

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

20 November  
2000

*appeal no. 27/2000*

*situation report no. 2*

*period covered: 6 October - 15 November 2000*

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*The Lao Red Cross (LRC), supported by the Federation, began a first round of distributions of family kits to 7,000 beneficiary families in early November which will be completed in the six worst affected provinces by 25 November. Given the generous response to the appeal and the needs of those affected, the provision of an increased ration of 100 kg. of rice is under consideration. As a result of the isolation of many of the affected areas and the lack of access of much of the population to health services, concerns remain that there may be outbreaks of diarrhoeal diseases and malaria.*

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### ***The context***

In mid August, typhoon Keimi swept through southern Laos causing flooding in three districts of Saravan province. In early September typhoon Wukong hit Laos and neighbouring countries. Torrential rainfall swelled the Mekong and its tributaries causing widespread flooding. Waters have now receded revealing the extent of the damage. The human cost has fortunately been relatively small with 15 deaths reported. Damage to housing and loss of personal possessions and food stocks is also minimal thanks the slow rise of water levels allowing a timely evacuation. However, serious damage has been caused to 62,743 ha of planted paddy fields, of a total area of 79,345 ha. WFP states that cropland which has been reported as “damaged” is mostly not recoverable. This has created a serious food security situation for those farmers who have no access to irrigation and who produce only one rice crop a year.

Following a rapid assessment by the Federation, an appeal for CHF 871,317 to assist 42,000 beneficiaries for 5 months was launched on 21 September. Since the end of September, two

Federation relief delegates have been deployed to assist the Lao Red Cross (LRC) and are currently carrying out a first round of distributions of 7,000 family kits comprising food and non food items. A second round of distributions of a supplementary ration of rice will take place in December.

## *Latest events*

Updated statistics on flood damage and numbers affected have been compiled from various sources including Red Cross branches and government authorities and the following figures were used to establish the numbers of family kits to be allocated to the six worst affected provinces.

### **Southern Provinces**

	<b>Families Affected</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Rice crop damaged (Ha)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No Kits allocated</b>
Champasak	20,993	29	17,200	27.7	1,730
Saravan	2,652	3.6	2,235	3.6	462
Attapeu	2,222	3	1,410	2.2	438

### **Central Provinces**

Savanakhet	15,208	21	17,774	28	1,500
Khammouan	29,389	40	22,030	35	2,500
Bolikhamxy	1,469	2	1,503	2.4	220

Reserve	150
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Due to the lack of clarity regarding the definition of “affected families”, the allocation of the 7,000 family kits was based on the surface area of damaged rice crops in combination with the relative strengths of the Lao Red Cross branches in the affected areas.

The Ministry of Health has not reported any significant rise in diarrhoeal diseases and malaria following the flooding, but WHO confirms that due to the limited access of much of the population to medical facilities, this may not provide an accurate picture of the situation.

## *Red Cross/Red Crescent action*

A rapid appraisal of available supplies in country, the transport and logistics capacities in the affected areas as well as local LRC branch capacities was carried out. Two Federation delegates have been working closely with the LRC both at headquarters and in 6 provincial branches to obtain beneficiary lists according to agreed criteria, establish a local purchasing mechanism following Federation procedures and to obtain details on transport and storage facilities in all the provinces. Distribution plans have subsequently been established and the selection of suppliers, receipt of relief items and their packaging in bags bearing the LRC logo have now been completed. Training has been given on warehouse management, distribution planning and management of the distribution points. Volunteers have also received training on disseminating health information at distribution points, in particular on the need to boil drinking water and use of oral rehydration salts (ORS) and mosquito nets.

LRC warehouses in Thakhek in central Khammouan province and Pakse in the southern province of Champasack have been used to receive and package the relief items for the central and southern regions respectively. Family kits comprising 25 kg of rice, 18 packs of noodles, 18 tins of sardines, 2

mosquito nets, 2 blankets, 10 packets of ORS have been dispatched to all provinces according to the identified beneficiary numbers as follows:

PROVINCE	No of Districts	No of Villages	No. of Beneficiary Families
Bolkhamxay	3	30	220
Khammouane	6	138	2,500
Savanakhet	11	164	1,500
Champasak	8	154	1,730
Saravane	4	59	462
Attapeu	4	55	438
Reserve			150
Total			7,000

Beneficiary selection has been carried out in accordance with the following criteria:

- Families who have lost all possessions and food stocks.
- Families who have lost their crop and have no access to irrigation.
- Poorest families in the community.

