

OPERATIONS UPDATE



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

RUSSIAN FEDERATION: FLOODS IN EASTERN SIBERIA

04 July 2001

Appeal No. 16/01

Launched on 28 May 2001 for CHF 479,500 for 8 months

DREF Allocated: CHF 50,000

Beneficiaries: 15,000

Operations Update No. 1 Period covered: 28 May - 21 June 2001. Next Ops Update No. 2 is expected on 27 August 2001.

“At a Glance”

Appeal coverage: 4.6% - pledges currently being processed will be reflected in the next Operations Update

Outstanding needs: CHF 457,525

The Disaster/Situation: Transport of relief goods to flood victims must be carried out in the next two months, before winter sets in and rivers are no longer navigable. Despite the allocation of CHF 50,000 from the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), shortage of funds is hampering the procurement process for the urgently needed relief items.

Operational Developments

In May, severe floods in Eastern Siberia inundated 87 settlements in Yakutia, plus several towns in the Irkutsk region and the Tyva Republic. According to official estimations, losses in Yakutia alone amount to USD 241 million. There, 12,000 houses were damaged, 407 km of road were rendered unusable, and 160 bridges washed away; much cultivated land and cattle were lost. Of the 50,305 people who were evacuated, some have returned home or are staying with neighbours and relatives, but others are still living in evacuation centres in public buildings or in tent towns on higher ground. Those who lost their house also lost all their possessions. To the question “What do you regret most?”, one inhabitant of Lensk said, “My warm clothes.” On 4 June it was snowing with a temperature low of minus two degrees Celsius.

The present situation is difficult. People have no home, no money, no food, and no means of rebuilding their lives. About 500 families will move away from Yakutia under the federal migration programme but the vast majority will have to rely on their own resources. Their most urgent problem is to repair their homes before the winter starts in September. "In the past two years I managed to put aside 26 cubic meters of wood to build a new house after my old one was badly damaged by the floods in 1998, but the water stole everything from me again," says Yuri Sotnikov from Lensk, pointing to the cellar lid - all that remains of his house. His 36 year old son was one of the eight killed by the floods in May.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action w

Response to the International Federation appeal has so far been extremely limited.

The American Red Cross "Food for Progress" programme donated 20 tonnes of food, which was sent to the affected regions. Another 60 tonnes are now being prepared for delivery to Yakutia.

Bilaterally, the American Red Cross earmarked USD 25,000 for the relief operations in Irkutsk and Yakutia. Over 11,380 cans of mashed fruit and juice for 600 children, and 1,000 hygiene kits (containing household soap, plastic bags, disinfectant, soap, washing powder, detergent and towels) for 1,000 affected families were purchased and are being distributed in Irkutsk. Hygiene parcels for 250 families, consisting of washing powder, household soap, toothpaste, toilet paper, towels, sponges, tooth brush, soap, shampoo and plastic bags, were procured and distributed in Yakutia, as well as 1,000 bed linen sets, 100 blankets and pillows, 250 warm sweaters, 1,000 pairs of socks, and 250 warm jackets.

The response of the National Red Cross Society w

The response of the Russian Red Cross Society (RRCS) to the disaster has been led by its Irkutsk and Yakutia regional branches. Immediately after the disaster, they drew on their own stocks to equip an evacuation centre in Tely Klyuch village (Yakutia) with food for 10 days, and blankets and pillows for 100 people. On 30 and 31 May, the Yakutia Red Cross distributed hygiene kits for children in Yakutsk evacuation centres. Each kit contained toothpaste, a toothbrush, shampoo, and a sponge. All items were purchased wholesale, then packed and prepared for distribution by local Red Cross employees and volunteers. On 31 May, 40 medical kits and flour were delivered to Namsky district. Some 500 bed linen sets were sent to Lensk.

The regional RRCS committee members donated one day's salary to the flood fund. Approximately RUR 5,000 (USD 172) was collected by volunteers with collection boxes.

In an attempt to raise support for the operation, Red Cross representatives approached local shops and businesses. One Irkutsk manufacturer donated 444 new suits, representing nearly USD 5,000, but most businesses were too busy meeting government emergency orders. "We will try to approach them again after the first wave of the emergency subsidies and they will be more prepared for co-operation with us", said the Yakutia Red Cross representative.

The Kamchatka Red Cross committee has offered a consignment of tinned fish, which now needs transportation. RRCS committees in the Archangelsk and Amursk regions are proposing assistance.

Relief distributions w

Objective 1. To identify the most vulnerable within the affected population in Yakutia and Irkutsk, and, as a secondary priority and pending assessment, Tyva, which will require assistance in the medium term.

From 30 May to 1 June, the RRCS regional representative in the Eastern Siberia zone, the American Red Cross delegate in the field and the Yakutsk Red Cross chairwoman met with the Yakutia government to discuss the needs of the affected population. The team visited evacuation centres in Yakutsk, and travelled to Namsky district, which was still under water, to assess the situation. On 31 May they went to Lensk (Yakutia) which was almost completely destroyed by the floods, and visited several nearby settlements. They also visited Mirny, to where most Lensk citizens were evacuated.

A draft assessment report, sent to the RRCS Central Committee in early June, stated that 46,790 people were affected by the floods in 60 Yakutia settlements, and another 16,000 in the town of Kirensk in the Irkutsk region. It was decided to focus on families with children as the priority Red Cross beneficiary group.

Objective 2. To provide 1,300 beneficiaries with multi-fuel stoves.

