

VIETNAM: FLOODS AND STORM

31 October 2000

appeal no. 23/00

situation report no. 2

period covered: 12 - 31 October 2000

It is estimated that floods, a tropical storm and flash flooding have affected some 5 million Vietnamese. Flood waters are gradually subsiding in the Mekong Delta, but levels remain high. The Red Cross of Vietnam (VNRC), supported by the Federation, has been distributing relief items for over ten weeks to 150,000 of the most vulnerable. A further priority is life saving as families are given help to prevent incidents of drowning, particularly among small children. Planning for the rehabilitation phase has begun and it is expected that reconstruction of houses will take place as of January, once the flood waters recede.

The context

Vietnam has been suffering from severe river flooding in the Mekong Delta provinces since July, the effects of a tropical storm which hit the province of Ha Tinh in September and, most recently, flash flooding which particularly affected the province of Dac Lac.

Hundreds of thousands of families have been affected by the combination of these disasters. The government of Vietnam has responded in each case, and the response of the general public in Vietnam has been impressive with numerous donations reaching the Vietnam Fatherland Front and the Red Cross of Vietnam from private individuals and companies.

The international response for the relief phase has been targeted mainly through the Red Cross of Vietnam/Federation appeal. Other agencies, such as World Vision, Care and CRS have also been active on the ground, working through the National Society and other agencies to carry out their

distributions. The UN has launched an appeal for USD 10 million, mainly targeting the rehabilitation phase.

Latest events

Mekong Delta •

The water level peaked at nearly five meters on 23 September 2000. Since then, in the upstream districts it has fallen by approximately three centimetres every day - in total about 70 cm so far. Nevertheless, the Mekong waters still cover many thousands of houses and the families evacuated continue to face the prospect of at least one more month on the dykes where they currently take refuge. The affected area has expanded from the three provinces of Long An, Dong Thap and An Giang to include Kien Giang, Tien Giang, Can Tho Provinces and parts of Vinh Long, Soc Trang and Ben Tre provinces. However, depths of water in most of these recently-affected provinces vary from a few centimetres to some two meters. Except for those impoverished, vulnerable people who have been forced from their homes and who are in need of assistance, the immediate impact for the majority has been inconvenience.

Nevertheless, the risk of longer-term problems for people affected in the flooded areas remains high. For example, as the water stagnates there may be increases in diseases such as dengue fever, malaria and intestinal disorders. Food shortages may occur because the next rice harvest may be delayed until March/April 2001. In addition, people's diet is likely to be inadequate because food supplements such as banana trees and kitchen gardens have been destroyed. Likewise, livelihood and income generation will be harder. People who had taken loans to start up small businesses will require more loans to replace animals and seeds that have already been used to sustain families rather than as market commodities. Thus many people will remain at subsistence levels for the foreseeable future.

In a macro sense, large scale enterprises, such fruit orchards, particularly in Tien Giang, have been crippled and may take four or five years to become productive. This will have a negative impact on the local economy and curtail a speedy recovery. Likewise, government resources will need to be allocated to rebuilding infrastructure such as schools, clinics, roads and bridges. While this will help to provide income for workers it will divert resources from other previously scheduled development or poverty alleviation programmes.

The floods have affected five million people to varying degrees. 411 people including 291 children have been killed, 800,000 houses have been inundated and 47,534 households needed to be relocated. Damage is estimated at approximately USD 236 million.

SUMMARY REPORT ON DAMAGE CAUSED BY FLOODING IN MEKONG DELTA (figures as of 27 Oct)

Description	Unit	Total	Long An	Dong Thap	An Giang	Kien Giang	Can Tho	Tien Giang	Vinh Long
People dead	No.	417	54	134	111	55	24	39	
Houses affected	No.	828,007	104,989	300,000	151,010	763,090	63,566	102,060	26,266
Houses already evacuated	No.	47,707	15,168	17,293	8,293	4,750	89	2,114	
Houses collapsed and destroyed	No.	3,300	1,023	1,004	674	351	248		

Schools inundated and damaged	No.	2,665	405	489	323	459	458	420	81
Pupils forced to be out of school	No.	828,320	103,270	345,000	129,639	59,001	58,455	110,356	27,600
Clinics inundated and damaged	No.	365	78	74	56	73	7	48	29

Flash Flooding in Dac Lac, Central Highlands •

A severe storm in south central Vietnam affected the highland provinces of Dak Lac, Lam Dong and Tay Ninh Provinces and resulted in a series of destructive flash floods. This affected the relief operation in the Mekong Delta and diverted personnel and resources to help people whose homes were destroyed or who had to be evacuated.

