

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

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA: FLOODS

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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. 01/2004) 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

A total of 39,851 families have been left homeless in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) following two days of heavy rains and floods. Flooding which was originally anticipated to affect the country in the middle of August arrived several weeks earlier than expected during the final week of July. From 24-25 July, many parts of North Pyongan, South Pyongan, Jagang, North Hwanghae, South Hwanghae, Kangwon and Ryanggang provinces were subjected to severe downpours. The two days of incessant rains have seriously affected the lives and livelihood of the people living in these areas. Roads and bridges have been partially destroyed leaving many of the flood victims stranded, and arable fields were inundated wiping out much of the forthcoming harvest. The DPRK Red Cross also reports that according to the country's Flood Damage Rehabilitation Committee (FDRC) 26,197 houses were damaged due to the floods.

The FDRC has requested assistance from the DPRK Red Cross to meet the needs of those people who have been most severely affected by these sudden floods. On 5 August, the DPRK Red Cross and the International Federation conducted a joint assessment of Pukchang and Eunsan counties in South Pyongan province. Representatives from the World Food Programme (WFP) and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) also participated in the same assessment.

The field assessment indicated that in Eunsan county, 230 families were reported homeless, 300 houses were partially damaged, and four people have died. In Pukchang county, 400 families are now homeless and 20 people have died due to floods. The Red Cross branch has quickly mobilised and deployed volunteers in the affected areas. Some of the homeless have been moved to public buildings which are being used as temporary shelters, while others are sharing houses with people who have not been affected.

Of particular concern however is the fact that some 19,894 people have reportedly been made homeless in Ryanggang province. Ryanggang is currently inaccessible to delegates as several bridges on the main road were destroyed by the floods.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The DPRK Red Cross at the national level is in close contact with the FDRC as well as the local authorities in the affected areas. The DRPK Red Cross will cover the needs of half of the flood affected population in Eunsan and Pukchang counties in South Pyongan province. The society is distributing blankets, water purification tablets, water containers, kitchen sets and plastic sheeting. One of the most important needs in this kind of disaster is clean water as floods can contaminate local supplies leaving flood affected communities without a source of clean drinking water.

As the DPRK Red Cross finds itself in the position of responding to the second major disaster including April's train explosion, the importance of disaster preparedness (DP) and well maintained strategically placed DP centres is reinforced as a critical component to the society's capacity to respond quickly and effectively to sudden onsets of emergencies. Earlier in July he DPRK Red Cross, aware that the flood season was coming, had already initiated disaster preparedness training for many of the branches in areas most susceptible to flooding.

The local DPRK Red Cross branch is a member of the local emergency committee which covers the affected areas. The Red Cross branch played an active role in evacuating communities, assessing the extent of the flood damage and evaluating the needs of flood affected communities. Members of the community donated household items such as cooking items and clothing and the Red Cross participated in the distribution of these items.

Government action

The government has responded by encouraging local communities to donate urgently needed items for distribution to flood victims. The government plans to rebuild the houses of all the people who lost their homes in these floods, while more extensive government support is expected in the currently inaccessible parts of Ryanggang province.

Other interventions:

The WFP is planning to provide emergency food in addition to the government distributed public distribution centre (PDC) rations.

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

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