

KYRGYZSTAN UZBEKISTAN - SHAHIMARDAN FLOODS

22 July 1998

Information Bulletin N° 1

The Disaster

Hundreds are feared dead and many more are homeless after the Ak Su and Shahimardan rivers on the Kyrgyzstan/Uzbekistan border burst their banks on the night of 8 July when a high mountain lake at the foot of the Allaudin Glacier in the Alai mountains of Kyrgyzstan could no longer contain the enormous volume of water caused by melting snow. The floods swept away homes, bridges and power plants in the Fergana Valley catching people unawares in their homes.

The Kyrgyzstan Red Crescent Society (KRCS) reported approximately 100 people are homeless, while another 100 families have had their houses partly damaged. Sixty outside toilets were also washed away giving cause for health concerns. There are no reports of casualties in Kyrgyzstan at this time.

The worst-affected area is due south of the city of Fergana, covering both sides of the border and includes an Uzbek enclave within Kyrgyzstan. The region is remote, mountainous and since the main road to the village of Shahimardan was washed away, this village is accessible only by helicopter.

Red Crescent officials were amongst the first to arrive on the scene. They have completed a preliminary assessment and provided shelter and other assistance. The death toll on the Uzbek side of the border has now been confirmed at 98 of which 78 bodies have been identified, and is expected to reach 200. The principle cause of death was drowning although a number of people were crushed by the huge boulders that were swept down by the flood.

Material damage is estimated at Som 1,001,770,000 (USD10.5 million) and includes roads, power supplies, telephone lines as well as houses and other buildings. 55 households were completely swept away

Also affected was Shahimardan which is in effect two separate villages - Shahimardan (570 households) and Yerdan (580 households). The total population of the area is approximately 5,000. most of the damage and losses occurred in the Shahimardan section. The area is a holiday

resort and a number of the casualties are holiday makers making their identification extremely difficult.

The area has been declared a national disaster by Uzbek President Karimov who visited shortly after the floods occurred. It has also been declared a prohibited zone and is likely to remain so for up to a year as authorities repair damages and replace infrastructure. The majority of the region derive their living from tourism and if tourists are unable to visit the economic consequences will be severe.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The International Federation released CHF 30,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund, which, along with donations from local embassies enabled the Red Crescent societies to prepare and distribute 100 family food parcels, each containing 5 kg wheat flour, 5 kg rice, 1 kg tea, 4 kg sugar, 2 kg beans, 4 ltr vegetable oil, 4 cans meat (each 450gm), 2 cans condensed milk for children (each 250gm) 4 pieces soap (each 300 gm), 4 boxes detergent (each 200 gm), 1 pack matches, 2 pairs galoshes, 1 cooking pot, 1 kettle, 1 mixing spoon.

URCS distributed used clothing, 200 sets of bedding and 100 tents. A video has been compiled of the disaster and its aftermath and is available from the Regional Delegation in Almaty and Media Service at the Secretariat in Geneva.

A further distribution of 200 food parcels will be made next week. Each will contain 22.5 kg wheat flour, 22.5 kg rice, 5 litres oil, 4 kg sugar (mainly for preserving in-season fruits), 1 kg tea.

Needs

The assessment of the situation continues and there will be ongoing needs. Food parcels, clothing, shelter materials and hygiene materials have been distributed and will continue to be distributed in the forthcoming days. There is a need to address the income earning potential of a community that has had its livelihood snatched away. This flood is one disaster in a series of similar events which have, and will continue, to beset this region. For more information please contact John Watt, acting desk officer, on ++4122 7304424, email watt@ifrc.org

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