

Overall Situation

One week after the severe earthquake in South Asia the situation is still that of an acute emergency. The number of casualties has risen to 54,000 in Pakistan and up to 1600 in India.

The high number of injured, the logistical challenges and rapidly deteriorating weather conditions, indicate that the relief operation is still at a live-saving stage. Urgent needs have not been satisfactorily covered yet, priorities are winterised shelter, medicaments, water and sanitation and nutrition. Other urgent needs are still field hospitals and medical care in general.



Helicopters transporting relief goods from a military base in Pakistan
(Source: Reuters, www.alertnet.org)

Continuous rains have further slowed down relief operations. Helicopters are still the only mean to get to cut-off villages because landslides block a number of roads. The difficult weather situation does not allow permanent helicopter trafficking though. Temperatures are dropping to below zero and hypothermia is becoming a serious risk to thousands of destitute people.

Current assessments have led to a revision of shelter needs: it is now estimated that up to 600,000 tents are required which is double the previous estimates. The delivered tents

need to be winterised in order to provide adequate shelter for victims.

Two relief experts of Malteser International, Marie Theres Benner and Jon Freeman, arrived on the spot on Friday morning and immediately took up their task to organize Malteser International's response to the disaster in co-operation with local partners. Wiltrud Gutmiedl, project coordinator for Malteser International in India, has immediately taken up contact with Indian partner organizations which are willing and able to help the victims of the disaster in the Kashmir area.



Earthquake victim cooks food in Balakot (Source: Reuters, www.alertnet.org)

Malteser International Activity

Malteser International's further strategy for relief activities includes the following steps:

- The erection of a logistical centre in Muzaffarabad in cooperation with the partner organisation International Blue Crescent (IBC) which has a team of five staff members in the city. From there on relief items like tents, blankets, hygiene kits, clothing and food will be purchased and distributed. As soon as the situation in Muzaffarabad allows it there will be installed a public kitchen to provide meals for around 3,000 people. Malteser International provides 500.000 € for immediate relief action in Pakistan.
- In India Malteser International will provide help through two of its partner organizations: the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) and the Sister Doctors Forum India (SDFI) which both provide medical assistance to the earthquake victims in Kashmir. A first pledge of 100,000 € is foreseen to support their work.

- The cooperation with partner organisations is according to the Malteser International strategy to avoid additional operational structures on the spot but to rather use existing organisations also in order to reinforce local capacities and to ensure the adequate use of funds. All partner organisations cooperated successfully with Malteser International in disaster areas in the past.
- The mission of the assessment team includes further research about possibilities for long-term rehabilitation projects and other possible partner organisations on the spot. Taking the experience of former disasters there will be a high need for the rehabilitation of health care infrastructure, schools and houses, which Malteser International might facilitate. But given the still dramatic situation in Pakistan, first priority is the provision of emergency relief.

Information on Hurricane Stan in Central America



Blocked road due to Hurricane Stan in El Salvador
(Source: Order of Malta Association El Salvador)

In the period from 4 to 9 October 2005 Hurricane Stan has caused casualties and high damages across Central America and Mexico. El Salvador has already suffered with the first eruption in a century of it Llamatepec volcano on Saturday, which killed two people and caused thousands to evacuate their homes. The number of dead in Guatemala has risen up to about 660. The number of people who are directly affected by the natural disaster is around 1.5 million.

Secretary General Ingo Radtke stays in close contact with the Order's Associations in the affected countries. Their reports prove how serious the situation in Central America still is. „The situation in Chiapas is very serious, a lot of houses have been washed away“, reports Juliteta Conroy from the Order's Association in Mexico. A cry for help is also coming from the president of the Order's Association in El Salvador, Pierre Houdelot: „The number of cases in children with acute respiratory infections is increasing in all of our ten health centres. We are running out of medical drugs, and the supply of new medication has become very difficult due to the desolation caused by the Hurricane.”

Malteser International will provide 100,000 Euro for the relief activities of the Order's Associations.

Malteser International would be glad if you support these activities by cash donations and encourages you to collect money. In order to avoid “fundraising confusion” and high bank fees, all Associations and Priorities should first use their internal system for collecting donations and then coordinate further proceeding with the Headquarters in Cologne.

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