

CHINA: FLOODS

8 July 1998

The Disaster

China's seasonal floods began in March this year, two months earlier than normal, and are continuing with unusual severity. More than 20 provinces have been seriously affected, and the situation is particularly bad in the Jiangxi, Hunan, Fujian and Guangxi provinces.

Official figures for these areas list at least 116 dead, 8,974 injured, 13.6 million homeless, 218,201 houses damaged, 66,526 houses collapsed; and more than 300,000 hectares of cropland damaged. The direct economic loss is put at 7 billion RMB (1.2 billion CHF), according to the Ministry for Civil Affairs.

Meteorological forecasts indicate that the worst is yet to come: the water level of China's large rivers is already high, and if the predicted rains arrive the situation will get even more serious with flooding lasting beyond the traditional summer pattern. (Normally, floods in China develop from South to North, last a little over a month and begin subsiding in late July or early August.)

In co-operation with the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC), the Federation is preparing for a possible large-scale emergency relief operation. As part of these measures, it is alerting donors to the likelihood of an international appeal in the next few weeks.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The RCSC is on a continuous disaster response footing and has already taken the following emergency measures:

- { initiated moves to restore, adjust and strengthen the Headquarters Disaster Relief Group activities and created a relief management task force composed of five senior staff;
- { issued an alert to provincial RC branches to closely follow the situation and report to the headquarters in a timely manner;
- { mobilised branches to begin fund-raising campaigns and strengthen the administration of relief funds and supplies;
- { released 150,000 RMB (CHF 26,800) to several of the most affected provinces for emergency relief operations.

Needs

The National Society has limited pre-positioned relief supplies and the provincial Red Cross branches and Disaster Preparedness centres have a limited number of vector control sprays, basic medicines, coats and

quilts available for immediate distribution. This stock will in no way be adequate to deal with the foreseen disaster and RCSC is therefore seeking CHF 1 million for the immediate procurement of food, water purification tablets, vector sprays and to cover operational costs like transport and communications.

Budget summary for the initial emergency phase

Needs in cash	in CHF
Water purification tablets, 45 million tablets	315,000
Vector control sprays	275,000
Blankets, 30,000 pieces	180,000
Rice / wheat flour, 1,000 MT	200,000
Administrative costs	30,000
Total	1,000,000

All relief supplies will be procured in China with the technical support from the Federation delegation. National Societies are requested to provide cash support to facilitate the management of the operation and avoid difficulties with customs clearance.

Red Cross Society of China/Federation plan of action

The RCSC has prepared a general plan of action which includes:

- { mobilising RC branches/grassroots to initiate fund-raising campaigns and carry out relief activities;
- { reporting to the Federation on the flood situation and preparing an appeal pending further developments;
- { informing the Hong Kong RC branch and the Red Cross organisation in Taiwan of the situation, strengthening communication and seeking their support;
- { issuing an appeal as soon as a decision in this direction is taken.

A Federation assessment mission, including two officers from the Federation Secretariat, is taking place from July 8 to July 17. The officers will obtain first hand information on the flood situation, draft a plan of action and produce information material which will be used for fund-raising activities. This plan of action will form the basis of the appeal, if launched, and be used for implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation purposes.

At this point in time the Federation envisages an operation to assist over 1.5 million beneficiaries with basic relief supplies.

The Federation has allocated CHF 100,000 from the Disaster Relief and Emergency Fund (DREF) for the immediate procurement of 14 million water purification tablets to assist 500,000 people for 30 days.

To provide further support to the RCSC on a field level, it is planned to post a field delegate for six months and an information/reporting delegate for 10 weeks. National Societies are invited to propose candidates for the above mentioned positions as soon as possible.

The operation will be supported by finance and information delegates from the Federation Regional Delegation in Kuala Lumpur which will provide technical support.

Conclusion

The RCSC/Federation are closely monitoring the rapidly changing flood situation and will keep National Societies informed of developments. Please note that budget forecasts reflect the present estimated needs

and that figures are subject to change, depending on the outcome of the assessment mission and its recommendations.

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