

VIETNAM: FLOODS AND STORM

11 October 2000

appeal no. 23/00

situation report no. 1; Revised budget

period covered: 19 September - 11 October 2000

Water levels in the worst-affected Mekong Delta provinces of Vietnam have peaked and flood waters have spread widely. Tens of thousands of families have fled their homes and many more are living in flooded houses in remote areas. The Red Cross of Vietnam, (VNRC) supported by the Federation, is implementing the relief operation as outlined in the revised appeal of 18 September. The National Society has distributed rice and instant noodles, plastic sheeting, mosquito nets and soap. Additional rice is being procured and wooden boats are being produced for distribution to those most affected. In view of the overwhelming needs, further objectives have been identified for support to the victims of the floods. The VNRC and the Federation are at the forefront of initiatives in favour of the most vulnerable.

The context

With extensive flooding turning the Vietnamese Mekong Delta provinces of An Giang, Dong Thap and Long An into vast expanses of open water since the beginning of July, 56,826 families have fled their homes and taken refuge on earthen dykes and rural roads in these three provinces. A further 30,000 to 40,000 families are living in extremely difficult circumstances. The authorities are trying to persuade them to evacuate, but with no high ground near their homes, they remain, living a precarious day to day existence. The death toll has reached 319 persons (the current rate is of 20 deaths per day), most of whom are children who are drowning in these remote areas. Urgent action is required to save lives. This region of Vietnam is extremely flat, so even if flood victims are willing to abandon their homes,

their nearest refuge is a flooded road or a crumbling dyke - there are no dry football fields, flood resistant public buildings or hills where short or medium term camps could be set up.

Latest events

Since the launch of the revised appeal on 18 September, flood waters have swelled to historic levels - peaking at just above the 1961 levels, and levelling off at just below this record. Since then, waters have spread among the next line of provinces along the Mekong’s journey to the sea, inundating Kien Giang, Can Tho and Tien Giang Provinces, and reaching as far as the outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City and Vinh Luong Province. As of 8 October, 816,335 homes have been flooded, affecting close to four million people, and severely disrupting commerce, agriculture and the daily lives of these people. Flood waters are predicted to remain at critical levels for between one and two months. For a daily update of figures, maps and forecasts, please log on to the Disaster Management Unit’s English language website - www.undp.org.vn/dmu.

Floods are part of the way of life of the people of the Mekong Delta of Vietnam and the extent to which people are affected varies from “inconvenience” and struggling to cope to desperation as people lose not only homes, but members of their family, particularly children.

The challenge for the communities, the authorities and of the Vietnam Red Cross is to identify among the hundreds of thousands of affected, those who are most vulnerable and to provide help where it is most needed.

SUMMARY REPORT ON DAMAGE CAUSED BY FLOODING IN MEKONG DELTA

Description	Unit	Total	Long An	Dong Thap	An Giang	Kien Giang	Can Tho	Tien Giang	Vinh Long
People dead	No.	319	38	111	95	28	12	35	
Houses affected	No.	816,335	104,329	300,000	147,479	73,433	63,566	101,262	26,266
Houses already evacuated	No.	56,826	14,124	17,335	13,678	4,265	89	6,675	660
Houses collapsed and destroyed	No.	2,394	561	860	817	67	14		75
Schools inundated and damaged	No.	11,916	2,351	4,337	1,736	748	891	1,794	59
Pupils forced to be out of school	No.	708,722	96,226	330,682	127,843	30,431	22,806	100,734	
Clinics inundated and damaged	No.	282	60	74	53	34	6	46	9
Road eroded	km	10,087	1,047	2,518	1,527	714	1,609	2,646	26

* Source: DMU report, and Provincial People’s Committees as of October 11, 2000

The government of Vietnam, at national, provincial and local levels, has been active for weeks in each of the affected provinces - shoring up infrastructure such as dykes, roads and public facilities in order to delay and, where possible, mitigate the effects of the rising waters. The government has also assisted farmers to take in crops avoiding the total loss of rice. Rescue and evacuation efforts have saved many lives. Senior leaders from the government of Vietnam have toured the region and financial support has been forthcoming as well as food assistance from the national reserve. In addition, the military has been mobilised, together with the border guard and several units of the naval forces which have been active in rescue and relief.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Assessments have been carried out by the Red Cross of Vietnam and other agencies which indicate that priority needs are for:

