

# **CAMBODIA: FLOODS**

9 November 1999

*appeal no. 18/99; budget revision  
situation report no. 2  
period covered: 19 August 10 November 1999*

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*Although the monsoon rains should slowly be reaching an end by this time of year, the country continues to experience heavy rain fall, causing serious flooding in certain areas. Following the initial flooding in Kampot District and the efforts to provide immediate relief and assistance, the most recent flooding occurred in Pursat Province, prompting renewed requests to provide support for the newest victims. The timely donor response to the initial Appeal has allowed the Cambodian Red Cross, with the Federation's support, to meet the initial emergency needs. With the most recent flooding, the Federation has revised the Appeal, adding CHF 372,350 to meet the revised needs.*

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## ***The context***

Continued monsoon rains since July have hit the two adjacent provinces of Kampot and Koh Kong. In addition reports on floods have been received from other provinces namely Kampong, Cham, Ratnakiri, Mondulkiri, Ratnakiri and Stung Treng.

Since October 23, continuous waves of tropical depressions and storms have streamed across Cambodia. During the night of November 3, a torrential downpour, widely scattered across Cambodia, caused severe flooding in the five provinces of Kandal, Takeo, Pursat, Kampong, Speu, Kg. Chhnang and the Municipality of Phnom Penh. After 10 days of continuous rain, streams and rivers rose dramatically and eventually overflowed their banks. The Royal Government reports that 25,847 families have been affected so far by this latest disaster.

Reports also indicate that large numbers of families had been forced from their homes to seek the sanctuary of higher ground to avoid the rising waters. Normal means of contact and communication have been severely disrupted as highways linking the major cities were damaged or flooded. Secondary roads and motorbike paths have been turned into impassable quagmires of mud cutting off many villages and communes. In addition, provincial officials report 3,561 homes damaged or destroyed as well as 7,529 hectares of rice and croplands flooded. As yet no deaths have been recorded.

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In and around Phnom Penh pumping stations are working 24 hours a day to drain many of the low-lying areas that have become heavily populated in recent years. Old and antiquated equipment is breaking down, and it is expected to take many more days of clear weather and continuous pumping to remove the standing waters.

## ***Latest events***

The response to mitigate the effects of the flooding continues, with urgently needed supplies being purchased, transported, and distributed to families in the flood affected communities. In addition, the recruitment of volunteers and the development and implementation of integrated community based first aid and disaster preparedness training for 200 members of various communities in Kampot province is being undertaken.

The new flooding prompted high level consultations between the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC), the Royal Government and the Royal Palace on November 5th. The President of the CRC, government representatives and representatives from the Royal Palace developed a coordinated response to meet the immediate emergency needs of disaster victims. CRC will assist the families in the Pursat Province. The government, together with the Royal Palace, will assume responsibility for the victims in the provinces of Kandal, Kampong Speu, Takeo, Kampong Chang, and Phnom Penh City.

Transportation and communication to more remote communes and villages continues to be difficult and will remain so until infrastructure redevelopment is undertaken.

Initially the government undertook responsibility for the Kampong Bay area, requesting the CRC to concentrate on Kampot District. Subsequently the Government has requested help from the CRC to assist flood affected communities in Kampong Bay. The CRC has responded swiftly to that request, with assistance for flood victims provided as well in Monduliri and Ratnakiri provinces.

## ***Government action***

The Royal Government has reported that the following actions have or will take place in response to the new flooding: government representatives began distributions in and around Phnom Penh on November 7, with each family to receive 10 kilos of rice, 1 kramar, 1 sarong, canned fish, and 10,000 Riel (equivalent to CHF 3.79). A total of 246 metric tons of rice and food, 41,490,000 Riel (equivalent to CHF 15,725), and 3,849 sarongs are planned to be distributed to all affected areas. Distributions in other areas will be specified as soon as a schedule is developed.

## ***Red Cross /Red Crescent action***

The following recent action has been taken by Red Cross, in consultation and close co-operation with the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) and the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC):

### ***Immediate assistance •***

The following immediate actions have been undertaken in response to the first flooding: 7,242 emergency household kits for flood victim families (each comprising 21 household items) have been purchased, and 6,045 of these have been distributed to the beneficiaries in Kampot Province on 27 August, and 11, 19, and 23 September. 68 families affected by floods in Monduliri Province were assisted in September with emergency household kits from the CRC's own stocks. On 19, 22 and 24 September, additional distributions for 1,436 flood affected families in Kaep City, Prey Veng and Takeo provinces took place, with the CRC distributing rice and clothing from their own stocks. The Ratnakiri Red Cross Branch reported that 1,053 families were affected by floods, and the Red Cross requested additional assistance from Oxfam UK.

