

## ***EAST ASIA: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE***

*17 November  
2000*

*appeal no. 01.29/2000  
situation report no. 1  
period covered: 1 January - 31 October 2000*

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*In October 1999, a status agreement was signed between the Federation and the government of China, paving the way for the opening of the East Asia regional office in Beijing in February 2000. Work is continuing to establish fully the delegation, given numerous administrative requirements, which is staffed by a head of regional office, a finance development delegate and a regional relief delegate. During the year, the region's vulnerability to natural disasters has resulted in the launching of three emergency appeals for earthquakes in China, snowfalls in Mongolia and a typhoon in the DPR Korea. Work is progressing on the definition of support to be provided by the regional office particularly in the area of disaster preparedness and capacity building.*

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### ***The context***

The East Asia region covers a large geographical area and is one of the most populous regions in the world, including the countries of China (1.3 billion), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (22.5 million), Japan (125.4 million), Mongolia (2.5 million) and the Republic of Korea (45.3 million). The region is characterised by significant social, political, cultural and economic diversities and several language groups. Added to which, the region is extremely prone to natural disasters: floods, drought, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, snowfall, typhoons and cyclones which have important social and economic consequences.

Throughout the reporting period, there has been significant activity aimed at improving relationships between countries in the region. Increasingly, linked economies are helping the process of regional integration and investment from Japan, the Republic of Korea (RoK), China and Mongolia is an important contributor to regional economic growth.

Vulnerability in the region is aggravated by a combination of regularly occurring natural disasters, economic deprivation and social exclusion. The diversity of the region is reflected in the five National Societies in terms of their funding base, opportunities and capacities. Through the establishment of a regional office in Beijing in February 2000, the Federation's main aim is to increase the level and quality of co-operation between National Societies in the East Asia region and the Asia and Pacific region as a whole, particularly to boost capacity building initiatives.

## *Latest events*

During the year, a series of natural disasters have occurred throughout the East Asia region which have rendered many people vulnerable, homeless and with a loss of income or livelihood. A severe summer drought throughout Mongolia and northern China has posed a serious threat for crop production and animal husbandry. The FAO reports that overall rice, maize and wheat production in China for 2000 is likely to be lower than expected due to a combination of drought, typhoon, storm activity and flood damage occurring at critical stages in the growing period. Official reports indicate that this year's drought has been the worst in 20 years damaging some 31 million hectares of summer and autumn crops.

The annual cycle of destructive and widespread flooding occurred along the Yangtze river this year, but was not as catastrophic as in previous years. Thousands of people who had to leave their homes following the 1999 floods along the Yangtze river spent the winter in tents or temporary accommodation. Over one million people were affected by a devastating earthquake which struck Yunnan province in January forcing thousands of people to evacuate their homes and live in temporary shelters and tents over the winter months.

Throughout the year, Mongolia has experienced steppe fires, outbreaks of disease amongst livestock, an infestation of rodents and a severe summer drought, following a harsh winter characterised by heavy snowfalls and extremely low temperatures. Over 450,000 people in 13 aimags (provinces) were affected by last winter which also resulted in the death of over two million head of livestock, the mainstay of the rural economy and the main source of food for herders and their families. The impact of last winter and this summer's severe drought do not augur well for the coming winter and many predict that conditions are likely to be as harsh as last year.

The eruption of Mt Usu in Japan in March 2000, led to the evacuation of many from their homes with the Japanese Red Cross playing an important role in the provision of emergency relief and medical assistance. An earthquake measuring 7.3 on the Richter scale struck the region of Chugoku in October causing some injuries, landslides and damage to infrastructure.

Drought and severe storm damage during the summer of 2000 in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has caused significant structural damage and forced 10,000 people to evacuate their homes. The scale of damage exceeded that of other natural disasters in the DPRK since 1995.

Throughout this year, there has been a marked increase in the number of foreign government delegations visiting the DPRK. High level talks have also taken place between Japan and the DPRK and the DPRK and China during the year. The historic meeting held between the leaders of the two Koreas in June 2000 and the subsequent meetings with high level representatives marked the start of a process designed to promote future co-operation, support and contact on the Korean peninsula. Both

regionally and internationally, this has been seen as an important step towards further reconciliation and an improvement of relations with other countries. Japan has announced significant loans and a humanitarian assistance package. The Red Cross Societies in the two Koreas have been instrumental in leading the process of family reunions which started in August 2000.

