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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°2
24 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:
2 to 20 October 2011.

Summary: CHF 97,137 has been allocated from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' (IFRC) 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.

With water purification units now installed and the distribution of non food relief items initiated, the focus of the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) has now shifted to distribution of shelter toolkits. The 1,000 shelter tool kits have been transported by FedEx free of charge from Kuala Lumpur to Gangtok. They have now arrived in India and was delivered in Gangtok on 21 October 2011. This distribution of tool kits will be a challenging task these are to be distributed to the households in far flung rural areas which may lack access by road. T planning for the distribution is underway. The list of the damaged houses is has been made available through the Sikkim branch.



Devastation caused by earthquake in Sikkim. **Photo:** Indian Red Cross Society.

The major donors and partners of DREF include the Australian, American and Belgian governments, the Austrian Red Cross, the Canadian Red Cross and government, Danish Red Cross and government, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), the Irish and the Italian governments, the Japanese Red Cross Society, the Luxembourg government, the Monaco Red Cross and government, the Netherlands Red Cross and government, the Norwegian Red Cross and government, the Spanish Government, the Swedish Red Cross and government, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the Medtronic and Z Zurich Foundations, and other corporate and private donors. The IFRC, on behalf of the national society, would like to extend thanks to all for their generous contributions. Details of the contributions to the DREF can be found on www.ifrc.org/dref.

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The situation

Following an earthquake of magnitude 6.8 on the Richter scale on 18 September 2011 that severely damaged the infrastructure of Sikkim, IRCS deployed members of its national disaster response team (NDRT) and national disaster water and sanitation response team (NDWRT), along with one water purification unit and non-food items in coordination with the government's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. These non-food items and the water purification units were sent to Sikkim by Air Force planes on 21 September 2011 as part of the immediate response. Kitchen sets were also sent from Guwahati warehouse to Sikkim by road. Table 1 below lists the supplies sent to Sikkim by IRCS.

Table 1: Relief items sent by IRCS national headquarters to Sikkim

Relief Item	Quantity
Blankets	2,000
Tarpaulin	500
Stove	200
Kitchen sets	500
Water purification unit	1

The water purification unit has been installed in Chungthang which is serving nearly 2,000 people. Despite the bad road conditions, distribution of relief supplies has continued in the eastern, western, southern and northern districts. The shelter toolkits pre-positioned at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) regional logistics unit warehouse in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, have been dispatched and have reached Gangtok on 21 October 2011.

NDRT and NDWRT members deployed in Sikkim are being replaced with new team members. This relief operation has given great opportunity to the disaster response team members to demonstrate their skills during an emergency and also to gain more experience of a disaster response operation.



IRCS staff registering the tracing case in Chungthang.
Photo: Indian Red Cross Society.

Although road access is being restored across most of the state, there are still many areas such as Chungthang that remain inaccessible by road. Distribution of shelter tools kits in such areas will present logistical challenges.

IRCS also runs a unique service for reunifying families and restoring family links which is known as the Family News Service. Two volunteers, trained in restoring family links, were deployed in Sikkim and resolved 46 cases of broken family links. The cases are detailed in table 2 below.

During the Lachung visits, the team was able to trace the missing persons, who were earlier registered in other parts of Sikkim. Messages received informed family members that they were alive and well.

IRCS volunteers visited Mangan and met the district commissioner and explained about the FNS service provided in Chungthang. The district commissioner observed that IRCS was the only agency providing such a service and he offered support to help in finding family members who have been sent messages by their families in Pegong and Chungthang in his district. The team handed over two 'I AM ALIVE' messages to the concerned families with the help of the local authorities in Mangan district.

Table 2: Details of RFL cases solved in Sikkim

Type of RFL service	No. of cases
“I AM ALIVE message”	35
Tracing cases	4
Phone service	7

Coordination and partnerships

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

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. The outcome was air assistance provided by the relief commissioner in the form of a helicopter to airlift the IRCS team and a water purification unit to Chungthang.

The IFRC India office is coordinating with in-country partner national societies, keeping them updated on the situation in Sikkim and the action of IRCS. Information is also being posted on IRCS website.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Progress towards outcomes

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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Detailed need assessment by IRCS and mobilization 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:

IRCS disaster response team members received relief supplies sent by IRCS national headquarters at Bagdogra airport. The distance between Bagdogra airport to Gangtok is approximately 140km. Due to landslides, road traffic moved at a snail's pace or not at all, resulting in an eight-hour journey to transport these relief supplies from the airport to Gangtok. Adding to the transportation time was the necessary formalities at the army warehouse in Bagdogra airport, which took an additional three hours prior to departure.

Due to heavy rainfall coupled with dense fog and recurring landslides, significant challenges were faced by the IRCS response team. Despite the adverse weather conditions, team members continued to move toward the most severely affected areas in each of the four districts. Table 3 below illustrates the relief supplies distributed to date by IRCS volunteers.

