



## ***LAO PDR: MEKONG RIVER FLOODING***

**Appeal no:27/2000**  
**21 September 2000**

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 871,317  
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES  
TO ASSIST 42,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 5 MONTHS***

### ***Summary***

Lao PDR is experiencing devastating floods, the effects of which cannot yet be fully measured. Further flooding may occur since the height of the monsoon season is in mid October. Preliminary government figures indicate that over 64,000 families have been affected as houses have been washed away or damaged, possessions lost and crops destroyed. Assessments are continuing and it is expected that numbers of those affected will increase significantly. The Lao Red Cross (LRC) with the support of the Federation, aims to assist 42,000 persons in the worst-hit provinces of Khammuane, Campasack, Bolikhamxay and Saravan. An initial response to cover immediate needs will involve distribution of food and non-food items to 7,000 families. The LRC intends build on the experience of the relief operation in order to strengthen response and preparedness capacities both at headquarters and branch level.

### ***The Disaster***

Lao PDR is currently experiencing the worst flooding since 1965. Early, heavy monsoon rains have caused the Mekong river to rise some six weeks earlier than usual in the monsoon season. River levels, particularly in the Mekong lower valley and in the rivers feeding the Mekong river in the central and southern provinces, have reached unprecedentedly high levels. On 15 September, the water level reached 14.32m in Thakhek (danger level 13,50m), in Savannaketh 12.17 m (danger level 12.50m) and in Pakse 13.33m (danger level 12.00m).

Although the floodwaters are receding at present, the entire Mekong catchment region is saturated. The peak of the flooding season usually occurs in mid October, therefore the potential for further flooding remains high, particularly if there should be another typhoon such as Wukong which hit the region in early September.

The Ministry of Agriculture is carrying out an assessment of flood victims and damaged rice fields, and as of 14 September, estimated that 18,423 families were affected and 48,724 hectares of crops are lost. These figures are expected to increase as statistics from all districts become available. The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) reported eight deaths caused either by drowning or by falling debris as houses collapsed.

The provinces which are so far reported to be the most affected are Khammuane, Champasack and Bolikhamxay which report damage of 45%, 19% and 7.5% respectively to the rice crop.

The major hydropower plants report that dams are full and in some cases it has been necessary to open the spillways contributing to the increased flow of water in the Mekong river system.

## *The Response so far*

### **Government Action w**

The government has been carrying out surveys throughout the affected areas and compiling data through the National Disaster Management Committee, of which the Lao Red Cross is a member. An official government assessment of the disaster is expected to be announced soon.

### **Red Cross/Red Crescent Action w**

Assisted by the Federation and staff from neighbouring National Societies, the Lao Red Cross has carried out an initial assessment by helicopter of relief needs in the four most affected provinces: two central provinces and two southern provinces which are difficult to access. Verification of reported numbers of victims took place in a number of villages where it was possible to land; surveys using local boats have also been carried out.

In addition, on 22 September, the LRC is launching limited relief action in the municipality of Vientiane, targeting the most vulnerable families in two badly affected villages. A distribution of locally purchased family kits and rice will be made.

### **Other Agencies' Action w**

No action by other agencies is planned at present.

### **Co-ordination w**

Disaster response in Lao PDR is co-ordinated by the government's National Disaster Management Committee. This comprises the Ministries of the Interior, Agriculture and Health, as well as the police, the Ministry of Defence and the Lao Red Cross. Regular meetings take place attended by representatives of the Lao Red Cross.

The informal NGO Lao Disaster Management Forum, a group periodically called together to share information on disaster needs, has been reconvened. Lao Red Cross and the Federation will attend and contribute to these meetings. In addition, the LRC and the Federation have shared information on assessments with UN agencies, major NGOs and donor Embassies in Vientiane. The Federation will participate in the UN disaster management meetings which include various Ministries from the Lao PDR government.

At the provincial level the Red Cross branch works closely with the local authorities. The provincial government’s Vice President is the Chairman of the local Red Cross branch committee.

