

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

MYANMAR: FLOODS

13 June 2001

Information Bulletin N° 01/01

DREF Allocated: CHF 56,180

This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below. An appeal is not being considered, but a DREF allocation of CHF 56,180 has been released, and a number of donor's have expressed an interest in covering any further needs. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the quarterly DREF update.

The Situation

Torrential rains at the beginning of the rainy season caused the Mongdaing Reservoir (some 67 km south of the central city of Mandalay, approximately 560 km north of the capital Yangon) to burst its banks during the early hours of Saturday 2 June 2001, leading to severe flooding in the townships of Meiktila (population of 296,399) and Wundwin (population of 205,186). The flood started at 07:00 AM and peaked around 11.30 AM. The floods were widespread throughout Meiktila, whereas the flood waters were more condensed in Wundwin. Official sources indicate that 51 dead bodies have been found, but at least 400 people are still missing according to unofficial sources. At this stage the number of homeless is difficult to estimate but at least 550 households are affected in Wundwin and another two hundred in Meiktila (an estimated total of over 4,000 persons). Approximately 10% of these are female-headed households, and some children are believed to be orphaned but this is also difficult to ascertain as only limited official information has been released. Thousands more have been affected to varying degrees as a result of the flooding. Initial information also indicates some 700 houses have been completely destroyed, with severe damage to latrines, wells and other infrastructure (schools, power lines, etc.). Local textile factories are reportedly operational as they are on higher ground.

The Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) has requested the immediate assistance of the International Federation to assist nearly four thousand homeless and vulnerable people (some 750 families) in Meiktila and Wundwin. While the waters have now receded the flood occurred just before the planting season and it is still too early to judge how much the planting will be delayed due to the floods and how this will, in turn, affect the November harvest.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

CHF 56,180 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to start the delivery of assistance. Myanmar Red Cross volunteers helped rescue 800 people from the floodwaters and administered first aid treatment. The Society has provided 2,100 articles of clothing, 2,000 cakes of soap and some medical supplies including syringes and gloves from the central stock in Yangon, as well as some fresh water. Their relief effort has exhausted most of their central supplies. Red Cross volunteers have also assisted with food distribution, predominantly rice and curry. This food has been provided by the government, private donors and AMDA (Association of Medical Doctors of

Asia). One young female Red Cross volunteer died while returning from assisting flood victims to help her own family during the height of the flood.

Government Action w

Central and provincial authorities responded quickly to the flood. A number of people are being housed in temporary accommodation in schools and monasteries. Others are cared for by friends and relatives, and five temporary camps in Wundwin are currently being consolidated into one or two housing 2,172 people.

Two to three gallons of water per household are being provided to the homeless by a combination of existing water supplies in monasteries and towns plus additional municipal supplies. Existing latrines plus some temporary trench latrines are being used.

The government has provided the homeless families with one set of kitchen utensils, a blanket and basic food supplies (rice and water). Food supplies are distributed twice daily with the participation of Red Cross volunteers. The government has also commenced building 473 temporary thatched houses for the homeless in Wundwin.

Other Agencies' Action w

The Myanmar Red Cross and the Federation's Delegation in Myanmar are among the very few international agencies or NGOs who have been granted access to the area. AMDA, who have a project office in Meiktila, have been able to provide 500 articles of clothing, latrine packs and 1,000 blankets. They have additional plans for food relief. Other national NGOs are also involved in the local response. UNICEF has also indicated it will provide relief goods although the nature of such goods is yet to be determined.

Coordination w

The International Federation, Myanmar Red Cross and AMDA are effectively coordinating their efforts.

Immediate Needs •

From June to August the Myanmar Red Cross and the Federation plan to provide emergency relief supplies in the form of food commodities, food containers, blankets, plastic sheeting for shelter, protective clothing, water containers and water purification tablets to 750 homeless and most vulnerable families (some 4,000 people) affected by the flooding in Wundwin and Mektilla. This is based on a preliminary assessment which revealed the following needs:

Relief

Shelter

The heavy rains have brought unusually cool weather, and blankets and plastic sheeting are needed for homeless families, especially those who are currently being housed in monasteries with poor facilities.

