

# **CHINA: FLOODS**

*1 March, 2000*

*appeal no. 17/99*

*situation report no. 7*

*period covered: 30 November 1999 - 30 January 2000*

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*After distributions of food, water purification and sanitation materials in four provinces affected by last year's floods, the Federation/RCSC relief operation is now in its final stage -- providing a one-month's food supply and winter quilts and blankets to the most needy victims. Funds are still needed for rice purchases. At least 60,000 of those left homeless are spending the winter in tents.*

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## ***The context***

Sustained rainfall from the middle of June until late September last year caused extensive flooding along the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze river in China. Though the floods in 1999 were less severe than those of 1998, the disaster was nevertheless far more serious than the seasonal floods of an 'average' year.

The International Federation and the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) responded by identifying target communities within the four worst affected provinces of Hunan, Hubei, Anhui and Jiangxi, and issued an international Appeal on 24 August 1999 seeking CHF 10.2 million in order to give more than 1 million people access to clean water and sanitation materials for two months, as well as to provide approximately 250,000 people with food.

The operation is now preparing to supply 10,000 particularly high risk victims with an additional one month's food ration as well as 20,000 people with quilts and clothing.

## ***Latest events***

Although the initial emergency phase is over, the effects of last year's flooding are still all too apparent in the four provinces covered by the International Federation's 1999 relief operation. The most severely affected victims of the disaster have in many cases been affected by floods on a recurring basis over the last five years: they are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, having lost their harvests and suffered damage to their houses and agricultural land year after year. In many instances, this means that they

are not eligible for government loans with which to purchase new seeds or food or to reconstruct their houses because they cannot provide any guarantees of repayment.

Floodwaters in Jiangxi and Hunan provinces have receded. In Anhui and Hubei provinces the local authorities are concentrating on draining water from low lying areas, as this is an important time of year in the agricultural calendar, when the fields are prepared for planting. In Hunan and Hubei provinces, the local authorities are assisting farmers by providing some rice seed free of charge to ensure that the spring planting can go ahead as planned. Harvesting of the main crops (rice, wheat, rapeseed) in the four provinces will take place between May and July.

Rehabilitation, reconstruction and relocation activities are continuing in the provinces and largely depend on government relief funds or loans, with input from the communities themselves. In some provinces, the temperatures in January fell as low as -11 degrees Celsius, creating extra hardship for those still living under canvas. The Provincial Branch of the Anhui Red Cross reports that approximately, 30,000 people are still living in temporary accommodation or tents. In Hunan province, some 28,200 people are living in temporary shelters allocated by the government or with friends and relatives. Tents supplied by local authorities have been erected in the ruins of former houses and are often lined on both the inside and outside with plastic sheeting which provides extra layers of insulation against the winter cold, snow and winds.

Mobile Red Cross medical teams are currently focusing on the dissemination of information on disease prevention and sanitation to affected communities. Depending on the location, medical services are provided to victims either free of charge or at a reduced price. The most commonly reported ailments at this time of year are colds, pneumonia, respiratory problems and intestinal disorders.

Feedback from the four provinces indicates that the main priorities at the moment are for rice, quilts/winter clothes, support for the reconstruction of houses, and medicines. With the limited funding available to assist flood victims (given the scale of the disaster and the number of people affected) and the targeted focus of the Appeal, the Federation\RCSC is able to respond to the needs of those Red Cross beneficiaries in the selected villages, through the distributions of rice and winter clothes and quilts during the first quarter of 2000.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

### **Programme Management**

Based on the findings of the joint International Federation\RCSC assessment team and with further input from the RCSC, support to the four provinces in the form of a three-month supply of rice and a two-month supply of water purification and sanitation materials was divided as follows:

|  | <b>Anhui</b> | <b>Hubei</b> | <b>Hunan</b> | <b>Jiangxi</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| Percentage of support to the provinces | 30%          | 20%          | 20%          | 30%            | 100%         |
| Number of villages                     | 53           | 73           | 37           | 46             | 209          |
| Number of beneficiaries                | 76,397       | 50,569       | 50,624       | 75,167         | 252,757      |

At the start of the emergency operation, the Federation/RCSC divided it into phases called plans of action which are linked to the objectives of the operation and are based on the immediate relief needs

and funding availability. To date the first five phases of the operation have been implemented and it is likely that there will be another two to complete the programme.

The division of the programme into phases enables the Federation\RCSC to manage, monitor and report on the implementation of the programme in a more structured way. The authorisation of each cash request (one cash request is needed per plan of action) by the Secretariat is dependent on the Delegation/RCSC being able to provide a financial project report on the utilisation of funds already transferred.

This approach eases the ‘tracking’ of funds through the system, from Geneva to the RCSC and then on to either the Branches or suppliers, depending whether the purchases are being made centrally or locally; it also facilitates donor reporting.

**Summary of Plans of Action 1 - 3**

By the end of November 1999, the International Federation\RCSC had completed three operational plans of action. This included the distribution of 2,151 metric tons of rice to 143,380 beneficiaries in 152 targeted villages in the 4 selected provinces, plus the distribution of some 1,989 boxes of sanitation materials and 40.8 million sachets of water purification powder, as follows:

|  | Anhui      | Hubei        | Hunan        | Jiangxi       | TOTAL         |
|--|------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Rice (metric tons)   | 781        | 391          | 391          | 589           | 2,152         |
| Water purification materials (sachets - each providing 10 litres of clean water) | 13 million | 8.16 million | 8.16 million | 11.52 million | 40.84 million |
| Sanitation materials (boxes)   | 637        | 397          | 397          | 558           | 1,989         |

The purchase of two vehicles was included in these initial plans of action (a third vehicle is included in the fifth plan of action) and the RCSC is in the process of seeking quotations.

