

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

ETHIOPIA: HEAVY RAINS AND FLOODS

6 May 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 2/2005) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

Recent heavy rains resulted in the worst flooding to occur in Ethiopia in 40 years. Five zones of the Somali region, eastern and south-eastern Ethiopia were affected, as were 11 woredas (administrative divisions). This region of Ethiopia is prone to conflict, and usually suffers from severe droughts.

This flooding resulted in the death of 177 people, and has directly affected 103,000 inhabitants. The death toll may rise as many people remain unaccounted for. Tens of thousands of livestock have also died in this region which usually suffers from severe droughts. According to authorities, 19 people died as a result of crocodile attacks.

The heavy rains continue to fall for a second consecutive week in the Somali region; this is hampering relief efforts by government and humanitarian organizations. Authorities are using helicopters to deliver aid to survivors; however, delays in fuel delivery have further hindered the transport of relief supplies. Large inhabited areas are inaccessible; authorities fear the outbreaks of diseases like malaria and diarrhoea.

Four areas about 700 km southeast of the capital, Addis Abeba, are completely cut off: roads and bridges have been washed away. The Afdar, Gode and Jijiga zones are particularly affected. Aid organizations report that food, plastic sheeting and clean water have begun to reach the affected populations.

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Weather forecasters predict further thunderstorms. On 23 April, the Wabe Shebelle River burst its banks after two days of heavy rains, crashing through 160 villages and sweeping families away. In 2003, 119 people died in the last major floods in Ethiopia.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

On 2 May 2005, the regional authorities asked humanitarian agencies to provide urgent assistance as they do not have the capacity to respond. The Ethiopian Red Cross Society¹ has mobilized volunteers and distributed non-food items to flood-affected people. ICRC, as lead agency for the Movement in the region, is coordinating this response. Other humanitarian organizations are also responding. The Federation's East Africa regional delegation in Nairobi has offered support for a rapid assessment and possible emergency response should the national society, and ICRC, require it. At this stage the national society is still evaluating the need for a Federation DREF allocation.

The Ethiopian Red Cross has dispatched 300 blankets, 10 roles of plastic sheets, 300 jerry-cans, 450 cups and plates, 150 tea pots and 150 cooking pots for flood-affected people in the Jigjiga area. UNICEF has also provided important quantities of relief articles.

The national society met with German Red Cross, Danish Red Cross and ICRC representatives to discuss possible cooperation during the current flood emergency. ICRC conducted an assessment in Gode, Kelafo and Mustahil areas which showed that the situation seems to be under control. ICRC will provide direct assistance to people affected by floods in Kelafo and Muatahil, and will provide additional resources in the Jigjiga area to complement the Ethiopian Red Cross response there.

Reports from the field indicate that those displaced from the floods are suffering from diarrhea and water borne illnesses and are generally in need of food, shelter, and health assistance. Water purification is also needed to prevent waterborne diseases. Malaria is an increasing threat. There is concern of an increase in food insecurity due to the destruction of livestock, livelihoods, and food in the region.

The Ethiopian Red Cross, which along with other humanitarian actors is conducting needs assessments of the affected areas, is also part of the Somali regional crisis management committee. This committee meets regularly to discuss coordination mechanisms and identify priority needs.

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For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's 2005 Annual Appeal:

- *Horn of Africa sub-regional programmes no. 05AA005 (includes Djibouti, Ethiopia and sub-regional office) – http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.annual05/05AA005.pdf.*

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¹ Ethiopian Red Cross Society – <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=65>