

# 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

19 June 2006

*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

This Bulletin (no. 01/2006) is being issued for information only, and reflects the situation and the information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

Donors wishing to contribute to the ongoing efforts are welcome to consult the disaster management sections in the following regional and/or national appeals for 2006-2007: [South Asia \(MAA52001\)](#), [Afghanistan \(MAAAF001\)](#), [Bangladesh \(MAABD001\)](#), [India \(MAAIN001\)](#), [Nepal \(MAANP001\)](#), and the ongoing tsunami appeals for Sri Lanka ([Appeal 28/04](#)) and the Pakistan earthquake appeal ([05EA022](#)).

The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to achieve the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity". The Global Agenda Goals are:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

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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 \(NGO's\) 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 (see map on last page). Heavy rainfall and a rise in temperatures causing melting of snow in the Himalayas result in the rapid and massive rise of water levels in large rivers like the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra, and their tributaries. 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. Global climate change has potentially serious consequences for this situation and it is suspected that over the coming years the combination of increased glacial melt and increased monsoon intensity

will add to the devastation caused by floods during the monsoon season. Flooding has numerous adverse effects, including loss of life through drowning, increased prevalence of disease and destruction of property, crops and resources to sustain livelihoods.

The year 2005 saw flooding across the region, affecting over 22 million people, leaving more than 3,400 people dead, 1,100 people injured and another 450,000 people displaced. The South Asian national societies provided assistance to hundreds of thousands of affected people. The International Federation launched emergency appeals seeking over CHF 2.2 million and used another CHF 300,000 out of its disaster relief emergency fund (DREF).

This year, the monsoon that touched the southern coast of India one week early, on 26 May, has triggered moderate rainfall across the country and heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places leading to floods. Eight states are facing flood-like situations that have resulted in the death of 140 people so far. The states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Kerala have been severely affected. Floods triggered by heavy rains in Assam have displaced 25,000 people and snapped road and rail communications.

In Nepal too, early monsoon is expected this year and rains have already started. The meteorological department has forecasted the possibility of more rain and there is a likelihood of big disasters such as floods and landslides. Warming trends have already had significant impact in the Nepal Himalayas, most significantly in terms of glacier retreat and significant increases in the size and volume of glacial lakes, making them more prone to glacial lake outburst flooding.

Late April this year saw the northern region of Afghanistan affected by floods caused by the melting of snow. In Pakistan, however, the meteorological department forecasts that this season's monsoon will be 'normal' based on the indication that most of the month of May remained dry and that the temperature level this year has been significantly higher than normal.

In Bangladesh, by 1 June the Flood Forecast Warning Centre has so far not issued any flood warning messages. All the rivers in the basins are at present flowing below their respective danger levels, except for three rivers in the Meghna basin, which are all registering rising trends. Similarly, rainfall data of the Sri Lankan meteorological department suggests that severe floods should not be expected in the country this year.

With the recent climatic changes in the region and atmospheric changes world over, it is hard to forecast the extent of monsoon rainfall and flooding with hundred per cent accuracy.

### **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.

To address the imminent danger of flooding, some of the steps that have so far been taken by the Federation and the national societies in the South Asia region are:

- Development of national contingency plans for flood response, through constant interaction and coordination with concerned government departments and other stakeholders in each country, and informing the branch offices in the districts of these plans.
- Establishment and strengthening of national and state/district disaster response teams, a pool of highly skilled and trained disaster management professionals, ready for deployment in the immediate aftermath of disasters.
- Coordination between the disaster management teams of the Federation's regional and country delegations and the headquarters of the national societies has also been strengthened through regular meetings and information exchange.
- 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**

Unlike last year, the Afghanistan delegation has not yet needed to launch an emergency appeal or plan a full-scale operation to help with floods caused by melting snows in the northern region of the country. During the year, the ARCS and the Federation have been able to cope with small-scale emergencies, like floods, with the national society distributing non-food items for up to 10,000 families from their regional warehouses around the country.

As part of the Movement contingency plan, Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Federation hold regular coordination meetings, as well as with other agencies like the Department of Disaster Preparedness, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, UN agencies and other stakeholders, to discuss ways in which to prepare for a possible emergency. The Movement partners recently coordinated a floods-assessment evaluation in Baghlan, Faryab, Samangan and Sar-i-Pul provinces.

The ARCS, with technical support from the Federation, have conducted training programmes for their national disaster response team (NDRT), disaster response unit and community-based disaster preparedness (CBDP) teams across the country. The national society has over 2,000 CBDP trained volunteers whose task is to recruit more volunteers in the coming months to ensure the ARCS will have enough manpower to cope with the possible flooding. The ARCS trainers at headquarter level hold regular meetings with the volunteers to ensure they are well trained and prepared.

