

SENEGAL: FLOODS

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The Disaster

In July and August 1998, during the lean period between harvests, torrential rain fell causing severe flooding in the regions of Kolda, Koalack, Tambacounda and Saint-Louis. Flood waters reached a height of 184 mm in some areas. The most affected region was Saint-Louis, situated in the delta of the River Senegal, where flooding caused considerable damage to infrastructure and large numbers of animals were lost. The livelihoods of some 90,000 people were seriously affected, as homes, possessions, food stocks, crops and livestock were swept away.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

As soon as possible the Senegalese Red Cross Society (SRCS) conducted an evaluation in the affected areas and identified 15,000 flood victims as the most vulnerable, with a further 3,000 homeless in urgent need of shelter. The plan of action drawn up by the National Society aimed to provide shelter and food assistance for a one month period to the 15,000 vulnerable, and to provide shelter for 3,000 homeless. In a second phase, the National Society planned to pre-position equipment, shelter and emergency food stocks during May and June 1999 in anticipation of possible flooding the following year.

In support of the SRCS, the Federation issued an Information Bulletin on 2 October and CHF 100,000 from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) was allocated in response to the emergency. Financing from the Federation enabled the SRCS to purchase 75 MT of rice and 80 large tents. As no further donations were forthcoming, the plan of action was revised to cover the provision of food and shelter for 15,000 beneficiaries.

As of November 1998, a ration of 5 kgs of rice was distributed to the identified flood victims by experienced first aiders, volunteers and officers within the affected local branches under the supervision of Headquarters. As a result of delays in procuring the 80 tents, those without shelter had been obliged to find alternative housing arrangements as the flood waters receded. In the case of the 15,000 targeted beneficiaries who had all been displaced by the flooding, 14,800 found shelter with host families, while another 200 were accommodated in a school building. A total of 42 tents, once procured, were distributed and the balance of 38 tents are stored in the SRCS Headquarters warehouse for emergency use. An information campaign was carried out by the SRCS prior to the distribution and pre-positioning exercises, aiming to raise awareness at the level of the local authorities, local population, and media.

Conclusion

The worst-affected flood victims were assisted through the distribution of food rations in accordance with the funding available. Although a small quantity of rice was distributed per head, this food assistance helped the flood victims at a difficult time. Nevertheless, the families who lost everything during the flooding continue to suffer from food shortages. Efforts are underway to prepare for potential floods which may occur again in late 1999.

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