Food

The food currently provided to homeless families consists of rice and a curry. However, because of the limited availability of local supplies, emergency food is an immediate priority. Rice, oil, salt, pulses and sardines will be distributed to the homeless for six weeks. Food storage containers are also necessary so that food will not perish. Each family has already been provided with one set of utensils. The possible need for further food supplies will be assessed later.

Health

Medicines

A small number of gastro-enteritis cases have been reported. At the moment the government has not indicated the need for emergency drugs. The MRCS and Federation country delegation will continue to monitor the situation.

Water and Sanitation

The Red Cross is assisting the local authority with supplying water via government tankers to the people living in temporary camps and shelters. The Red Cross will disinfect the water in the tankers prior to distribution, and 900 water purification tablets (each treating 1,000 litres) will be required to be used by the Red Cross, to provide an anticipated 30,000 litres/day of water for an 30 days period. The Red Cross personnel and volunteers will be trained in the correct use of the purification tablets and monitoring of the chlorine level in the tankers. To facilitate the storage of water, large 4 gallon (15 litres) water storage containers are needed (two containers per family).

Health Education

An information sheet outlining basic hygiene practices and safe water storage will be distributed with the water containers.

Anticipated Later Needs (September) •

Relief/DP - Capacity building of the MRCS

The present relief operation has highlighted the need for DP training. Many volunteers have very limited knowledge of how to adequately respond in disaster situations. Additional First Aid and disaster preparedness training courses, including the development of new manuals on disaster preparedness for Red Cross volunteers need to be developed. Furthermore, the MRCS is in the process of a restructuring and a new disaster preparedness division was established about a month ago and a new health division will be established soon. There might be a need to further strengthen MRCS activities at the central level through such activities as the provision of office equipment and refurbishment of relief goods.

Health

The already low stock of First Aid supplies has been depleted, and there is a need to replenish these supplies as the MRCS prepares for the annual flooding season and other potential emergencies. Some 65 first aid kits and some replenishment stocks will be procured. The kits will be assigned to teams of Red Cross volunteers, while the stocks will be placed at branch offices following an established replenishment scheme.

Water and Sanitation

Based on assessments currently underway, the rehabilitation of water wells is anticipated in the next phase of the operation. The government is also currently assessing the number of latrines destroyed as a result of the floods, and the Red Cross branch will be active in this effort. More specifically, a community based approach will be carried out by the Red Cross focusing on:

- the rehabilitation or replacement of water points.
- repair or construction of new latrines.
- environmental sanitation.
- hygiene awareness and health promotion.

Capacity of the National Society •

The MRCS has some degree of disaster experience, most recently with the Pegu floods of 1997. The MRCS is a long-established National Society with 324 branches throughout the country and up to 300,000 volunteers. The Wundwin Red Cross branch has 100 active Red Cross volunteers, and Meiktila has 550 active Red Cross volunteers. The local Township Medical Officer is traditionally the chairman of the Red Cross branch and has both government experience and Red Cross knowledge.

The MRCS participates in the local Disaster Committee based in Wundwin which meets regularly to coordinate efforts. The head of the MRCS disaster preparedness division will be overseeing the eventual distribution of relief goods along with the Myanmar Delegation, supported by the regional disaster management unit in Bangkok. The MRCS has been constrained by a lack of human capacity at headquarters for some time and this operation will provide the opportunity to build much needed capacity.

Present Capacity of the Federation in Myanmar •

The International Federation has two delegates in the country, the head of delegation and a health delegate. The Federation hopes to secure the services of a relief delegate for a short period of time to augment the capacity to respond. The Regional Delegation in Bangkok will provide administrative and technical support.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

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