

CHINA: FLOODS

26 July 2000

appeal no. 21/98

situation report no. 11 (final)

period covered: July 1998 - April 2000

The Context

Continuous rainfall between March and August 1998, the highest for over 40 years, caused massive flooding throughout the Yangtze River basin, as well as along the Songhuajiang and Nenjiang Rivers. The floods affected a total of 29 Provinces along the banks of these three major rivers. It was estimated that a total of 223 million people were affected. Around 15.85 million were forced to evacuate their homes to seek temporary shelter in safer areas.

The Federation's Appeal, launched on 20 July 1998, initially sought to provide the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) with critical relief items that included food, medicines, sanitation materials and water purification tablets for 270,000 families (one million people) for a period of three months.

Further flooding in September 1998, this time in the north-eastern part of China, required a revision of the Appeal to cover these newly affected areas. On 2 September, the Appeal was revised to provide additional relief supplies for the flood victims as well as basic emergency shelter and winter clothing and quilts to help the most vulnerable to survive the winter. The number of beneficiaries in the revised Appeal was increased to two million.

Implementation, achievements and constraints

OBJECTIVE 1: To provide 8,000 MT of basic food (rice/wheat flour) to over 1 million people (270,000 families, temporarily displaced from their flooded homes) for 20 days with a ration equivalent to 1,600 Kcal per day.

The provision of food was essential since most of the food stock had either been washed away or had been spoilt by the flood waters. The loss of harvest in most of the areas meant that it was crucial to support the government efforts to supply the most vulnerable with emergency food assistance.

Achievements

The Federation was able to provide a total of 12,759 MT of food (rice and wheat flour) to over 1,691,000 beneficiaries. That was an increase of 60% in food and 70% in beneficiary figures compared to the estimates in the original appeal. The original time-frame of 20 days was achieved in all provinces. Having in mind, though, severe winter conditions in Inner Mongolia, the emergency food assistance there continued for 60 days. There were government indications that malnutrition in the areas covered by food distributions was lower than in normal years. The food assistance provided a bridge between the emergency situation and resumption of food production.

Distribution of Rice and Wheat Flour (In Metric Tons)

PROVINCE	TOTAL RICE	TOTAL WHEAT FLOUR
HUBEI	2,473.85	
HUNAN	1,362	
JIANGXI	2,061	
FUJIAN	314.28	
HEILONGJIANG	2,699.77	
INNER MONGOLIA	3,848.47	3,848.47
TOTAL	12,759.37	3,848.47

Constraints

Due to delays in the transfer of funds to the field, the operation carried out by the RCSC and the Federation did not always resemble an emergency response. Once the funds were received by the Provincial Red Cross branches, however, they were immediately used for procurement and distribution of food.

OBJECTIVE 2: To provide basic medical sets and sanitation materials for 85,000 beneficiaries during the emergency phase.

Achievements

The RCSC managed to distribute 152,029 medical sets consisting of a variety of drugs (anti-enteritis, berberine, tablets against cold and floxacin) which enabled the mobile medical teams to cover approximately 112,000 beneficiaries in all targeted provinces. The number of beneficiaries could only be estimated given the difficulties to report on actual prescriptions handed out. It has been estimated, though, that 32% more people than planned by the original appeal benefited from the medical support.

The actions of the Red Cross medical teams undoubtedly helped to prevent and alleviate many diseases associated with flood-affected population. Whilst the incidence of cholera was higher than usual, there was no evidence of any uncontrolled spreading of this disease. Diseases such as typhoid, gastro-enteritis and haemorrhagic fever all remained at usual levels.

The total number of 144,780 beneficiaries received sanitation material, an increase of 70% in comparison with the planned figure from the original appeal.

The provision of sanitation material was a crucial component of the overall relief operation, as many flood victims were forced to live in temporary shelters along the high lying dykes for a long period of time. Most of the deaths reported in earlier floods (100,000 in 1931 and 30,000 in 1954) were caused not by the floods themselves but by water borne diseases that spread amongst the victims. In the early stages of the disaster, the government supplied the affected provinces with sanitation material and water purification tablets but, due to the length of the disaster, supplies soon become scarce. The RCSC therefore highlighted the acute need for sanitation material in order to reduce the vulnerability of the flood victims.