## ***The Intended Operation***

### **Assessment of Needs •**

A small Federation assessment team arrived in Lao PDR on 15 September, following an initial one day visit from an experienced Disaster Preparedness Delegate from the Bangkok Regional Delegation. The team, consisting of a Delegate from the Australian Red Cross and staff members from the Lao, Singapore, Thai and Danish Red Cross Societies travelled extensively by helicopter and boat in the five affected provinces of Bolikhamsai, Khammuan, Savannakhet, Salavan and Champasak, carrying out a rapid two day assessment. They were accompanied by the LRC President, Vice President and the Head of the Disaster Preparedness Department. The assessment team covered over 800 km. of the Mekong river and, with the support of three LRC branches in the area, conducted spot checks in eight villages to assess local needs. This rapid assessment allowed the team to verify figures provided, as well as to ascertain which districts within each province were most affected.

Four field assessment teams are currently being created and receiving training. Each team consists of a locally hired field officer and a volunteer from the local Red Cross branch. The teams will visit each affected village and gather data from the village chief as to which families meet the LRC selection criteria for relief. This data will then be verified through beneficiary monitoring exercises.

Beneficiary selection criteria are as follows:

1. Families which have lost their houses or a substantial part of the house to the floods.
2. Families who have lost a significant amount of household goods including food stocks.
3. Families which have lost their rice crop and thus risk problems of food security in the near future.
4. Families with other serious income disruption as a result of the floods.

In many of the affected villages it is likely that this will amount to 10 to 30% of the village population. Given the information currently available and the capacity of the Laos Red Cross branches, the appeal will seek to assist an estimated 42,000 people (see table below).

<i>Province</i>	<b>Total Population</b>		<b>Affected Population</b>			<b>LRC targeted Population</b>
	<i>Families</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>Villages affected</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>Persons</i>
Khammuane	27,381	164,286	Assessment under way	Assessment under way	Assessment under way	10,500
Savannakhet	21,590	129,540	N/A	9,203	49,743	15,000
Champasak	70,349	422,097	Assessment under way	Assessment under way	Assessment under way	10,500
Saravan	28,209	169,255	114	2,447	14,465	6,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>147,529</b>	<b>885,178</b>				<b>42,000</b>
<i>Source: National Disaster Management Committee</i>						

### **Immediate Needs •**

The immediate needs are for food, blankets and mosquito nets for the most affected population to be distributed over the coming three months. Each beneficiary family will receive 25 kg. of rice, two mosquito nets, two blankets, 18 cans of sardines, 18 packets of noodles and 10 packets of oral rehydration salts.

#### **Anticipated Later Needs •**

After the initial distribution and monitoring, a further long-term needs assessment will take place in co-ordination with WFP and international NGOs. Based on this assessment, a second phase will be implemented in view of needs as regards rehabilitation, capacity-building in disaster preparedness and medium term food security problems. At present, it is planned to carry out a distribution of a 50 kg. bag of rice per targeted family. In addition, follow-up disaster relief and preparedness training will be given in-country to the staff and volunteers of the branches which are participating in the relief programme.

#### **Red Cross Objectives •**

- { Over the next three months, to meet the immediate emergency needs of 7,000 of the most vulnerable families affected by the present floods.
- { To assist with immediate food security needs following the floods to supplement fishing and cash crop production until the harvest of the next rice crop takes place next year.
- { To enhance the disaster response capacity of the LRC branches in the most flood prone areas so that they are better able to manage future disaster response operations.

## ***National Society/Federation Plan of Action***

#### **Emergency Phase: October - December 2000 •**

Four field assessment teams are being formed. It is planned that two teams will work out of each provincial branch headquarters in Pakxe (Champasak province) and Thakhek (Khammuane province). Each team is made up of locally hired field officers and a branch volunteer. The teams will be given an initial three day training by the Federation relief delegates and the LRC head of disaster preparedness.

The four teams will then compile individual family distribution lists, village by village, using the selection criteria outlined above, with a final selection of a maximum of 7,000 families.

