

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

VIETNAM: FLOODS

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This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. 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

Seasonal monsoon rains since mid-August have caused extensive flooding in six Mekong Delta provinces of southern Vietnam. The most seriously affected provinces are An Giang and Dong Thap, with all districts flooded. Long An, Tien Giang, Can Tho and Kien Giang are also affected (with moderate flooding in about half of each province). The average flood water level in each of these provinces is over 1 metre.

Floodwaters reached peak levels in mid-September and are now slowly receding. However, water levels at the two principal gauging stations on the Vietnam-Cambodian border remain well above Alarm Level III (the very dangerous flood condition) and are forecast to remain that way, at least until the end of the month.

Flood water levels of the Mekong River Delta are complex, with levels in some areas receding slowly whilst increasing in others. Flood water levels in the downstream areas are increasing due to the influence of high tides. Flood levels remain above Alarm Level III at the two gauging centres close to the Vietnam/Cambodian border. The flood water level at the Tan Chau Gauging Station on the Tien River, (on the border between An Giang and Dong Thap Provinces) was at 4.56 meters (0.36 meters above Alarm Level III = 4.20 meters) whilst the flood water level for the Hau River at the Chau Doc Gauging Station (in An Giang Province) was at 4.30 meters (0.80 meters above Alarm Level III = 3.50 meters). These flood water levels were from 0.05 to 0.25 meters lower than the same flood water levels last year.

Levels are forecast to continue to recede slowly at the upstream gauging stations whilst those downstream will change under the influence of the tide.

According to the latest damage summary report from the government's Central Committee for Storm and Flood Control (CCFSC) over 250,000 houses are inundated and almost 40,000ha of agricultural land flooded. Over 1,400 schools are flooded, and as a consequence, over 300,000 children are not able to attend school.

To date 221 persons, of whom 181 are children, have died.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Red Cross centres in each province were quick to mobilise to assist the local authorities in the early stages of the flood response operations. From the outset of the disaster, Red Cross staff and volunteers in the worst affected areas participated in relief operations alongside the local authorities. During this period of emergency relief (September/October) Red Cross staff and volunteers in co-ordination with the local authorities and other organisations undertook rapid needs assessments in the communes affected by the floods.

Local Red Cross staff and volunteers have been instrumental in the evacuation of those affected by the floods to safe areas, and have administered emergency “on the spot” relief distributions to poor households or those in great difficulty. These initial emergency distributions have included the provision of: life-buoys, lifejackets, lifeboats plastic sheeting, food, water purification tablets (WPT) and materials for building makeshift houses. The Red Cross chapters in the affected provinces have distributed from 1 to 3MT of food from their reserves. A total of 23MT of rice and 6,000 packages of instant noodles have been distributed to 1,700 households.

As well as providing technical advice, coordination and support to the rescue and relief operations, the Vietnam Red Cross Society Headquarters have released over CHF20,000 for the emergency relief period to assist the affected provinces.

On October 3rd, the Red Cross facilitated a meeting bringing together for the first time representatives from the UN (UNDP, UNICEF), INGOs (including World Vision, CRS, SCF) and senior representatives from the Government’s CCFSC. The meeting focused on issues of cooperation & coordination during times of disaster, but with particular reference to flood response operations in the Mekong. Topics discussed included electronic information sharing, further forums of discussion for key issues, and the establishment of an appropriate coordination body. Further meetings are planned for later this month.

Specific activities undertaken by the Red Cross chapters in each province are detailed in the spreadsheet below:

FLOOD RESPONSE ACTIVITIES (Updated on October 2nd, 2001)

RESPONSE	An Giang	Dong Thap	Long An	Kien Giang	Can Tho	Tien Giang	TOTAL
Rescue posts set up	277	297	375	123	93	36	1,201
Shock brigade members in rescue posts	2,128	6,580	750	478	465	72	10,473
No. of people rescued	121	47	60	0	0	0	228
No. of people received FA	0	0	0	0	0	60	60
Life-buoys sent to rescue posts	500	50	500	100	24	0	1,174
Life vests sent to rescue posts	500	130	0	100	24	0	754
First Aid bags sent to rescue posts	200	220	140	100	0	0	660
Assistance to households to evacuate	2,313	2,150	800	500	0	0	5,763
Assistance to households to erect temporary shelters	682	830	800	500	0	0	2,812
Red Cross T-shirts and caps	0	500	0	0	0	0	500
Megaphones	0	7	0	0	0	0	7
Torches	0	150	0	0	0	0	150

On 5 September, Professor Nguyen Trong Nhan, President of the Vietnam Red Cross Society, appealed to all Red Cross staff and volunteers to contribute their time and resources and encourage people to donate money and goods to assist the people affected by the floods. To date the National HQ has provided more than CHF87,000 for the emergency operation.

