

Operations update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Viet Nam: Floods

Emergency appeal n° MDRVN005
GLIDE FF-2008-000211-VNM
Operations update n° 3
28 January 2009

Period covered by this Operations

Update: 6 December 2008 to 15 January 2009

Appeal target (current): CHF 4,779,037
(USD 4.07 million or EUR 3.17 million)

Appeal coverage: 45.62%. Funds are urgently needed to enable the Viet Nam Red Cross to provide assistance to those affected. [<click for donor response or contact details>](#)

Appeal history:

- This emergency appeal was launched on 12 November 2008 for CHF 4,779,037 (USD 4.07 million or EUR 3.17 million) to support the Viet Nam Red Cross (VNRC) to assist 293,860 beneficiaries (70,000 households) for 10 months.

Summary:

Those affected, especially in the villages, are slowly adapting to make ends meet. In many areas, villagers have planted potatoes while awaiting the February crop, while others continue looking for work as construction workers, dockhands, or household help.

In Hanoi and surrounding areas, villagers showed a great and rapid sense of self-initiated recovery and entrepreneurship following the disaster. They immediately began replanting flowers and short growth-cycle vegetables with the hopes of earning an income from vegetable and flower sales, the prices of which soared since the floods occurred. However, their expectations were not met; due to the resulting surplus in supply of these items, prices plunged to an extent greater than expected. As such, the villagers are unable to cover their labour and production costs, let alone enhance their capacity to generate income.

This appeal still seeks assistance to fill this gap of rebuilding sustainable sources of income for communities.

As of 15 January, 6,500 kitchen sets, 22,000 blankets and 22,000 mosquito nets have been distributed to affected people in 17 provinces.

The process to procure 2,100 tonnes of rice has started. It is expected that this procurement will be completed by the end of January, and distribution can start in February.



Beneficiaries cluster together in the cold weather, awaiting the distribution of relief supplies in Ninh Binh province. The frequent succession of extreme climate events continues to challenge the socio-economic lives of people in Viet Nam. (Photo: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

The timing of this procurement is expected to fit in well with forthcoming needs when food (mainly, rice) will very likely be running short at this time of the year, pending the next harvest. In the meantime, the government has decided to support each flood-affected family with 23.5 kilogrammes of rice per person before the lunar new year in late January.

Over the course of this operation, the Federation continues to support the coordination and management role of the VNRC headquarters as well as to ensure the Movement's Fundamental Principles are reflected at all levels, including the grassroots.

To date, American Red Cross, British Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross/government, Finnish Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross, Monaco Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross/government, Swedish Red Cross/government, the Norwegian embassy and USAID have pledged to contribute to this appeal. Bilateral support includes Australia Red Cross, German Red Cross/government and Swiss Red Cross.

The International Federation, on behalf of the Viet Nam Red Cross, would like to thank all partners for their response to this appeal to date.

The situation

Affected villages are slowly adapting to make ends meet. In many areas, villagers planted potatoes while awaiting the February crop, while others sought jobs as construction workers, dockhands or household help.

In Hanoi and surrounding areas, the initiative of villagers to adapt and even improve their situation in the aftermath of the disaster was apparent in their efforts to re-plant flowers and quick-growing vegetables. These intended to capture the market for vegetables and flowers, following a price increase in the wake of the disaster. However, contrary to expectation, prices plunged much lower than expected; e.g. from VND 2,000 (CHF 0.136 or USD 0.12) per bunch of mustard greens, to VND 1,000 for three bunches. This has adversely affected villagers in terms of labour and production costs, and been a setback in the effort to generate income.

Once the livelihood component planned under this emergency appeal begins, the International Federation country office and the VNRC will further discuss in more detail sustainable means of livelihood for the communities involved.

In early 2009, provinces in the central area frequently hit by disaster, including Quang Nam, were struck by torrential rains, submerging three fishing boats, with two people reported dead or missing. The frequent succession of extreme climate events continues to challenge the social and economic lives of people living in these areas.

Coordination and partnerships

The national society continues to update its Red Cross partners, members of the national disaster management working group (DMWG) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on the latest developments of the operation.

National society capacity building

The International Federation country office provides technical support to the national society on a day-to-day basis. Professional planning, monitoring and reporting are among the major topics shared with the VNRC. The country office continues to promote the Movement's Fundamental Principles and its implications in Red Cross work at the VNRC headquarters, Red Cross grassroots level and with other local organizations supporting Red Cross activities in the country.

