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Information bulletin

Maldives/South Asia: Water crisis

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Maldivian Red Crescent (MRC), with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), is assessing the emerging situation and will determine if external assistance is required for MRC interventions, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

The situation

A fire broke out on Thursday, 4 December 2014 at 13:40 hr inside the Maldives Water and Sewerage Company (MWSC)'s Generator Unit and has disrupted Male' City's water supply. MWSC temporarily suspend the water supplies in the capital Malé since the accident. The fire was extinguished but water supply was affected across the capital city as MWSC is the sole provider of clean desalinated water in the capital and the unit was severely damaged in the fire.

The total population of the Malé is 153,000, excluding expat population and migrants. Most households in the capital rely on MWSC for their daily water needs. The alternative source of water from wells is not suitable for household use, as these wells are possibly polluted with drainage water and other pollutants.

A state of emergency was declared by the government of Maldives and a task force was set up for distributing safe drinking water. National Emergency Response Team (NERT) and Emergency Response Team (ERT) volunteers of MRC Male' branch have been deployed to assist the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) and Police who is tasked to manage the distribution of safe drinking water. Although there is anxiety among locals, situation so far is under control with no report of violence or unrest. If the water supply is not restored immediately or the water supplies from other sources do not reach the people for a longer period of time, the situation may turn violent and civil unrest is anticipated.

At the time of publishing this report, government of India extended its support to Maldives. The water supplies are expected to reach Male' by air or ship around the evening on Friday, 5 December 2014. As of 4 December midnight when the distribution points were closed, 90,000 people were provided with 2-litre of water each. These included locals and expats with ID cards and proper documentation (work permits and entry stamps). The distribution of water started on 5 December at 08:30 hr. The MNDF is replenishing water from the nearby water desalination plants located at Thulusdhoo island, which is located at least two hours from Male'.



Maldivian Red Crescent volunteers assisting the Maldivian Defence Force and Police in water distribution. (Photo by MRC)

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Twenty four MRC staff and 60 Male' branch National Emergency Response Team (NERT) and Emergency Response Team (ERT) volunteers are assisting the government in the water distribution points. MRC is closely monitoring the situation and is working in close coordination with the government to determine the collaborative support and direction in the response efforts and with IFRC to determine the possible need for additional resources.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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How we work

All IFRC 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 the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives.
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace.**