China continues to go through a period of economic transition which is presenting many challenges to the Chinese leadership. Whilst China's pending membership of the World Trade Organisation is generally seen as positive, many commentators have pointed out that in the short and medium term this is likely to lead to an increase in unemployment.

A general election held in Mongolia in July 2000 saw the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party gain the vast majority of seats in Parliament over the coalition of democratic parties who have been in office for the past 4 years.

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

### **Regional Assistance Strategy •**

A status agreement between the International Federation and the government of China was signed in October 1999 paving the way for the opening of the East Asia regional office in Beijing.

The official opening of the regional office was attended by the Secretary General of the Federation, the Director of the Federation's Asia and Pacific department and other key representatives from the East Asia and South East Asia delegations, the ICRC's regional office in Bangkok, Embassies, international organisations and press/media agencies in Beijing. It was preceded by a regional meeting attended by the Secretaries General from the 5 National Societies to continue discussions on future regional co-operation and assistance.

A new head of regional office (HoRO) took up position in May 2000, since when introductory meetings have been held with the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) leadership and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The HoRO attended the 50th Anniversary of the Hong Kong branch of the RCSC which was marked by a working seminar focusing on IHL, regional co-operation and support to youth and blood initiatives. The HoRO also visited a branch of the RCSC not previously involved in Federation supported programmes and has made familiarisation visits to the DPRK, Japan, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea (ROK). The visit to Japan included a working group meeting with heads of regional delegations from the Asia and Pacific region (Bangkok, Suva and Delhi) and a representative from the Australian Red Cross to discuss the regional relief network.

National Societies in the region and the regional office are supported by the regional finance unit located in Kuala Lumpur and the information unit of the South East Asia regional delegation.

Delegates in the regional office have also met with other Red Cross Societies supporting bilateral programmes in China and providing support to Federation funded programmes in the DPRK and Mongolia.

During the reporting period, a number of regionally recruited delegates took up positions with the Federation: the Japanese Red Cross provided a field delegate for a 4 month period for the Mongolia Snowfalls operation, the Singapore Red Cross has provided a field delegate for the DPRK typhoon operation and the DPRK Red Cross has provided a head of delegation for Armenia. A member of the RCSC's international department spent 3 months in the Secretariat's Asia and Pacific department as a staff on loan and will be replaced by another member of the RCSC in November.

Despite continuing efforts to establish the regional office in Beijing, the office is not yet fully functional as a result of the extensive and lengthy administrative procedures required by the government of China. The regional office is currently staffed by a head of office, a regional relief delegate, a finance development delegate who works solely with the RCSC and three members of staff on loan from the RCSC.

Three emergency appeals have been launched for the East Asia region this year:

China Earthquakes 02/2000 in January 2000; Mongolia Snowfalls 5/2000 in February 2000 and DPR Korea Typhoon 25/2000 in September 2000.

Priorities for the remainder of the year for the regional office will be to complete the establishment of the regional office and to work on the development of the regional assistance strategy for the East Asia region and a country assistance strategy for China. In addition, the regional office will work with the 5 National Societies to plan and organise workshops and meetings for the year 2001. The HoRO will also attend the basic training course for delegates being held in Japan in November as the Federation resource person.

#### **Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) •**

With the opening of the regional office, the Federation will be able to provide more long term and consistent support to the RCSC. Discussions regarding future support to the RCSC by the International Federation are ongoing, though key projects have been identified.

#### **Democratic People's Republic of Korea •**

The Beijing regional office continues to provide logistical support to the DPRK delegation in Pyongyang.

#### **Japan •**

The President of the Japanese Red Cross Society visited China in June 2000 and held meetings with the RCSC and the regional office.

#### **Mongolia •**

With the closing of the Federation's representative position in Mongolia in December 1999, the regional office also manages support to the Mongolian Red Cross in accordance with existing development plans.

