

OPERATIONS UPDATE



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:FLOODS

20 November 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 183 countries.

In Brief

Appeal No. 05AA017; Operations Update no. 3; Period covered: 4 October – 17 November 2005; Appeal coverage: 36.6%

(click here for attached contributions list) (click here for updated contributions list available on the website)

Appeal history:

- Launched on 11 August 2005 for CHF 5,501,604 (USD 4,274,751 or EUR 2,525,539) for 9 months to assist 400,000 beneficiaries.
- Information bulletin 1 to 7 issued.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 200,000

Outstanding needs : CHF 2,013,587 (USD 1,529,500 or EUR 1,300,935)

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals:

[China Annual Appeal 05AA058](#)

[East Asia Regional Appeal 05AA061](#)

Operational Summary:

Over the past few years, China has experienced increasingly long flood seasons, where the traditional May to August flood season has now extended into the autumn months. In 2005, following heavy floods that commenced in May, villagers who had only recently replanted crops destroyed by floods were caught off guard by typhoon Talim, which roared through Anhui and Jiangxi provinces over 3-4 September. Even more unusual have been the floods that occurred 8-9 November in Jiangxi's Jiujiang city, which affected 260,000 people in 13 counties, submerged rice and cotton crops and left more farmers questioning how they will provide their families with food in the coming months.

Over the past month, the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) county-level branches distributed 1,500 MT of rice to some 100,000 people living in small and remote villages in Anhui, Guangxi, Hunan, Jiangxi and Sichuan. The RCSC and the Federation are currently in the process of procuring quilts for distribution throughout the affected areas covered by this appeal.

The wide-reaching network of RCSC county branches is playing a critical role in facilitating the delivery of relief items to residents of small and hard to reach villages. County-level and prefecture branch representatives liaise closely with villages about distribution dates and beneficiary selection criteria. They also make all arrangements for the final distribution of rice to the thousands beneficiaries.

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Background and Summary

In November, vast stretches of fields in southern and central China are dotted with farmers attending to the harvest. The end of October and the beginning of November is a critical period in the fields, with family members gathering to finish the work in time. In Anhui, Guangxi, Hunan, Jiangxi and Sichuan, however, barren plots of land and rice fields resembling small ponds lay empty following the multiple floods, typhoons, intense hail and landslides that struck central and southern China between May and November, destroying over 15 million hectares of farmland in total across the continent-sized country.



Photo 1: Farmers in Anhui look upon their empty fields, witness to the floods' destruction of precious crops and farmland.

Over the past month, the Red Cross Society of China's (RCSC) county-level Red Cross branches distributed 1,500 MT of rice to some 100,000 people by living in small and remote villages in Anhui, Guangxi, Hunan, Jiangxi and Sichuan, each of which are considered among the poorest provinces in China (detailed distribution plan is available in Programme Update no.2).

It is a long journey for the thousands of 15 kg bags of rice. Tons of rice must be transported through extensive areas by train and trucks, until finally the bags are pushed home by the beneficiaries in hand carts through villages in Anhui, Hunan and Jiangxi; carried via winding dirt roads on horseback through the precariously beautiful landscapes of Guangxi; or loaded onto small boats in Sichuan. For numerous families, particularly, senior citizens and the disabled who live in colder areas and were unable to save crops or lacked stored food supplies, rice received from the RCSC means one less worry, buying families a little time to focus on repairing their homes and refurbishing their fields. Rice distributions also served the same purpose for residents of Jiangxi's Xia Hua village, where heavy rainfall over the past two weeks is threatening to once again inundate the village.

While families in the most southern areas are able to obtain small amounts of fresh vegetables from gardens, families living in the colder areas – where it is too late for any vegetables to grow – rely on eating hot chillies, stray baskets of soybeans and sweet potatoes. The debt begins to add up for these families as loans of money for urgent repairs to the house, new seeds for the fields, medical and school fees as well as food borrowed from friends and neighbours will all have to be repaid from the anticipated harvest five or six months from now. The crops and a handful of chickens and ducks are the lifeblood of these communities. Most of the farmers cannot take time away from the fields to make it to the closest county centre and lack the means to get there. Rather, the crops and the chickens are the foundation for the families' subsistence and are their source of income for purchasing items at outdoor markets and paying bills.

With the crops gone and a reported 1.17 million houses across the country ruined, families who were fortunate enough to receive government assistance are busy trying to put a roof back over their heads. Many families are

still living in temporary housing. At the same time, thousands of poor families who fall in the middle live by default with thin cracked walls and holes in their straw roof. They unable to afford the RMB 600 (CHF 98) needed to make necessary repairs, because their yearly income of RMB 2000 – 3,000 (CHF 326 – 489) for a family of four has now been diminished by one half in a loss of the season's harvest.

