DREF operation

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

India: Floods

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The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of national societies to respond to disasters.

CHF 1,000,000 (USD 885,200 or EUR 626,350) has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the national society in delivering immediate assistance to some 10,000 families (50,000 beneficiaries).

An IRCS water purification unit positioned in a flood affected area in Bihar state.

Summary: The Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) is effectively and readily carrying out the DREF operation. The procurement of relief items has been completed and the items have either been delivered or are on route to the affected areas. A total of seven water and sanitation units have been positioned in Bihar and Assam and are supporting the affected communities in these states.

A team consisting of the IRCS, the International Federation and in-country partner national societies have carried out an assessment in the state of Bihar. The assessment report has been forwarded to the IRCS Secretary General for comments. Currently, the national society, supported by the International Federation, is carrying out assessments in the states of Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. The teams are due to report back by 3rd October. Another team will carry out an assessment in the state of Assam starting 3rd October. Based on the recommendations of the various assessments, an overall plan of action will be drafted to carry out immediate and mid-term relief operation.

The DREF operation is to provide support to 10,000 families (50,000 beneficiaries) through the provision of shelter and household items. The operation is to be implemented over 60 days, and will be completed by 10 November 2008; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 10 February 2009). There is a need to change the DREF name from "Bihar Floods" to "India Floods" to better encompass the magnitude and extensive involvement of the Movement in the flood operation in the country. A request has been sent to Geneva to this effect.

So far, the replenishment of the DREF has had a positive response thanks to the Sri Lankan Red Cross Society (CHF 10,000), Italian government (CHF 161,500) and Irish Red Cross (CHF 3,828). Additional un-earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

Click here for the contact details

The situation

During the reporting period, the country has been witnessing moderate to heavy rainfall in Orissa and Bihar and light to moderate rainfall in West Bengal and Assam. Rainfall and floods are still being experienced in Orissa, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, some parts of Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

The situation in the states of Orissa, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar remains grim with extensive agriculture land submerged. Air dropping of food packets by the army is still continuing. The state governments are providing health check-ups and safe drinking water to the affected communities, as well as repairing roads and other local infrastructure. In Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal, the situation is under control and the respective state governments and various civil society organizations have begun their relief operations in the affected areas. The continuous rainfall will prolong the recovery period, thereby hampering relief efforts.

The International Federation, in consultation with the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), has decided to focus on four states, where the floods have either taken an exceptional course or have been more severe than normal. These states are Bihar, Assam, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. In all four states needs assessments (immediate, mid and long term) will be carried out, which will ultimately result in a national based Plan of Action. However, it may not be feasible for the International Federation to operate in all of the four affected states.

Overview of the four priority flood affected states

In **Bihar** light to moderate rainfall was reported in most parts of the state with some parts experiencing isolated heavy showers. In total, 4.7 million people have been affected in 18 districts spread across 2,528 villages in the state. In five districts (Madhepura, Purnea, Saharsa, Supaul and Araria) people are still living on embankments, roadsides and in sporadic makeshift camps. The government has taken up initiatives like measles vaccination drives for children in the state, with 177 medical teams assisting the affected communities.

Name of the district	No. of people affected	No. of villages affected	No. of relief camps	No. of people accommodated in relief camps
Supaul	893,790	243	46	62,888
Madhepura	1.15 million	378	74	56,000
Araria	391,328	98	65	81,439
Saharsa	431,089	145	83	40,613
Purnia	150,000	20. blocks	06	NA

In **Assam** 21 districts have been affected by floods, the worst affected being Jorhat, Majuli, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Morigaon, Kamrup and Dhubri. The total affected population is 2.5 million and 35 lives have been lost. Moderate to heavy rainfall has been reported in a few parts of the state. At least 32,067 people continue to live in 178 relief camps in the flood affected area.

