

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

SOUTH ASIA: FLOODS

14 June 2005

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 181 countries.

In Brief

This Bulletin (no. 01/2005) is being issued for information only, and reflects the status of the situation and information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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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 in disaster relief and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's [Annual Appeal](#). For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

Every year the monsoon season brings about major flooding in parts of South Asia. Heavy rainfall is coupled with a rise in temperatures causing the melting of snow in the Himalayas, which makes the mighty rivers of Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra, and their numerous tributaries, swell far above the average. As a result, the plains of Bangladesh and Nepal, north-eastern states of India, as well as parts of Pakistan get flooded almost every year between July and September. A steady population growth on the sub-continent and global warming are expected to increase the negative impact of the monsoon and undermine its beneficial effect on agriculture. It is estimated that, in the long run, those factors will add to the devastation caused by floods during the monsoon season.



The year 2004 has seen the worst flooding since 1998, with over 70 million people affected in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. People lost their homes, crops and entire livelihoods. The International Federation launched emergency appeals for these three countries, seeking over CHF 12 million to assist approximately 1.8 million people.

This year, the monsoon has reached the southern coast of India on 7 June, slightly later than the average. By mid-June the monsoon has reached the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The Indian Meteorological Department's operational long-range forecast for the 2005 Southwest monsoon season (June-September) is that the rainfall for the country as a whole is likely to be 98 per cent of the long period average. There is a very high probability for this year's seasonal rainfall to be near normal and above.

In Bangladesh, the Flood Forecast Warning Centre (FFWC) has so far not issued flood warning messages. Light to moderate rainfall is reported over the Ganges, the Meghna basins and heavy rainfall over the Brahmaputra basin.

Bearing in mind that the winter 2004-2005 was marked by extreme weather conditions in southern and central Asia, with extremely low temperatures and heavy snowfall, which is now melting and feeding the major river systems, it is likely that the current monsoon season will bring considerable flooding in the disaster-prone areas mentioned above.

Afghanistan and Pakistan have experienced an extremely harsh winter, with freezing temperatures, heavy snowfall, and, in the early spring, torrential rains and storms. As a result, both countries have already been subjected to flooding. The flooding season continues throughout the summer months, and many areas of both countries are under a high alert.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Years of experience in floods response in South Asia have stressed the importance of disaster preparedness and mitigation components in the work of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in the region. In their efforts, national societies rely on large networks of volunteers who live and work in disaster prone communities, thus ensuring commitment to, and ownership of, long-term disaster preparedness efforts. Some of their major achievements so far are:

- The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) has a network of community-based disaster preparedness volunteers in 35 branches, as well as a long-running cyclone preparedness programme involving 40,000 volunteers.
- In India, the national society has focused on developing preparedness capacities in eight disaster prone states. So far, the state branches of Assam and Bihar have developed and demonstrated their increased capacity in human and material resource mobilization in times of disasters. Additionally, the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) has established national and state disaster response teams, a pool of highly skilled and trained national staff ready for deployment in the immediate aftermath of disasters.
- The Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) has community-based disaster preparedness programmes in 16 districts of the country prone to floods and landslides. Communities have trained volunteers in first aid, fund-raising, disaster response, as well as local disaster relief funds ready for immediate use when flooding occurs.

A strong focus point amongst all national societies in the region is heavy focus on community-based preparedness, with strengthening of human and material resources through volunteer training schemes, improvement of storage facilities in strategic locations, pre-positioning of relief stocks, as well as construction of flood platforms, water and sanitation facilities.

Current state of preparedness of National Societies

Afghanistan

The Afghanistan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), the Federation and ICRC have developed a floods contingency plan in order to mobilize all available resources and prepare for response as floods occur. As part of that plan, the Federation is currently implementing a spring floods emergency operation, which is focusing on pre-positioning of non-food items for 2,000 families in each of the five regions – Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif and Kandahar.

As part of response preparedness efforts, ARCS volunteers and staff are conducting ongoing field monitoring and assessments to determine specific needs in the regions. While procurement and pre-positioning is underway, some relief items have already been distributed to the affected population, as the floods occur.

Bangladesh

BDRCS currently has a buffer stock of 25,000 family kits and 45,000 blankets. It also has access to 1,000 tonnes of rice from the World Food Programme (WFP) stocks for emergency disaster response.

By the end of June, the national society will activate the emergency flood disaster coordination committee. Trained Red Crescent youth and community-based disaster preparedness volunteers are ready at district branches for needs assessment and emergency response.

India

IRCS currently has 20,000 family packs of non-food items available in regional warehouses. The procurement is underway for replenishment of additional 30,000 family packs and 20,000 family tents used in the tsunami response operation.

IRCS has a national disaster response team of 16 members, as well as 12-strong state disaster response team members in Gujarat and an 18-member state-level disaster response team (SDRT) in Orissa, which are ready for deployment throughout the country.

The 2004 floods emergency operation is currently in its second phase, with focus on construction of raised platforms, tube wells and latrines in the states of Assam and Bihar. Some of these activities will be replicated by the branches in new operational areas.

Nepal

NRCS currently has 10,000 family packs in its central warehouse, as well as another 12,000 family packs in four regional warehouses (3,000 packs in each). An average of 50 family packs has been stored in all 75 district chapters. Two six-tonne trucks and two pick-up vehicles are available at the NRCS headquarters.

In terms of human resources, the national society has 775 staff trained in basic disaster response, available in 31 districts (25 persons in each district). Additionally, 29 national disaster response team (NDRT) members and 5,000 trained volunteers have been put on standby for deployment if needed.

All 75 district chapters have been requested to organize pre-monsoon coordination meetings and take other preparedness measures. Ten districts have already completed meetings with concerned stakeholders. The NRCS disaster management department has drafted a provisional response plan for floods and landslides. The national society has NRS 20 million (CHF 360,000) available in its disaster relief fund.

Pakistan

The Pakistani Red Crescent Society (PRCS) responded to floods that affected its Northern Areas, North-West Frontier Province and Balochistan in the first quarter of the year. With help of bilateral donors and an allocation from the Federation's disaster relief emergency fund, over 200 tonnes of relief consignments, worth CHF 550,000, were distributed to the affected population. PRCS is continuing to monitor the situation and is on alert for possible further relief interventions.

Sri Lanka

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) and the Federation delegation organized a disaster management core group meeting, which was attended by most partner national societies present in the country. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the future of SLRCS disaster management programme, as well as floods preparedness and pre-positioning of relief stocks in the vulnerable regions.

Coordination

In all countries, close coordination is maintained with government authorities, both at national and provincial level, and other partners assisting the preparedness activities in communities. Contacts with donors, in particular the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) and the British Department For International Development (DFID), have been established as part of efforts to identify possible funding sources for an eventual response operation. The South Asia regional and country delegations and Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies will continue to closely monitor the progress of the monsoon and keep all partners up to date with preparedness and response activities in the region.

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