

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

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

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 06/2005) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. A DREF allocation of CHF 200,000 has been released. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed.

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The Situation



Photo 1: This farmer is in despair as floods in Xingwang village have destroyed 1000kg of her rice.

It is only one month into China's 2005 flood season, which commenced at the end of May, but figures of the losses related to floods are already well into the millions. To date, some 2.9 million people have been evacuated in 22 provinces as the force of floodwaters and landslides have destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes and millions of hectares of this season's harvest. According to the Chinese government, flood-related economic losses

in six of the southern provinces alone is said to be around USD 2 billion. Based on weather patterns seen over the past few years, the flood season can be expected to last at least until the end of August, affecting China's other typically flood-prone areas. The Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) and the Federation will continue to monitor the situation carefully and keep partners fully abreast of the situation as any further needs arise.

As temperatures continue to rise in areas such as Guangxi autonomous region and Guangdong province, there are rising concerns about the potential spread of infectious diseases resulting from some of the worst floods in a century, which have left thousands injured, 607 people dead and 164 unaccounted for. At the same time, the precarious existence of subsistence farmers throughout China is being pushed closer to the edge, not only because of the massive loss of crops, but also because of the death of thousands of head of livestock.

Severe flooding is an annual occurrence in China, and the government has established swift response and mitigation activities that have reduced the number of flood-related deaths and injuries over the past couple of years, while best efforts are being made to provide relief items and temporary shelter. Nevertheless, meteorologists' forecasts of an exceptionally severe flood season, made earlier this year, seem to be coming to fruition, with the number of deaths already equaling the three-month figure in 2004, leaving Hunan, Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang amongst the most severely affected areas so far.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) relief coordinators liken the society's national-level flood response activities to a coordinated international relief operation as the flood-affected areas in China are scattered over distances that exceed thousands of kilometres. More than 20 of the RCSC provincial branches are currently engaged in relief activities. The size of China's population and provinces means that many of RCSC's provincial-level relief activities are comparable to responding to a disaster in a country in Western Europe, whereby the RCSC's capital city-based provincial branches work closely with large networks of prefecture and county-level branches to ensure that relief items are being distributed quickly to beneficiaries.

All of the RCSC provincial branches in the flood-affected provinces have initiated local fundraising activities for flood victims, and many of these branches have already distributed basic relief items such as quilts, rice, and clothing. At the same time, RCSC headquarters has, to date, supported branch relief activities with cash and in-kind assistance totalling RMB 7.8 million (approximately CHF 1,210,000). The RCSC also received a donation of USD 100,000 from the American embassy in Beijing to support the society's ongoing flood relief activities in Hunan, Guangxi autonomous region, Guizhou, Sichuan, and Chongqing. The Hong Kong Red Cross (HKRC) branch also donated RMB 200,000 (CHF 31,039) to support food distributions in Guangxi and Hunan. The HKRC representatives will be in Hunan during the first week of July to monitor rice distribution and will then travel to Guangxi to visit the flood-affected areas.



Photo 2: The RCSC branch in Guangxi are distributing relief items to flood-affected areas, some of which have experienced the worst floods in a century.

The Federation is releasing Disaster Response Emergency Funds (DREF) valuing CHF 200,000 to support RCSC relief activities in Guangxi autonomous region and Guizhou province. These two areas were identified for Federation assistance as Guizhou and Guangxi have sustained extensive losses as a result of flooding, are among the poorest provinces in China, and are home to substantial populations of ethnic minorities.

Guizhou province

Poverty among the province's 39 million people is widespread, and Guizhou is one of the poorest provinces in China. Some 40 per cent of Guizhou's population belong to ethnic minorities. Minority groups represented include the Miao, Bouyei, Dong, Yi, Shut, Hui, Gelo, Zhuang and Yao people. One of the main contributing factors to Guizhou's challenged economic state is that 99 per cent of the province is covered by hills and mountains, which is not conducive to farming, making it nearly impossible to produce adequate farm produce to feed the local population.

In Guizhou, 140,000 people had to be evacuated because of flooding. Floods affected 83 counties, leaving 80 people dead and 18 missing. Some 2,399 people were injured by the rushing water that destroyed 4,080 homes and damaged an additional 45,000. In addition, 1,922 head of livestock were killed by the floods. Representatives from the RCSC's Guizhou provincial branch visited six of the affected areas, distributing relief items such as rice, tents, quilts, clothing and water purification powder throughout nine counties. The branch has also initiated local fundraising activities and submitted a formal request to RCSC headquarters for further relief supplies.

Guangxi autonomous region

Guangxi was among one of the hardest-hit areas by last week's excessive rainfall, with Xiangzhou county receiving one third of their annual rainfall in less than three days. Excess rain water filled the Xijiang river, resulting in the worst flooding in 100 years, affecting seven prefectures.



Photo 3: A Red Cross assessment team surveys the damage in an affected village in Xiangzhou, Guangxi.

On 26 June, Federation delegates joined senior management and staff members from the RCSC branch in Guangxi autonomous region on an assessment mission to selected flood affected villages. During the assessment visit, it was noted that the leading cause of damage to houses was the use of poor quality construction materials. As many of the farmers are unable to afford proper materials such as cement, many houses are built relying on a mud-based sealant which is unable to stand up against flood waters. Many of the villagers who have been displaced are now living in tents, either provided by the Red Cross or by the government, and are beginning to construct more temporary wooden shelters. Most of the medical complaints have been minor.

To date, the Guangxi branch has distributed 72 MT of rice, 2,000 blankets, 2,000 quilts, 100 tents, 5,000 t-shirts, 5,000 pairs of slippers and 1,400 boxes of water purification tablets from its available relief supplies. The branch also initiated local fundraising activities and has submitted a formal request to RCSC headquarters for further support.

Given the existing needs for further relief items that were reported by branches to RCSC headquarters, the findings of this past week's assessments, and following discussions between representatives from the RCSC's relief division and the Federation, funding from DREF will be used by the RCSC branches in Guangxi and Guizhou to provide relief items to 20,000 beneficiaries, as outlined in the table below.

Province/region	Counties	Items
1. Guangxi autonomous region	Shaoping, Xiangzhou, Teng	5,450 quilts 75 MT rice 6,250 mosquito nets
2. Guizhou province	Weining, Wuchuan, Songtao	5,450 quilts 70 MT rice

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