Constraints

The RCSC acknowledged difficulties in reporting on actual beneficiary numbers due to inaccurate figures provided by the mobile medical and sanitation teams. In many cases, due to the workload of the teams, figures were not adequately precise.

The supply of drugs and sanitation material seemed to have a significant impact on the reduction of serious health problems. It is a fact, however, that the Federation provided only a relatively small quantity. The Ministry of Health was, in general, responsible for providing drugs and sanitation material in order to avoid any epidemics similar to those which caused many deaths during earlier severe floods.

OBJECTIVE 3: To provide 1.5 million people with safe water for a period of 60 days by supplying 90 million water purification tablets.**Achievements**

The Federation funding enabled the RCSC to supply the targeted number of beneficiaries with over 64 million water purification tablets for a period of 42 days.

Immediate deployment of water purification tablets in the early phases of the operation combined with a government public health campaign (instructions on the use of tablets) made an enormous difference and reduced vulnerability to water borne diseases and, consequently, allowed a quicker recovery of the victims.

Constraints

Very early on, it became clear that the budget for water purification tablets would not be equally needed in the latter stages of the emergency. By the end of the 4th Plan of Action, it became evident that the victims started returning to their villages and were able to rehabilitate their own wells. The Red Cross branches were therefore able to report that any balance of funds originally allocated for the provision of the water purification tablets would be more effectively spent by procurement of other more relevant relief items such as food and clothing.

OBJECTIVE 4 : To provide quilts and blankets to 300,000 people.**Achievements**

The Red Cross Society of China procured 46,055 quilts for 184,220 beneficiaries (one quilt per family of 4) i.e. 60% of planned beneficiaries were covered.

The quilts were mainly distributed to displaced persons who were unable to return to their homes or build temporary shelters prior to the onset of winter. The North-East, Inner Mongolia and Heilongjiang were prioritised due to very low winter temperatures in those regions.

Constraints

During the operation, it became clear that blankets were not the most effective relief item for the area since they gave little thermal protection. Following the visit of the Federation assessment team to the North-East, some of the funds originally allocated for quilts were re-allocated into other programmes, namely shelter.

OBJECTIVE 5: To provide heavy 50,000 winter coats.

Achievements

The Federation distributed 39,600 heavy coats to the most affected victims of the flooding in five provinces and covered 79% of the targeted beneficiaries.

The Federation assisted the RCSC in reaching the most affected population along the Yangtze as well as in the North-East provinces and Heilongjiang. Many beneficiaries lost all their possessions in the floods. The coats were distributed to those living in temporary accommodation over the winter.

Constraints

Since the priority was to provide temporary shelter, it was decided to re-allocate some of the funds originally earmarked for winter coats into the much needed shelter programme.

Distribution of Coats and Quilts to the provinces.

	COATS	QUILTS
HUBEI	8,700	10,785
HUNAN	1,650	1,300
JIANGXI	7,080	7,680
HEILONGJIANG	11,085	17,540
INNER MONGOLIA	11,085	8,750
TOTALS	39,600	46,055
TOTAL BENEFICIARIES	158,400	184,220

OBJECTIVE 6: To construct 2,500 emergency shelters in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region for 12,500 beneficiaries.

Achievements

In total, 2,680 houses were built. They provided shelter to approximately 11,792 beneficiaries during the extremely cold winter season in Inner Mongolia. The planned number of houses was exceeded by 180 units. The size of a standard family was, however, smaller than originally estimated, thus decreasing the total number of beneficiaries in this programme.

Constraints

Due to the onset of winter and temperatures below minus 18 Celsius, this programme was put on halt over the winter of 1998. Over 1,000 completed shelters, however, provided heated shelter for over 4,000 beneficiaries. The programme was re-started in early May 1999, and the remaining 1,680 shelters were completed.