In response to the extremely severe winter in Mongolia, the regional relief delegate worked with the MRCS to draw up a package of assistance and the drafting of an emergency appeal to support those affected. Since March, a field delegate has been positioned in Mongolia to provide support to the MRCS in this relief operation. The delegation's office in Ulaan Baatar is also manned by two national members of staff and is supported by the South East Asia's regional finance unit on all financial matters.

#### **Disaster Response •**

##### *China Floods Operation 1999, appeal No 17/99*

A three person review team carried out an evaluation of the 1999 China floods operation in February 2000, holding extensive meetings with the RCSC at headquarters, provincial, prefecture, county and township levels as well as with representatives from relevant Ministries and UN agencies. This review, as with previous assessments and evaluations, is seen as part of the ongoing learning process for both the Federation and the RCSC. The 1999 China floods operation has now been completed. Situation reports on this emergency relief operation have been released on a regular basis.

##### *China Earthquakes 2000, appeal No 02/2000*

Following a series of earthquakes which struck various provinces of China in the latter stages of 1999 and in January 2000, the Federation launched an emergency appeal to provide food assistance to 50,000 beneficiaries over a 3 month period and 80,000 quilts and blankets. Two distributions have been carried out completing this operation.

The RCSC and the regional office will continue to liaise closely on any natural disasters that occur in China.

### **Disaster Preparedness •**

With the enormous impact of natural disasters within China, in particular the seasonal cycle of flooding, the RCSC and the delegation will build on the experience gained from flood and earthquake operations in recent years to set up a comprehensive disaster preparedness plan for 2001 onwards.

Two one week relief seminars were held in Inner Mongolia and Guangdong for representatives from the provincial branches. The purpose of these meetings was to present an update on the RCSC rules and regulations with regard to relief operations and to discuss the targeting and selection of beneficiaries. The regional office made a presentation on the Federation's Emergency Appeal process and reporting procedures at both seminars.

As part of the country assistance strategy, a project to support the strengthening of the RCSC disaster preparedness capacity through further training, is being drawn up by the RCSC and the regional office.

### **Capacity Building / Finance Development Project •**

A three year finance development programme designed in 1999 on the basis of experiences gained during the 1998 and 1999 flood operations is now underway. Its aim is to assist the RCSC to strengthen its financial management and reporting capacity through the development of a computerised accounting system, the compilation of consolidated accounts and training opportunities for financial and non financial managers.

The finance development delegate, who spent 10 months in China during 1999 working with the RCSC on this project, returned for four months at the start of this year. The focus of this mission was as follows:

- to assist with the financial monitoring and reporting of the 1999 floods operation.
- to work with the RCSC finance department on the continued development of a quarterly financial reporting system for the provincial Red Cross branches.
- to hand over to the new incoming finance development delegate who arrived in June.

The new Canadian Red Cross funded finance development delegate is a native Mandarin speaker which should ease communications between the delegation and the RCSC finance department. The delegate arrived in June and has carried out familiarisation visits to the Red Cross branches of Hubei, Hunan, Yunnan, Guangxi provinces and Inner Mongolia autonomous region. The purpose of these visits has been to gain an increased understanding of the current financial systems in place and the relationship between headquarters and the provinces and to make an assessment of training needs. Although the finance development project team still needs to be formalised, meetings have been held with accounting software producers to identify a suitable package for the provincial branches.

## ***Outstanding needs***

Current coverage of the appeal stands at 42 per cent and contributions are encouraged to ensure the success of the regional programmes.

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

The HoRO has held introductory meetings with representatives of the UNHCR, WFP, UNDP and has had contact with a number of NGOs based in China. The regional office has had direct contact with the AusAID, WHO and UNHCR offices in Beijing throughout the year as well as with APTN, Reuters and other international media. Emergency appeals and situation reports which relate to the region are regularly circulated to Embassies, international media and other international organisations based in Beijing.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

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**This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>**

<b>East Asia</b>						ANNEX 1
<b>APPEAL No. 01.29/2000</b>		<b>PLEDGES RECEIVED</b>				11/16/00
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>CASH</b>						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				1,332,000		<b>TOTAL COVERAGE 42.3%</b>
<b>Balance carried forward from 1999</b>				<b>463,980</b>		
REALLOCATION OF CASH				100,000		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				563,980	CHF	42.3%
<b>KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%
<b>ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
<b>THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:</b>						
P54900, PCN001						