Family kits will be purchased, packed locally and supplied to two LRC warehouses for subsequent distribution by the assessment teams. Distribution will take place directly to the targeted families, by boat, oxen cart and tractor. Distribution reports will be collected at the provincial level and forwarded to LRC in Vientiane.

#### **Phase Two: December 2000 - February 2001 •**

At the end of December, it is planned to carry out a second distribution to the targeted families of 50 kg of rice to assist in ensuring a degree of food security, in addition to which families will have recourse to more traditional coping mechanisms.

In addition, as the relief operation comes to a close, the field assessment teams and branch staff will hold programme evaluation meetings, the results of which will feed into a basic disaster response training course, to be conducted by Federation delegates with the LRC headquarters staff. The aim of the course is to consolidate skills acquired during the relief operation and to ensure that the systems are in place to respond effectively to a major disaster.

**Capacity of the National Society •**

Lao Red Cross was established as an independent organisation in 1992. Since then, the organisation has established LRC branches in 17 of the 18 provinces. The majority of these branches have received disaster preparedness and response training, both in country and at the Asia Disaster Preparedness Centre in Bangkok. In addition, the Japanese Red Cross Society has provided assistance to build three regional disaster preparedness warehouses, two of which will be used in the planned operation. The development of the National Society has been strongly supported by the Federation and the National Societies of Switzerland, Australia, Japan, the Netherlands and Denmark. The Lao Red Cross has made progress as regards its internal capacity over the past two years, particularly at the provincial branch level. This is the first major relief operation to be set up since a new structure was put in place.

**Present Capacity of the Federation in Lao •**

At present, the Federation has a small office at the LRC headquarters staffed by a local programme manager. Following a major partnership meeting in Bangkok in May 2000, it was agreed to provide a development consultant to the LRC for three months to assist the bilateral National Society staff teams and develop a fully inclusive country assistance strategy, taking into consideration the recently drafted Lao Red Cross five year national plan. The LRC receives direct assistance from the Federation's Regional Delegation in Bangkok. Two Relief delegates will be recruited for the proposed relief programme.

**Evaluation •**

An internal evaluation of the first phase of the operation will take place in December 2000 in order to plan the training in disaster response.

## ***Budget summary***

See Annex 1 for details.

## ***Conclusion***

The Lao Red Cross, supported by the Federation aims to conduct a well managed relief operation in a transparent and timely fashion which will provide essential relief to disaster victims, build the credibility and confidence of the Lao Red Cross and pave the way for enhanced relief and development capacity.

Jean Ayoub  
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**This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>**

<b><u>BUDGET SUMMARY</u></b>		APPEAL No. 27/2000
<b>Laos - floods</b>		
TYPE	VALUE	
<b><u>RELIEF NEEDS</u></b>		
	IN CHF	
Rice: 350 mts	148,601	
Family kits: 7,000	378,500	
<b>TOTAL RELIEF NEEDS</b>		527,101
<b><u>CAPITAL EQUIPMENT</u></b>		
Vehicles	5,100	
Boats: 4	24,000	
Computers	7,500	
Telecom. equipment	1,500	
<b><u>PROGRAMME SUPPORT</u></b>		
Programme management	58,753	
Technical support	17,588	
Professional services	19,504	
<b><u>TRANSPORT STORAGE &amp; VEHICLE COSTS</u></b>	18,481	
<b><u>PERSONNEL</u></b>		
Expatriate staff	40,050	
National staff	51,915	
Personnel (support costs)	50,000	
<b><u>ADMINISTRATIVE &amp; GENERAL SERVICES</u></b>		
Travel & related expenses	4,800	
Information expenses	2,000	
Administrative & general expenses	43,025	
<b>TOTAL OPERATIONAL NEEDS</b>		344,216
<b>TOTAL APPEAL CASH, KIND, SERVICES</b>		871,317
<b>LESS AVAILABLE RESOURCES (-)</b>		
<b>NET REQUEST</b>		871,317