During September, the Red Cross along with the local authorities at the different levels undertook a needs assessment. The results of this assessment are indicated in the table below:

NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR MEKONG DELTA PROVINCES

(Updated on 2 October 2001 with data from VNRC Chapters)

Needs for relief supplies/provinces	An Giang	Dong Thap	Long An	Kien Giang	Can Tho	Tien Giang	TOTAL
SHORT TERM (30 DAYS)							
Rice (MT)	200	500	400	200	200	200	1,700
Instant noodle (box/30 packs)	1,700	1,700	1,000	1,000	1,000	5,000	11,400
Plastic sheets (4x10m sheets)	2,000	3,000	2,000	600	600	2,800	11,000
Water buckets	3,000	1,000	5,000	800	700	3,500	14,000
Life buoys	200	500	500	200	100	300	1,800
Life jackets	400	200	500	200	200	200	1,700
Mosquito nets	3,000	6,000	5,000	3,000	2,000	2,500	21,500
Blankets	3,000	6,000	5,000	3,000	2,000	2,500	21,500
Fishing boats	3,000	2,000	3,000	1,000	750	2,200	11,950
Fishing nets	3,000	2,000	3,000	1,000	750	2,200	11,950
Composite boats (big)	1	2	1	1	1	1	7
Composite boats (small)	5	6	5	5	5	5	31
Torches	200	200	200	100	100	100	900
Kitchen sets	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	2,000	9,500
Raincoats	1,700	300	300	200	200	200	2,900
Megaphones	50	50	90	20	20	20	250
Means of communication	2	2	2	1	1	1	9
First Aid bags	200	300	500	100	100	100	1,300
Soap	5,000	6,000	5,000	1,000	1,000	7,000	25,000
Red Cross tee-shirt, caps	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	2,000	9,500
REHABILITATION							
Rice (MT)	1,000	0	0	0	0	0	1,000
Plastic sheets (4x10m sheets)	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	5,000
Water buckets (30l)	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	10,000
Fishing boats	3,000	0	0	0	0	0	3,000
Fishing nets	3,000	0	0	0	0	0	3,000
Mosquito nets	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	5,000
Blankets	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	5,000
Bags and medicine	2,000	0	0	0	0	0	2,000
Houses	3,000	0	0	0	0	0	3,000

In order to meet these needs the Vietnam Red Cross Society took the decision in early October to launch a National Appeal. The Appeal, for approximately, CHF 870,000 will be primarily for the following:

- 1,800 MT of rice.
- 6,000 household kits (incl. 1 bucket, 1 blanket, 1 mosquito net, 1 kitchen set, WPTs).
- 300 small boats (*xuong*) and fishing nets.

(Full details of the National Appeal are available by direct request to the National Society or through the Federation's Vietnam Delegation.)

A continuing increase of high death rates among children due to flooding in the Mekong over the past 4-5 years has caused the International Federation to further assess its assistance to the vulnerable. In the year 2000, 335 out of 481 total lives lost were those of children. This year the CCFSC theme 'safeguard the lives of children in the flooded areas of the Mekong River Delta' has been made a principal concern of the Government.

The Red Cross in collaboration with UNICEF has produced two pictorial brochures; one aimed at children and the other for parents living in flood affected areas. 50,000 copies of each brochure will be distributed in the coming weeks. The brochures are designed to give practical advice to families with a focus on measures to protect the lives of young children.

A request for ECHO support has been issued through the French Red Cross Society, for 1,200 fishing boats and fishing nets and 200 livelihood assistance packages (to be tailored to individual household needs).

The VNRC and Federation will also provide disaster preparedness equipment and materials for the flood response operation from joint reserve stock. This includes: 10,000 (4 x 10m) plastic sheets; 1,000 life buoys; 6,000 household sets (as detailed above) and boats/other equipment for use by the Red Cross chapters for their ongoing response activities.

The Chinese Red Cross Society donated USD20,000 and the Embassy of PR of China a further USD10,000 to support the Mekong Flood operations.

Further support channelled through the French Red Cross from the French High Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City of USD20,000 will be used to procure 110MT of rice.

Government action

In An Giang, Dong Thap, Long An, Kien Giang and Tien Giang provinces the government health departments each provided 20 medicine units, 250,000 WPT (Chloramin B) and 46 communal medicine cabinets.

The local government authorities have also established child care day centres in Dong Thap (408) An Giang (37) and Can Tho (80) to take care of approximately 13,000 children on a daily basis.

The People's Committees will give CHF118 to the households who lost a family member in the floods; provide each household whose homes collapsed during the floods with CHF177 and support each evacuated household with CHF35. To date, the People's Committee in Dong Thap received money and relief supplies valued at CHF177, 000 to help 13,984 households; in An Giang CHF109,000 assisted 11,000 households whilst in Long An over CHF66,000 was received to assist 4,350 households.

Action by other agencies

As a result of the coordination meeting facilitated by the Red Cross, World Vision International, UNICEF and CRS are better coordinating their support to the child care day centres. The Red Cross is currently considering further measures to increase support to children. Other agencies that are currently considering their response include SCF, Oxfam (GB)

For a full description of the National Society profile, see <http://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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