

CHINA: FLOODS

12 August 1998

appeal no. 21/98

situation report no. 3

period covered: 06 - 12 August

Flooding in central China is reaching record breaking levels and has already affected 240 million people. Red Cross/public health teams are providing health care and sanitation measures and distributing basic relief supplies, but funding shortages are holding up the full implementation of the Federation-financed relief operation.

The context

Continuous rains since March have caused vast flooding that is now affecting an estimated 240 million people -- one fifth of China's population -- in central and south east China. In many areas, the floods are being described as the worst in living memory. The Yangtze River has now reached record levels. According to the latest official figures, more than 2,000 people have died in the floods, 5.58 million houses have been destroyed, 12.05 million houses have been damaged, 21.5 million hectares of crops have been affected, and another 4.78 million totally destroyed. 13.8 million people have been evacuated.

Latest events

Rainfall along the Yangtze River Valley in central and east China continued over the past week. The situation remains serious as dikes along the river, long soaked with water, are in danger of collapsing. More rainfall is expected from the river's upper reaches.

On 6 August Hubei Province became the fourth province to declare a state of emergency, as the Yangtze surpassed the record heights of 1954. The fourth crest of water flowed down the river and through the capital Wuhan on 10 August. Flood-control officials, under increasing pressure to divert flooding in the Jingjiang section of the river, did not have to proceed with the planned demolition of affected dikes. A fifth crest has formed and is moving down from the upper reaches of the Yangtze. The government reports that some 500,000 people have been evacuated from the flood plain near Jingjiang, where the Yangtze narrows into a zigzag course, making this the most dangerous section of the river.

Following two days of urgent repairs, a 40-metre-wide breach in the levee in Jiujiang, Jiangxi province, was plugged and roaring flood waters were held back. The breach was the worst of the summer.

The Red Cross Branch in Jiangsu reports that flooding in some areas is making it difficult to maintain the country's control programme for schistosomiasis. It is feared that there may be increasing outbreaks of this tropical disease (also known as bilharziasis or snail fever), caused by infestation with parasitic worms.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Red Cross Society of China has an extensive nation-wide network of 156,000 grassroots units, most of which are medical units; 2,562 county and district branches; 347 prefecture and city branches; and 31 provincial branches. Units based in the flood-affected areas are concentrating their efforts on: food distributions, sanitation, water purification measures and medical supplies; assisting with evacuation efforts and dike maintenance. There are now more than 10,000 medical/first aid teams, put together jointly by the Red Cross and the Public Health Bureau, working in flood-affected areas. To date, the Red Cross has provided assistance to approximately one million people.

Federation delegates have just completed a monitoring field trip, accompanying a shipment of medical and water purification supplies into Sichuan and Jiangsu provinces.

Sichuan

Flash flooding in Sichuan Province between 5 - 6 July ravaged large areas of agricultural farmland. It left water-logged soil and destroyed the rice crop. Because many farmers live at subsistence level, the effects of the floods will have a devastating impact for some time to come. Some 270 Red Cross medical teams have been sent to the worst-affected areas. Sanitation teams have also been mobilised as the flood water recedes. These teams, working closely with the Public Health Bureau, use both hand-held and vehicle mounted sprayers to disinfect areas contaminated by the flooding in order to prevent epidemics. Red Cross volunteers are supplying food and water to the most vulnerable within their communities. Early warning of the impending flood limited casualties to approximately 200 dead and 4,000 injured. Some 200,000 houses were damaged, 60,000 of them beyond repair.

Jiangsu

Parts of Jiangsu Province have suffered devastating floods, lasting up to 38 days in some areas. Some 2,700 elderly and children had been evacuated with the assistance of the Red Cross from the island of Jiang Xin Zhou, which lies on a tributary of the Yangtze, south-west of the provincial capital, Nanjing. Much of the island is under one meter of water and is threatened with further flooding. To date, local Red Cross volunteers have raised 500,000 RMB (CHF 90,900) to buy food and medicines for the displaced. East of Nanjing, where people must wade through waist high water to go about their daily life, the effects of being immersed for extended periods in polluted water are apparent in the rising number of skin infections. Red Cross medical teams are treating the sick using medical supplies purchased with funds donated by the local community.

