

## ***LAOS PDR: MEKONG RIVER FLOODING***

*3 April 2001*

*appeal no. 27/2000*

*situation report no. 3; Revised Budget*

*period covered: 16 November 2000 - 12 February 2001*

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*The Lao Red Cross (LRC) / Federation operation in support of 42,000 disaster victims has been well supported. As a result, in addition to the distribution of family kits to 7,000 vulnerable families in November 2000, each beneficiary family received 100 kg. of rice (double the ration initially planned) in January 2001. Repairs and maintenance were carried out on National Society vehicles and it is planned to purchase disaster preparedness stocks for three regional warehouses and to continue to build the disaster preparedness capacity of the Lao Red Cross. An evaluation of the operation will take place in May 2001.*

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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 was fortunately relatively small with 15 deaths reported. Damage to housing and loss of personal possessions and food stocks was minimal thanks the slow rise of water levels allowing 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 what 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 Lao Red Cross (LRC) / 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. A first round distribution of 7,000 family kits comprising food and non food items was completed by the end of

November and a second round distribution of a supplementary ration of rice was completed by the end of December.

## ***Latest events***

Updated statistics on the flood damage and the number of people affected were compiled from various sources including Red Cross branches and government authorities. The following figures from the six worst affected provinces were used to determine how the balance of emergency relief assistance - family kits and rice - would be allocated to the six provinces.

<b>Province</b>	<b>Families Affected</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Rice crop damaged (Ha)</b>	<b>%</b>
Champasak	20'993	29	17'200	27.7
Saravan	2'652	3.6	2'235	3.6
Attapeu	2'222	3	1'410	2.2
Savanakhet	15'208	21	17'774	28
Khammouan	29'389	40	22'030	35
Bolikhamsy	1'469	2	1'503	2.4

### **Health •**

The Ministry of Health (MoH) has not reported any significant rise in cases of diarrhoeal diseases and malaria as a result of the flooding. However, annual statistics from the MoH of reported cases of severe diarrhoea and deaths from diarrhoea in year 2000 are alarmingly high, showing severe outbreaks in eight districts.

LRC, with support from the Federation regional delegation for South East Asia, has prepared a cholera preparedness plan in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, WHO and UNICEF. The objective is to ensure that LRC's contribution in addressing severe diarrhoea or cholera outbreaks are effective and efficient.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

As reported in previous situation reports, a rapid appraisal of available supplies in-country, transport and logistics capacity in the affected areas, as well as LRC branch capacity, was made in early October. Two Federation delegates worked closely with the LRC both at headquarters and in six provincial branches to obtain beneficiary lists according to agreed criteria, set up local purchasing mechanisms following Federation procedures and to establish transport and storage requirements in all the provinces. Training was provided in warehouse management, distribution planning and management of the distribution points. Volunteers also received training in the dissemination of health information at distribution points, in particular on the need to boil drinking water and the use of oral rehydration salts (ORS) and mosquito nets.

Due to the lack of clarity as to the definition of "affected families" in government statistics, the allocations of relief were based on the area of damaged rice crops in combination with the relative strengths of the LRC branches in the affected areas.

Beneficiary selection was made according to the following criteria:

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

Beneficiary lists were compiled by the provincial and district social welfare departments. Due to the lack of an extensive volunteer network and the large number of villages, many of them very remote, a full Red Cross survey was not feasible.

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

The LRC regional warehouses in Thakhek, in central Khammouan province, and Pakse in the southern province of Champasack were used to receive and package the relief items for the central and southern regions respectively.

Round one distributions in November consisted of family kits comprising 25 kg rice, 18 packs of noodles, 18 tins of sardines, 2 mosquito nets, 2 blankets, 10 packets of oralite (ORS). Round two distributions in December consisted of 100 kgs of supplementary rice. This was distributed according to the identified beneficiary families as follows:

<b>PROVINCE</b>	<b>No. Districts</b>	<b>No. Villages</b>	<b>No. Beneficiaries (families)</b>	<b>No. of Kits Allocated (Round 1 distribution)</b>	<b>Rice (MT) Distributed (Round 2 distribution)</b>
Bolkhamxay	3	30	220	220	22
Khammouane	6	138	2'500	2'500	257
Savanakhet	11	164	1'500	1'500	150
Champasak	8	154	1'730	1'730	181
Saravane	4	59	462	462	46.2
Attapeu	4	55	438	438	43.8
Reserves				150	15
<b>Total</b>			<b>7'000</b>	<b>7'000</b>	<b>700</b>

As a result of savings made by purchasing rice direct from rice mills during round 2 of the distributions, approximately 188mt of additional rice were purchased. Since WFP has an extensive distribution programme for 8 months in the same provinces (reaching an estimated 103,000 beneficiaries), it was decided that the additional 188mt of rice be distributed to other vulnerable groups in the country. The food security situation in Lao PDR can be termed a 'chronic disaster' - the increased population pressure and resource exploitation (slash and burn) of shifting cultivation zones in the north has decreased fallow periods and caused dislocation and a shrinking land base for staple food production. Almost all upland areas suffer severe annual rice deficits. It was therefore decided - in consultation with WFP and other organisation working in food programmes - that the 188mt of rice be provided, through the LRC, to the 7 poorest provinces of Lao PDR which are mostly in the north of the country. This distribution took place during January 2001.

Given that the flood water levels receded far sooner than expected, the purchase of boats, which was envisaged in the original appeal, was not thought to be appropriate. Moreover, the cost of transportation of rice was considerably more than budgeted as the more cost effective transport by boats was not possible and it was necessary to use trucks.