On average, a typical 60 square metre brick house that lacks water and sanitation facilities or glass windows will cost anywhere between RMB 10,000 – 30,000 (approximately CHF 1,600 – 4,900) to build. The government's ability to provide assistance for rebuilding and relocating depends on the respective county's capacity and the extent of damage caused by floods. Thus government support for rebuilding is limited to specific circumstances. Under the best of these circumstances, it will take time and hard work for farmers who are better off and have the support of their family and community to pay back government or private loans from the agricultural bank taken to rebuild their houses.

As affected farmers continue to work hard to recover from floods, another potential disaster poses a threat to their livelihood. Over the past few weeks, as with many countries in the world, concern over avian influenza has increased in China. Since October, China has reported six outbreaks of the virus in poultry, with millions of birds having been culled, big cities placing a ban on the sale of live poultry and local officials confiscating chickens and ducks from backyards. On 17 November, The ministry of health announced there has been two cases of the deadly virus in central Hunan province and one in eastern Anhui province.

Flood conditions lower people's resistance to disease in general. Their vulnerability becomes more acute due to increased exposure to the cold from living in damaged houses with leaky roofs, inadequate access to food and the contamination of water sources when pit latrines and animal pens overflowing. At the same time, flood victims who are left without a source of income are less likely to seek medical treatment because they lack the sufficient funds to pay for treatment, particularly if they have to travel long distances, thus increasing the vulnerability of flood victims to contracting this or any other disease.

The spread of the avian influenza, much like the loss of crops to the floods, is resulting in substantial economic losses for farmers who have had their chickens culled. Farmers fearing their birds will be culled contribute further to the potential spread of the disease as they are reluctant to report suspected cases, or rush to sell the birds as quickly as possible. When the disease, for example, was identified in ducks in Dingdang town in Guangxi the local government culled 14,000 birds within a three-kilometre radius of the duck farm. Some geese were found dead in Anhui on 18 October, and more recently on 14 November, when 6,800 fowl raised by farmers in a village near Huainan city (one of the Federation/RCSC operational areas) died because of what has been diagnosed as the H5N1 virus. As reported by the Asian Development Bank at the beginning of November, should the disease continue to evolve, an avian flu pandemic could halt Asia's economic growth rate to almost zero, depending on factors such as the severity and length of the pandemic as well as the psychological impact on consumer and investor confidence.

The well-being of rural communities in Anhui, Hunan, Jiangxi and Sichuan is put at further risk because of the reported rise in the number of cases of snail fever, also known as schistosomiasis, which is a parasitic disease that slowly eats away at the liver, intestines and spleen. According to a latest survey by the provincial health department, Hunan makes up almost one quarter, or 210,000, of China's total infections of the disease.

Operational developments [<click here for an attached logframe>](#)

Emergency relief (food and non-food)

Objective: Recovery assistance in the form of rice and quilts is provided to 100,000 of the neediest families (estimated 400,000 individuals) in five flood-stricken provinces (Anhui, Guangxi, Hunan, Jiangxi and Sichuan).

Progress/Achievements

The first round of rice distributions in the five provinces (1500 MT of rice) took place during the second half of October. Distributions were followed up by monitoring visits in all five provinces conducted by representatives of the RCSC provincial and county-level branches and the Federation during the last week of October and the first

two weeks of November (please refer to Monitoring section below for more information). Information from one of the monitoring visits revealed that the Anhui provincial branch also submits to auditing procedures carried out by the government, presumably groups from the national audit office of the People's Republic of China (CNAO). The government's Anhui provincial audit office has specific tasks related to auditing non-commercial funds:

- financial revenues and expenditures of social security funds, public donations and other relevant funds under the charge of the government
- financial revenues and expenditures of projects funded with aids or loans provided by international organizations or foreign governments
- financial revenues and expenditures of the departments of Anhui provincial government and their non-profit undertakings

Procurement of an additional 750 MT of rice and some 65,000 quilts commenced during the second week of November following the confirmation of funding for these items at the end of October from the Danish Red Cross and the Belgian Red Cross.

