

DREF operation



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Peoples Democratic Republic of Lao: Floods

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GLIDE n° FL-2008-000131-
LAO
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The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of national societies to respond to disasters.

CHF 200,000 (USD 182,000 or EUR 124,000) has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the national society in delivering immediate assistance to some 10,000 beneficiaries. Un-earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

Summary: The Mekong River reached its highest peak in a hundred years during August 2008, causing significant damage to houses,

infrastructure, and agricultural land. Historically, high flood levels are followed by yet higher peaks, and thus there are concerns that

the affected population will be faced with further hardship. The damage to the agricultural land means that there is a real danger of food shortages in the year to come. The DREF allocation will be used to support families in the worst affected areas with food, family kits and basic medicines.

This operation is expected to be implemented over 3 months, and will therefore be completed by November 2008; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 28 February 2009).



Rice fields were severely affected by the floods. Photo taken by DRC in Laos.

The situation

Tropical storm Kammuri lingered over northern Lao PDR for several days in August, causing the Mekong River to exceed historically high levels, reaching 13.67 meters on 15 August, well above the 11.5 flood alarm level. The floods are reported to be the worst in 100 years by the four-nation Mekong River commission's Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Centre. The heavy rains resulted in severe flooding and

landslides in several provinces. The worst affected areas are Vientiane Province, Vientiane Capital, Sayabouly Province, Khammuan Province, Luang Namtha, and Bolikamxay Province.

Landslides have killed six people, and up to 200,000 people are believed to be affected by the floods. Flood water inundated large areas of agricultural land, destroyed crops, and damaged homes and infrastructure. Large parts of Vientiane (the capital) were flooded despite the efforts of a large number of soldiers, public servants and volunteers who worked around the clock to build sandbag dikes along the Mekong River front. Major routes along the river were cut as roads were inundated and bridges damaged. As the water has receded most roads have become passable.

The Government of Lao PDR appealed for international assistance and organized a briefing on 25 August on the impact of the flooding and the need for assistance for members of the diplomatic corps and international organizations. The meeting highlighted the historic data suggesting that a high flood peak is followed by yet another - and higher peak - three to four weeks after the first flooding has occurred. If this historic data is accurate then the worst might is expected still to come.

Coordination and partnerships

Lao Red Cross (LRC) is a permanent member of the National Disaster Management Committee and has actively participated in the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) meetings. As LRC has decided to focus on food aid LRC is also participating in the Food security Task Force. Partners to the Food Security Taskforce are working on common standards for food rations and coordination of operational areas to prevent overlapping. With WFP, World Vision and Lao Red Cross being the main actors in the food aid sector at the moment coordination efforts are going very well.

The Federation's regional DM Unit has been in constant contact with the LRC and has assisted with preparations for the DREF applications. The Regional DM Unit will support the LRC with an experienced staff member until a longer-term delegate has been identified and deployed.

Both the French and Danish Red Cross are supporting longer-term LRC development programs and have supported the LRC in the response to the floods. The French Red Cross provided the LRC with a smaller emergency grant which has already been used for procurement of immediate relief supplies. Danish Red Cross has offered to support the operation with a fully funded delegate to assist LRC in the upstart phase of the operation and preparations for a possible appeal.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Lao Red Cross immediately responded with smaller distributions of rice, medicines and clothes in the affected areas in Vientiane Province. The American Embassy has donated 50,000 USD directly to the LRC which is presently being used for procurement of rice and Family-kits consisting of basic Medicines, Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) and soap.

The needs

Joint Government of Lao PDR/UN/RC/INGO assessment teams are dispatched to all the affected areas. Results from these assessments are expected within the next coming days. While the more detailed assessment is still to be finalized there is little doubt that a significant number of people have been severely affected and that there is a real threat that many of the more vulnerable communities are at risk of suffering a severe food shortage.

There are no indications of epidemic outbreaks but increased numbers of people suffering from common colds, conjunctivitis, diarrhea, skin diseases and foot injuries from walking in dirty water are being reported.

The proposed operation

Support for this operation is likely to come in irregularly from various parties over a period of time. To be as efficient as possible the LRC has decided to work with smaller Plans of Actions (PoA) as soon as funding becomes available. The LRC has identified the need for food as the most urgent need in this operation and will accordingly focus its efforts mainly in this area. In the immediate response phase smaller family kits

consisting of basic medicines, ORS and soap will be distributed along side the food but this is only foreseen to be the case for the first 2-3 weeks of distributions after which family kits will be phased out.

- PoA 1: The first Plan of Action has been developed around the American Embassy contribution and will support families in the worst affected province of Bolikhamxay with both rice and family kits (the LRC's President agreed to PoA 1 and relief distributions in Bolikhamxay Province first (Province 1) will be implemented with the DREF.
- PoA 2: is being developed around the DREF allocation and will also support families with Rice and family kits. The final decision on which communities to support will be taken in coordination with the Food Security Task Force.
- PoA 3: Additional plans of actions will be developed once the government/UN/RC/INGO assessment teams have delivered their report and additional funding has been secured.

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: 10,000 beneficiaries are supported with rice, family kits and medicines, according to assessment and selection criteria that identify actual needs and vulnerable groups.

Activities planned:

- Conduct rapid emergency needs and capacity assessments.
- Develop beneficiary targeting strategy and registration system to deliver intended assistance.
- Procure and distribute relief supplies and control supply movements from point of dispatch to end user.
- Monitor and evaluate the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distributions.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

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