

CAMBODIA: FLOODS

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The disaster

In the last ten days of September, heavy rainfall produced by two storms in China, Laos and the north-east of Cambodia caused a rapid and extraordinary rise in the level of the Mekong River. The result was widespread flooding across six provinces in Cambodia (Ratanakiri, Stung Treng, Kampong Cham, Kandal and Prey Veng) with the most serious flooding occurring in Kampong Cham and Prey Veng. Some districts of Phnom Penh have also been affected as the Mekong nears the critical level of 11.20 metres in the capital. The municipality of Phnom Penh is planning to place 100,000 sandbags in strategic positions to prevent the river from flooding the city further.

The floods reportedly claimed 11 lives, drowned livestock, destroyed houses, damaged bridges, dams and irrigation systems, and ruined approximately 120,000 hectares of rice fields.

Government action

The National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) estimates that approximately 1.3 million people (10% of the total population of Cambodia) have been affected, of whom 500,000 will require assistance. These figures are based on the total population of affected communes and villages in the six provinces.

Priority needs will include food, shelter and medicines to combat potential epidemics (diarrhoea and fever). The NCDM estimates that flood victims will require approximately 7,500 MT. of rice per month and 200,000 plastic tarpaulins for shelter. It will shortly present an emergency appeal, containing a unified plan of assistance, to the two Cambodian prime ministers for their approval and thereafter to international donors and aid agencies.

Following a meeting yesterday, 30 September, attended by NCDM, the Federation, WFP, UNDP and UNICEF, the WFP made available 3,200 MT. of rice from its stocks, which will need to be replaced, and UNICEF is considering providing funds for the purchase of an unspecified number of plastic shelters. An Emergency Response Group meeting is being held today, 1 October, at the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) headquarters and additional pledges may be made by participating NGOs.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The CRC has already responded to the emergency by distributing food, shelter and clothing to 440 affected families in Kampong Cham and Prey Veng. It is now preparing to undertake a vulnerability assessment in order to establish an accurate picture of needs. The survey, which will

gather details of the location and numbers of people affected, livestock losses, damage to houses, infrastructure, rice fields and farmland, will be carried out by Red Cross Volunteers in co-operation with local authorities and NGOs.

National Societies will be informed of the results and notified of any outstanding needs.

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