However, since the operation has been well supported, the budget has been revised to cover additional activities. These activities, which were identified by LRC in consultation with the Federation and with WFP, aim to provide further support to the most vulnerable and to strengthen the disaster preparedness capacity of LRC. Therefore, an additional 50 kg of rice per beneficiary (bringing the total to 100 kg per family) was included in the second round of rice distribution, repairs and maintenance will be carried out on LRC trucks, pickups and communications equipment and a three ton truck will be purchased for use by the central provinces' warehouse. Disaster preparedness stocks will also be purchased for the three regional warehouses composed of cooking sets, plastic sheeting, mats, cutlasses, blankets, first aid kits and water purification tablets.

## ***Outstanding needs***

There are no outstanding needs for this relief operation.

The revised budget of CHF 986,727 (attached), which now includes activities to upgrade the LRC disaster preparedness stocks and hardware, is 23% overfunded. Given the further need to strengthen the capacity of the LRC (as identified in the annual appeal 2001), it has been agreed with the relevant donors that the balance of CHF 295,377 be utilised for capacity building programmes, with special emphasis given to disaster preparedness. It is also proposed that funds be set aside to facilitate the evaluation of the Red Cross operation throughout the Mekong Basin which is scheduled for May 2001.

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

External relations have largely focused on working closely with other agencies and especially with WFP on issues of food security.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

## ***Conclusion***

The objectives and targets expressed in the appeal have all been satisfactorily achieved within the time-frame stated. The combined assistance provided by the LRC/Federation and WFP has provided support to the victims of the September floods until the next wet season rice harvest. The operation has been well supported by Red Cross partners and donors.

The disaster has again highlighted that the density and concentration of the population, and the nation's reliance on wet season rice produced on the Mekong river plain, is a major vulnerability factor. Devastation caused by flooding will certainly continue to be felt with increased rice deficits and higher malnutrition rates (47% of the population suffer from chronic malnutrition). The priority is to increase irrigated areas for rice cultivation and effect a transfer away from sticky rice to the consumption of dry season rice. This is proceeding slowly and until major changes are implemented, continued relief operations will be required to fill the food gap.

A major benefit of this programme has been the further strengthening of the LRC disaster preparedness and relief department. Mechanisms have been set up within the LRC for purchasing, storage and distribution and some hardware has been upgraded. The LRC has also gained experience at headquarters and branch level in planning and decision making in an emergency response situation; this is an experience which will almost certainly be required in the near future as the force and frequency of floods and other natural disasters appears to be increasing.

An evaluation will take place in May 2001 and work to strengthen the LRC will continue. The balance of funds from the operation will contribute to further capacity building of LRC in order to better prepare the National Society for the onset of seasonal flooding expected in 2001.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
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<b>Laos - floods</b>						ANNEX 1
<b>APPEAL No. 27/2000</b>		<b>PLEDGES RECEIVED</b>				03.04.2001
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>CASH</b>						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				<b>986'727</b>		<b>TOTAL COVERAGE 129.9%</b>
AMERICAN - RC		20'000	USD	35'470	02.11.00	
AMERICAN - PRIVATE		66	USD	118	21.11.00	
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	
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	
SINGAPORE - PRIVATE		16	USD	29	21.11.00	
SWEDISH - RC		500'000	SEK	91'000	03.10.00	
SWISS - RC				55'500	27.09.00	FAMILY KITS
SWISS - PRIVATE				3'878	10.10.00	
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH</b>				1'249'250	CHF	126.6%
<b>KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
China	Delegate(s)			10'020		
Great Britain	Delegate(s)			22'834		
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES</b>				32'854	CHF	3.3%
<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>						

<b>BUDGET SUMMARY</b>	<b>APPEAL No. 27/2000</b>		
<b>Laos - floods (revised budget)</b>			
TYPE	ORIGINAL	REVISION	VARIANCE
<b>RELIEF NEEDS</b>	IN CHF		
Clothing & textiles: blankets, mosquito nets		103'603	103'603
Cereals & food parcels		324'094	324'094
Rice: 350 mts	148'601		-148'601
Medical & first aid		16'139	16'139
Utensils, tools, family kits	378'500	204'686	-173'814
DP stocks			
<b>TOTAL RELIEF NEEDS</b>	<b>527'101</b>	<b>648'522</b>	<b>121'421</b>
<b>CAPITAL EQUIPMENT</b>			
Vehicles	5'100	45'439	40'339
Boats: 4	24'000		-24'000
Computers	7'500	12'740	5'240
Telecom. equipment	1'500		-1'500
Office equipment		4'420	4'420
<b>PROGRAMME SUPPORT</b>			
Programme management	58'753	66'535	7'782
Technical support	17'588	19'917	2'329
Professional services	19'504	22'088	2'584
<b>TRANSPORT STORAGE &amp; VEHICLE COSTS</b>	<b>18'481</b>	<b>42'650</b>	<b>24'169</b>
<b>PERSONNEL</b>			
Expatriate staff	40'050	60'693	20'643
National staff	51'915	16'114	-35'801
Personnel (support costs)	50'000		-50'000
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE &amp; GENERAL SERVICES</b>			
Travel & related expenses	4'800	7'969	3'169
Information expenses	2'000	8'677	6'677
Administrative & general expenses	43'025	30'963	-12'062
<b>TOTAL OPERATIONAL NEEDS</b>	<b>344'216</b>	<b>338'205</b>	<b>-6'011</b>
<b>TOTAL APPEAL CASH, KIND, SERVICES</b>	<b>871'317</b>	<b>986'727</b>	<b>115'410</b>
<b>LESS AVAILABLE RESOURCES (-)</b>		<b>1'282'104</b>	
<b>NET REQUEST</b>		<b>NIL</b>	