The most severely affected settlement assessed in Jiangsu province was in the district of Donggou, where a once thriving community of two hundred families had been abandoned to flood waters reaching one and a half metres in places. Red Cross medical and sanitation teams were much in evidence in the region. Their efforts have limited the outbreak of serious diseases, although some illnesses, such as skin and stomach ailments, have been reported.

Hubei

Some 7,170 medical/first aid teams, formed of Red Cross and Public Health Bureau personnel, are currently working in flood affected areas in Hubei province.

Federation Delegation

The Federation Delegation continues to work in close co-operation with the Red Cross Society of China. The past week has seen an increased focus on the procurement and distribution of much-needed relief supplies, including: water purification tablets, food, medicines, and sanitation materials.

Outstanding needs

There is no sign of any respite for the flooded regions in central China. The Federation urgently needs cash contributions in order to meet its operational objectives of assisting one million seriously affected people with 8,000 Mt. of basic food, medical supplies and 60 million water purification tablets.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Federation Delegation in China has been extremely active with the media, completing more than 40 interviews in the reporting period, primarily with the international media, on the human aspects of this disaster, the work of the Red Cross Society of China, the needs of those affected, and the International Federation's appeal for CHF 6.7 million. So far since the launch of the appeal some 70 interviews have been given, providing high visibility to Red Cross humanitarian efforts.

Information sharing with Beijing-based embassies continues on a weekly basis. The Federation is co-ordinating closely with MSF to strengthen relief delivery through shared information.

Contacts have been established with local EU/ECHO representation, and with WFP/UNDP for possible co-operation.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

This year's floods are reaching record breaking proportions and have already had a devastating effect on the lives of tens of millions of people. Large-scale emergency assistance is urgently needed and has been planned for in the Federation's appeal. The appeal budget is, however, still seriously underfunded -- 38.8 per cent as of today -- and the cash shortage is holding up purchases of relief items and their distribution to local Red Cross Branches in the worst affected areas. Donors are urged to do all they can to ensure that the appeal total -- CHF 6.7 million -- is fully covered as rapidly as possible.

For further information, please contact Marcel Fortier, Desk Officer, on +4122 7304268 (e:mail: fortier@ifrc.org).

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CHINA - FLOODS

APPEAL No. 21/98

**PLEDGES
 RECEIVED**

12/08/98

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE
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CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL	6,770,000
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AUSTRALIAN - RC	100,000 USD	150,000	04/08/98
CANADIAN - RC	50,000 CAD	51,230	15/07/98
CANADIAN - RC/GOVT	100,000 CAD	102,460	20/07/98
CANADIAN - RC/GOVT	50,000 CAD	51,230	28/08/98
GERMAN - RC/GOVT	350,000 DEM	294,630	11/08/98 WATE
BRITISH - RC/GOVT	150,000 GBP	368,070	25/07/98
DANISH - RC	500,000 DKK	108,500	24/07/98
DANISH - RC/GOVT	2,000,000 DKK	434,000	05/08/98
ICELAND - RC	200,000 ISK	41,870	20/07/98
NORWEGIAN RC/GOVT	1,350,000 NOK	264,033	23/07/98
NORWEGIAN - RC	150,000 NOK	29,337	23/07/98
US EMBASSY - BEIJING	250,000 USD	375,000	27/07/98 WATE
SWEDISH - RC/GOVT	1,500,000 SEK	283,200	12/08/98
PRIVATE	40.00 USD	60.00	06/08/98
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH		2,553,620 CHF	

KIND AND SERVICES (INCL. PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE
CANADIAN - RC	1 DEL X 10 WEEKS			12,500	
BRITISH - RC	1 DEL X 6 MONTHS			30,000	
DANISH - RC	1 DEL X 3 MONTHS			15,000	
BELGIUM - RC	1 DEL X 3 MONTHS			15,000	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				72,500 CHF	

NOT REQUESTED IN APPEAL

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0.00 CHF		