

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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This Bulletin is being issued based on the information and needs described below. The Federation is already supporting the China Red Cross Society (CRCS) in the affected area through Emergency Appeal no. 16/02, and donors are encouraged to contribute to support the objectives of this appeal. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, and depending on the evolving situation, the Federation will consider issuing a revised budget through an Operations Update to be issued shortly.

The Situation

Following the declaration of a state of emergency in the Hunan province two days ago, hundreds of thousands of people assisted by troops have been mobilised to monitor dikes and carry out flood emergency protection work. So far, no dike failure has been reported. Though the situation has slightly improved with the Xiang River waters slowly receding, the level of the Dongting Lake is continuing to rise and has today (August 23, at 17:00 local time) reached a level of 34.8 meters or 2.7 meters above the warning level which stands at 32 meters. When a similar situation occurred in 1998 and 1999, this level was considered to be critical and that the dikes threatened to overflow. However, according to the latest information from the Red Cross of China branch in Changsha (capital of the Hunan Province and the Flood Control Point in Yueyang town) the critical level now stands at 36 meters thanks to the strengthening of main dikes. The weather appears to have stabilised; there have been no reports of rainfalls in the area around the lake in the last 30 hours. The rise of water levels is also slowing down and stands at one centimetre per hour compared to two centimetres per hour in previous days.

According to a preliminary assessment carried out by local authorities and reported by the local Red Cross branch, 754,000 people in nine counties have been affected by localised flooding that has occurred in areas close to dikes. Two villages have been completely submerged by water and one of the main roads linking the Yuenyang city has been severely damaged. Three thousand buildings have collapsed and 836 families have been left homeless. According to unconfirmed media reports, over 500,000 people have been evacuated, the majority of whom have sought refuge with relatives while only few families have been accommodated within school premises. Food and clothing have been distributed to all those evacuated.

After preliminary assessment, economic damages are so far estimated at 1.4 billion RMB (approx. US dollar 169 million). The heavily populated Dongting lake basin is one of China's leading rice-producing regions.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Action

The Hunan branch of the Red Cross Society of China has been assisting those affected by repeated flash floods since end of June. More recently, the branch has distributed 260 tents provided through the Federation Appeal (China flash floods: Appeal 16/2002) while the distribution of water purification powder to beneficiaries is ongoing. Red Cross assistance in Hunan has focused on beneficiaries who have lost their home and their crops and have been left without food and clothing.

The branch has also distributed 61 MT of wheat with funds collected locally, 300 MT of rice donated by the Shanghai and Guandong provincial branches as well as 70 tents from the Hong Kong RC (80 additional tents from the same donation are being kept in stock). Since the beginning of the flood season, 1500 quilts forwarded to the branch by the national HQ have also been distributed. The branch is currently distributing 6,000 boxes of biscuits from a local donation. Three thousand are going to beneficiaries and the remaining 3,000 to volunteers working on dikes.

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

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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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