A retired person with years of experience in the social work department at the headquarters has been recruited by the International Federation country office as a volunteer to increase the monitoring capacity at headquarters level. The national society will likely benefit more with a firm policy to better utilize its well-trained human resources in disaster preparedness from chapter level.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Overview

With the support from participating national societies, the VNRC continues to provide assistance to the affected people in the form of rice, family kits, livelihood assistance, and water and sanitation initiatives. In addition to the response from the emergency appeal and supported by German Red Cross, the VNRC provided 71 tonnes of fertilizer and 7,000 kilogrammes of rice to the most affected communes in Lang Son and Bac Giang provinces. Also with this support, 565 bio-sand filters were given to the worst-hit families located in flood areas in Lang Son and Bac Giang provinces.

Progress towards objectives

Relief (food)

The process to procure 2,100 tonnes of rice has started. It is expected that this procurement will be completed by the end of January, allowing distribution to start in February. The allocation plan is shown below:

Province	Rice	Estimated delivery date
Vinh Phuc	81	15 February
Hoa Binh	81	
Ha Noi	300	
Ha Nam	210	14 February
Ninh Binh	210	
Thanh Hoa	399	13 February
Nghe An	399	12 February
Ha Tinh	300	11 February
Quang Binh	120	
Total	2,100	

The timing for this procurement is also expected to coincide with the need when food (mainly, rice) will be very likely running short, pending the next harvest. In the meantime, the government will support each flood-affected family with 23.5 kilogrammes of rice per person before the lunar new year in late January. IN communes, rice for relief purposes has been divided equally among villagers, regardless of individual needs.

Non-food items

As of 15 January, some 6,500 kitchen sets, 22,000 blankets and 22,000 mosquito nets have been distributed to affected people in 17 provinces. These items were received through donations from British Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross and Netherlands Red Cross. The kitchen sets and blankets were shipped from the regional warehouse of the regional logistics unit based in Kuala Lumpur, while the mosquito nets were locally procured from the supplier under the Framework Agreement, based in Viet Nam.

The quality of the distributed items was appreciated by beneficiaries. However, feedback from the field showed that the contents of the kitchen sets did not fully conform to traditional customs; for instance, the cooking utensils and bowls.

Overall, the second distribution took longer than planned. The main reason for this was due to the lapse of time in communications between different Red Cross levels, and the allowance of sufficient time for Red Cross chapters to consolidate the list of beneficiaries submitted by Red Cross communes, as well as customs clearance for the imported items.

Distribution of in-kind supplies (details)

Province	Blanket (Unit)	Mosquito net (Unit)	Cooking set (Set)
Lang Son	1,000	1,000	
Bac Giang	1,000	1,000	500
Bac Ninh	1,000	1,000	
Ha Nam	1,500	1,500	500
Ninh Binh	2,000	2,000	500
Nam Dinh	1,500	1,500	
Thanh Hoa	1,000	1,000	500
Nghe An	1,000	1,000	500
Ha Tinh	1,000	1,000	500
Quang Binh	1,000	1,000	
Vinh Phuc	1,000	1,000	500
Phu Tho	1,000	1,000	500
Ha Noi	2,997	3,000	997
Thai Nguyen	1,000	1,000	500
Hung Yen	1,500	1,500	500
Hai Duong	1,500	1,500	500
Hoa Binh	1,000	1,000	
Total	21,997	22,000	6,497

Livelihood Support

At this stage of the operation, this component is yet to begin as funding received to date has been prioritized for emergency relief.

In the meantime, the government has decided to assist the families most affected to re-start agricultural production. For instance, each family will receive VND 30,000 (CHF 2.04 or USD 1.75) per 360 square metres of farm land to buy seeds for crops. However, there is not information yet on the plan of distribution.

Once funding is secured for the component, a detailed needs assessment on the livelihood situation will be carried out. In addition, consultations with other national sectors such as agriculture will be necessary in order to find the best possible option for those affected to resume agricultural production in a sustainable manner, given the recent foot and mouth disease in animals in Nghe An province, and a case of H5N1 infection reported in Thanh Hoa.

Water and sanitation

The implementation of this planned component will begin once objectives for food, non-food and livelihood support have been met.