**Plan of Action 4**

Since the start of the operation, the four Provincial Red Cross Branches have been responsible for the purchase of rice for distribution within their province and funds have been transferred from the RCSC’s headquarters bank account accordingly.

During December 1999 and January 2000, a total of 3,070 metric tons of rice was distributed by the Red Cross Branches to 204,684 identified beneficiaries in Anhui, Hubei, Hunan and Jiangxi provinces as detailed in the table below. By the end of Plan of Action 4, the International Federation\RCSC had met 45% of its original objective. Based on planning figures, the Delegation estimates that by the end of Plan of Action 6, an approximate total of 9,562 metric tons of rice will have been distributed, meaning that the Federation will have achieved 82% coverage of its original objective, to provide 250,000 people with a 3 month supply of rice and another 10,000 with a further one month's supply.

|                    | Anhui  | Hubei  | Hunan  | Jiangxi | TOTAL   |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Rice (metric tons) | 1,141  | 532    | 532    | 865     | 3,070   |
| Beneficiaries      | 76,044 | 35,487 | 35,487 | 57,666  | 204,684 |

Distribution points vary but most of those monitored by the Federation field delegates so far have been sited in villages or townships. Distributions are usually carried out in the open, with beneficiary lists detailing the number of family members and the number of bags displayed on boards. Each bag weighs

15 kilograms and represents a one-month ration. Individual beneficiaries are called forward in turn to receive and sign (or use a thumb print) for their rice.

Emphasis is now being placed on post monitoring distribution visits to meet with Red Cross staff and Red Cross beneficiaries. Sample beneficiary lists are made available to the RCSC\Federation to facilitate this process. Due to the distances to be covered in the field, it has not always been possible to randomly select villages to visit but in most instances delegates have been free to select and interview Red Cross beneficiaries. In addition, detailed discussions are often held with local village leaders, who have also provided valuable feedback on the programme, the current priorities, what has worked well and what could be improved.

The RCSC headquarters has been responsible for the centralised purchase of the water purification and sanitation items which have then been distributed to the provinces by rail. A total of 44.5 million water purification sachets (each sachet providing 10 litres of clean water) have been distributed as part of Plan of Action 4 .

Due to the expanded tendering operation for these items, the RCSC have managed to obtain major savings in the procurement process and this has enabled the Federation\RCSC to meet their objective of providing 60 million water purification sachets well within the budget given in the appeal. Any 'spare' funding earmarked for the purchase of water and sanitation items has been reallocated, with donor consent, for the purchase of food and winter jackets and quilts, reflecting the changing priorities and needs of the affected population over the winter months

Besides distributing relief items to flood victims, the Anhui, Hubei, Hunan and Jiangxi Provincial Red Cross Branches have also been going through their annual review and planning process for the year ahead. The Provincial Branch of the Hunan Red Cross has particularly specified that it plans to organise disaster preparedness and response training for its Red Cross staff.

Drawing on previous years' experience, emphasis will increasingly be placed on ensuring that the RCSC disaster preparedness centres have a ready supply of materials to allow the Red Cross to respond to future emergency situations. A small amount of funding has already been allocated for the replenishment of DP stocks. As the operation draws to a close, the Federation\RCSC will draw up a detailed plan to ensure that the DP Centres are restocked.

The Federation is looking for a replacement Finance Development Delegate to work with the RCSC to further develop and enhance the RCSC financial systems and the financial reporting system, given the large amounts of funding being transferred directly to the RCSC for various relief operations. In the meantime, a British Red Cross delegate will join the China Delegation on a short term mission to assist with the financial reporting on the 1999 floods operation.

The implementation of Plan of Action 5 is in its final stages, with the focus on the distribution of quilts\winter clothes and further rice distributions. Field reports are still being sent back to the RCSC headquarters in Beijing and further details will be available in the next situation report. Plan of Action 6 has now been authorised by the RCSC and the Delegation and a cash request has been submitted to Geneva.

### **Review of the 1999 Floods Operation**

Terms of Reference for an external operational review of the 1999 floods programme have now been drawn up. The review team will comprise three people and will co-ordinate closely with the RCSC and the Delegation in Beijing. The review will take place during the first two weeks of March and will examine:

- the impact and appropriateness of the 1999 floods programme,
- the effectiveness of the targeting of the beneficiaries,

-- the interaction and co-ordination with local authorities and other agencies and how this might be further improved for future programmes to ensure that there is no duplication of effort and resources.

## ***Outstanding needs***

The Appeal is now 67,82% covered by funding. To enable the International Federation\RCSC to meet their original objective, and to bridge the difficult period between winter and spring and before the next harvest, further funds are needed for the purchase of rice.

Four vehicles were included in the appeal, one to be allocated to each of the four Provinces covered by the programme, to facilitate communication and access to affected communities. So far, funding has been received for three vehicles; the Federation is seeking an additional CHF 15,000 to enable the RCSC to purchase the fourth vehicle.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

Red Cross food distributions have received wide coverage in the local media, and visits by Federation delegates to the provinces have been covered by local TV stations and newspapers.

The Regional Information Delegate in Kuala Lumpur and the Information Delegate assigned to the China Floods Operation for a four month period have worked closely together in co-operation with the RCSC to produce a Red Cross 'Insight' publication on the 1999 floods. This has now been published in English. It will be circulated widely and translated into Chinese for distribution in country.

Articles on the China Floods Operation have also appeared in the latest Asia\Pacific Focus publication. The Delegation, continues to provide up dated information to the Regional Information Delegate in Kuala Lumpur to be placed on the Asia\Pacific website or in forthcoming Red Cross publications.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

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