

# DREF operation update



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Lao PDR: Floods

**DREF operation n° MDRLA001**  
**GLIDE n° FL-2008-000131- LAO**  
**Update n° 01**  
**6 October 2008**

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.

**Period covered by this update:** 29 August to 29 September 2008.

**Summary:** A total of CHF 200,000 (USD 176,404 or EUR 129,528) has been allocated from the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the national society in delivering assistance to 10,100 beneficiaries. Un-earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

The level of water in the Mekong River reached its highest peak in 100 years during August 2008, causing significant damage to houses, infrastructure and agricultural land. The damage to the agricultural land means that there is a real danger of food shortages in the coming year. The DREF allocation will be used to support families in the worst affected areas with food and hygiene kits. This operation is expected to be implemented in three months, and completed by November 2008. In line with the International Federation reporting standards, the final report (narrative and financial) is due by 28 February 2008.

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Lao Red Cross staff distributes relief items to people affected by floods in Vientiane.

## The situation

Tropical storm Kammuri lingered over northern Lao People's Democratic Republic for several days in August, causing the Mekong River to exceed historically high levels on 15 August, reportedly to be the worst in 100 years. The Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic appealed for international assistance on 25 August and a rapid assessment of the impact and needs by the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Lao government was conducted from 21 -29 August. The Lao Red Cross (LRC) provided one of its experienced disaster management staff members to be part of the joint assessment team. The flooding resulted from severe local rainfall associated with tropical storm Kammuri and higher-than-average monsoon rains. The northern and central regions of Lao People's Democratic Republic were particularly severely affected. The worst-affected areas are Luangphrabang, Luang Namtha, Bokeo, Khammuane, Vientiane and Borikhamxai provinces and Vientiane Capital. It is estimated that a total of 204,189 people in some 866

villages from 53 districts across the country were affected by the floods. Flash floods were also reported, causing 11 deaths. Flood water inundated large areas of agricultural land, destroyed crops, and damaged homes and infrastructure. Most of the affected people initially took shelter in the homes of others, but have now mainly been able to return to their homes. A number of bridges and roads have been damaged. Many families are in need of clean water supply and contaminated wells need to be rehabilitated. Latrines in the affected areas need rehabilitation and some villages also need rehabilitation of sewerage systems. Some health facilities reported damages but most remain functional. However, even in normal times, health services are generally considered inadequate, especially for rural communities. Fortunately no major disease outbreaks have been reported due to the floods.

Agriculture is the main source of livelihoods in Lao People's Democratic Republic. Large areas of agricultural land were inundated at the peak of the floods. Over 70 per cent of agricultural land in affected areas has been damaged. In some areas, crops and paddies were swept away, leaving the land rendered uncultivable for the remaining agriculture season. Irrigation infrastructure and fish ponds in 30 to 40 per cent of the villages are damaged and livestock are susceptible to diseases due to lack of feeding, as well as muddy and wet conditions. The floods occurred during the lean season, when the food stocks of most of the poorer households are low. Fortunately, most households were able to save their remaining food stocks since the onset of the flood was gradual in many areas. Loss of wild foods, in particular aquatic food, available for domestic consumption may have severe consequences for some of the more vulnerable groups. Many farmers were not able to replant their fields after the floods and will miss out the November harvest. In areas where irrigation is possible, damages to irrigation infrastructure will hamper the next planting season. Hence many farmers will not see another harvest until November 2009. It is estimated that 20 per cent of the affected population, some 40,000 people, are in severe need of food relief in the immediate future, while even more will need support in the longer term. The flood-affected areas are the most productive and normally supply surplus rice for the rest of the country. Damages to agricultural infrastructure, assets, and crops have been severe. Food production has been severely compromised, affecting availability and access to food during the ensuing season. The compound impact of rising food prices and drastically declined production may have severe implications for national and household food security. The loss of livelihood opportunities may further restrict access to food which is already restricted by high food prices for many vulnerable households.

For the time being, the situation is stable and water levels of the Mekong River and its tributaries in Laos are back to normal levels. However, with most of the Mekong watershed already heavily saturated, this situation could drastically change if rainfall increases or the passing of another tropical storm/typhoon with the approximately same trajectory as Kammuri hits the area. Such an event would most probably create a second flooding.

## The Needs

LRC has identified food as the most urgent need and will focus its efforts in this area. The assessment of the impact and needs by IASC and the Lao government concludes the following needs:

### Most immediate needs (September - November 2008)

- Clean drinking water and sanitation
- Food supplies
- Essential medicines and primary health care
- Immunization and surveillance for disease outbreaks and nutrition status
- Emergency replacement seeds

### Medium-term needs (December onwards)

- Credit and cash transfers for work
- Food security and livelihoods
- Early recovery for agriculture and livestock
- Food availability
- Micronutrient supplementation
- Immunization
- Infrastructure roads, schools and health facilities, shelter
- Vulnerability and stress of affected people

With many people losing productive assets and having reduced livelihood opportunities while at the same time facing the dire prospect of not being able to secure another harvest until November 2009, food security will certainly be of uttermost importance to focus on for the coming year. The United Nations launched a joint appeal on 19 September for the flood recovery and rehabilitation requesting for USD 10 million (CHF 11 million or EUR 7 million). The appeal covers both the immediate relief phase and a one-year recovery/rehabilitation period which will be implemented through 15 projects in eight different sectors.

