

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

RUSSIAN FEDERATION: FLOODS IN EASTERN SIBERIA

21 May 2001

Information Bulletin N° 1/01

DREF Allocated: CHF 50,000

This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below. A DREF allocation of CHF 50,000 has been released, and the Federation is assessing further needs. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the quarterly DREF update.

The Situation

The worst spring flooding in the Lena River in Yakutia, eastern Siberia has prompted more than 12,000 people to assist in rescue and emergency operations. The town of Lensk with a population of 37,800 people is at the centre of this disaster. In many towns electricity, heating and water supply systems are out of commission and temperatures at night often go down to minus 1C.

Explosives and bombs are being used to break apart huge chunks of ice jamming the Siberian rivers and causing them to flood. Helicopters are rescuing hundreds of people trapped on their rooftops by the rising waters. The evacuated are being accommodated in temporary camps in safe areas or brought to the capital city of Yakutsk. Those affected are being supplied with food and medical care.

According to the Emergencies Ministry, the level of water in the Lena near the town of Lensk reached a level of 19.5-meter by May 18, six meters above the critical point. Despite the government efforts to stem the flooding, the water continues to rise, placing more people at risk.

Local officials could not assess the extent of the damage done by the floods but said the river fleet had been totally destroyed and the reoccupation of hundreds of buildings eroded by the water was in doubt. Since May 13 when the disaster began the floods have left almost 5,000 homes under water in 41 towns and villages in Yakutia. Local authorities initial estimates indicate that more than 150,000 people have been affected.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Since 13 May when the floods inundated the first settlements in Yakutia and the Government declared an emergency the Yakutsk Red Cross has been working on an emergency basis in close co-operation with the Republican Disasters Centre. Some 13 tons of humanitarian aid including food, medicines, hygiene kits, blankets and pillows have been delivered by the Yakutia Red Cross on EMERCOM helicopters to the villages of Hundyga, Teplky Kluch, Lensk of the Olekmin and Khangalass regions along the Lena and its tributaries to support the people evacuated to temporary camps. In the village of Teplky Kluch the Red

Cross equipped evacuation centre is assisting 100 people with pillows and blankets, and will supply food for 10 days. Much of the flooding has occurred in rural areas in the sparsely populated region, making the delivery of assistance to these areas difficult.

The **Irkutsk** region in eastern Siberia is also been badly affected by the floods, and many of the citizens from its northern towns of Ust-Kut (57,000) and Kirensk (17,000) have been evacuated. The Irkutsk Red Cross has delivered 20 tons of food to the affected areas. In addition, they will provide clean water for the powdered baby food previously supplied to Kirensk. The Red Cross has also received some 20 tons of food for the affected area from the American Red Cross.

Needs

Food, warm clothes, footwear, blankets, bedsheets and water filters are urgently needed.

For further details please contact:

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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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