### **Bangladesh**

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) and the Federation have developed a preliminary plan of action. The Federation is updating this plan on a regular basis and maintaining contact with various donors in the country. The BDRCS and the Federation regularly attend meetings of the disaster emergency response group, a disaster management coordination group. BDRCS is also organising a meeting with all concerned unit level officers in the flood-prone districts, before the onset of the monsoon.

The BDRCS and the Federation are renting warehouses in strategic locations in the country and assessing any need for maintenance of existing warehouses located in Dhaka and Chittagong. The Federation is processing the procurement of buffer stocks consisting of various relief materials (i.e. family kits, clothing items, buckets etc.) and disaster response materials that would be required in the event of a major disaster.

### **India**

The Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) is already working to assist with flooding in the state of Assam (see separate information bulletin). The society is also working on a contingency plan for flood response and is coordinating with concerned agencies in the Indian government towards this end. IRCS has instructed the programme states to prepare their monsoon preparedness plans as well.

The IRCS has kept emergency response units specialised in water and sanitation, communication, health ready for immediate deployment. Warehouses have been renovated and warehouse equipment, machinery and vehicles have been repaired. Non-food relief items (disaster preparedness stock) have been stored in the six regional warehouses of IRCS and can cater to at least 50,000 families at any point of time anywhere in the country.

The IRCS has formed a multi-sectoral national disaster response team (NDRT) and state level disaster response teams (SDRTs) in four states, namely Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar and Orissa, which can be mobilized immediately. A disaster management centre has been started at the IRCS national headquarters and has been in constant touch with affected state branches of the national society to collect data for generating daily situation reports, which are shared widely. The existing disaster response database of emergency response persons, trained volunteers, health team and disaster preparedness stock has been updated.

### **Nepal**

The Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) has relief materials (30,000 family packages) and basic rescue kits pre-positioned at various strategic locations. Rescue kits are being pre-positioned at NRCS disaster management centres. A disaster management centre is being established at national headquarters in Kathmandu.

Emergency response teams have been alerted at different levels that can be mobilized immediately. The NRCS national headquarters has informed all district chapters to start necessary preparedness actions. District level

coordination meetings have started in some districts. A contingency plan is being finalized and regular information is being collected and the situation being monitored.

### **Pakistan**

The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has identified 53 districts as 'flood-prone' and is developing disaster management cells in these districts. Six of these cells are already in place, with priority being given to areas that have historically been hardest hit. The districts where cells have been established are Jhang and Narowal in the Punjab, Badin and Khairpur in Sindh, Swat in North West Frontier Province and Sibi in Balochistan.

Stockpiles of emergency shelter (20,000 tents) are in place at the Federation/PRCS logistics compound in Mansehra. The national and provincial headquarters will act as the main hubs for relief stocks. The amassing of stocks in the national headquarters has been completed, with stocks for up to 2,000 families, while it is almost complete at the provincial level, with each provincial branch holding stocks for 400 families. The disaster management cells hold stocks sufficient for 200 families.

Contingency plans for the needs of communities already made vulnerable by the October 2005 earthquake are in place. Under these plans, a significant scaling up of the PRCS's disaster management capacity is planned for 2006-2008, which will include the establishment of national and branch disaster response teams as well as local disaster preparedness teams.

### **Sri Lanka**

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS), in collaboration with government agencies and other local and international stakeholders, have identified a few vulnerable districts that are prone to floods (Colombo, Kalutara, Gampaha, Galle, Matara, Hambantota, Kegalle and Ratnapura). Disaster preparedness stocks have been earmarked, with financial assistance from the Federation, to face any emergency situations that might arise. A network of relevant agencies in the districts has been formed so that, in the event of a disaster, the required resources can be mobilized.

The SLRCS and the Federation have developed contingency plans, which are in place and branch offices in the districts have been informed about these plans. SLRCS is in constant touch with relevant government departments, such as the meteorological department, in order to obtain up-to-date facts and figures regarding impending floods in the country and region. Relevant information received is immediately passed down to the branches/district points for quick action. The branch offices also maintain links with the local police and concerned government authorities for disaster response. .

### **Coordination**

The South Asian regional delegation held a floods preparedness coordination meeting on 2 June, with representatives from the country delegations of India, Bangladesh and from Nepal Red Cross to build on the regional disaster management team and to discuss practical issues about flood preparedness and contingency plans. A draft of internal standard operational procedures for disaster response was also circulated.

In addition, coordination between the disaster management teams of the Federation's regional and country delegations and the headquarters of the national societies has also been strengthened through regular meetings and information exchange.

As in the past, 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 have been established and/or strengthened.

The South Asia regional and country delegations and Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies will continue to work together closely to monitor the progress of the monsoon and keep all partners up to date with preparedness and response activities in the region.

