

CAMBODIA: FOOD SHORTAGE

21 May 1996

appeal no. 11/95

situation report no. 3 (Final)

period covered: 8 September 1995 - 10 April 1996

The disaster

Severe floods, made worse because flood control and irrigation systems in Cambodia are virtually non-operational after decades of war, neglect and environmental degradation, destroyed many thousands of hectares of nursery rice beds and newly transplanted rice seedlings in August 1994. These floods were followed by drought conditions which killed off most of the few remaining seedlings. The combined result was a disastrous harvest at the end of the year, leading to food shortages that affected 2.5 million Cambodians in nine out of the country's 21 provinces and produced a further deterioration in the living conditions of the most vulnerable.

Although the Royal Cambodian government continues to make strenuous efforts to repair the country's infrastructure and promote a market economy, the majority of the 80% to 85% of the population in rural areas still lack access to clean water and sanitation, and many exist at subsistence level. For poor farmers, whose rice crop often feeds the family for only 9 or 10 months of the year, the failure of 1994's harvest meant increased debt at best and, at worst, no money to buy food, clean water and medicine.

Following elections held in 1993 under UN supervision, a coalition government was established in Cambodia. Peace is still however very fragile. Armed attacks and assaults occur regularly, forcing whole communities to become internally displaced. In the process they lose their houses, household essentials, draft animals and control over farm land which is their main source of living. In several provinces, vast areas of former agricultural fields are still heavily mined and unsafe for cultivation. These various constraints continue to severely restrict agricultural activities and in many areas the level of food production is below local needs.

By late 1995 there were no significant changes in the situation of the beneficiaries in the four target provinces targeted by the Appeal. They were still facing severe food shortages and were not being assisted by any NGOs and/or government bodies.

According to a FAO/WFP Special Report, "...in spite of overall surplus, parts of the country remain with food deficit and continue to need assistance. It is estimated that 21 percent of communes, in main rice producing provinces, were affected by floods in 1995, which resulted in a significant loss of crops. As a result a large section of the population in these areas will face food shortage in 1996... Vulnerable people in many food deficit areas have limited resources to purchase food and will need support". (FAO/WFP Special Report - Crop and Food Supply Situation - Cambodia - February 1996).

The appeal

Following an initial needs assessment jointly conducted by the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) and the Federation in late August 1995, the Federation launched an international appeal on 8 September for CHF 2,142,000 to assist 70,850 beneficiaries. These were identified as special vulnerable groups, consisting of elderly, widows, single mothers, disabled, chronically sick and orphans, who were not receiving any assistance from other sources in the four target provinces of Kompong Speu, Kompong Chhnang, Prey Veng and Takeo for five months. The total amount received was CHF 958,922.

The Operation

Following the recruitment of a Relief Co-ordinator, the operation began on 1st November, 1995 and ended on 10 April, 1996.

The operational objectives were as follows:

- To assist 70,851 beneficiaries identified as special vulnerable groups by distributing 4,251 MT. of rice in the four target provinces not assisted by other agencies
- To provide basic nutritional information to beneficiaries, using CRC Branch Volunteers
- To provide basic health care information, both preventative and curative, through trained CRC Branch Volunteers.
- To reinforce the capacity of the CRC through support for training and the mobilisation and utilisation of CRC Branch Volunteers in relief operations.
- To carry out Red Cross dissemination and improve the general image of the CRC in the target areas

The plan of action was as follows:

The proposed starting date was to be immediately after the receipt of initial funding. The completion date was to be five months after the starting date.

The operation was to be carried out by the CRC with assistance from the Federation Delegation in Cambodia. The overall responsibility for co-operation between the CRC and the Federation was to rest with the Relief Co-ordinator from the Federation.

All the rice was to be purchased in Cambodia. Standard Federation narrative and financial and reporting procedures were to be strictly followed, and practical arrangements for this would be made with the CRC. The distribution of Red Cross relief supplies was to be utilised for publicity and information purposes and appropriate media coverage was to be organised.

The CRC was felt to have the operational and management capacity to effectively carry out this operation. It could draw on extensive experience, having been involved for many years in relief operations in Cambodia. The Red Cross volunteers working in the target

provinces were to play a decisive role in the food distributions. The target provinces had the following numbers of volunteers available:

<u>Provinces</u>	<u>Nos. of Volunteers</u>
Kompong Speu	246
Kompong Chhnang	406
Prey Veng	225
Takeo	381

An evaluation, in which the CRC and the Federation Delegation in Cambodia would co-operate closely, was to be carried out immediately after the completion of the operation.

The Delegation •

The Federation Delegation in Cambodia was supported by the appointment of an experienced Relief Co-ordinator (sponsored by the Swiss Red Cross) for this operation. The Head of Delegation, the Finance and Administration, Logistics and Training Delegates were all involved in the operation.

The Federation has maintained a delegation in Phnom Penh since 1991 and is presently working with the CRC on structural and organisational development. Prior to the launching of this appeal, the CRC/Federation had provided assistance after the 1994 floods.

Participation of the Operating National Society •

The CRC implemented the operation (procurement, warehousing, needs assessment, distribution) with the assistance and support of the Federation Delegation in Cambodia.

The assessments and distribution were the responsibility of three CRC teams: a management team, comprising eight CRC personnel, and two mobile teams each of eight personnel, aided by Red Cross volunteers. Special training was given to the teams by the CRC and the Federation staff during November/December 1995. General information on the target areas was provided by the local authorities (provincial/district/village) to the CRC teams, which visited all proposed beneficiaries to ensure they met the agreed criteria. Detailed lists giving the exact number of families and family members were sent to the CRC management team for final selection.