In Lang Son province, distribution by the Viet Nam Red Cross is carried out indoors. While villagers have taken the initiative to regenerate sources of income and regain their economic independence, their efforts have been hindered by plunging market prices. (Photo: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

Institutional Capacity

Training on how to organize good distribution was carried out at each implementing province before the actual distribution. Participants were key people involved in the operation from their respective Red Cross chapters, and presidents of Red Cross districts as well as communes. As local authorities work closely with the Red Cross in emergency response, chairpersons of commune people's committees were also invited to the training. This was to ensure that all partners engaged in Red Cross activities gain more knowledge on how to select beneficiaries and how to organize distribution, adhering to the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement's Fundamental Principles.

Trainers for this exercise include staff from the social work department, an implementing unit and staff from other departments in support of the implementing department. However, the trainers themselves will need a better understanding of the Red Cross principles and their implications in their work. The national society will also need to have a broader perspective by putting together capacity at local Red Cross level, utilizing trained staff on disaster preparedness from Red Cross chapters for overall VNRC activities.

On the procurement of relief items, staff involved in the procurement process at headquarters received a two-day coaching on International Federation procurement procedures and processes. Selected staff from the headquarters' administration, social work (the implementing unit), finance and personnel departments who currently work as the procurement team for relief operations, attended this training. The regional procurement officer from the regional logistics unit in Kuala Lumpur conducted this training session. Discussion was also held to review the existing procurement process of the national society. This session is set to support the tendering of the upcoming purchase of 2,100 tonnes of rice in February mentioned earlier. This procurement will benefit 70,000 families.

Technical support and training on selection of beneficiaries, organization of distribution, monitoring and reporting will continue over the course of the operation.



The process of distribution being carried out in Ha Nam province: a further procurement of 2,100 tonnes of rice is expected to benefit 70,000 families among all those affected by the floods nationwide. (Photo: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

Challenges

The operation encounters common issues among Red Cross chapters implementing this operation: the even allocation of relief items, and the confusion over allocation based on damage rather than needs. This issue implies that there is no standard approach and common understanding of the Red Cross' unique standing among Red Cross workers. As such, experiences vary from one chapter to another. This indicates that there is a lot of work for the International Federation in order to support the coordination and management role of the headquarters as well as to ensure Fundamental Principles are observed through to the Red Cross grassroots level.

At community level, while the operation receives full cooperation and support from the local governments as well as representatives from mass organizations such as women's associations, farmer's units and others who are involved in the distribution as volunteers, the shortage of Red Cross volunteers remains a challenge to actual implementation.

Though the overall plan of distribution for the non-food items was prepared by the VNRC with technical assistance from the International Federation country office and zone office, the items shipped from Kuala Lumpur were not released immediately upon arrival. This delay was to allow time for adequate communications among Red Cross levels; to give the chapters sufficient time to consolidate their respective lists of beneficiaries, and time for customs clearance for items shipped from out of the country.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation, please contact:

- Viet Nam Red Cross: Mr. Doan Van Thai, secretary general, phone +84 913.216.549, email: doanvanthai62@yahoo.com.vn
- Federation country office, Viet Nam: Ms. Irja Sandberg, country representative, phone: +84 904.067.955, email: irja.sandberg@ifrc.org, Mr. Dang Van Tao, disaster management manager, phone +84 913.361.581, email: tao.vandang@ifrc.org
- Federation Southeast Asia regional office in Bangkok (phone: +66 2 6661 8201):
 - Alan Bradbury, head of regional office, email: alan.bradbury@ifrc.org
 - Patrick Fox, head of Southeast Asia disaster management unit, email: patrick.fox@ifrc.org.
 - Lasse Norgaard, communications delegate, phone: +66 847 526 441, email: lasse.norgaard@ifrc.org
- Federation Asia Pacific zone office, Kuala Lumpur (phone: +603 9207 5700):
 - Heikki Väättämoinen, disaster response delegate phone: +6012 230 7895, email: heikki.vaatamoinen@ifrc.org
 - Penny Elghady, resource mobilization and PMER coordinator, phone: +6012 230 8634, email: penny.elghady@ifrc.org
Please send pledges of funding to zonerm.asiapacific@ifrc.org
 - For mobilization of relief items: (fax: +60 3 2168 8573)
 - Jeremy Francis, regional logistics coordinator, phone: +60 12 298 9752, email: jeremy.francis@ifrc.org
 - Aysegul Bagci, regional logistics delegate, phone +60 12 295 6730, email: aysegul.bagci@ifrc.org

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