

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

EAST TIMOR: FLOODS

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Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: NA

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 180 countries.

For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

This document 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 may consider international support through a request for funds from key Red Cross Red Crescent partners of the East Timor Red Cross.

The Situation

Torrential rain towards the end of last month caused severe flooding in the villages of Meligo and Atudara, situated in Cailaco, 30 minutes drive east of Maliana, south east in the country. While there is severe damage to seven houses with another nine completely destroyed, early assessments confirm that up to 400 people are seriously affected and in need of assistance.

There have been no reported deaths or injuries but significant psychological impact has been observed. A few cases of diarrhea and malaria have been diagnosed but people are receiving adequate health care from the local clinic in Maliana.

Already extremely impoverished, villagers have been left with very little as flood waters carried away belongings, livestock and destroyed crops of rice, corn and vegetables.

In late December, the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) had provided support to 26 families, handing out family kits, 50 kg rice and five litres of cooking oil to each family. However there are still significant unmet needs amongst those worst affected by the floods (see below).

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

An extensive and detailed assessment over two days by the East Timor Red Cross (CVTL) earlier this month included interviews with 62 families - more than 350 people. This exercise is being followed up with an examination of local water supplies by relevant CVTL specialists while the society is reviewing the health situation of the villages.

The assessment uncovered a general shortage of food in the disaster zone. Provisions supplied by the NDMO have already been consumed and many families have resorted to emergency measures such as mixing ground palm tree substances with the remaining food. As the majority rely on agriculture to generate an income many are now facing the immediate future with no means of earning a living.

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According to CVTL assessors, most of the 400 persons will need immediate assistance to restart their modest growing activities through the provision of rice and vegetable seeds and, additionally food support over the coming three months, until the rice crop is ready for harvesting.

CVTL is also liaising closely with the NDMO - which has plans for some limited food distributions over the next week - in an effort to strengthen the operation and coordination between the two organisations.

Tomorrow (Wednesday) a team from CVTL headquarters and the Federation representative in East Timor will travel to the stricken area to distribute family kits (including kitchen utensils, cutlery, plates, washing materials and hygiene items) from its stocks to up to 40 families identified by the earlier assessment. In addition, a consignment of clothing donated by the Singapore Red Cross will be distributed to the needy and destitute through local networks, including the church. CVTL volunteers in Maliana are planning to launch a local radio campaign to collect clothes, with church leaders gain requested to handle the distribution.

Resources allowing, the CVTL will further seek to provide construction materials and assist with rebuilding of the nine houses destroyed while the Society's water and sanitation team will continue rendering practical assistance to the villagers as necessary.

The disaster response from CVTL - currently a society seeking recognition and admission (in 2005) - underlines once again the importance and practical value of investment in a trained and motivated volunteer corps at the grass roots level. On current estimates, funding in the region of CHF 50,000 would ensure the operation described in outline above is completed, including restocking and further training. In addition to helping some 400 vulnerable people, the disaster also represents a real development opportunity for CVTL already an integral element of the humanitarian response network for the world's newest nation.

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

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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.