

# ***CHINA: FLOODS***

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## ***Information Bulletin N° 2***

### ***The Disaster***

Sustained rainfall in recent weeks along the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze river has increased fears of major flooding in central China. Although the worst of the flood season has yet to come, high water levels are already posing a serious threat in many parts of Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces. East China's Anhui and Central Hubei provinces declared a state of emergency on 20 July as flood waters continued to rise above danger levels and threaten provinces along the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze. Flooding on the middle reaches of the Yangtze is becoming more serious, according to the latest information from the provinces of Jiangxi, Hubei and Hunan, where the water levels in some sections of the river have exceeded the danger limit for 20 days.

Reports from the local authorities indicate that while the flood control situation remains critical, no severe dangers have been reported along the thousands of kilometres of levees and dykes that protect the surrounding countryside from these seasonal floods. However, some leaks and cave-ins, due to water logging, have been identified in levees and dykes along the main river.

The limited flooding from the Yangtze so far is in part due to the many flood control projects initiated by the central government after last year's devastating floods. Hubei Province for instance reinforced hundreds of kilometres of Yangtze levees, to increase their ability to withstand major floods. The third flood peak is expected to hit the town of Yichang in Hubei today.

While many of the Provinces currently affected by the torrential rain are in a position to cope with the current high water levels, the critical period is still yet to come. Weather forecasters predict that heavy downpours will continue to push up the water levels along the Yangtze.

From the statistics received from the Provincial Red Cross branches in the six worst affected Provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan and Anhui, the torrential rainfall has affected some 58.94 million people. It has caused the deaths of 188 people and over 24,000 are reported to have been injured. In addition, 1.795 million people have had to be evacuated to safer areas. An estimated 278,000 rooms have collapsed.

The HQ of the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) has received numerous appeals for assistance from Provincial Branches. Funds allocated for the purchase of Disaster Preparedness stocks will be used to purchase water purification tablets, sanitation materials and basic curative medicines for the worst affected areas. Further Federation funds will be released once a complete plan has been formulated by the Federation delegation and RCSC Relief Department and the result of the latest tenders are analysed.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The RCSC HQ in Beijing continues to receive up to date disaster reports on the situation from the worst affected provinces.

In all Provinces, Red Cross medical teams have been sent to the affected areas to provide medical assistance and supply water purification tablets and sanitation materials to ensure safe water supplies and prevent the outbreak of waterborne diseases.

Fund-raising campaigns have been initiated to raise both in kind and cash donations for the emergency.

Regional and Provincial Red Cross Disaster Preparedness Centres continue to release DP stocks to the worst affected areas.

The Hubei Provincial Red Cross, in co-operation with the local health department, organised and dispatched 258 medical teams to the affected areas in the province. Sanitation materials and curative medicines with a value of RMB 6,912,900 million (CHF 1,256,900) have been dispatched to the teams in the field.

In the past week the Zhejiang Provincial Red Cross and the local health department have supported the 550 medical teams mobilised at the start of the floods with a total of RMB 1.2 million (CHF 218,000) worth of relief items, including drinking water and sanitation materials (RMB 280,000), food (RMB 80,000), tents and pumping facilities (RMB 660,000) and daily necessities and clothing (RMB 80,000).

In Anhui Province, the local Red Cross branches and the health authorities sent 714 medical teams to the affected areas to provide medical care and carry out disease prevention activities. The Red Cross has distributed medicines, food, clothing and quilts with a total value of RMB 3.89 million (CHF 707,272). The Provincial Red Cross in Jiangxi has allocated RMB 200,000 (CHF 36,300) worth of relief materials to the flood affected areas in the province. Many medical teams have been organised by the Red Cross at various levels.

The orders for sanitation material and water purification tablets, funded through the Federation, have been authorised by the RCSC management and it is hoped that these essential relief items will be delivered soon to the disaster areas.

Tenders have now been received for the additional relief items (water purification tablets, sanitation materials, clothing and tents) and it is hoped that contracts will soon be signed with the suppliers. These purchases will be funded through a cash reserve of CHF 810,000 built from funds previously committed by the Federation and donor national societies in preparation for the 1999 floods and already in country.

The Federation has allocated CHF 100,000 from the Disaster Relief and Emergency Fund (DREF) to provide further support to the RCSC in the field. It is also planned to post two field delegates for a period of five months and an information/reporting delegate for three months. National Societies are invited to propose candidates for the above mentioned positions as soon as possible.

## ***Government Response***

The Chinese Government continue to mobilise the army and citizens in the affected areas to protect the dykes from the high water levels. The evacuation of people to safer areas continues.

The first batch of flood relief materials from the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters arrived on Monday in Hunan Province, the front line of the flood control campaign along the Yangtze. Officials are on duty around the clock, monitoring the movement of the river's flood peak and changes in water levels at the major danger sections along thousands of kilometres of Yangtze levees, according to reports.

## *Needs*

While the Provincial Red Cross branches seem to be coping at the moment with the DP stocks that are available to them, there will clearly be a need to reassess the situation if the current torrential rain continues. For the moment, in this early phase of the disaster the main emphasis remains on the procurement and distribution of water purification tablets and sanitation materials, curative medicines, food, clothing and quilts. It is hoped that the funds currently within the country will act as a buffer, to enabling the RCSC to carry on its activities before its well rehearsed domestic fund raising drives produce additional stocks and funds.

Although the RCSC is not at present looking for international assistance, discussions continue between the Federation's delegation and the RCSC leadership on how best to assist the National Society. In the meantime the Federation is transferring the funds allocated from DREF, plus a contribution of approx. CHF 100,000 received from the Canadian Red Cross in response to this emergency. Additional spontaneous cash donations are most welcome.

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