

CHINA: FLOODS

17 August 1999

appeal no. 17/99

situation report no. 2

period covered: 11 - 17 August 1999

As floods threaten to spread further, the Red Cross of China and the Federation have despatched assessment teams to the worst hit provinces, while moving ahead with the purchase of medicines, food and water purification materials.

The context

Sustained rainfall since the middle of June has caused flooding along the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze river in China. Over 700 people have died and 24,000 have been injured as a result of the floods and 5.5 million have been displaced throughout the country. Six provinces in particular - Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan and Anhui - have been very badly affected by the flooding. In these provinces, Red Cross branches estimate some 60 million people have been put at risk, while 1.8 million have been evacuated from their homes.

Meteorological forecasts indicate further rainfall, with a potential for further floods not only along the Yangtze but also along the Yellow River. Experts fear that the Yellow River will be particularly prone to flooding, given that up to 35% of the existing levees along the river are not up to minimum standards.

Latest events

The International Federation Team and officers from the Red Cross Society of China headquarters and the Hong Kong Red Cross branch began a joint assessment to flood affected areas on 11 August. Two teams were formed and dispatched to Anhui and Hubei Provinces, and Hunan and Jiangxi Provinces, respectively. Briefings are being provided by Provincial, County and municipal branches of the RCSC in the areas most affected and flood victims living in tented cities on dikes are being interviewed.

Initial reports indicate serious damage to homes and farm fields caused by deep flood waters. Although water levels have receded in the past few weeks, they remain at about four metres in many areas. Continued heavy rainfall was reported by the team in Anhui Province, adding to concerns about further flooding.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Red Cross is operating clinics set up in temporary shelter areas as well as dispatching mobile teams of doctors and nurses to villages cut off by flood waters. The most common ailments treated are respiratory infections, skin diseases, and diarrhoea. There have been no reports of cholera as yet.

Initial procurements, utilising reserve Federation funds held in China, are underway and it is expected that the first contracts for essential medicines will be signed in the next few days.

Funds recently received by the delegation for the first Plan of Action are being used to finance the purchase of food for four of the six worst affected provinces. A further Plan of Action is being drawn up which will concentrate on purchasing the first supplies of water purification tablets and sanitation materials for the affected provinces.

Outstanding needs

This year's floods have struck many areas which have not yet fully recovered from the 1998 flood season. This year's first crop of rice has been destroyed just prior to being harvested and continued flooding of tens of thousands of hectares of farmland has made it impossible to plant the second harvest. As a result, the need for food is one of the main priorities in many areas.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Video footage taken during the first few days of the assessment mission in Anhui Province was edited and shown on Chinese Central TV (CCTV), and distributed by AP-TN and Reuters via satellite feed to their subscribers (including the European Broadcasting Union). This resulted in reports on major international news programmes, including the BBC, CNN, Sky News, and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. A selection of photos, also taken in Anhui, were distributed by the Associated Press wire service for use by print media.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

While the full picture of the effects of the latest flooding is just beginning to reach the Delegation in Beijing, the assessment team's report will enable the Federation and RCSC to further refine its objectives and strengthen the overall response to this disaster. It is however obvious from the initial reports from the field that one of the main problems facing the affected population is the lack of food, caused by crop losses. The loss of access to clean water supplies and the need to provide a safe and hygienic environment for the displaced, until such time as they can return to their homes, are also priority areas of concern.

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CHINA, FLOODS

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 17/99

PLEDGES RECEIVED

08/17/99

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL----->				8,500,000	31.26%	
AUSTRALIAN- RC		25,000	AUD	25,820	08/10/99	
CANADIAN - RC		100,000	CAD	95,930	07/20/99	RELIEF SUPPLIES
SWEDISH - RC		1,800,000	SEK	329,040	08/10/99	
UNITED STATES - GOVT		500,000	USD	785,000	08/10/99	WATSAN, FOOD, CLOTHING, QUILTS
AMERICAN - RC		100,000	USD	157,000	08/13/99	
BRITISH - GOVT		500,000	GBP	1,223,950	08/13/99	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				2,616,740 CHF	30.79%	

KIND AND SERVICES (INCL. PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
Iceland - RC	Delegate			15,000		
Netherlands - RC	Delegate			25,000		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				40,000 CHF	0.47%	

NOT REQUESTED IN APPEAL

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0 CHF		