

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

CAMBODIA: DROUGHT AND FLOODS 20 August 2002

Information Bulletin N° 1

Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: Not Applicable

This Bulletin is for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

Cambodia, which is now faced with the likelihood of extensive flooding, has been experiencing possibly the worst drought for 20 years. The late arrival of the seasonal rains is expected to seriously impact on agricultural production and thereby on the livelihoods of the rural poor; an estimated 31% of the 1,609 communes have been unable to plant the rice crop. Whilst Cambodia typically plants up to 2.0 million hectares of wet season rice, only 700,000 hectares have been planted in recent weeks (National Committee for Disaster Management, August 2002). Though some of the drought affected provinces are now experiencing heavy rains, the provinces of Kampong Speu, Takeo, Uddor Mean Chey, Prey Veng, Kampong Chhnang and Kampot are, according to the governments National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM), “severely affected by drought with little crop production” (Status Report, NCDM, 18 August 2002).

Meanwhile, following heavy rainfall in Cambodia, as well as an indication of alarming water levels in Laos (according to the Mekong River Commission, flood levels in the Mekong in Luang Prabhang are the highest since 1966), the rivers in Cambodia are beginning to swell. Speculation is that the Tonle Sap lake has only a further capacity for 170,000m³ after which Cambodia could experience extensive floods; the surge of water from Laos could reach Cambodia within 5 days.

The NCDM has taken a lead in co-ordination drawing effectively on its newly established national network of provincial offices. On 20 August 2002, NCDM chaired a second co-ordination meeting, which included line ministries, provincial representatives as well as the UN Disaster Management Team (UNDMT), ECHO, international organisations and non-governmental organisations. Steps taken to alleviate the impact of the drought include the distribution of 3,000 mt of rice, as well as the distribution of water pumps, provision of diesel fuel, improvement of drainage systems and the construction of deep wells. Measures to address the potential flooding include identifying safe areas (as used in 2000/2001) and developing evacuation plans.

Whilst seasonal floods and limited droughts are typical for the region, the scale of the drought and the potential further impact of forecast heavy rains and the swollen river system, could spell further disaster for families and communities still recovering from two consecutive years of flood disaster.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Action

Whilst the Royal Government of Cambodia has not yet requested international assistance, the Cambodia Red Cross (CRC), which works in close co-ordination with NCDM, will, as part of its ongoing work to assist those people most vulnerable to disasters, provide initial humanitarian assistance to 3,499 families. These families,

who have been identified through the CRC branches, have been either affected by the drought, the recent floods or are still recovering from the 2000/2001 floods.

Province	Number of Families
Prey Veng	84
Takeo	101
Kampong Chhnang	58
Banteay Mean Chey	77
Svay Rieng	918
Kampong Speu	415
Kratie	200
Pursat	656
Kampot	990
TOTAL:	3'499

The CRC will utilise its stock of relief goods which includes 74mt of food rice (a further 40mt will be donated in the coming days by the Embassy of China), 500 food cartons, 600 household kits (containing 6 items), canned fish and a limited quantity of essential drugs (for treatment of diarrhoea and fever).

With the support of the International Federation country and regional delegations, the CRC will continue to monitor the situation. Moreover, the CRC will co-ordinate with NCDM as well as NGOs, to help ensure that the CRC volunteer network as well as the safe areas and other disaster preparedness measures are fully utilised in the event of any major relief operation.

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

For further details please contact:

- *Men Neary Sopheak (CRC Director of Communications) in Phnom Penh; Phone 855 23 212876; Mobile: 855 12 810854 Fax 855 23 212875; email crc@camnet.com.kh*
- *Antony Spalton (Head of Delegation), Phone +855 12 901400 (mobile) ; Fax 855 23 210 163; email ifrcckh01@ifrc.org*

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.

John Horekens
Director
Division of External Relations

Simon Missiri
Head
Asia & Pacific Department