

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

CHINA: TYPHOON, FLOODS AND LANDSLIDES

24 August 2004

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organisation and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 06/2004) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 200,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). The Federation does not anticipate further needs. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the DREF update.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

Overview

During the two week period of 9 to 24 August, China endured: a powerful earthquake in Yunnan province which left thousands of people homeless, destroyed 18,556 houses in Zhaotong city alone and damaged 22 of the areas dams thus creating an additional threat of flooding to the affected area; typhoon Rananim and subsequent mudslides in Zhejiang province which was followed by typhoon Megi a few days after; and renewed severe flooding in Anhui province. Parts of China continue to be on alert to the possibility of two more typhoons including typhoon Aere and continued flooding in the northeast.

Hundreds of thousands of families, mostly rural farmers, have lost their homes to the multiple natural disasters which occurred during this two week period, and over the season of severe floods and dangerous hail storms that commenced in May have had to be resettled after losing their homes, belongings, livestock and crops. While the government has been able to effectively evacuate much of the affected population and by doing so limit the number of disaster related deaths as well as provide for some of the immediate needs for food and shelter, there is still a significant challenge for the thousands of families who have now lost everything and have nothing to fall back on.

For many of these families who have no savings and who survive on incomes below USD 200 per year, the combined cost of a new home, new seeds or animals plus ongoing obligations to pay school and medical fees will mean that many of these families will never be able to get back to the position they were in before the disaster struck. Although true in any situation, it is especially true that when addressing the needs of borderline

communities the most critical period for disaster management is before the disaster strikes. For those people who even in the best times survive on almost nothing, have no available financial resources and who possess limited education, the smallest economic loss is still a set back they may never recover from.

Although it is highly unusual for all three to happen over the course of a week, floods, earthquakes and typhoons were expected in China during the second week of August. It is therefore important to build upon this understanding and protect the communities living in known disaster prone areas by vesting them with the skills and understanding of how to mitigate the damages caused by disasters. Relief items although undeniably critical in the wake of an emergency are only temporary quick fixes, while the true urgent need in the face of disaster is the need to reduce the risk of these vulnerable communities to frequently occurring natural disasters.

The Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) and the Federation with the support of the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) have already begun to address the need to reduce the risk of vulnerable communities to flooding in Guangxi and Hunan. Since 2001, communities comprised of poor farmers in Hunan and Guangxi have sustained billions of RMB in losses due to natural disasters. The RCSC and the Federation are currently running the ECHO supported community vulnerability risk reduction (CVR) programme in these provinces where selected at risk communities are provided with improved sanitation facilities and health education that help limit contamination of the water supply and reduce risk to waterborne diseases that threaten communities during flooding. Additionally the RCSC and the Federation will work with the Australian and Danish Red Cross to introduce community based disaster preparedness activities to high risk areas as part of the CVR initiative.

Update on the Floods

According to the latest statistics released by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, 569 people have died and 51,000 people have been injured or contracted illnesses attributable to floods and landslides in China. By the end of July landslides caused by floods destroyed 340,000 houses and damaged more than 1 million houses, forcing 1.46 million people to abandon their homes. The Red Cross Society of China's relief division continues to receive frequent updates from the provincial branches that report on the latest changes of the evolving situation. Among the most recent developments was flooding from 13 to 15 August in Anhui province caused by heavy rainfall in the Huaihe river system resulting in the third flood of the river this year. Additionally, the RCSC Yunnan provincial branch has maintained close contact with the local authorities who are monitoring the potential for floods following the dam ages wreaked on dams during the earthquake.

Yunnan Province: Earthquake

Yunnan province was already one of China's most flood affected provinces this summer when a strong earthquake in the province struck the county of Ludian in Zhaotong city on 10 August. It was in fact the third strongest earthquake to hit Ludian county in less than a year. Two other earthquakes measuring 5.1 and 5.0 on the Richter scales struck the county on 15 and 26 November 2003, killing four people and injuring an additional 120.

Zhejiang Province: Typhoon Rananim

Typhoon Rananim, which hit Zhejiang province on 12 August left 164 people dead and injured thousands. A spokesman with the provincial government reported that 109 of the victims died from the collapse of their houses, while the remaining 55 were killed by floods, mud-rock flow and hurricanes. Of the dead, 144 were from the area while 20 were migrant workers from other provinces. The typhoon affected 75 counties along with 765 townships and villages in Zhejiang, destroying 64,300 houses, killing 55,000 heads of livestock and severely affecting the infrastructure. On 13 August, rainfall from the typhoon triggered a deadly mud-rock flow in the city of Yueqing which killed 39 people and left eight missing.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

On 9 August, the RCSC launched a national appeal to provide relief assistance to the flood affected provinces. The RCSC national office is supporting provincial level activities by providing the branches with cash and relief items such as food, clothing and quilts. Provincial level branches have also launched campaigns to raise funds and collect items like clothing to help bring comfort to those people displaced by floods. Additionally, the RCSC and the Federation are currently planning to extend CVR activities to a third province which was subjected to this summer's severe weather.

Representatives from RCSC headquarters and the Zhejiang provincial branch responded immediately to the typhoon and were in Zhejiang shortly after the typhoon struck and are supporting the needs of the affected population by providing relief items such as food and clothing. RCSC headquarters also provided rapid assistance to the RCSC Yunnan provincial branch following the earthquake. The national office of the RCSC which had supported the branch earlier in regard to the floods released additional relief items such as water purification items and quilts for victims of the earthquake. The RCSC is also conducting ten workshops at the provincial level on the society's disaster relief procedures and the first of these workshops commenced in Guangxi during the third week of August. RCSC provincial branch staff will work with relief staff from the prefecture and county levels to help improve the capacity of the local branches in managing ongoing activities and responding to future disasters. The RCSC relief division recognises the importance of training staff at the society's grass-roots level as the local RCSC branches are the ones who are responsible for both first response and implementation of relief distributions.

Funds released to the RCSC from the Federation's DREF will be used for the purchase of quilts and rice for affected families in Zhejiang which was affected by typhoons, Chongqing and Anhui.

The Federation's East Asia regional information delegate supported the RCSC launch of the national flood relief appeal with international media activity that coincided with the RCSC press conference in Beijing. The RCSC has adopted the slogan "Every Yuan Counts" to help promote the society's national flood relief appeal.

At the same time, the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) granted three million Hong Kong dollars (USD 384,645) to the Hong Kong Red Cross to help flood victims in Henan, Yunnan, Hunan and Guangxi.

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the [Federation's Annual Appeal](#).

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