

CAMBODIA: FLOODS

10 August 2000

Information Bulletin N° 2

The Disaster

Since mid-July localised thunderstorms and the flooding Mekong River and its tributaries have affected 10 provinces and the Municipality of Phnom Penh. Thousands of families have been forced to seek safety on higher ground and tens of thousands of hectares of croplands have been inundated with flood waters. Earlier than normal heavy rains, excessive run-offs due to deforestation and river silt accumulation have caused the Mekong River to overflow its banks flooding five provinces of Kratie, Stung Treng, Prey Veng, Kandal, Kompong Cham and Phnom Penh City. Thunderstorms and heavy downpours sweeping across Cambodia have caused localised flooding in five provinces of Kompong Thom, Koh Kong, Seim Reip, Oddor Meanchey and Svay Reng.

Official government estimates are 45,214 affected families; 116,874 affected croplands; 5,400 flooded homes and 15 deaths directly attributed to the flooding. The Royal Cambodian Government issued warnings of the impending Mekong River flooding in early July, allowing ample opportunity for families, communities and villages to initiate preparations and take necessary steps to ensure the safety of persons, possessions, food supplies and livestock.

These heavy rains in Cambodia and the upper Mekong River watershed area of Southern China, Laos, Northern Thailand and Northern Vietnam had come before most of the crops were harvested. Many thousands of hectares of croplands are still under water. The government officials estimate as much as 63, 000 hectares of rice and subsidiary crops may be destroyed.

The preliminary assessment and reports from various field units indicate that food and health and sanitation issues are of primary concern. The adequate warning of the impending flooding, allowed most communities to safeguarded there food supplies. However, family reserve food stocks are dwindling and as with any major flood, safe drinking water and hygiene practices and waterborne diseases are a serious concern.

The Mekong River is still at extremely high levels. The rate of water decline has slowed considerably as waters continue to percolate through the saturated soil and surface runoff migrates through tributaries and newly formed channels. The threat of further rains and serious flooding is realistic as the

meteorological data and forecasters predict additional monsoon rains. Historically, the worst period is through September with the monsoon season ending late November, early December.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

In response to the immediate emergency needs of the most vulnerable population, the Cambodian Red Cross Society (CRCS) is working in partnership with the Royal Government National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM).

The NCDM and CRCS continue to co-ordinate response and relief activities at the national and provincial level on a daily basis to ensure all identified needs are met without duplication of service.

The CRCS and NCDM formalised roles and responsibilities last week by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) emphasizing data gathering and sharing, joint damage/needs assessment teams, scheduling regular co-ordination meetings with CRC and the Federation in order to share, exchange information and collaborate with NGOs, IOs and other involved agencies. The MoU will stay in force throughout the emergency.

Joint government and CRCS needs assessment teams are currently in 5 of the most seriously affected provinces of Kandal, Prey Veng, Kompong Cham, Kratie, Stung Treng and another team is in Phnom Penh City. The joint teams include Red Cross Volunteers trained in disaster preparedness and assessment practices. The teams are working closely with communities, village and community officials to identify the specific needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised flood victims.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has asked the CRCS to assume responsibility for relief activity in 6 provinces covering 14 districts of the most seriously affected areas. The government has also asked the CRCS to assist victims in 3 of Phnom Penh City's most heavily affected districts. The Phnom Penh phase of the relief operation is conducted in close co-operation and in co-ordination with the Municipal branch of the CRCS and municipal officials. To date, the CRCS has assisted or is planning to assist 9,393 families or 45,327 individuals. The ECHO funded household kits procured earlier this year as precautionary measure in case of future flooding have been distributed to the families which lost their household possessions. Action Against Hunger kits pre-positioned at the Provincial Red Cross Office in Kompong Cham are also used to assist the victims.

Working closely with the CRCS, the Royal Cambodian Government has distributed 60 metric tons of rice, 11,800 sand bags, 1,600 meters of plastic sheeting and 8,000 litres of fuel. Additional plans announced by the Prime Minister call for distribution of another 1,200 metric tons of rice seed furnished by the government and FAO. The requests from other ministries will include distributions of up to 600 metric tons of rice. The NCDM will allocate an additional quantity 150,000 sand bags and upto 80,000 litres of fuel to assist provincial authorities. On 9 August, the United States Ambassador to Cambodia donated through the American Red Cross USD 25,000 to the CRCS as USAID support in response to the CRCS President's local emergency appeal for assistance. The money will be used for the procurement of household emergency kits. For details on received donations, please see Annex 1. Detailed distribution lists are available from the South-East Asia Desk at the Federation Secretariat.

The CRCS continues to maintain close co-operation and information exchange with the United Nations World Food Program (WFP). Joint assessment teams are in the process of planning and identifying the short and long term needs of permanently dislocated families in the Phnom Penh area. The government authorities have allocated funds for the procurement of land as well as for rehabilitation of infrastructure in places of relocation of affected families. The WFP continues to monitor the overall situation in Cambodia and is in constant communication with field units, NGOs and CRCS.

The United Nations Office for Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has sent an advisor to Cambodia to assess the situation. Field visits and several consultations and discussions have taken place with the Federation, NCDM, WFP, UNDP and other organizations.

Needs

The Federation continues to monitor the situation and further needs will be reported as the situation develops.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Hiroshi Higashiura
Director
Asia Pacific Department

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

CAMBODIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY (CRCS)

**List of donations received
by 10 August 2000 in response to the CRCS
Local Emergency Appeal launched on 27 July 2000**

No.	Type				
1.00	CASH	Riels 72'000'000.00	=	\$ 20'685	
		USD 54'189.00	in which	\$ 16'189	
				\$ 13'000	earmarked for 50 MT of rice
				\$ 25'000	earmarked for household kits
		Total			
2.00	KIND	Rice	609.00	MT	
		Medicaments	16.00	items	valued \$ 4'042.40 USD
		Noodles	57.00	cartons	
		Canned fishes	120.00	cartons	
		Scarf	1'000	pieces	
		Clothes	5'000	sets	

Phnom Penh, 10 August 2000