OBJECTIVE 7 (additional to the appeal): To provide construction material for 4,500 houses in Hubei and Hunan provinces.

Achievements

The Daimler Chrysler Corporation donated funds for assistance to flood victims. The RCSC submitted a proposal to the Federation for support to the most vulnerable. In total, 4,734 families were provided bricks and cement for the reconstruction of their homes. These funds, however, represented just an addition to the funds provided by the central government for the reconstruction of houses in the affected provinces.

Housing

PROVINCE	NUMBER OF HOMES	BENEFICIARIES
HUBEI	2,234	10,081
HUNAN	2,500	10,017
TOTAL	4,734	20,098

Constraints

The Chinese New Year festival in mid February and bad weather conditions in April delayed the construction programme.

OBJECTIVE 8 (additional to the appeal): To replenish the RCSC Disaster Preparedness Stock.

The 1998 Floods had seriously depleted the Disaster Preparedness (DP) stocks at RCSC DP Centres. It was, therefore, essential to replenish the stocks and provide the National Society with enough stocks to enable them to respond to possible future floods.

Achievements

The National Society purchased the essential relief material including sanitation material, water purification tablets, clothing, tents and medicines for nine regional and provincial DP centres in the country. The stocks arrived at the targeted provinces in time to be used within the early emergency phase of the 1999 floods, thereby enabling the provincial branches to respond to the needs of the affected population.

PROVINCE	Medicines (Boxes)	Sanitation Material (Boxes)	Water Purification Tablets (Boxes)	Coats	Tents
<i>ANHUI</i>	143	679	216	2,390	
<i>JIANGXI</i>	141	679	214	2,400	
<i>HUBEI</i>	141	679	214	2,390	
<i>HUNAN</i>	127	532	168	2,390	
<i>ZHEJIANG</i>	224	565	178	1,810	
<i>CHONGQING</i>	86	417	132	1,810	
<i>SICHUAN</i>	267	149	49	1,810	
<i>JIANGSU</i>	18	273	86		
<i>NINQXUA</i>	105	273	86		
<i>RCSC HQ Reserve</i>					128
TOTALS	1,252	4,246	1,343	15,000	128

Constraints

Due to various changes in the middle and senior management of the RCSC headquarters, there were some delays in the bidding process for the DP stocks. While these delays were

regrettable, the new procedures adopted by the National Society in carrying out intensive market research did allow a far greater level of transparency.

Conclusion

While the level of needs within the flooded provinces was high, the multifaceted approach to the operation placed an enormous strain on the management structures within the national headquarters which was at that time undergoing reorganisation.

The donor requirements for timely reporting sometimes caused friction between the RCSC and the Federation. In order to resolve this in the future, it would be necessary to try to delegate both financial and operational reporting to provinces. The headquarters would then be required only to consolidate final reports coming from the provinces. The Federation recruited a Finance Development Delegate in 1999 to work with the National Society on improving reporting standards in the provinces.

At present, the RCSC headquarters and five out of the eight affected provinces are still holding balances (CHF 1,571,358 in total) which have been partly reconciled. As explained in the attached final financial report, 98% of this overall balance is held by the Inner Mongolia branch. The funds have been transferred to local prefectures for the construction programme and they are now in the process of collecting receipts in support of expenditures. The remaining cash balance of CHF 304,584.60 held by the Federation Secretariat is to be transferred into the project account for China Floods 1999.

Future programmes should concentrate on helping the National Society develop its own identity on the basis of their proven expertise. The branches are often asked to supplement the local government medical capacities. Very close relations with the Health Bureau might not be the best possible way while the efforts are made by the National Society to become more independent. The RCSC would easier achieve this goal by concentrating more on traditional Red Cross activities .

The multi-tiered management structures in the RCSC often made it difficult to ensure the timely transfer of funds from Beijing to provinces. The time span between the initial Plan of Action and the receipt of funds was very long and valuable time was lost. A more streamlined approach of the National Society senior management would ensure timely transfer of the funds to relevant provinces.

The high turnover of representatives as well as delegates was considered by the RCSC as detrimental to the efficient management of the operation.

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