

AFGHANISTAN: FLOOD RELIEF

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Operational developments

The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) has responded well to the flooding and heavy rains which have occurred in nine provinces of the country during the past month. Poor communications and the size of the affected area, covering Badakhshan and Takhar in the north-east, Fariab in the north-west and six southern and western provinces, are making it difficult to obtain precise details. To date, conservative estimates put the number of homeless at 51,400 and the numbers of dead or missing at over 100.

From the outset, the Federation and ICRC have been working closely to ensure that their combined resources are put at the disposal of the ARCS for its flood relief operation. The ICRC have given 500 MT. of wheatflour to the ARCS -- 350 MT. for Fariab province and 150 tonnes for the operation in the southern region working out of Kandahar. Federation and ICRC delegates have been able to advise and assist with supplies, logistics, survey and reporting work.

The following is a breakdown of what is being done at provincial level:

Badakhshan

A recent report states that in the provincial capital, Faizabad, 50% of homes are badly damaged, and 5% of the houses and two bridges are completely destroyed.

Five villages in the Faizabad river valley, Chasma Bed, New Abad, Meshi, Samad Dara and Daham Ab, have sustained substantial damage.

Plastic sheeting donated by the ICRC and cash for local purchases from the Federation have enabled the branch President to start a relief operation. The plastic sheeting was flown in by ICRC plane on 25 April. The ARCS clinic in Faizabad continues to provide medical services to the city's population. An ICRC health delegate who visited Faizabad for 3 days last week confirms that substantial damage has occurred. Further relief supplies, mainly clothing and blankets, will be trucked in from Mazar I Sharif in the next few days.

Takhar

On 29 April, the President of the Takhar branch of the ARCS travelled to Kabul to inform the National President of the ARCS that flooding had also occurred in Takhar province. Further information is expected shortly.

Fariab

The ARCS regional headquarters in Mazar I Sharif is now working with the branch in Fariab to distribute clothing and blankets provided by the Federation. It has also assisted with the distribution of a US\$ 16,000 cash donation from local businessmen in Mazar I Sharif. The ARCS mobile medical team in the provincial capital, Maimana, is visiting flood affected villages providing medical care.

Initial surveys indicate that 1,900 families, or approximately 13,300 people are homeless. On 29 April, an ARCS/Federation four-person team from Mazar I Sharif returned to the flood affected area to draw up the final food distribution lists for a two to three months feeding programme. WFP and a local Commander donated about eight MT. of wheat and 2,000 blankets a few days ago which will provide food for approximately 1,900 families for ten days. However, the 350 MT. of wheatflour donated by the ICRC, and 10,000 kgs of cooking oil purchased locally by the Federation will form the core of the feeding operation over the coming months.

Local agricultural specialists believe it will be three months, when the next harvest is due, before those affected are able to provide some food for themselves. However, because of extensive damage to crops, the harvest will be considerably less than normal.

Originally the ARCS in the north asked for plastic sheeting. A further survey found that the homeless have built makeshift shelters which in the warm weather will be adequate until rebuilding takes place. Cooking oil will therefore be purchased instead.

Helmand

As more information comes to hand, it is becoming clear that Helmand province was the worst affected of the southern provinces. An ARCS survey team did further work in the area north of the capital, Lashgar Gar, by following the Helmand River from Girishk to Shurukian where large areas of land have been eroded by the rising river. It found that in this small area alone 21,000 people (3,000 families) in seventy villages have been made homeless or have lost land or crops. The team noted that the level and volume of water in the Helmand River is increasing as temperatures rise and more melting snow enters the headwaters.

A local village representative whose knowledge of the river goes back 45 years believes that the water level will peak in May, so further flooding is likely.

Zabul

Recent information has been received which indicates that 130 families in Zabul require food and other relief assistance.

The ARCS has decided to provide food assistance for a two-month period to 1,500 of the worst affected families in Helmand and Zabul provinces and will distribute 1,500 blankets. The 150 metric tons of wheat flour is being provided by the ICRC and the blankets by the Federation.

Nimroz

The ARCS headquarters is still awaiting a detailed report from the Branch in Nimroz. After the initial relief supplies sent two weeks ago, comprising clothing, beans and oil from stocks in Herat, no further supplies have been sent. The ARCS President in Nimroz, who was in Herat 10 days ago, reported that the ARCS medical team was providing assistance to people with medical problems following the flood. Hopefully a detailed report will be received shortly.

Kandahar

In Kandahar, there are currently 40 families in need of food and relief assistance.

Herat and Farah provinces

These two provinces were affected by flooding in March. A joint ARCS, Federation and ICRC survey team reported that although five villages were affected the damage was not extensive. The ARCS in Herat provided clothing to affected families; because the UN and NGOs have a large presence there needs were met quickly.

In Farah, the ARCS again provided clothing to the branch. The ARCS clinic converted to a mobile unit, providing assistance to flood victims. Further information is awaited.

Conclusion

The ARCS has responded well to the needs of flood victims in affected provinces, supported by the Federation and ICRC. Major delays have been caused by the remoteness of these provinces and by poor communications. Small quantities of relief supplies and medical assistance were provided as soon as news of flooding reached branch and regional ARCS headquarters. Now that surveys are nearing completion, adequate quantities of food, blankets, clothing and temporary shelter are being organised and will be reaching the flood affected areas in the coming week.

Due to the fact that the Afghan Red Crescent Society is assisted in the current floods relief operation by both - Federation and ICRC, information for this bulletin was compiled by Federation and ICRC Heads of Delegation in Afghanistan.

Songsheng Cao
Desk Officer
Asia & Pacific Department

Jerry Talbot
Director
Asia & Pacific Department