01.01	EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL
SWISS - GOVT/SDR				67,872	29.01.01	3'280 BLANKETS, 50 ROLLS PLASTIC SHEETINGS, TRANSPORT/INSURANCE
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				6,422,897	CHF	25.1%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						
PIN514						