- shelter materials - exposed on the dykes to the searing Mekong Delta sun, and lashed with afternoon and evening thunder storms and nightly wind gusts, families of up to 15 members huddle sitting upright in tiny makeshift shacks trying to stay dry and safe.
- food - most of those worst affected are daily labourers, the land-less who normally live from hand to mouth, and now are without work, without their meagre kitchen gardens. Their banana trees have rotted away, and their reserves are depleted. Food security will remain an issue for many of these families well into the beginning of 2001.
- boats - both from the point of view of essential transport - many people have skin infections from wading through the flood waters to carry out even the most basic of daily activities - but more importantly for the possibility of fishing, since with a boat and net, a family can harvest the enriched flood waters for fish, crabs and shrimps. This is a clear example of “give a man a fish or give a man a fishing boat and net”.
- mosquito nets - most of the families have been able to rescue most of their household items, but one item they consistently lack is a mosquito net. With the waters dropping, mosquitoes will breed rapidly and this is therefore an essential item for each family.
- health and hygiene - with the only water source for all daily activities being the flood waters, people are in need of help in terms of daily hygiene, clean water and sanitation services - particularly in the coming weeks;
- rescue/awareness of danger - many families are forced to leave their children in their homes each day as they leave to seek work, to fish or to find fire wood. Many young children are out fishing themselves, searching for firewood or simply playing in very unfamiliar water conditions. The daily death toll is alarming.
- many of the abandoned homes have since collapsed and washed away. On their return, flood victims will have to try to rebuild their homes.

Red Cross teams comprising Vietnam Red Cross staff and Federation delegates have travelled extensively throughout the provinces affected by the floods developing a comprehensive picture of the situation. In accordance with the objectives of the revised appeal, Red Cross staff and volunteers have been working closely with the local authorities and have assisted with a number of evacuations and boat rescues and continue to monitor the situation in the flooded areas. At present, the local Red Cross groups are turning their attention to the families remaining in their homes in remote areas, distributing life belts and disseminating the message of safety, particularly for children. The VNRC has also used the mass media to pass messages to these remote communities and to potential donors in the provinces to seek for life belts and floatation devices for distribution. To date, 1,000 life belts have been distributed and a further 2,000 are currently being procured.

The VNRC has procured rice and instant noodles and distributed these to families on dykes in the three provinces. In addition, the VNRC has distributed emergency food supplies provided by World Vision and a number of religious and community groups. To date 7,000 families have received plastic sheeting and a further 5,000 plastic sheets are being distributed this week.

Rice is being procured both by the VNRC and the World Food Programme on behalf of the VNRC. This will be distributed in quantities of 30 kg, 60 kg and 90 kg, according to family size, over the coming

two weeks. Beneficiary identification is being carried out in the three worst hit provinces. A further 1,000 MT of rice is needed for the provinces of Kien Giang and Tien Giang where 5,000 families have been displaced and many more are in need in their own homes. A further distribution of food is anticipated in December to a smaller beneficiary group which will be critically short of food towards the end of the year. Mosquito nets and soap are being provided to 25,000 families, and are complemented by distributions from CARE.

With increased beneficiary numbers, a total of 4,000 wooden boats will be procured across the five worst affected provinces. Production and distribution should be completed by the end of October. The VNRC/Federation team has been joined by an expert from Oxfam UK in the field and has linked closely with UNICEF and other agencies working in the area of health.. It is foreseen that as an initial response, financed by Oxfam UK, will be to provide 25,000 families with water purification tablets and buckets. Water containers provided by the German and Australian Red Cross Societies will also be used in this operation. As yet, the health situation has not deteriorated. However, the Red Cross will continue to monitor the situation and provide assistance in support of the Ministry of Health. The VNRC and the Federation have also provided logistical support to British government, DFID, representatives, Oxfam UK, the European Union, ECHO, as well as the international and national press. At national level, the Red Cross has co-ordinated closely with the Disaster Management Unit of the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CCFSC).

