

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

INDIA – ORISSA, WEST BENGAL, TAMIL NADU : FLOODS

26 October 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 (NGOs) 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

There has been widespread flooding in eastern India, affecting approximately a million people. West Bengal has been the hardest hit, but Orissa and Tamil Nadu have also been deluged by heavy rain leading to flash floods. There have been at least 20 reported fatalities.

In West Bengal, which is a low-lying state next to Bangladesh, more than 220,000 people have been marooned following torrential rain for a week. The East and West Midnapore districts are the worst hit. There is also serious flooding in north and south Parganas, Howrah and Hoogly. Many parts of the state capital Kolkata have been inundated. The state relief minister reports that more than 125,000 people have been shifted to 1,200 relief camps.

In Orissa, over 400,000 people in the district of Balasore have been affected across 653 villages. The Budhabalanga and Jalaka rivers were both flowing above danger levels, and causing flooding in low-lying areas.

Tamil Nadu has borne the brunt of the low-pressure system in the Bay of Bengal as well, being lashed by heavy rains. Flood warnings have been issued in 11 districts. These include Nagappattinam, which was heavily affected by the December 2004 tsunami. The Cauvery River is running high, posing a flood threat to surrounding areas.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) district and state branches have been responding since the onset of the flooding. IRCS national headquarters in Delhi is maintaining close contact with branches in affected states.

The Orissa state branch is mobilizing medical supplies for use in the IRCS medical centre in Bhadrak district. People in Balasore are taking refuge in six partially constructed Indian Red Cross cyclone shelters. A total of ten shelters are being built as part of the national society's disaster preparedness programme. Indian Red Cross volunteers are running community kitchens in the cyclone shelters, assisted by non-affected local communities to bring assistance to those hit by the flooding.

The IRCS West Bengal state branch is only providing supplementary relief services at this stage with the government authorities stating they have the capacity to meet local needs. Relief items mobilized by the branch include tents, PVC sheets, new and used clothing, kitchen sets, buckets, soap, blankets, bleaching powder, and oral rehydration salts. District branches in affected areas have been mobilizing their own resources and making relief distributions.

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