Beneficiary lists have been compiled by the provincial and district social welfare departments. Given the lack of an extensive volunteer network and the large number of villages, many of which are very remote, a Red Cross survey was not feasible, particularly as a result of financial and time constraints.

Local authorities have been able to provide the necessary information and spot checks before distributions and a monitoring questionnaire employed during distributions have confirmed that approximately 90 % of beneficiaries questioned had lost all their rice crop and the remaining 10% had lost more than 50% of their crop.

First round distributions of family kits commenced on 6 November and have already been completed in Bolikhamxay and Khammouan provinces. Distributions in the remaining 4 provinces are to be completed by 25 November.

Planning for the second round of rice distributions has already commenced. Due to the generous response from donors, contributions exceed the amount requested in the appeal. After discussions with LRC, the regional delegation in Bangkok and WFP, the balance may be used to increase the ration per beneficiary family from 50kg to 100kg. In addition, repairs and maintenance will be carried out on LRC trucks, pickups and communications equipment used in the flood operation which are essential for the smooth running of future relief operations. Additional warehouse equipment will also be purchased to improve goods handling and an emergency procedures manual will be produced which will consolidate the training received during the operation to be used as a reference handbook by all branches in future operations.

A revised budget for the operation is currently being drawn up and will be issued with the next situation report.

## ***Outstanding needs***

As the appeal is fully funded, there are no outstanding needs.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

At present, no NGOs have specific programmes to assist victims of the flood disaster. The government has received financial contributions from Luxembourg and Singapore as well as 200 MT of rice from Malaysia and Vietnam.

WFP has plans to provide 520 tons of rice in the near future to be distributed in Khammouane and Champasak provinces and has an eight month plan to distribute 8,160 MT of rice in 5 provinces.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

## ***Conclusion***

Rice is the principal crop cultivated on some 85% of the total cropped area and is the staple food of the Lao people. Nearly all the crop is rain fed and is harvested once a year in November. Only approximately 12% of the rice crop is produced from irrigated fields during the dry season.

Major flooding occurred in 1995 and 1996 leading to a national emergency and giving rise to a repeated annual deficit in rice production. The increased force and frequency of flooding in rice growing areas has resulted in affected families resorting to survival measures including selling their livestock or possessions, foraging, fishing, reducing their food intake or migrating to other areas. While Red Cross food distributions will not solve their problems indefinitely, they constitute vital additional support to the communities' coping mechanisms.

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<b>Laos - floods</b>						ANNEX 1
<b>APPEAL No. 27/2000</b>		<b>PLEDGES RECEIVED</b>			11/20/00	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>CASH</b>						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				<b>871,317</b>		<b>TOTAL COVERAGE 144.9%</b>
AUSTRALIAN GOVT		30,000	AUD	29,952	16.09.00	FAMILY KITS AND TRANSPORT COSTS
AUSTRIAN - RC		25,000	EUR	38,933	20.09.00	
BRITISH - GOVT		188,078	GBP	470,195	10.10.00	RELIEF GOODS
DANISH - GOVT		950,000	DKK	198,360	28.09.00	
ICELANDIC - RC		200,000	ISK	4,295	22.09.00	
IRANIAN RC		30,000	usd	53,205	29.10.00	
JAPANESE - RC				44,000	25.09.00	
LIECHTENSTEIN - RC				13,200	07.11.00	
MONACO - RC		20,000	FRF	4,658	21.09.00	
NETHERLANDS - GOVT		100,000	NLG	69,319	06.10.00	
NORWEGIAN GOVT/RC		1,000,000	NOK	190,343	14.11.00	
SWEDISH - RC		500,000	SEK	91,000	03.10.00	
SWISS - RC				55,500	27.09.00	FAMILY KITS
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH</b>				1,262,960	CHF	144.9%
<b>KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES</b>				0	CHF	0.0%
<b>ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED</b>				0	CHF	
<b>THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:</b>						