



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

## **CHINA: GAS WELL EXPLOSION IN CHONGQING**

*Information Bulletin N° 01/2003*

This Information Bulletin is for information purposes only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

### **The Situation**

An explosion in an underground gas well on 23 December, located in Gao Qiao town in Chongqing city's Kaixian county in the north eastern part of Chongqing province, resulted in the release of hydrogen sulfide, which is highly toxic when inhaled. The explosion - the worst of its kind in China's history – is thought to be caused by a puncture to the highly pressurised gas well caused by drilling.

The explosion occurred late at night, while people in the neighbouring villages were sleeping and affected 18,000 families in the surrounding rural farming communities including the towns of Yihe, Shangba and Zishui. Xiaoyang village, the village closest to the explosion was the most devastated by the explosion which resulted in the deaths of nearly all of the village's residents, entire families were lost due to the inhalation of the toxic fumes, while 600 people in Zhonghe required treatment for poisoning and chemical burns.

According to the latest reports from the Red Cross Society of China's (RCSC) Chongqing Provincial branch a total of 234 people have died from inhaling the toxic fumes and some 13,000 families of the total 18,000 affected by the explosion are being classified as "seriously affected." The central area is still isolated for disinfecting. Many domestic animals were killed due to gas inhalation and crops have been contaminated.

As of 29 December, some families are reported to be returning to their homes while the branch is reporting that 60,000 people are still unable to return home and are requiring food while the latest number of those injured due to the explosion is reported to be around 1,000 people. The government is making efforts to dispel the toxic gas from the area and has set up temporary shelters for individuals evacuated as a result of the accident.

About 64,000 people ran away from their native places into the downtown of Kaixian County. Kaixian County is

### **Red Cross/Red Crescent Action**

Some 1,050 people have been treated for injuries by the RCSC's medical team deployed by the Provincial branch in response to the emergency. Common injuries attributed to the explosion have been severe burns, eye problems and respiratory problems.

The branch reports that 50 people remain in critical condition while 800 have been hospitalised. According to reports in the media, children and the elderly in the farming communities who did not know what to do during this type of accident were among the most severely affected.

Within the first two days following the explosion, the RCSC's Chongqing Provincial branch assisted 14,000 beneficiaries by distributing eye medicine to 7,000 beneficiaries and food (instant noodles) to an additional 7,000 beneficiaries. The total value of the assistance provided by the branch is RMB 25,000.

The Chongqing branch is reporting the continued need for medicine and food, and is continuing with its efforts to raise funds and collect clothing and quilts for the affected communities. The Shanghai branch of the RCSC donated 100,000 RMB to the local Red Cross to support their relief activities.

Additionally a representative of the RCSC's Chongqing branch was interviewed by CNN.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

*For further details please contact :*

- *Red Cross Society of China: Mr. Wang Xiaohua, Director of RCSC External Relations Department, email; [rcsc@chineseredcross.org.cn](mailto:rcsc@chineseredcross.org.cn); phone +86-10-6512-4169; fax+86-10-6512-4169*
- *East Asia Regional Delegation: Mr. Alistair Henley (HoRD), email; [ifrcen01@ifrc.org](mailto:ifrcen01@ifrc.org); phone+86 1350 1205 972, fax+86-10-6532-7166*
- *Federation Geneva: Mr. Satoshi Sugai, Desk Officer, email; [satoshi.sugai@ifrc.org](mailto:satoshi.sugai@ifrc.org); phone +41 22 730 4237; fax+41 22 733 0395*

*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.*