Cash is urgently needed to meet this objective.

Objective 3. To provide 7,500 beneficiaries with kitchen sets: possible contents two plates, a pot, a saucepan and two cups.

Cash is urgently needed to meet this objective.

Objective 4. To provide 6,000 beneficiaries with a sleeping pack, containing sheets, blankets, pillow cases, and, for those beneficiaries sleeping on the floor, 2,000 folding beds.

This objective was partly met through the American Red Cross' bilateral donation and DREF funding. More cash is needed in order to reach the targeted number of beneficiaries.

Region	Item	Quantity	Beneficiaries	Funding
Irkutsk	Mattresses	25	25	Local RC resources
	Blankets	600	600	DREF
Yakutia	Blankets and pillows	212	212	Local RC resources
	Bed linen sets	1,000	1,000	American RC
	Blankets and pillows	100	100	American RC
	Mattresses	350	350	DREF
	Blankets	500	500	DREF
	Bed linen sets	500	500	DREF

Objective 5. To provide 900 children with footwear and a clothing set (probably hats, gloves, woollen socks and other warm clothing).

Local Red Cross committees have launched clothes appeals. In Irkutsk, over 550 kg of used clothing was collected and sent to the worst affected areas, while in Yakutia, two tonnes of second hand clothes are stacked in Red Cross points. They need to be cleaned and disinfected but the local Red Cross does not have the means to do this.

Region	Item	Quantity	Beneficiaries	Funding
Irkutsk	Secondhand clothes	500	100	Local RC resources
	New clothes	1,594	1,000	Local resources
Yakutia	Children's clothes	20 sets	20	Local resources
	Warm sweaters	250	250	American RC
	Warm socks	1000 pairs	250	American RC
	Sport suits	265	265	American RC
	Warm jackets	250	250	American RC
	Children clothes	200 sets	200	DREF
Warm jackets	200	200	DREF	

Objective 6. To provide 200 families with baby food.

Cash is needed to meet this objective.

Region	Item	Quantity	Beneficiaries	Funding
Irkutsk	Children's food	2.8 tons	600	American RC
Yakutia	Children's food	240 kg	200	DREF

Logistics w

Objective 1. To identify and utilize the most cost-effective and time-effective means of delivering humanitarian assistance to the affected regions.

The relief/logistics team in Moscow is currently conducting market research and feasibility studies to define potential participants for further tenders. The multi-modal way of delivery was already identified as railroad/rivers. Due to a lack of money, it will not be possible to rent a barge; the relief goods will be transported by river as general cargo, under the supervision of a member of the relief/logistics team.

Local meteorologists predict a very hot summer. This means that the navigation period, which is rarely longer than four months, might be even shorter due to shallow rivers, and could end this year in early September. Consequently, the timing of procurement, delivery and distribution is crucial for the relief operation. According to the RRCS/delegation relief team, it is vital to start procurement in July.

Federation Delegation w

The Federation has a strong relief and logistics component in its Moscow office, consisting of a Federation delegate as relief co-ordinator, a relief programmes manager and a relief officer. Alongside the RRCS counterparts, they are providing effective support and assistance to the targeted areas. In the absence of the head of delegation, the relief coordinator has been temporarily assigned to the post. A finance delegate arrived in May to review the delegation's financial system, including relief programme financial issues. The American Red Cross' programme coordinator, the health, information, IT and administration departments' staff all provide vital support to the relief operations both in Moscow and in the field.

Co-ordination

Local RRCS committees are regularly co-ordinating their activities with the Ministry for Emergency Situations (EMERCOM), and other relevant local services. EMERCOM planes and helicopters were made available to the Red Cross in the initial stage of the operation for the transport of humanitarian assistance.

Both the federal and Yakutian governments are taking measures to restore the damaged infrastructures. Boilers, electricity and communication lines are being repaired. Plans to reconstruct Lensk and some other towns are being drawn up. Victims have received allowances of USD 30 plus three months of salary in advance (USD 100 on average). Some 4,000 children will be sent to summer camps in other parts of the country.

As of 4 June, electricity and water supplies had not been restored in the affected villages. Drinking water is being supplied in adequate quantities. Food is available in a limited variety (tinned food, grains, bread). The local authorities are managing to keep food prices reasonable. Hospitals are functioning but are short of medicine and proper equipment.

Outstanding needs

Basically, the Appeal has barely entered the implementation phase. None of the objectives has been fully met due to extremely limited donor support. Russian Red Cross committees in the area have deployed all their resources.

Cash is urgently needed for multi-fuel stoves, kitchen sets, sleeping packs, footwear and warm clothes.

Mattresses or fold-away beds are urgently needed. Most of the flood victims are sleeping on the cold ground.

Baby food for infants is also needed. Eight babies were born in Lensk during the floods, one of them in a boat during the evacuation. Most of the mothers have lost their milk, and there are no stocks of baby food in the town. Altogether, there are nearly 200 infants in Lensk.

In a couple of months, school will start again and normally, most families would now be preparing to buy school necessities. In the current situation, when people have lost all their possessions, this is impossible. Assistance

with such items would be extremely valuable. Most Yakutians still remember the Red Cross school sets which were distributed under the Polar Siberian Appeal 29/99.

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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.

This operation seeks to administer to the immediate requirements of the victims of this disaster. Subsequent operations to promote sustainable development or longer-term capacity building will require additional support, and these programmes are outlined on the Federation's web site.

For further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation web site at <http://www.ifrc.org>.

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