Water levels fell quickly and most people whose houses were flooded have returned home. Damage, although not as extensive as had been originally reported, has had a devastating effect. Many families have lost all their possessions and their livelihood will be curtailed due to the impact of the storm on rural production as small holdings of coffee and rice were severely affected and some eight hundred homes were completely destroyed. Damage to infrastructure, such as roads and bridges will also impede recovery.

In total, 5,863 homes were flooded, 615 homes completely swept away, and in one district alone, 50 coffee crops on small holdings were destroyed.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Mekong Delta •

The Red Cross of Vietnam, supported by the Federation, has taken a lead role beside the national and provincial authorities in the collection of data and assessment of humanitarian needs and has been instrumental in providing timely and accurate information to other agencies working in the region. Moreover, concurrently, the Red Cross has been assisting in every aspect of the disaster relief operation.

In terms of rescue efforts, tasks undertaken have included the provision of fifteen boats and crews to help in search and rescue. These teams, equipped with loud speakers, have been visiting remote flooded areas to advise families on how to prevent drowning, especially amongst children. They have also provided life buoys and life jackets to the most vulnerable in an attempt to reduce loss of life. These teams are also advising on preventative health measures to reduce the risk of disease.

The Red Cross has been distributing relief items for over ten weeks. To date, one million dollars worth of support has been distributed to the most vulnerable people affected by the floods. The first priority has been identified as saving life. The second priority has been to sustain life through provision of rice, plastic sheeting, mosquito nets and the wherewithal to obtain clean water to over 150,000 people. Eighty percent of the commodities have already been delivered and it is expected that this second phase of the relief effort will be completed by 10 November 2000.

Training has been included in the relief operation to ensure that distributions have been carried out in accordance with the principles laid down by the Federation as regards selection of beneficiaries, relief planning, logistics, organisation of distributions, reporting and monitoring of continued needs, based on the "Guidelines for relief in the Mekong" issued jointly by the Federation and the VNRC. Local level volunteers (shock brigades) have been trained in safety messages for families living in remote areas to prevent drowning and in basic health messages from the community based first aid programme of the VNRC. Training was provided by staff from the VNRC HCMC second office.

In response to the Federation's appeal, Australia, the USA and Germany have supplemented relief efforts by airlifting much needed goods and equipment into the region. The Australian government provided blankets and water containers, the American government provided high quality plastic sheeting, water purification systems and rescue boats and the German government and the German Red Cross brought in water containers. In addition, the Korean Red Cross has made a bilateral donation of relief items.

Plans for Red Cross activities in relation to long-term rehabilitation are also well under way. Many thousands of families have lost their homes in the floods. Thousands more will return to homes which will be unfit for habitation. To an extent, temporary shelter material will help in the short term to repair homes. But in the medium to long term, housing is an issue which the Red Cross in Vietnam will address. Already, a Red Cross design team which has been active in the Central Provinces of Vietnam for the past two years has worked in the Mekong Delta and produced a number of design options which have been discussed between the VNRC and Federation operations managers. At a meeting of VNRC chapters in December, this programme will be further analysed and building should commence in early January when the waters have receded.

Ha Tinh Storm •

Following Tropical Storm Wukong, which hit on 10 September, the Red Cross of Vietnam, supported by the Federation, has provided emergency food and shelter. 1,000 household kits were funded by ECHO and 300 MT of rice were distributed to the worst affected families. In addition, 200 storm resistant house frames are on order and will be built in the coming month.

Flash Flooding •

The Red Cross of Vietnam responded to the needs using resources from its own reserves and from the Federation. This entailed provision of plastic sheeting, rice, instant noodles, household kits, blankets and clothing.

Outstanding needs

Future problems include more rain as a result of an extended typhoon season which may last through to December and the continuing dislocation of people, some of whom have already lived with the floods for over two months and who may not be able to return home for another four to six weeks. In addition, health problems, due to stagnant water may add to the plight of vulnerable.