*[Please see the title page for contact information.](#)*

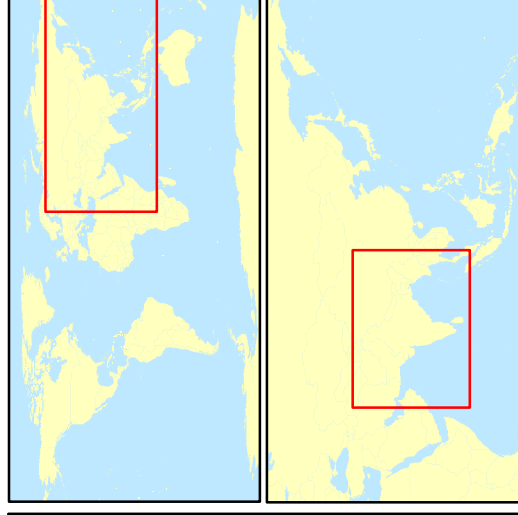
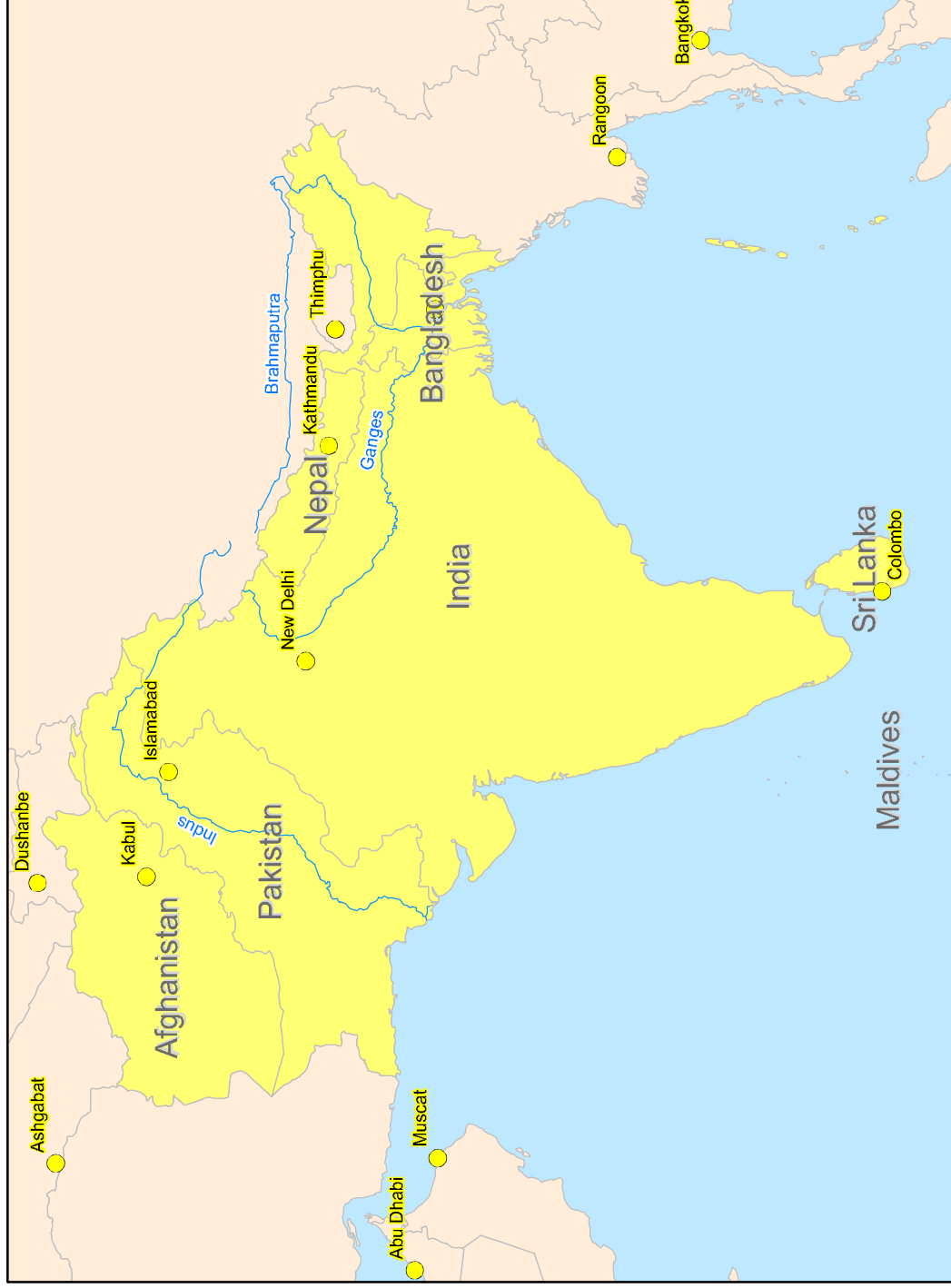
*[Please see map on next page](#)*



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# Floods preparedness



The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.  
Map data sources: ESRI, Federation