The situation in **Orissa** remains consistent with moderate to heavy rainfall reported in a few parts of the state. The state received very heavy rainfalls last week leaving several villages inundated in 17 districts. More than 5.6 million people have been affected in 18 districts in 5,504 villages. The flood situation in the Mahanadi system continues to be grim, with more areas submerged due to the opening of about 73 breaches in embankments at different places. An acute shortage of boats and manpower has hampered the rescue operation, as highlighted in the SPHERE situation report. According to government sources, 0.5 million hectares of crop area have been damaged, more than 45,190 houses have been damaged, and roads have been cut off at 939 places. A major portion of the national highway 205, connecting the state capital Bhubaneswar with Puri, remains cut off. Though water has started receding from the affected areas in the interior districts, the flooding situation remains grim as the rain still continues hampering the relief and rescue operations.

In **Uttar Pradesh**, a total of 1,181 people have been killed since the onset of the monsoon this year. Mathura city is facing a serious threat of floods following the discharge of large quantities of water from Tajewala Headworks and Hathini Kund barrage in the Yamuna river. Following the threat in Yamuna river a flood alert was launched in 184 villages in five districts of western Uttar Pradesh, and on 22nd September district officials of Saharanpur, Muzzaffarnagar, Baghpat, Ghaziabad and Gautambudh Nagar reported that these villages had been evacuated. One week after, the most affected districts were Lakhimpur, Sitapur, Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Mau and Ballia. In total, more than 3 million people have been affected in 23 districts spread across 7,305 villages. The state government has set up 531 camps.

Damage details in Uttar Pradesh (as of 1st October)
- Population affected – 4,116,126
- No. of human lives lost – 1,181
- No. of districts affected - 23
- No. of villages affected – 7,305
- No. of persons evacuated – 172,940
- No. of relief camps opened – 531
- No. of persons in relief camps – 192,862
- No. of cattle/ livestock lost – 1,784
- No. of houses destroyed (partially) – 388,830
- Cropped area affected (in ha) – 4.97

Source: Central government

Coordination and partnerships

The IRCS along with International Federation is constantly monitoring the flood situation in the country, with weekly updates posted on the IRCS website. The International Federation is producing a floods operation matrix twice a week, monitoring the flood situation by focusing on Assam, Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. The IRCS headquarters is also continuing with its daily floods meetings to share information among national society staff.

The floods situation is being closely monitored by the IRCS and the International Federation through field visits. The Head of the India Office and the India Office communications officer visited Bihar, with the latter also visiting Assam to get a first-hand view of the situation in the state. Field trip reports and web-stories have been published to share updated information.

To scale up the ongoing relief operation in Bihar, and to further assess the needs in other states where heavy flooding has occurred, the IRCS and the International Federation have deployed five teams for different assessments. A first team was deployed for assessment from 16-21 September to:

- Identify priority areas which have limited access
- Identify the most affected sectors that have to be strengthened and supplemented
- Identify 3-4 most flood affected villages to carry out an integrated assessment
- Identify immediate and medium-term needs vis-à-vis the gaps on the ongoing flood relief and response
- Coordinate with the local government and others

The team presented its findings to the senior management of the International Federation and the IRCS and submitted recommendations for a possible follow-up operation. The final draft of the assessment report has been handed over to the IRCS senior management for final comments.

Two teams left on a week long assessment to Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. The team members included staff-on-loan from the International Federation's Disaster Management Unit in Kuala Lumpur, and staff from the India Office, in-country partner national societies and IRCS, both state branch and national headquarters. The assessment in Assam will start on 3rd October. The reports with findings and recommendations are to be expected by the end of the first week of October.

The IRCS coordination with government agencies and UN offices is good. In most of the affected states and districts, the IRCS is participating in state or district level flood coordination meetings. In Bihar, the government has nominated IRCS as the official agency for collecting in-kind donations for the government. In Assam, the IRCS' state branch is hosting the Inter Agency Group meetings.

The national society mobilised resources from the World Health Organization at the national level and received donations from national corporations. The Movement in-country is seen as a key player in the field of disaster management field and is a part of the UNDMT (a formal coordination group of UN bodies to share information on disaster management).

The IRCS has a long standing agreement with the Indian railway authorities for free transportation of relief items to affected areas. All relief goods sent from New Delhi or received from the Framework Agreements were sent through the Indian railways. The IRCS management is following up on a daily basis to have at least one wagon put at their disposal for such transport.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The IRCS is playing an essential role in relief efforts throughout the affected states, it supported the government in rescue and evacuation services, providing relief material such as essential food supplies,

kitchen sets, cotton blankets, mosquito nets and most important safe and clean drinking water. To date IRCS has deployed water purification units in Bihar, Orissa and Assam which have been used extensively, thereby reducing health risks in these states.

