

CHINA: FLOODS AND TYPHOONS

22 August 1997

Information Bulletin N° 2

The Disaster

Super Typhoon Winnie, recognised as the worst typhoon to hit China and Taiwan in the past decade, caused the death of more than 250 people and injured over 3000 when it passed Taiwan and hit Zhejiang Province, moving at 40 metres per second. Shangdong and Jiangsu Provinces, and Shanghai City were also significantly affected during the storm of 17 - 19 August. For the people living in this eastern coast of China, the typhoon was just the latest disaster in a series of weather related catastrophes.

More than 100,000 rooms were destroyed leaving tens of thousands without shelter. Deaths and injury were mostly caused by crushing as buildings collapsed, drowning, electrocution, and when struck by flying debris.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) was able to track the storm's approach as it gathered strength for several days before it hit. The low lying coastal area was evacuated of nearly 1 million inhabitants, greatly reducing the death and injury toll.

Local and provincial RCSC branches quickly went to the aid of the injured. In Zhejiang Province, nine RCSC medical teams -- in conjunction with the Public Health Department -- comprised of 121 doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and epidemiologists were dispatched to assist victims of the storm, following a needs assessment team led by the Zhejiang Provincial Branch vice-president. Medicine valued at CHF 5,000, disinfectant and spraying equipment (CHF 9,000), and 500 pieces of clothing were distributed by the staff.

Assessment teams are evaluating the situation in Jiangsu Province. In Shangdong Province, six medical teams have been sent in to assist the injured.

The RCSC Headquarters has asked all of its branches to conduct fund-raising and collection of relief goods.

Less than one week ago, an assessment team led by the RCSC Executive vice-president completed its mission to Guangdong Province following the devastation caused by Typhoon Victor. Combined with two serious flood disasters on 8 May and 3 July, the data revealed that 191 people

had been killed, 1,476 injured, 129,780 rooms destroyed, and almost 12 million people in 982 townships, 5300 villages, 16 cities, and 89 counties were affected.

Needs

Due to the ferocity of the storm many people lost belongings and shelter. The RCSC, in its preliminary assessment, has determined that there is a need for food, medicine, disinfectants and spraying equipment, clothes, quilts, and shelter materials.

Funds are needed for local procurement. With the permission of donor National Societies, leftover funds from the flood appeal last year could be utilised to assist the RCSC in this latest tragedy.

Ann Naef
Acting Head
Appeals & Reports Service

Hiroshi Higashiura
Director
Asia & Pacific Department