It is envisaged that a further distribution of food will be needed in December for the many thousands of families who have not been able to plant or find work following the floods.

The appeal coverage currently stands at 73.4 per cent.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Collaboration between the Red Cross of Vietnam and government authorities at all levels has been positive throughout this operation. The VNRC has co-ordinated closely with the People's Committees at provincial, district and commune levels to ensure that beneficiary selection is well targeted and distributions well co-ordinated. The Fatherland Front has also requested VNRC to co-ordinate the contributions of a number of small Vietnamese organisations and groups to ensure the even coverage of assistance to all those who are affected by the floods. Thus, the VNRC has assisted in transporting goods and identifying beneficiary communities for groups ranging from small Buddhist pagodas in HCMC, to large international companies wishing to assist.

The Vietnamese and international media continue to show interest in the work of the Red Cross. Most recently, Reuters, BBC, AP and AFP have covered the arrival of assistance and witnessed its distribution right to the beneficiary. The BBC covered the launch of the schoolchildren's DP training initiative of the VNRC/Federation and all agencies cover the news on a weekly basis. The Vietnamese press has covered all stages of the operation.

Federation personnel have also worked with the World Bank office in Vietnam regarding the adaptation of single storey schools to double storey and the extension of roads and dykes in current development programmes to serve a dual role as refuges in times of flooding. The Bank has responded positively, and has already agreed on changes to existing programmes with the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). The Bank, following last year's flooding in the Central Provinces of Vietnam, responded in a similar way and built hundreds of two storey schools throughout those flood prone provinces in an impressive collaboration with MOET.

Support has come from many sources in Vietnam - the Intel Corporation announced a contribution of USD 50,000 on 1 November. This and other multinational corporations are looking for links with the Red Cross in Vietnam.

Photos of the families living with the floods, and of relief distributions are available on CDrom from the Delegation in Hanoi or from the Federation Secretariat in Geneva.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Almost one and a half months since the launch of the appeal, most of the relief phase of the operation has been completed. With conditions still poor in the Mekong Delta, rehabilitation must be put on hold until January, however, planning has begun. Meanwhile, continued poor weather plagues Vietnam, with relatively small scale flash flooding operations underway. However, depending on weather patters, central Vietnam is vulnerable to flooding as a result of saturated land.

Donor response has been extremely positive. The Red Cross of Vietnam and the Federation are grateful to donors for their confidence, making this swift and comprehensive operation possible.

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Vietnam floods and storms						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 23/2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED			10/31/00	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				5,378,094		TOTAL COVERAGE 73.4%
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	
CANADIAN - PRIVATE				87	04.10.00	
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
DANISH - GOVT		1,900,000	DKK	388,740	11.10.00	
DANISH - RC		462,500	DKK	94,628	20.10.00	
FINNISH GOVT		22,059	USD	39,122	09.10.00	
FINNISH - RC		33,637	EUR	51,391	28.09.00	
FINNISH - RC		33,637	EUR	51,391	27.10.00	
FRENCH - GOVT		300,000,000	VND	37,500	22.09.00	RICE, MOSQUITO NETS, PLASTIC SHEETINGS
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	
ITALIAN - GOVT		500,000,000	ITL	397,500	04.10.00	
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	
MONACO - RC		20,000	FRF	4,658	18.10.00	
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	
NEW ZEALAND - GOVT		50,000	NZD	37,345	04.10.00	
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	
SWISS - RC				55,500	17.10.00	RELIEF ITEMS
UNICEF		30,000	USD	51,375	19.09.00	RELIEF GOODS, FOOD, PLASTIC SHEETING
UNDP		50,000	USD	88,675	25.09.00	TRANSPORT, STORAGE, VEHICLE COSTS FOR NON-FOOD ITEMS DISTRIBUTION; TRAVEL, COMMUNICATION & SALARIES
USAID		216,160	USD	383,360	04.10.00	PROCUREMENT & DISTRIBUTION RELIEF ITEMS
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				3,896,399	CHF	72.4%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
KOREAN, REPUBLIC - RC		30,000	USD	53,205	25.10.00	2'877 UNITS OF CLOTHES, bilateral donation
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				53,205	CHF	1.0%
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						