The volunteers of the IRCS are playing a vital role in this year's flood operation, with the state branches being the prime force of response. The branches have been able to achieve success due to these committed volunteers who have tirelessly worked round the clock. The International Federation's disaster management programmes over the last two years have focused on training of volunteers on disaster risk reduction and response. The IRCS managed to respond to the immediate needs due to their efforts to have pre-positioned stock in their regional warehouses. The challenge will now be to have these stocks replenished. The government has been showcasing its appreciation for the IRCS volunteers in all the states as the volunteers have been distributing relief material in the interior parts of the states, which were treated as inaccessible by the government machinery.

Hygiene promotion has been the priority of the IRCS volunteers through information, education, communication (IEC) material, health camps, door-to-door campaigning, and awareness generation on distributing oral rehydration salts (ORS). The impact of these efforts is visible as none of the states have reported any kind of epidemic.

The Bihar state branch continues to be a role model in handling in-kind donations of the general public as per the instruction issued by the authorities. Disaster management control rooms have been functioning in Assam, Orissa and Bihar for monitoring and information sharing. As brought out by various local assessments carried out in these affected state branches, the needs remain shelter and household items, together with restoring of livelihoods.

The Australian Red Cross came forward and has deployed a water purification unit for the flood affected people in Assam along with a two member team to operate the equipment for the first two weeks while training local volunteers in handling the equipment. The water purification unit has been donated to the IRCS. The two member team has returned, debriefed with the IRCS management and the Head of the India Office.

The International Federation has released CHF 1 million from its DREF through which it is sourcing 10,000 kitchen sets, 22,000 blankets and 23,000 tarpaulins through its regional Framework Agreements and regional stock positions. The majority of the relief items have been released to the IRCS for onward transport to the affected area, while the tarpaulins have reached the IRCS' Kolkata warehouse on 3rd October. The procurement of these items have been done with the DREF allocated funds, and are in urgent response to the needs identified by the state and district branches in Bihar, Assam and Orissa. An earlier plan with 1,250 tents included in the DREF allocation was revised later due to operational needs/challenges and better coverage of the affected population through the provision of tarpaulins for temporary shelter.

The International Federation's India Office along with the South Asia Regional Delegation formed a South Asia floods task force that meets every two days to share information and review the flood situation in Nepal, Bangladesh and India. Every alternate day an information matrix has been put together giving information on the situation and the IRCS response. The South Asia floods task force has now refocused itself on the India flood situation as the situation in the neighbouring countries has stabilised.

Daily coordination meetings are held by the India Office with the IRCS senior management and operational departments, and through daily information sharing meetings with Movement stakeholders in Delhi. At this stage, the International Federation will focus on IRCS assessment, interventions and reporting in four major flood affected states: Bihar, Assam, Orissa, and Uttar Pradesh. New assessment teams will depart to Assam and Orissa to continue assessing the flood situation, mid-term needs and IRCS response.

The needs

The needs in India are very big. In the four targeted states, a total of 17 million people have been affected. The total death toll since the start of the flood season stands at 1,600, with 397,000 houses fully damaged. The current DREF operation will only cover 10,000 families (50,000 beneficiaries). There are much bigger needs, which are clearly highlighted in the finalised or draft assessments received from the field. It may not be possible to assist in the relief and rehabilitation operation in all of the states which have been assessed.

Beneficiary selection: Based on the available DREF allocation, this operation would target 10,000 families, i.e. 50,000 beneficiaries. The beneficiary selection has been done based on the IRCS guidelines so as to cater to the most vulnerable population. Some of the local branches of the national society selected the

target areas and the IRCS volunteers verified the beneficiary lists with the government and the other NGOs. In some cases, the government provided to the IRCS lists of people who had not been included in previous distributions. As IRCS has been regularly sharing information with all stakeholders, duplication in interventions has been avoided.