Beneficiary selection has been carried out over the last ten days in accordance with strict guidelines developed by the VNRC and the Federation. This exercise involves Red Cross staff and volunteers who travel to remote areas, working with the People's Committees and other agencies. Distribution lists have been drawn up taking into account needs in each village, commune, district and province, the action of the government and agencies, and assistance channelled through the Red Cross from local religious and community groups.

Additional needs have arisen as the scale of the disaster and the long term implications have become clearer. Thus, further objectives have been defined:

- To monitor the food security situation over the coming months.
- To work with families who have lost their homes in the design of an economical flood resistant relief house (based on the successful housing solutions in the central provinces) adapted to the needs of the Delta region.
- To develop the VNRC mobile dispensary model which has been tested in Soc Trang as a service to the communities displaced by the floods.
- To develop approaches to community preparedness suited to the needs of the Delta provinces.
- To identify a role for the Vietnam Red Cross local chapters in dealing with longer term issues of rehabilitation, water and sanitation and basic health care which have been identified during this disaster as important for the recovery period.

Outstanding needs

Given the deteriorating situation, further objectives to address additional needs have been identified and the budget for the operation has been revised upwards. Response to the appeal has been positive and donors are encouraged to confirm soft pledges which, if forthcoming, would raise the coverage of the revised budget to around 80%.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The VNRC is participating in the National Co-ordinating Committee's meetings for flood relief. World Vision, Care, the World Food Programme, UNICEF, UNDP, CRS, Oxfam UK, Oxfam Hong Kong, are all working through the Red Cross in the implementation of their relief programmes. Other assistance from UN bodies is being closely co-ordinated with the Red Cross.

The Federation is a member of the UN Disaster Management Team and has briefed a UN OCHA emergency team which arrived in the past few days to carry out a needs assessment. The Vietnam Red Cross/Federation will work closely with the team when they report their findings. Close liaison has been established with WHO and UNICEF in respect of water and sanitation and medium-term health risks.

The national and international media have been particularly important to the efforts of the Red Cross and to the victims of this disaster. Reuters, BBC, AP, Vietnam News and other journalists have accompanied the Red Cross through the region, highlighting the needs and also promoting the work of Red Cross. Both foreign and domestic business has assisted the Red Cross in its work - Fosters, Eriksson and Cosco Systems have all made significant contributions to relief efforts.

The government announced that three organisations would be asked to co-ordinate the selection of beneficiaries and the distribution of assistance - the Fatherland Front, the Vietnam Red Cross and the Ministry of Finance Aid Receipt department.

High on the agenda for government at provincial and district levels though will be the major rehabilitation needs which they face when the waters recede. Hundreds of kilometres of rural roads, dykes and irrigation channels will need to be completely refurbished. Schools, clinics and power lines have been seriously damaged and are in need of repair. Family homes by the hundred will have to be rebuilt. These needs will be the focus of the government, while the international community has been called upon to assist with provision of humanitarian relief.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The situation in Vietnam has worsened considerably since the issue of the revised appeal on 18 September. Nevertheless, life is now beginning to stabilise for many thousands of families who are worst affected, and as medium term relief reaches them in the coming days, it is hoped that the situation of the most vulnerable will gradually improve.

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This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

