

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

NAMIBIA: CAPRIVI FLOODS

16 May, 2003

Information Bulletin N° 1

Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: N/A

This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider international support through an Appeal.

The Situation

Recent heavy rains along the upper Zambezi river region have caused a sharp increase in the level of the Zambezi river and 22 villages have been flooded in the north eastern Caprivi region. Approximately 12,000 people are affected in the Kabbe and Katima districts and two people have died in the floods. The districts are prone to natural disasters and have recently been affected by drought and food insecurity. While food distributions have been on-going, the floods have increased the vulnerability of those already vulnerable. Despite the districts being at high-risk of floods and early warning systems in place, the population has been reluctant to leave fearing that their properties would be looted.

The flooded areas are inaccessible by road and can only be accessed by canoes. The government is flying in limited relief goods to the area. Livestock are trapped on small islands with little if any grass, and are being attacked and eaten by crocodiles. Crops are under water and houses are flooded. The water levels of the Zambezi has risen to 6.64 meters, which is believed to be the highest level in 21 years. Thirteen schools in the area have closed due to the floods.

The Caprivi region borders onto Angola, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe and the region has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the world, with up to 50% of the population affected in some areas. The food insecurity situation in the region has further devastated the population. With poor general health and hygiene knowledge, there is fear that the contamination of water sources will provoke outbreaks of cholera and malaria. Support is urgently needed to assist the affected population in the Caprivi region.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Within 10 hours of notification, the Namibia Red Cross and the Federation's Regional Delegation in Harare sent a joint regional disaster response team (RDRT) to the affected areas to carry out a rapid needs assessment from May 3-10. The team produced an assessment report which has been shared with all relevant stakeholders, including the Namibian government, who has requested the Namibia Red Cross Society to be the sole intervention organisation to respond to the disaster.

The immediate needs are food, boats, blankets, tents, mattresses, mosquito nets and OHS. Items will have to be airdropped or transported by boat. There is also an urgent need to airlift people who are trapped by the floods.

The short term/intermediate needs are the provision of water purification tablets, provision of safe water, distribution of non-food items, rehabilitation of existing water sources and provision of shelter.

The Namibia Red Cross is already present in the Caprivi region with a recently launched HIV/AIDS programme which focusses on prevention, counselling and homebased care. The programme is a cross border initiative in which the Botswana, Namibia and Zambia Red Cross societies have joined hands to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The Namibia Red Cross Society has three full-time staff members and 20 trained home based care facilitators in the area. There is an office infrastructure with communication facilities and a 4x4 vehicle. Volunteers from other parts of the country will be deployed to the area. Across the borders to Zambia and Zimbabwe, there are hundreds of volunteers who can also be deployed to assist in the relief operation.

From the Harare Regional Delegation, the regional disaster management delegate and the regional information delegate are on their way to Namibia to assist the Society co-ordinate the relief operation.

It is expected that an appeal will be launched next week to assist the affected population in Caprivi.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

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