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## DREF operation update India: Sikkim Earthquake

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**DREF operation n° MDRIN008**  
**GLIDE n° EQ-2011-000136-IND**  
**Update n°01**  
**4 October 2011**

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) 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 emergency response. 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.

**Period covered by this update:** 22  
September to 1 October 2011.

**CHF 97,137 has been allocated from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the National Society in delivering immediate assistance to some 5,000 beneficiaries. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.**

**Summary:** To date, the 6.8 magnitude earthquake which struck Sikkim on 18 September has claimed 112 lives in the state. Many areas in the north district are still inaccessible by road, posing a challenge to extending relief assistance to the people in need. The Government of India has put 36 helicopters in action as part of the relief efforts. However, heavy rains and dense fog have hampered the entire operation.



In September 2011, the Indian Red Cross Society supplied purified water to the affected people after the earthquakes in Sikkim. **Photo:** Indian Red Cross Society.

An Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) relief team reached Gangtok on 21 September and since then has been trying to proceed to the most severely affected areas for assessment and relief work. The continuing landslides, heavy rains and dense fog prevented the team from reaching Chungthang. The team was able to airlift a water purification unit to Chungthang on 27 September 2011 by helicopter and the unit was installed the following day. This unit is now providing water to around 1,500 people. Many workers from other parts of the country who were working on the various development projects have been stranded in Chungthang. The deployed team is closely working with the Sikkim state branch volunteers under the leadership of the state secretary and has started distributing non-food items. The restoring family links (RFL) services are also being delivered in Chungthang and Mangan.

This operation is expected to be implemented over three months, and will be completed by 22 December 2011. The Canadian Red Cross/government has replenished the DREF for this allocation. Details of all donors can be found on:  
<http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/responding/drs/tools/dref/donors.asp>.

[<click here to view contact details>](#)

## The situation



On 29 September 2011, the NDRT/NDWRT team travelled for 7km through a tunnel which is under construction on their way from Chungthang to Gangtok.  
**Photo:** NDRT member / Indian Red Cross Society.

An earthquake with a 6.8 magnitude occurred on 18 September 2011 at 18:11 IST in the border region between India and Nepal, causing widespread damage to the infrastructure in Sikkim.

The main shock was followed by several aftershocks of low intensity which have triggered landslides in the backdrop of persistent heavy rains.

Various assessment missions of humanitarian organizations, including Sphere, have collected significant information to give clarity on damage. The worst affected northern district of Sikkim remains inaccessible due to landslides. Reports indicate that damage to infrastructure is wide-spread, and the number of lives lost has exceeded 110 in Sikkim alone. Lack of access due to damaged roads, collapsed communication networks as well as poor weather conditions are hindering efforts to reach the affected population.

To meet the emergency needs of the affected people, IRCS has started relief operation in Sikkim. IRCS intends initially to support 5,000 affected people with shelter materials, non-food items as well as clean water.

IRCS has airlifted non-food relief items along with a water treatment unit from Delhi to Bagdogra airport. From Bagdogra airport to Gangtok, relief items were transported by truck. Additional relief supplies were sent from the Kolkata regional warehouse by truck to Gangtok. A team of five national disaster response team (NDRT) and national disaster water and sanitation response team (NDWRT) members was deployed to reinforce capacities of the Sikkim state branches. A water treatment unit was further airlifted from Gangtok to Chungthang which is inaccessible by road and is the worst affected, and has since been installed and is distributing water to 1,500 people in Chungthang. This team is now active in the distribution of non-food items.

## Coordination and partnerships

A meeting among humanitarian agencies was held at the Sphere India office on 19 September 2011. The meeting touched on the challenges facing the relief operation due to poor access to the affected areas. IRCS is working in close coordination with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare which is its nodal ministry.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) India office is coordinating with in-country partner national societies, keeping them updated on the situation in Sikkim and the action of IRCS.

A meeting was held with the relief commissioner of Sikkim on 24 September 2011 where coordination and resource sharing was discussed with a focus on finding solutions in order to reach areas which at present remain inaccessible. As a result of this meeting, a helicopter was arranged by the relief commissioner to airlift the IRCS team and water treatment unit to Chungthang.

# Red Cross and Red Crescent action

## Progress towards outcomes

In response to a request from the Sikkim state branch, IRCS headquarters has deployed a team of NDRT and NDWRT members to reinforce the capacities of the state branch. These teams are helping the state branch in assessing the needs of the affected people and in shaping up the relief operation. Two NDRT members who are trained in RFL have also been deployed. As the assessment team started working in Sikkim, needs of the affected people from the field are being communicated on regular basis.

### Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

**Outcome: The immediate needs of 1,000 earthquake affected families (5,000 beneficiaries) have been met through relief distributions in Sikkim.**

#### Outputs and activities planned:

- Detailed need assessment by IRCS and mobilisation of national disaster response team (NDRT) and national disaster water and sanitation response team (NDWRT) members and volunteers.
- Procurement of non-food item stocks.
- Dispatch and transportation by IRCS to the distribution sites.
- Distribution of relief items (woollen blankets) by trained IRCS volunteers and staff.
- Re-stock relief items distributed. Regular detailed monitoring and reporting of distributions.

**Progress:** NDRT/NDWRT members have been deployed to Gangtok since 21 September 2011. The team has been liaising with the state branch as well as the various government departments engaged in relief operation. The team has also visited some of the most severely affected areas and have analysed the needs.

The following non-food items which were airlifted on 22 September 2011 at 5:00 from Delhi are being distributed by the volunteers of state branch and the NDRT/NDWRT team members in the affected areas.

Sr. no	Items	Quantity
1	Stoves	200
2	Tarpaulin	500
3	Woollen blanket	2,000

In addition to the above relief items, 500 kitchen sets were sent to Gangtok from the Kolkata warehouses by truck. Distribution of these kitchen sets is also in progress.

Replenishment of the relief items which have been sent to Gangtok is being carried out.

#### Challenges:

Transport and communications are both badly affected due to earthquake, landslides and the continuing rain. The road between Siliguri and Gangtok, as well as most of the other main routes that are now reopened are frequently blocked by recurrent landslides and the falling of loose rocks and boulders. Communication links (telephone and any other communication) with many villages in upper north Sikkim are still disrupted. This is a major concern, as it prevents smooth and regular communication with some of the worst affected villages.

Due to inaccessibility by road and scarcity of helicopter services, the team had to walk 10 km and had to travel through a tunnel which is under construction for 7 km to reach their destination.



Distribution of relief supplies in Sikkim by Red Cross volunteers in September 2011. **Photo:** Indian Red Cross Society

### Emergency health

**Outcome: First aid and referral services for the injured and sick people in severely-hit areas are available.**

#### Outputs and activities planned:

- Procurement of first aid kits.

- Provision of first aid to earthquake affected people in Sikkim

**Progress:** As the government has deployed many health teams in the field, the proposed activity under this objective will not be carried out in order to avoid duplication of work. The services of the NDRT team member who is also a doctor were sought by the local administration for handling some of the donated medicines.

### Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion

**Outcome: Water and sanitation related diseases are reduced for 1,000 families through access to safe drinking water.**

**Outputs and activities planned:**

- Assess the damage to existing water supply systems and requirement for emergency water supply.
- Selection of most vulnerable people as beneficiaries.
- Deployment of water treatment unit(s).
- Treatment and distribution of safe drinking water for up to 5,000 people (1,000 families).
- Monitoring and evaluation.

**Progress:** A water treatment unit has been installed in Chungthang near Gurudwara and is providing safe drinking water to the affected people who are taking shelter in the relief camp, as well as those staying in temporary shelters. This unit is currently distributing safe water to approximately 1,500 people. District officials visited the location where the unit has been installed and appreciated the work done by IRCS. Before leaving Chungthang, the team trained local volunteers to operate the WatSan unit.

**Challenges:** Heavy rain fall, dense fog and landslides delayed the installation of water treatment unit by three days.



27 September 2011: Airlifting of water purification unit to Chngthang. **Photo:** Indian Red Cross Society

### Emergency shelter

**Outcome: 1,000 families have received tools to repair their damaged houses and to salvagematerial of the damaged houses**

**Outputs and activities planned:**

- Identification of beneficiaries.
- Procurement of shelter kit and tarpaulin.
- Distribution of the shelter kits along with tarpaulin by trained staff and volunteers.
- Monitoring the use of shelter kit.
- Regular detailed monitoring and reporting of distributions.

**Progress:** According to the team, the shelter tool kits is still a high priority for those people whose houses are damaged. The team has collected the statistics from local administration on the damaged houses which will facilitate the distribution of shelter tool kits. FedEx has kindly agreed to transport these kits free of charge from the Regional warehouse in Malaysia to India which will speed up the process.

**Challenges:** As we do not have shelter tool kits available from the IRCS regional warehouse, they will be sent from the IFRC regional warehouse in Kuala Lumpur, which is taking some time but the process is now facilitated by free air-frieght service offered.

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## Contact information

**For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:**

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## DREF history:

- This DREF was allocated on 22 September 2011 for CHF 97,137 for three months to assist 75,000 beneficiaries.



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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 Disaster 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.

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

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.