Progress towards objectives

Based on the four assessments carried out by the IRCS, the International Federation and in-country partners, a national action plan is being worked out. The total number of beneficiaries for the DREF operation has been decided as 10,000 families. However, the initial focus on two states, Bihar and Assam, has changed and the states of Orissa and Uttar Pradesh will be added to the overall plan of action as part of the IRCS' priority states. The specific distribution of relief items to the affected states and districts is yet to be finalised. The objective of the assessments is to analyse the flood situation in the states and to identify urgent and priority needs of the most vulnerable population affected by the flood, while also looking at the mid and long term needs.

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: To distribute 10,000 kitchen sets and 22,000 blankets to the most affected population in Assam and Bihar.
(The number of blankets has been reduced from 25,000 to 22,000 based on immediate needs and limited budget allocations)

Activities planned and progress: The national society (sub-district level) together with the local authorities is in the process of identifying beneficiaries.

- Kitchen sets have been ordered through the global framework agreement. The first 7,655 have been delivered to the IRCS' state branch in Assam for further distribution. The balance will be delivered in the next few days.
- The order for 22,000 blankets has been delivered through the International Federation's framework agreement with a local supplier and delivered to the IRCS' Bahadurgarh warehouse (in the state of Haryana).
- A total of 10,000 blankets are earmarked for Assam state.
- The finally distribution of the relief supplies will be carried out in close coordination with the IRCS state branch staff and volunteers in consultation and cooperation with the local government authorities that are coordinating the distributions.

Challenges:
Due to internal procedural inconsistencies within the national society, in some cases IRCS relief items have been distributed as part of a government relief package (in line with the IRCS' status of receiving in-kind donations for the government) without the prior knowledge of the district branches. Most of the distributions of relief items in the mega camps in the affected states are organised by the District Magistrate's office (the District Magistrate is by de-facto the chairperson for the district branch).

Emergency shelter

Objective: To distribute 1,250 tents to the most affected people in Bihar, Assam and Orissa.
(This objective has been modified from distribution of 1,250 tents to 23,000 tarpaulins due to operational priorities)

Activities planned and progress: The national society has identified shelter needs of the most vulnerable community members through its selection criteria and government guidelines.

- Tarpaulins have been ordered from the International Federation's warehouse in Kuala Lumpur and reached the IRCS' Kolkata warehouse on 3rd October.
- These will be transported to distribution sites and in required numbers.
- Items will be distributed in cooperation with state authorities and other forums to avoid duplication.

Conclusion

The flooding in India is worse than ever before. The response from the IRCS has been highly appreciated and the relief items distributed have been well received. The DREF allocation will not be sufficient to cover all needs highlighted through the various assessments. Without an international appeal, the International Federation will analyse its disaster management plan for 2008-09 to streamline it to be in line with the proposed plan of action for the flood operation. Donor national societies can contribute towards this 2008-09 plan.

How we work

All International Federation 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 is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- Indian Red Cross Society: Dr. S.P. Agarwal (Secretary General), email: spagarwalsg@indianredcross.org; phone: +91.11.2371.6424; fax: +91.11.23711.7454
- Federation country office in India: Peter Ophoff (Head of India Office), email: peter.ophoff@ifrc.org; phone: +91.11.2332.4203; fax: +91.11.233.4235
- Federation South Asia regional delegation in India: Al Panico (Head of Regional Delegation), email: al.panico@ifrc.org; phone: +91.11.2411.1125; fax: +91.11.2411.1128
- Federation Asia Pacific zone in Malaysia: Amy Gaver (Head of Disaster Management Unit); email: amy.gaver@ifrc.org; phone: +603.9207.5724; fax: +603.2161.0670
- Federation Asia Pacific zone in Malaysia: Jeremy Francis (Regional Logistics Coordinator), email: jeremy.francis@ifrc.org, phone: +60 12 298 9752, fax: +60 3 2168 8573
- Federation Asia Pacific zone in Malaysia: Penny Elghady (Resource Mobilisation and Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Coordinator), email: penny.elghady@ifrc.org, phone: +603 9207 5775
- Federation Secretariat in Geneva (Asia Pacific department): Christine South (Operations Coordinator), email:christine.south@ifrc.org, phone: +41.22.730.4529, fax: +41.22.733.0395

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