

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## CHINA: FLOODS AND LANDSLIDES

23 July 2004

*The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organisation and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.*

### In Brief

**This Information Bulletin (no. 04/2004) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.**

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### The Situation

The full extent to which this year's flood season affects China will be determined over the coming three to four weeks. As of 23 July, the Yangtze, Yellow and Huai Rivers are relatively under control compared to this time last year when the flood season extended six weeks longer than normal into September.

Since June, the Federation and the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) have been monitoring and when necessary responding to the humanitarian needs created by the increasing incidences of severe weather throughout China. Destructive hail, severe rain and the consequential floods, landslides and mudslides have hundreds of thousands homeless in 15 provinces and 381 dead. To date Hunan, Guangxi, Henan, Hubei, Chongqing, Yunnan and Shandong provinces have suffered the greatest amount of personal and economic weather related damages and losses.

Although this year's flooding has affected urban areas including Shanghai, Beijing and Ti'an in Shaanxi, it is the rural areas and subsistence farmers who suffer the greatest personal setbacks due to the floods. According to a recently published report by China's State Council Leading Group office of Poverty and Development, serious natural disasters in 2003 resulted in an increase in the number of poor, who are those people with an annual income of RMB 637 (USD 77), to over two million people in Henan, Anhui and Shanxi provinces. Only recently recovering from flooding in 2003, the poor in Henan and Anhui once again find themselves confronted by severe flooding and resettlements. Natural disasters, such as the current floods present a formidable constraint in regard to the government's concerted efforts to implement poverty reduction initiatives particularly in the rural areas

requiring the greatest support. To date, the government is reporting a total economic loss of RMB 14.85 billion so far this year with flooding expected to continue until at least the middle of August.

In addition to the numbers there is the emotional impact of the floods on the victims. With communication lines shut off in some of the worst affected areas, family members in the rural areas who have lost their homes and are staying in temporary shelters are having difficulty contacting their relatives who work as migrant workers to inform them of their plight.

While there is no way of saving the millions of hectares of crops that are now submerged or damaged by the floods and hail, China's Ministry of Civil Affairs is coordinating the evacuation of and finding of temporary shelter for those left homeless.

### **Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

Realising that it was not enough to simply react to floods following the floods in 2001, and that action to reduce the vulnerability of communities to recurring natural disasters was needed, the RCSC and the Federation began to introduce activities that would support communities in preparing for disasters. One of the greatest hazards presented to rural communities by the floods is the contamination of water supplies due to inadequate sanitation systems. The RCSC and the Federation, with support from the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) introduced community based sanitation projects in Hunan and Guangxi which are managed and implemented by the RCSC provincial branches with support from the Federation. Work in regard to branch development and the introduction of health and education activities over the past three years to the branches and vulnerable communities have improved their capacity to respond quickly to disasters.

Currently coping with floods in Guangxi and Hunan, the RCSC branches in coordination with and with the support of the national office of the RCSC in Beijing are currently distributing tents, clothing, food and water purification tablets to the most severely affected areas. The branches are working hard to overcome obstacles such as washed out roads to ensure that affected families are receiving the relief items. The Federation's programme coordinator based in Guangxi and the Federation's regional information delegate accompanied the branch on an assessment visit in the middle of June, and consequently the findings of the visit were made available to the public in a web story published on the Federation's website [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org).

Relief activities by the RCSC provincial branches in Yunnan and Chongqing began in June and RCSC branches throughout the affected provinces have played an active role in flood response activities.

On Sunday 25 July, representatives from the headquarters of RCSC, the Federation's regional information delegate and field officer in Hunan, as well as the Hong Kong and Macao Red Cross will be leaving for a week long field visit to Hunan where 231,000 people were evacuated and Henan where some 150,000 people were evacuated.

The RCSC, through its network of provincial and county level branches as well as disaster preparedness centres is currently relying on their local capacity to respond to the needs of the people affected by floods so far this year. Should the situation require it, the national society is able to launch a national appeal to garner additional support for their activities. Should the situation worsen to the extent that the needs exceed the available resources, an international appeal can be launched at the discretion of the Red Cross Society of China in co-operation with the Federation.

Further information will be provided as it becomes available and as the situation evolves.

*For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.*

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