Table 3: Relief distribution details

Sr. No.	District	Blanket	Tarpaulin	Stove	Kitchen Set
1	North	157	90	36	12
2	South	475	110	34	15
3	West	125	50	15	40
4	East	458	75	28	15
Total		1,215	325	113	82

The distribution of relief items including blankets, stoves, tarpaulin and kitchen sets continues and IRCS national headquarters may send additional relief supplies based on needs.

Challenges: Despite the challenges set by damaged infrastructure and transportation difficulties, IRCS was first to reach many areas with relief supplies and assistance for those affected, as mentioned by sub-divisional magistrates, block development officers and additional district collectors in Geyzing (west district), Mangan (north district) and Chungthang (north district).

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 a team of doctors and paramedics to render assistance to the affected people, IRCS has decided to concentrate its efforts on providing non food relief, purified safe drinking water and shelter. However in Mangan, on request of the district administration, the IRCS team members helped in segregating 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.
- Treatment and distribution of safe drinking water for up to 5,000 people (1,000 families).
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Progress:

A meeting was held with the relief commissioner in Gangtok to finalize the location of an operational water purification unit to serve those affected by this disaster. Based on the available information, it was decided to install water purification unit (NOMAD) in Chungthang which was inaccessible by road due to heavy landslides. The only option to reach Chungthang with this unit was to transport by air, using an army helicopter. On 27 September 2011, the Indian Army airlifted the unit and support and response team from



Transportation of the water purification unit by helicopter to Chungthang. **Photo:** Indian Red Cross Society.

Gangtok to Pagong (ITBP camp helipad). SDM Chungthang then arranged a vehicle to transport the water unit from the Pagong helipad to Chungthang.

The IRCS team was able to install the unit within four hours and immediately begin delivering safe, purified water to the population. The water unit is working approximately eight hours per day producing 32,000 litres per day, supplying water to 22,000 people in Chungthang camp (SPHERE standards 15 l/person/day). On the same day, SDM and BDO visited the site and commended the work of the Red Cross. Many people from the Chungthang have expressed keenness to now join the Red Cross as a member or volunteer.

IRCS disaster response team members trained community volunteers to operate water purification unit before leaving Chungthang.

Challenges:

As a helicopter was not available for the team to return to Gangtok, they elected to walk for more than 10 kms, including 7 km through a tunnel which is currently under construction toward Naga camp. From Naga camp, they travelled by army truck to Mangan and from there to Gangtok by hiring a vehicle. This highlights the commitment of IRCS volunteers who work in unfavourable difficult situations to reach to the most vulnerable people with the required relief assistance.

Emergency shelter

Outcome: 1,000 families have received tools to repair their damaged houses and to salvage material 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:

The earthquake has caused widespread devastation in Sikkim affecting many *pucca* and *kuchha* houses. The houses damaged in the isolated rural areas are unlikely to receive any immediate assistance to repair or reconstruct their houses, mostly due to logistical challenges. These houses are constructed of locally available material; mainly wood, mud and stones. The Indian Red Cross Society intendeds to provide shelter toolkits to 1,000 such households.

Shelter kits can be combined with salvaged materials or other local materials to give a quick and flexible initial solution to the emergency shelter needs of families. Affected families can use the shelter toolkit to build a basic shelter that later can be upgraded into more permanent solutions.



Damaged houses in rural Sikkim. **Photo:** Indian Red Cross Society.

FedEx is transporting these shelter toolkits free of charge from Kuala Lumpur to Gangtok, Sikkim. These kits have reached Gangtok on 21 October 2011.

Challenges:

As the shelter tool kits are not pre-positioned in the IRCS regional warehouse here in India, they are required to be imported from IFRC regional warehouse in Malaysia. However, the shelter tool kits have arrived in-country.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

Indian Red Cross Society:

- Dr. SP Agarwal, Secretary General
Tel: +91 11 2371 6441; email: spagarwalsg@indianredcross.org

IFRC India office:

- Mr. John Roche, head of office
Tel: +91 11 2332 4203; e-mail: john.roche@ifrc.org

IFRC South Asia regional office, in India:

- Mr. Azmat Ulla, head of regional office
Tel: +91 11 2411 1122; fax: +91 11 2411 1128; e-mail: azmat.ulla@ifrc.org
- Ms Maija-Liisa Fors, regional programme coordinator
Tel: +91 11 2411 1125; fax: +91.11.2411.1128; e-mail: majaliisa.fors@ifrc.org

IFRC Asia Pacific Zone office, in Malaysia:

- Ms Rose Dew, operations coordinator
Tel: +60 3 9207 5735; mob: +6012 3213 0149; e-mail: rose.dew@ifrc.org
- Mr Al Panico, head of operations
Tel: + 60 3 9207 5700; e-mail: al.panico@ifrc.org
- Mr Alan Bradbury, head of resource mobilization and planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER)
Tel: +60 3 9207 5775; email: alan.bradbury@ifrc.org
- Mr Jeremy Francis, acting head of regional logistics unit
Mob: +6012 298 9752; e-mail: jeremy.francis@ifrc.org

DREF history:

- This DREF was initially allocated on 22 September 2011 for CHF **97,137** for 0 months to assist 5,000 beneficiaries.
- 2 DREF operation updates issued.



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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.
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