

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

TAJIKISTAN AND UZBEKISTAN: DROUGHT

20 July 2001

Information Bulletin N° 01

DREF Allocated: CHF 35,000

- This information bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below. An allocation of CHF 35,000 has been released from the International Federation's disaster relief emergency fund (DREF) to support the deployment of two Field Assessment and Coordination Teams (FACT) to assess levels of vulnerability and needs in drought-hit Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider international support through an Appeal.

The Situation

Tajikistan

Recent low rainfall looks set to prolong the devastating effects of the ongoing drought in Tajikistan which has affected almost two million people. The International Federation is sending another assessment team to receive latest reports from the worst affected areas.

Tajikistan has suffered three years of low rainfall and snowfall and in September 2000 the International Federation launched an Emergency Appeal (No. 26/2000) seeking CHF 22.6 million to assist 250,000 people with food, seeds, water and sanitation and public health activities. (For details on this operation, please refer to the situation reports on the appeal 26/00, posted on the Federation's web-site.)

The current drought emergency operation is entering its final stages but latest reports indicate the crisis is set to continue. Rainfall in the critical months of March and April was only 44 per cent of the long-time average.

The Tajik Ministry of Agriculture says 172,000 hectares out of 200,000 hectares of rain-fed land have suffered from drought. It is estimated that 50 per cent of cereal harvest in irrigated areas has been destroyed. The 2001 crop is reported to be 200,000 tonnes less than in 2000, an estimated loss of USD 47 million. This year's harvest of grain and cereals is likely to equal only 50 per cent of last year's level.

On 23 May 2001, the President of Tajikistan appealed to the international community for urgent food aid totalling 500,000 tonnes of wheat. The appeal also requested assistance in oil, meat, sugar and dairy products.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) carried out a crop and food supply assessment between 21 June and 3 July 2001. Preliminary results confirm a food shortage, caused by climatic factors. The drought has been compounded by long-lasting structural problems, mainly caused by poor water-management and dysfunctional irrigation systems

Uzbekistan

On 10 July, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan appealed to the UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs for international assistance after a second consecutive year of drought. According to the government, north-western provinces are worst affected, with crop fields reduced to half of the original size.

The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that up to 600,000 households south of the Aral Sea have lost their crops and do not have secure drinking water supplies. There are also food problems in urban areas with a steady increase in prices. The drought has been exacerbated by a number of structural factors, mainly related to poor water management and lack of maintenance of existing irrigation systems.

The government has identified water, sanitation and health as the priorities and the most pressing needs include:

- supply of equipment for decontamination of water and overall epidemiological control;
- provision of medicines and medical equipment for maternity clinics and mother-and-child health care facilities;
- supply of hygiene and sanitary material at schools and pre-school institutions;
- provision of water pumps and water purification stations;
- procurement of vehicles/water trucks.

An OCHA and UNDP joint assessment in the first week of July pinpointed immediate measures to improve drinking water supplies. These include repair and maintenance of existing desalinization facilities, improved water handling and storage at household level, water trucking and installation of hand pumps. Food assistance is also necessary to prevent further migration from affected areas. Although no formal appeal for food assistance was made by the government, OCHA reported that food will be accepted.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Federation will deploy two Field Assessment and Coordination Teams (FACT) to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan respectively, between 29 July and 7 August. The teams will assess vulnerability levels and plan the Federation's emergency operation. A new drought-related emergency appeal may be launched by mid-August.

The missions comprise a team leader from the Federation's secretariat, two representatives of the Norwegian Red Cross, one representative each from Austrian Red Cross, German Red Cross, Hellenic Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, Swedish Red Cross, the European Union/Red Cross liaison bureau, as well as regional disaster preparedness and health delegates, a relief officer, Tajikistan delegation's FACT representative/reporting delegate, disaster preparedness and development officers from the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan.

Regular information on the progress of the FACT mission and the results of the assessment in the two countries will be shared with partners in the coming weeks.

For a full description of National Societies profiles, see www.ifrc.org

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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