## Coordination and partnerships

LRC is a permanent member of the national disaster management committee and has actively participated in the IASC meetings. As LRC has decided to focus on food aid, it is participating in the food security task force, with the World Food Programme (WFP) taking the lead. Partners to the food security taskforce are

working on common standards for food rations and coordination of operational areas to prevent overlapping. WFP, World Vision, the ministry of labour and social welfare (MLSW) and LRC are currently the main actors in the food aid sector and coordination efforts are going very well. A more extensive partnership with WFP on relief food distribution is currently being discussed between LRC's leadership and WFP. LRC's branches in the operating provinces are coordinating closely with various authorities and disaster management committees at sub-national levels.

The International Federation's regional disaster management unit has been in constant contact with the LRC and has assisted with preparations for the DREF applications. A relief delegate has been deployed to Laos to assist LRC with the relief operation.

Both the Danish and French Red Cross are supporting longer-term LRC development programmes. They have also supported the LRC in the response to the floods. The French Red Cross provided a smaller emergency grant which has already been used for procurement of immediate relief supplies. The Danish Red Cross is supporting the operation by fully funding the delegate currently assisting LRC.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The LRC immediately responded to the floods with smaller distributions of items such as food, drinking water, basic medicines and clothes in the affected areas. In total, LRC reached people in 97 villages in four provinces: Vientiane Capital, Vientiane Province, Luangphrabang and Borikhamxai. The American embassy donated USD 50,000 (CHF 56,866 or EUR 36,793) directly to the LRC which has been used to procure rice and hygiene kits. These items will be distributed in conjunction with the DREF operation.

## Progress towards objectives

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 focus its efforts in this area. Small hygiene kits consisting of washing powder and soap will be distributed alongside with the rice.

- PoA 1: The first PoA has been developed around the American embassy contribution and will support families in the province of Borikhamxai with both rice and hygiene kits. PoA1 is aimed to reach 2,100 beneficiaries in two districts.
- PoA 2: The second PoA is developed around the DREF allocation and will also support families with rice and hygiene kits. PoA2 will be implemented in Vientiane Province and Vientiane Capital. PoA2 is aimed to reach 8,000 beneficiaries in three districts.
- PoA 3: A third PoA is under discussion between LRC and WFP to provide relief food for some additional 14,000 beneficiaries in Louang Namtha, Bokeo and Borikhamxai provinces.

PoA1 and 2 will be executed in conjunction and are closely coordinated. All beneficiaries have been identified together with local authorities and affected villages in accordance with selection criteria set up by LRC headquarters. The criteria stipulates that households must:

- i) have lost their crops due to the floods;
- ii) not have received assistance from any other agency/organization; and
- iii) be among the most vulnerable in the community (disabled, elderly, female/child headed households)

LRC have adopted WFP's food ration of 15 kilograms of rice per person and per month for this operation. Hence LRC will provide rice for two months for every beneficiary. Procurements have just been finalized and are awaiting delivery. Final preparations are being made for relief distributions to start in early October. The distribution will be supervised by a core group of two to three branch staff and one headquarters staff in each province. They will be assisted by one Red Cross coordinator in each district.

### Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

**Objective: 10,100 beneficiaries are supported with rice and hygiene kits according to assessment and selection criteria that identify actual needs and vulnerable groups.**

#### Activities planned:

- Prepare LRC branches and staff for relief distribution.
- 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.

The floods happened during a time common of short food supplies. Already high prices of rice prior to the disaster have increased even more leaving many families facing food shortages. Unsustainable coping mechanisms might plunge households into poverty and sale of productive and household assets may impede the recovery process. Therefore, relief supplies to the most vulnerable will fill the dual purpose of providing food and protecting assets from being sold for food.

The relief distributions for PoA 1 and 2 are planned to start in early October. Each beneficiary will be provided with 30 kilograms of rice (enough for two months) and every household with one hygiene kit consisting of two kilograms of washing powder and ten bars of soap.

**Table 1 Planned relief distributions for PoAs 1 and 2.**

Province	District	Villages	Families	Beneficiaries	% female beneficiaries	Rice (tons)	Hygiene kits
Vientiane Province	Thulakhom	11	752	4,000	48.5	120	752
	<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>752</i>	<i>4,000</i>	<i>48.5</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>752</i>
Vientiane Capital	PakNgum	15	495	2,000	50.7	60	495
	Sangthong	7	409	2,000	51.0	60	411
	<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>904</i>	<i>4,000</i>	<i>50.8</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>906</i>
Borikhamxai Province	Thaphabath	13	133	660	50.0	19.8	133
	Pakxane	20	299	1,440	49.3	43.2	298
	<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>432</i>	<i>2,100</i>	<i>49.7</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>431</i>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>2,088</b>	<b>10,100</b>	<b>49.9 (Average)</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>2,089</b>

## 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

### For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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