Vietnam floods and storms						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 23/2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED			10/11/00	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				5,378,094		TOTAL COVERAGE 42.1%
AMERICAN - GOVT		25,000	USD	42,813	28.09.00	
AUSTRALIAN - GOVT		250,000	AUD	249,600	16.09.00	
AUSTRIAN - RC		25,000	EUR	38,933	20.09.00	
BRITISH - GOVT/DFID		147,059	GBP	380,883	15.09.00	RELIEF NEEDS & OPERATIONAL NEEDS
CANADIAN - RC		50,000	CAD	57,670	18.09.00	
CANADIAN - GOVT		50,000	CAD	59,560	22.09.00	
DANISH - RC		185,000	DKK	38,628	18.09.00	
DANISH - RC		462,500	DKK	96,570	28.09.00	
DANISH - GOVT		32,076	USD	54,930	03.10.00	BASIC FOOD & NON-FOOD COMMODITIES
GERMAN - GOVT/RC		281,030	DEM	219,513	29.09.00	10'000 PLASTIC SHEETS & 14'000 MOSQUITO NETS
ICELANDIC - RC		200,000	ISK	4,295	22.09.00	
JAPANESE - RC				130,000	25.09.00	
JAPANESE - GOVT		50,000	USD	85,625	21.09.00	290 MT RICE & TRANSPORT, ADMIN/ OPERATIONAL COSTS
LIECHTENSTEIN - RC				50,000	02.10.00	
NETHERLANDS - GOVT		38,461	USD	65,864	21.09.00	
NETHERLANDS - GOVT		495,049	NLG	343,164	27.09.00	
NETHERLANDS - RC				25,000	27.09.00	
SINGAPORE - GOVT		20,000	USD	34,250	25.09.00	
SWEDISH - GOVT		1,000,000	SEK	187,100	26.09.00	RELIEF NEEDS & TRANSPORT STORAGE AND VEHICLE COSTS
SWISS - GOVT		28,604	USD	50,729	27.09.00	
UNICEF		30,000	USD	51,375	19.09.00	RELIEF GOODS, FOOD, PLASTIC SHEETING
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				2,266,502	CHF	42.1%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						
PVN513						

				ANNEX 1
<u>BUDGET SUMMARY (revised)</u>		APPEAL No. 23/2000		
Vietnam floods and storms				
TYPE	ORIGINAL BUDGET	REVISION 1	REVISION 2	VARIANCE
RELIEF NEEDS		IN CHF		
Plastic sheeting	20,000	98,560	370,990	(350,990)
Construction kits: (Cement, sand, steel house frames)	108,000	190,080	1,109,700	(1,001,700)
Clothes(life jackets/life buoys)			33,255	(33,255)
Mosquito nets: 27,000	9,000	104,544	93,420	(84,420)
Rice: 2,800 mts	127,000	1,044,736	1,400,850	(1,273,850)
Instant noodles		8,800	0	0
Utensils & tools (Relief kits)		54,560	29,110	(29,110)
Small boats and nets: 3,000		211,200	446,360	(446,360)
Medical supplies			256,500	(256,500)
Other relief supplies (chemicals/soap)	17,000	26,400	88,350	(71,350)
TOTAL RELIEF NEEDS	281,000	1,738,880	3,828,535	(3,547,535)
CAPITAL EQUIPMENT				
Large boats: 3		42,240	39,011	(39,011)
Other equipment	5,000	17,600	82,200	(77,200)
PROGRAMME SUPPORT				
Programme management	26,214	174,251	362,645	(336,431)
Technical support	7,847	52,162	108,557	(100,710)
Professional services	8,702	57,847	120,388	(111,686)
TRANSPORT STORAGE & VEHICLE COSTS				
	12,000	193,600	342,500	(330,500)
PERSONNEL				
Expatriate staff	15,000	88,000	71,100	(56,100)
National staff	6,000	20,000	55,827	(49,827)
Personnel (support costs)	5,000	18,000		5,000
ADMINISTRATIVE & GENERAL SERVICES				
Travel & related expenses	5,000	17,000	25,688	(20,688)
Information expenses	2,000	15,000	10,275	(8,275)
Administrative & general expenses	15,000	149,600	48,806	(33,806)
Professional fees			25,688	(25,688)
Support to NS (Emergency Distribution Phase 1)			256,875	(256,875)
TOTAL OPERATIONAL NEEDS	107,763	845,300	1,549,559	(1,441,796)
TOTAL APPEAL CASH, KIND, SERVICES	388,763	2,584,180	5,378,094	(4,989,331)
LESS AVAILABLE RESOURCES (-)			2,266,502	
NET REQUEST			3,111,592	0