



TIMOR-LESTE: STORMS & FLOODS

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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 183 countries.

In Brief

CHF 200,000 HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO ASSIST SOME 8,400 BENEFICIARIES FOR THREE MONTHS.

UN earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

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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

Several districts in Timor-Leste have been hit by disasters since mid January. Districts including Ainaro, Viqueque, Bobonaro and Baucau were exposed to storms, destroying or damaging some 1,200 houses and several crops. Oecusse, the Timor-Leste enclave located on the coast of the Indonesian part of Timor, was hit by a flood, with house and crop destruction affecting more than 2,000 families, according to latest indications. (Please see information bulletin no.1, 10 February 2006 for more details.)

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Cruz Vermelha de Timor-Leste (CVTL) immediately started to assess damage and needs in the districts, a process that proved time consuming and difficult because of road destruction and the fact that communities affected were widely scattered. As a clearer picture began to build on the amount of damage, CVTL launched an operation to cover affected districts, with the focus of relief dependent on the situation in each district.

The Secretary General of CVTL and the Federation Head of Delegation met with the relevant government minister (for Labour & Solidarity) today (16 February) to clarify cooperation issues concerning the various disasters. An information sharing meeting with other humanitarian actors was also held yesterday.

As part of its evolving response, CVTL requested disaster relief emergency fund (DREF) support from the Secretariat in Geneva. This was granted to the tune of CHF 200,000. An emergency appeal to build the momentum of the response is due to be launched early next week.

Ainaro, Viqueque, Bobonaro and Baucau

CVTL completed a rapid assessment of destruction in these districts, and decided to:

1. Provide construction materials for up to 650 households, in all districts
2. Conduct a training programme for villagers and selected volunteers on better roof construction. This is planned to start in Ainaro tomorrow.
3. Monitor food needs and provision
4. Clarify the need for seed provision

Construction activities in the four districts will vary subject to the need as well as coverage to be provided by the Government.

Oecusse

CVTL sent a combined water sanitation assessment team to Oecusse. Assessment was carried out in cooperation with Caritas and Oxfam, but all areas are not yet covered.

CVTL will focus on the cleaning of 30 or so contaminated wells. The national society has begun sending equipment and goods, ie pumps, generators and chlorine, so that the cleaning gathers pace in an attempt to pre-empt any health problems. CVTL also plans to provide up to 2,000 mosquito nets. The presence of a Federation Health delegate, supporting the national society, is ensuring a broader and more integrated approach to the response.

Coverage of the need for food and seeds will be monitored, along with the government and other humanitarian actors. Cooperation with the government on assessment/ distribution will be discussed.

The needs

House reconstruction:

The main problem is that the storms have blown off a large number of house roofs. As such, reconstruction needs are immediate, as Timor-Leste is still in the grip of its rainy season. The Government will provide a significant amount of construction materials. However, the Minister of Labour and Solidarity has requested CVTL to help cover gaps and provide materials, mainly roof plates and screws, for up to 200 families.

The destruction of so many roofs was partly because of poor construction techniques. CVTL is launching a training project based on model reconstruction in all districts, to benefit all villages affected by the storms. A civil engineer has been engaged and the project will start in Ainaro this weekend.

Food

Given the level of crop destruction, food shortages in affected areas are a concern. The government has provided some food already to Oecusse and intends to stock up 4,000 metric tonnes to address coming shortages. WFP will also use its stocks. Food needs should therefore be covered except for some concern around the welfare of children and pregnant women.

CVTL will monitor the situation in case gaps emerge in the intended coverage. In addition, CVTL/Federation are discussing possible cooperation with WFP and the government on assessment and distribution.

Seeds and tools

In Oecusse, the FAO will cover the need for provision of seeds, as it has capacity to meet the need of 5,000 families. For the rest of the country, CVTL is awaiting confirmation over FAO's preparedness.

Health

There are a number of Cuban doctors in Oecusse, which should contribute to a good level of preparedness and response to the situation. Oxfam is distributing 8,000 mosquito nets, and CVTL will distribute up to 2,000, subject to needs and coordination with the government, which also plans some distributions. As for other districts, there are no reports of specific health challenges.

Water sanitation

Contaminated wells pose a special health risk. After a similar disaster three years ago, 21 people reportedly died of cholera. As indicated, CVTL has already begun its response in this respect.

Coordination

The Government's lead entity on the disasters is the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity. Coordination now seems to be in gear. Local Government on the ground has begun to provide leadership. More information is being shared on the actions of various actors.

Supported by the Federation, CVTL invited humanitarian representatives in Dili to an information-sharing meeting yesterday (15 February). This helped build a more complete picture of the situation and facilitate CVTL's course of action.

The CVTL/ Federation also requested the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity to summon a coordination meeting for tomorrow (17 February).

The disaster represents a significant challenge for CVTL, a growing but still relatively new national society. The operation is the first time it has responded in several different districts at the same time. The Federation will offer coordination support from the headquarters.

As the operation gathers pace, the Federation is ready to offer additional support through its Regional Delegation in Bangkok. An experienced RDRT disaster manager from Philippines National Red Cross is due to arrive in Timor-Leste at the weekend to assist the national society in assessment and appeal preparation. Longer-term, if CVTL indicate a need, the Regional Delegation is ready to offer further assistance via a relief delegate.