Analysis of the operation

Needs Assessment •

In addition to the initial needs assessment jointly conducted by the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) and the Federation in late August 1995, further comprehensive needs assessments were conducted in the four target provinces by the two CRC mobile teams in November/December 1995 and March/February 1996.

The two mobile teams were provided with information from local authorities on the poorest families, single mothers, widows or elderly people in the target areas. Accurate figures were collected on the population and the numbers of members in each families in the targeted villages. The final selection of beneficiaries was made by the CRC management team.

The selected beneficiaries received their "rice ticket", and information on the exact date and places of distribution, which were always chosen jointly with the local authorities.

These assessments were carried out in extremely poor areas, where for a variety of reasons people were unable to generate a sustainable income. In addition, access to these often remote places was usually very difficult, and some of the target villages were located in insecure areas.

Objectives and Plan of Action •

Slowed down by low funding and onerous needs survey conditions, the distribution of rice finally began in the four targeted provinces in late January and ended in April.

Following the survey findings and the low response to the appeal, it was decided to increase the number of beneficiaries from 70,850 to approximately 163,000 (including specific groups of handicapped people) and reduce the amounts distributed within a shorter time frame (4 months), since the targeted beneficiaries would probably benefit from the new harvest, and consequently would not require additional rations.

The operation distributed a total of 2,444.865 MT. to 162,958 beneficiaries in the four target provinces from January to April 1996.

Details of the distributions were as follows:

Province	Families	Persons	Quantity (MT.)
Prey Veng	5,673	30,729	460.935
Kompong Speu	6,195	30,557	458.425 (+ 145 KGs. to monks)
Kompong Chhnang	9,750	47,880	718.225 (+ 85 KGs. to monks)
Takeo	10,025	53,792	807.050
TOTAL	31,643	162,958	2,444.865

67 MT. of rice remains in the CRC warehouse and will be used as Emergency Stock.

Organisation of distributions: Due to long collaboration with WFP, the CRC has extensive experience in rice distribution. Meticulous preparations were carried out during the assessments and in the organisation of distributions. All beneficiaries knew exactly when, where and how much rice they would receive.

Financial Resources: Since the Appeal was only partially covered, a revised budget was drawn up and finalised by the CRC/Federation in November, 1995. By omitting the purchase of four trucks included in the original budget, in order to maximise the quantity of food, it became possible to budget for 1,800 MT. of rice. Following two further pledges, a second revised budget was drawn up in early January, in which an additional 700 MT. was included.

Training: Following special training facilitated by the Training Delegate and the Relief Co-ordinator for the CRC mobile and management teams (24 persons) in November, the 2 mobile teams provided training to Red Cross volunteers and local authorities in the four target provinces.

In-country purchasing: Following standard tender procedures in December 1995 and at the end of February 1996, 1,800 MT. (35% broken white rice, imported from Vietnam) and 700 MT. (35% Cambodian white rice) respectively were purchased. A Cambodian external controller (CAMCONTROL) was hired to control the quantity and quality of the 1,800 MT. of rice. However, due to concerns regarding the satisfactory standard of this testing, quality control for the 700 MT. of rice was carried out by an internationally accredited laboratory in Thailand.

Transport: Since the Appeal was only partially covered and the purchase of trucks was cancelled, the CRC hired trucks for the distributions. Despite the bad condition of many of the roads to many of the distribution sites, all the rice was efficiently transported to the distribution points. Generally trucks were loaded and went to the Province the day before to ensure that the distribution started on time.

Red Cross Dissemination: At each rice distribution, Red Cross dissemination was undertaken with the beneficiaries, and included information on the role of the Federation and activities of the CRC.

'Food for Activities': Before receipt of the rice, all beneficiaries agreed to participate in a programme of 'food for activities' which required them to work in their own villages on the improvement of fencing, road repair, sanitation, gate dam repair and preparation of compost.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Since this operation was conducted in areas not covered by other agencies, CRC /Federation co-ordinated and shared information with governmental agencies, UN and others organisations through the regular and scheduled meetings of the Emergency Response Group (ERG).

Media coverage of the operation was good. All local Cambodian TV channels and newspapers regularly covered the operation.

Financial Report

See Annex 1 for details. The balance remaining of over CHF 200,000 will be repaid to DREF to offset most of the advance, once all final accounts are received.

Conclusion

Main Achievements

- The rice was efficiently distributed by the CRC to the identified beneficiaries in the four target provinces with no reported losses or robberies.
- The experience and capacity building of the CRC was strengthened through support to the training and mobilisation of Red Cross volunteers.
- The Federation was provided with the opportunity to collaborate closely with CRC, and to better identify its capacity, strengths and weakness.

Shortcomings/Failures

- There was a lack of co-ordination and co-operation between the different departments of the CRC in the organising of Red Cross dissemination, local and international media coverage (press releases, press conferences etc.) and the provision of basic nutritional

and health care, which was not provided to the beneficiaries through the Branch volunteers in accordance with stated operational objectives.

- The contract for the purchase of the rice was signed by the HoD on behalf of the Federation, resulting in a lack of ownership by the CRC for this aspect of the operation. For future CRC/Federation relief operations it is strongly recommended that the purchase contract be co-signed by the CRC and the Federation.
- Lack of an appropriate structure and financial system within CRC obliged the Delegation to assume responsibility for paying the rice sellers directly.
- No evaluation was conducted on the operation with the CRC.

Problems Encountered

- Difficulties experienced in obtaining satisfactory results locally regarding the quality of the rice during the first part of the operation were solved by sending samples of rice to an internationally accredited laboratory in Thailand for testing.
- There was concern regarding rice storage conditions at the CRC warehouse. The CRC was provided with Federation guidelines (translated into Khmer) on warehousing and basic principles of cereals storage for their reference and immediate and future action.

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