

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

19 June 2002

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This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports the Federation will consider international support through an Appeal.

The Situation

China's central and southern provinces are mobilising resources in preparation for further heavy flooding as local weather forecasters are predicting more heavy rain throughout the already flooded region. The total number of provinces reporting heavy losses has risen to nine. Red Cross Society of China headquarters is in constant contact with local Red Cross branches in these affected areas.

The Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) has exhausted its own resources providing immediate assistance to the flood affected population. The RCSC has launched a national appeal asking the public and commercial enterprises for assistance, but with the number of affected persons rising, the RCSC is considering the launch of a preliminary international appeal targeting approximately 100,000 beneficiaries.

The overall situation in the country, as reported by the government, indicates that some 95 million people have been affected by the flooding. The number of damaged and destroyed houses is estimated to exceed 1,000,000, while 683,000 people are reported to have completely lost their homes. Some 401 persons are reported dead, and several hundred are still missing and feared dead.

As can be expected in a situation like this, reported figures concerning the extent of damage vary greatly, and figures regarding the number of affected persons are still unconfirmed. It is nevertheless evident that large areas have suffered substantial losses, and that the number of people who have lost all of their possessions can be counted in the ten-thousands.

Preliminary reports from the lower parts of the Yangtze, furthermore, indicate that flood levels are rising above normal. In Hubei, flood levels are reported to be at 1998 levels, when the most devastating flood in half a century killed more than 4,000 people. Preparations in the form of dike reinforcements have prevented the rising water levels from having the same consequences as in 1998, but continuing rain could still result in large scale flooding.

The rainy season has only just commenced, and even if the rainfall continues at a normal level serious floods can be expected. Earlier this year, Chinese authorities warned that the "El Nino" effect was likely to create serious floods in the south while drought is expected in the north.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The RCSC dispatched three rapid assessment teams. One to Shaanxi, with the participation of the Federation disaster preparedness delegate, one to Sichuan and one to Xinjiang Uygur Zizhiqu where a flood relief operation supported by USAID/DCHA/OFDA is being implemented. Assessment missions to the remaining affected provinces are presently under preparation. The Head of the Federation's Regional Office in Beijing is expected to join the RCSC mission to Chongqing. Assessment missions are presently being deployed in Fujian and Hunan

A joint RCSC/Federation/Government assessment mission was made to two provinces in Shaanxi: Zhashui, and Zhen'An. Flash floods swept through the valleys of this mountainous region causing serious damage to a number of villages. A large number of houses, schools, hospitals, roads and bridges were swept away by the floods, which left thousands without houses and the crops which they depend on for their livelihood. The army and government have responded quickly repairing roads, and clearing houses and streets of mud and rocks.

The RCSC released materials from its disaster preparedness stocks in most of the affected areas. RCSC national headquarters released CNY 200,000 (CHF 37,518) from its Emergency Fund for the operation in Shaanxi. The Hong Kong Red Cross Branch released CNY 1 million (CHF 187,590) to be divided equally between the Shaanxi and Sichuan Branches. RCSC national headquarters have also provided 50 tents to the Shaanxi Branch worth CNY 87,500 (CHF 16,414).

The RCSC have furthermore dispatched medical teams to a number of the worst affected areas. The Chongqing Red Cross sent 35 medical teams to heavily affected areas. The Hunan Red Cross sent 98 medical teams to flood damaged areas and distributed relief items valued at over CNY 2 million.

Through the nationwide fundraising campaign in support of the flood affected population, the RCSC has managed to collect and distribute large amounts of relief materials such as blankets, clothes and food. The number of cash donations are increasing and a considerable amount of additional support is expected from a variety of fundraising activities.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

For further details please contact :

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

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

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