

# 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

## LAO PDR: FLOODS

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*This information 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*

The Lao PDR, similar to the other countries in the lower Mekong River Basin, is now either experiencing floods or bracing for them as the monsoon sets in and the rains increase. This is due to a combination of factors including very heavy rains in southern China and northern Laos, tropical storms over the South China sea and the effects of 'El Nino'. So far the Government has not declared an emergency and local government authorities, supported by Lao Red Cross (LRC) branches and other organizations, are coping well with the effects of local flooding.

The first peak of the floods was reached on 19/20 August, when the water levels of the Mekong reached 12.6 metres in Vientiane - the highest point since the devastating floods of 1966 when the whole of urban Vientiane was flooded and the city was under water. Flood levels in Luang Prabang are also the highest since 1966 and there are initial reports of flash floods in Pongsali and Luang Nam Tha provinces in the north of the country.

The waters have now started to recede and Vientiane residents are breathing a sigh of relief that the newly constructed embankment which protects the city centre was not breached. But even if the Lao capital has been spared, there are increasing signs of flooding in the southern provinces of Bolikamsay, Khammouane, Savannakhet and Champasak, traditionally the most flood prone parts of the country.

The Lao Government, in close cooperation with the UN system, international aid agencies and the LRC/Federation, are in the process of carrying out a comprehensive needs and damage assessment to establish immediate relief and medium to longer term requirements. It is anticipated that this assessment will be completed within the next two to three weeks when it will be possible to give a clearer overall picture of the situation and likelihood of external assistance required. In the meantime the Lao Government, with the support of its partners, has the situation under control.

The Ministry of Agriculture is playing the lead role of coordinating flood operations, on behalf of the National Disaster Management Committee (NDMC), with the support of other key government ministries such as health, labour and social welfare, transport and the meteorological office; in close consultation with its international partners. The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) acts as the secretariat, and is the information clearing house and focal point. The LRC is an active member of the NDMC and is seen as an important partner for emergency response. A key coordination meeting took place on 23 August to share information with government, international aid organisations, key donors about the flood situation and discuss the practical aspects of carrying out the comprehensive needs and damage assessment described above.

The Meteorological Office and the Ministry of Agriculture have emphasised the need for preparedness planning in the event that the second flood peak, anticipated in mid September, exceeds the first resulting in flooding on a par with 1966.

## ***Red Cross and Red Crescent action***

Over the past two months, the LRC and the Federation have been closely monitoring the flood situation on the basis of regular situation reports from LRC branches and information sharing with key government departments, UN and NGO partners. A comprehensive needs and damage assessment is underway.

The LRC, with the support of the Federation, has just completed a distribution of family kits and drinking water to some 100 worst affected families in Hadsayfong district of Vientiane Municipality. In the next few days, the LRC will continue distributions to a further 500 families in Hadsayfong and Sikhottabong districts. The Red Cross relief teams will be accompanied by staff from LRC Health Division who will assess immediate health and water-sanitation priorities and then coordinate with Ministry of Health, WHO, UNICEF on any action required.

To date the LRC has received very limited information from any of its branches concerning the need for assistance in other parts of the country. Supplies in the LRC's warehouses exist were, however, restocked last year through the Federation supported DP programme, and these will be available to provide assistance if needed. The stocks consist of rice, some canned and dry goods for family kits, mosquito nets, sleeping mats, cooking utensils, blankets and used clothing. The LRC also has three regional DP warehouses located in Udomsai (for the northern provinces), Khammouane (for the central provinces), and Champasak (for the southern provinces), as well as the central warehouse at the headquarters in Vientiane. Immediate priorities are to carry out comprehensive assessments in cooperation with the Government, UN, other international aid organisations; prepare a contingency plan of action and budget; restock the warehouses with items to make additional family kits in case they are needed; and mobilise LRC branch volunteers.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see [www.ifrc.org](http://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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