

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

VIETNAM: 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

Parts of the Mekong Delta are affected by serious flooding for the third year in a row. Floodwater levels in large areas of Dong Thap, An Giang and Long An provinces have been above Alarm Level III (Emergency Flood Conditions) for weeks. After temporarily stabilizing, upstream floodwater levels are on the rise again, and levels in downstream inland areas of these provinces (as well as neighbouring Kien Giang province) continue to rise each day.

Thousands of families are facing serious difficulties due to the floods. So far, 48 people have died, of whom 45 were children. Dong Thap Province has suffered the largest number of casualties with 24 deaths - 22 of whom were children under ten years old.

Floods have submerged more than 43,000 houses in An Giang, Long An, and Dong Thap Provinces. One-quarter of these households have been evacuated to safer areas. In Dong Thap and An Giang Provinces, flooding has forced almost 20,000 families to seek assistance. More than 41,000 school students in the region have not been able to start the new academic year because school buildings are still under water.

The National Hydro-meteorological Forecast Center reported floodwater levels are still rising in the lower reaches of the Mekong River, the Dong Thap Muoi (Plain of Reeds) and the Long Xuyen Quadrangle. The water level was measured at 4.51m in Tan Chau and 4.09m at Chau Doc on 15 September, respectively 0.31m and 0.59m above the Alarm Level III. The Centre predicts the floodwaters will continue to rise slowly to 4.55m (at Tan Chau) by the 21st September, creating further problems for the area.

Authorities in the delta provinces indicate they are focusing their efforts on reinforcing residential areas and helping people in flood-prone areas to move to higher ground. 164 new settlements have been built or are planned in seven provinces at an estimated cost of VND 500 billion (CHF 50 million), to provide shelter to 30,000 households.

With deaths of children through drowning again causing widespread concern, the Red Cross, local youth volunteers, the Women's Unions and Farmers' Association have organized temporary childcare centers to look after children and protect them from drowning while their parents are working away from home.

Polluted water is another threat facing those affected by the floods. The authorities in the three Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta provinces hardest hit by floods: Dong Thap, Long An and An Giang, are taking urgent action to combat the outbreak of disease and make water safe for drinking. The Long An Department of Science and Technology has supplied water purification tablets to households to sterilize collected water. Barges are carrying

clean water to inundated areas where people are using flood water for drinking and daily use.

People living in floating residential complexes have been urged to treat polluted water and to observe environmental sanitation procedures to prevent the spread of contagious diseases.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Since the end of August, the Red Cross Chapters in the three worst affected provinces of An Giang, Long An and Dong Thap have been active in providing support to affected families.

In Long An, the Chapter organized 3 courses on search and rescue for 300 “shock-brigade” members. Local appeals raised support to enable the distribution of 100 relief kits (comprising both food and cash) to some of the hardest hit families. The Chapter also established 5 child care centers in the worst affected communes to provide protection and care for children during the times when their parents are away from their homes.

In An Giang, the Chapter organized several meetings over the last weeks for the staff and volunteers of the 226 First Aid and rescue stations to agree on activities. The teams have helped to evacuate over 200 households to higher ground. 7MT of rice was distributed (to date) by the Chapter. Three First Aid courses for about 70 volunteers were organized and participants provided with First Aid kits/bags (with financial support provided by the provincial Committee for Flood and Storm Control). The teams have dealt with over 70 cases in the last couple of weeks.

In Dong Thap, the Chapter has 175 search and rescue teams (comprising over 4,600 volunteers from the Red Cross and other organizations) and takes a lead role in their mobilization and management. Over the last few weeks, 11 training course were organized for 150 of these teams. Such teams have assisted 307 households evacuating to higher ground. An estimated 25,595 households are living in the areas with the deepest floodwaters, of whom about 6,000 have already been evacuated and a further 5,695 are in need of evacuation. Aside from assisting with the ongoing evacuations of people, the search and rescue teams have also helped households to harvest rice. The Chapter has mobilized local contributions for relief assistance to help provide for some of the estimated 20,000 households requiring immediate assistance (of the approximately 42,000 requiring assistance). The Red Cross branches too are active in the support of the 264 child care centers in the province that provide daily protection for over 5,000 children.

Since the flooding began the Vietnam Red Cross Headquarters has released 125 million VND (more than CHF 12,000) to 10 provinces of: An Giang, Long An, Dong Thap, Kien Giang, Tien Giang, Can Tho, Vinh Long, Soc Trang, Tra Vinh and Ben Tre to procure rescue equipment, medicine and food for emergency response.

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

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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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