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The CRC responded to new flooding in Pursat with an immediate shipment of 500 plastic tarps and 5,000 dried food boxes on November 6. Provincial CRC and local government authorities continue to assess and identify victims, aid in evacuations and assist with emergency needs. The Director of the CRC Disaster Management Department travelled to Pursat on November 9 to assist the Pursat Red Cross provincial branch in coordination efforts with local government and NGOs, and to oversee plans for aid distribution. Further aid distributions in Pursat Province to assist 3,796 families will be carried out on November 10, 11 and 12. Each distribution will include 20 kilos rice, 1 kramar, 1 sarong, 1 shirt or pants for each family. In addition each family that sustained damage or lost their home will receive plastic sheeting. Further aid will be in the form of household kits consisting of 21 items of bedding, cooking utensils, mosquito nets and building repair materials. The Federation is in the process of preparing a new application to be submitted to ECHO for procurement of 5,000 emergency household kits for new flood victims.

### ***Water and Sanitation •***

671 litres of insecticide was purchased in Thailand to impregnate the mosquito nets included in the emergency household kits. Because it took longer than expected to receive the goods from Thailand, most of the kits were distributed to the beneficiaries before the insecticide arrived in the country. The CRC is cooperating closely with the National Malaria Center (NMC), and the insecticide will therefore be given to the NMC to impregnate the bednets in Kampot Province as part of their usual national malaria control program. The initial water and sanitation needs assessment was carried out from 18 to 21 August. The process of recruiting a suitable implementing partner in this sector is currently underway.

### ***Ongoing actions to respond to the earlier Kampot flooding •***

{The following steps have been planned and will be implemented in relation to the earlier floods in Kampot Province:

- w A community level network for disaster preparedness will be established through Red Cross Volunteers and Red Cross Youth and RCY Advisors in 12 target schools in Kampot, Kaep and Sihanoukville.
- w The recruitment of additional CRC staff members both at the national and provincial level will be continued to implement the planned activities.
- w The remaining 1,197 emergency household kits will be distributed to the flood victims.

### ***Strengthening of the CRC •***

The integrated training package for Community Based First Aid (CBFA) and Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) includes dissemination of Red Cross Principles and ideals in addition to the technical aspects of first aid and disaster preparedness. This involves close cooperation between the Disaster Management Department (DMD), the Program Department, and Communications Department. Identification of 200 Red Cross Volunteers (RCVs) for the integrated training program began on 13 September and the training commenced on 4 October in Kampot Province. The 8 training courses (25 participants/course) are scheduled to conclude in mid-December 1999. Funding for this integrated training on CBFA and CBDP is covered jointly by the CBDP program (with American Red Cross funding) and the flood operation budget (ECHO funding) through the Federation.

The Red Cross Youth (RCY) network will also be established in 6 target schools in Kampot Province and in 3 schools in Kaep City and Sihanoukville Province. 50 RCY Members and 2 RCY Advisors will be recruited and trained in each target school. Each Red Cross Branch will nominate and train one Red Cross Youth Advisor from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports provincial office as a liaison person between the Red Cross Youth program and the Ministry. Target schools were selected and the training commenced in October.

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## ***Action by other organizations or agencies***

According to the information received to date, the following action has been taken by other agencies and organizations:

- w** Oxfam UK carried out a needs assessment among the flood victims in Ratnakiri, in addition to the joint assessment reports received from the local authorities and the Ratnakiri Red Cross Branch.
- w** The NCDM and the Royal Government of Cambodia have continued distribution of their assistance to the flood victims in areas they are covering.
- w** CARE International has sent 5 metric tons of dried food to their representatives in Pursat Province in response to the new flooding. Distributions will be coordinated and coincide with Red Cross and governmental relief activities.

## ***Outstanding needs***

The Federation and the CRC have continued to work closely with the Royal Cambodian Government to ensure the emergency needs of all victims are addressed. The CRC has been specifically requested to focus assistance efforts in the Kampot District of Kampot Province, one of the most heavily affected areas. So far over 6,000 families have received CRC assistance to sustain them through the emergency. Additionally, the flooding has damaged the basic infrastructure for community water supplies, and the repair or replacement of community wells will be carried out.

The impact of the new flooding will bring further strains on already vulnerable families. The water has only gradually begun to recede and it will be many days or even weeks before the full effects on the crops are assessed. As with any flood of this magnitude the threat of water borne disease is always present. The full impact on safe water has yet to be determined and assessed.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

Effective cooperation and information sharing continues with the Royal Cambodian Government and especially with the NCDM, as well as with provincial authorities, ECHO, Oxfam UK, Care International, and others active in the emergency response.

Local media initially covered the floods in the coastal area extensively and the two first joint Cambodian Red Cross/Federation distributions in Kampot District were covered on local TV news on the same evening on all channels. Many articles also appeared in the local newspapers covering the event. Regular programmes on CRC activities, including assistance to the flood victims, were shown on local TV channels prior to the CRC Annual fund-raising event Charity Bazaar and Gala Dinner which took place in Phnom Penh from 5 to 6 November 1999. Local media has also provided effective coverage from the newly flooded provinces.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

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