

KAZAKHSTAN: FLOODS

3 July 2000

appeal no. 13/2000

situation report no. 2

period covered: May - June, 2000

The assistance provided so far to beneficiaries is only a small part of the total needs of the affected communities. In addition to the basic planned relief assistance, cement, timber and other building materials are desperately needed. Donor interest has so far been limited, and further assistance to alleviate the suffering of this flood ravaged area will not be possible without additional support.

The context

In April, heavy rains in Russia necessitated the release of water which had reached dangerous levels in reservoirs, causing widespread flooding downstream in the Kustanaj Oblast in Kazakhstan. Homes were flooded, crops destroyed and many animals were killed by the floodwaters. Altogether, 2,500 people were directly affected, most of them left homeless, in four Rayons and part of Kustanaj city. The National Society of Kazakhstan, with support provided from the Federation, provided emergency relief from its disaster preparedness stocks while assessing needs. An appeal was launched seeking funding to enable the National Society to assist the homeless and their host families with food, hygiene supplies and household items. The appeal is also intended to replenish the National Society's preparedness stocks.

Latest events

The four districts of Denisovsky, Zhitikarinsky, Taranovsky and Kustanaiski, comprising 5,100 hectares of urban settlements and 5,760 hectares of farm land already planted with this year's crops, have been flooded. According to official estimates, the total damage is approximately USD 1.5 million. According to the latest data a total of 51 sq. km of inhabited area, 57,6 sq. km of cultivated land, and 542 houses were flooded. Some 2,209 people (690 families) were directly affected by the disaster, the majority being evacuated by the local Emergency Committee.

Continuous rain is making normal life difficult, as well as delaying repairs to the houses. Many houses still have flooded basements, causing structural problems. The homes are generally constructed of mud brick applied to timber surfaces. The water has washed the external surfaces away, exposing the fragile construction of the inner wall. These communities, already seriously affected by the current harsh socio-economic climate in Kazakhstan, are not able to reconstruct their dwellings and recover from the disaster on their own. The homes of 70% of the affected population were damaged, and about 10% are beyond repair. 90% of the inhabitants lost their food supplies. Subsistence gardens and produce were ruined, as were seeds for re-sowing. In nearby districts, crops were washed away. 10% of the affected families have lost their livestock, and cattle feed has been completely destroyed.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Federation's Regional Relief Delegate and the Red Crescent and Red Cross Society of Kazakhstan have already set up a three-month programme in this remote area of the country. In addition to the food and other relief supplies distributed in the initial two weeks of the operation to 952 displaced and affected people, further distributions of clothing and bedding have taken place during the last two weeks.

A total of 1,859 beneficiaries (582 families) have been assisted so far in the operation, including the following particularly vulnerable groups:

- Multichildren families: 49 families (322 people).
- Isolated elderly and handicapped: 130 families (180 people).
- Incomplete families with children: 30 families (94 people).

The following food and non-food supplies have been distributed:

- Food: 20 tons (to all groups of beneficiaries).
- Mattresses: 500 pieces (337 families).
- Quilts: 684 pieces (359 families).
- Bed linen: 667 sets (382 families).
- Used clothing: 2 MT (to all groups of beneficiaries).
- Floor and wall paint: 1,266 litres (126 families).

The Regional Relief Delegate and a National Society representative have visited the Oblast to monitor the distribution, and undertaken a needs assessment to determine further action. The information obtained is reflected in this report.

Outstanding needs

There remains an acute need for food supplies, shoes and clothing, mattresses, quilts and bed linen, and hygiene items and cleaning supplies. Building materials such as cement, timber, and other building materials, which were not part of the original appeal, are needed in view of revised assessments of the extent of the damage.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The National Society has maintained close contacts with the Government Agency for Emergencies at the local and national level, although Government resources are severely limited. In the early stages of the disaster, Local Authorities were able to assist victims with the supply of some machinery for the reconstruction of river banks, with transport for evacuees, and with provision of early warnings, but this is the limit of their current capacities.

There are no other emergency response agencies currently operating in this remote area of Kazakhstan.

The Federation's Regional Delegation Information Officer travelled to the area to brief and liaise with local media and to obtain up to date information which is available on the Federation Web Site in "Direct from the Field".

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The summer is short in this remote northern region of Kazakhstan and repairs to the many damaged homes must be completed by the onset of the forthcoming harsh winter. While there has been adequate publicity, there is still little support for the victims of the flood from the Oblast administration and it is unlikely to materialize. Donor interest has so far been limited, and alleviating the suffering of this flood ravaged area will not be possible without additional support.

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