The greatest challenge faced in providing relief assistance in China is ensuring the delivery of the items throughout expansive affected areas in each of the five provinces. The wide-reaching network of RCSC county branches plays a critical role in facilitating the delivery of the relief items to residents of small villages, which can take an entire day to reach because of poor or tough road conditions or adverse weather. The RCSC county-level and prefecture branch representatives also play an important role in liaising with villages about distribution dates, beneficiary selection criteria and making all arrangements for the final distribution of rice to the beneficiaries. Depending on the distances between the county and the individual villages, county-level Red Cross staff will work with village representatives to arrange for the transportation of both the villagers and the relief items to and from the distribution site.

According to a recent report published by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), over the period 26 December to 5 May 2005 there were 23 floods with a larger affected area than the tsunami. Historically, China has been one of the countries sustaining the greatest extent of flood damage over the past century. As indicated in the table below, according to statistics cited on the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)/Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CREED) International Disaster Database, between 1900 and 2005, floods in China had occurred with the greatest frequency and affected the largest number of people.

Countries most affected by Water-related Disasters (1900-2005)					
sorted by number of people killed and affected					
Country	Date	Killed	Country	Date	People Affected
China P Rep	Jul-1931	3,700,000	China P Rep	6-Aug-1998	238,973,000
China P Rep	Jul-1959	2,000,000	China P Rep	18-May-1991	210,232,227
China P Rep	Jul-1939	500,000	China P Rep	Jun-2002	190,035,257
Indian Ocean	Dec-2004	250,000	China P Rep	Jul-1996	154,634,000
China P Rep	1935	142,000	China P Rep	23-Jun-2003	150,146,000
China P Rep	1911	100,000	India	7-Jul-1993	128,000,000
China P Rep	Jul-1949	57,000	China P Rep	May-1995	114,470,249
Guatemala	Oct-1949	40,000	China P Rep	Jun-1999	101,024,000
China P Rep	Aug-1954	30,000	China P Rep	14-Jul-1989	100,010,000
Venezuela	19-Dec-1999	30,000	China P Rep	Jun-1994	78,974,400
Bangladesh	Jul-1974	28,700	~ Indian Ocean	Dec-2004	5,000,000

*** Countries most affected by water-related disasters (1900-2005). Based on: "EM -DAT: The OFDA/CREED International Disaster Database, Université catholique de Louvain , Brussels , Belgium ".*

This being said, in 2005 reports of record breaking floods and a series of powerful typhoons that struck China led to the evacuation of millions of people across the country, with some people living outside on dykes for up to two months before returning home. Sifting through these stories to identify the most vulnerable is extremely and emotionally challenging. The RCSC county-level branches are placed in a difficult position of working with village representatives to choose among so many people in need.

Monitoring

Five monitoring visits were scheduled for October and November this year. The first round of visits was conducted on 25 to 28 October to Sichuan and Anhui, while the second round was undertaken in Guangxi, Jiangxi and Hunan.

Representatives from the RCSC's provincial and county branches, as well as representatives of the Federation were the core members of the monitoring team. The team interviewed representatives from the provincial branch and county-level branches to follow up on the distribution of rice. Beneficiaries were also visited and interviewed – four to five beneficiaries and their households per village – to obtain greater insight into the living conditions and needs of China's rural poor, which is linked to the regular floods that continuously burden their lives.

Distribution

Monitoring visits to all five provinces has enabled the gathering of detailed information on the rice distribution to specific areas in the respective provinces carried out at the end of October and the first two weeks of November (see logframe). Further information on the other distributions will be made available as the remaining monitoring visits are completed. The three selected suppliers delivered the contracted amount of rice to affected counties in the five provinces during the second half of October based on the distribution plan. Arriving by rail, the bags of rice are counted and signed off by country representatives present at the delivery points. The cost of rail transport is covered by the RCSC national office. The rice is then delivered to the various distribution points by small trucks and vehicles hired by the county-level branches.

Selection criteria and beneficiary lists were well disseminated, as they were prominently posted in public areas close to the distribution sites. A committee of three or four village and Red Cross representatives performed the selection process. The monitoring team attended one of the distribution ceremonies and found that it was in compliance to RCSC standard procedures.

Beneficiary visits



Photo 2: The Federation monitoring team meets with a beneficiary at his home in Sichuan province.

To avoid intimidating or disconcerting the households, the number of interviewers was limited to two team members guided by one village committee member. All beneficiaries interviewed came from vulnerable households as identified in the selection criteria. Many of the interviewed households had members who were senior in age or disabled. All had suffered greatly in the floods, either through damaged homes, loss of income or crops or both. Based on the interviews, these families spent the most on building materials, new seeds and fertilizers. The average income of families interviewed was approximately RMB 3,000, though there were some

that earned as little as RMB 1,000. The majority received no other assistance. Although many of the areas are prone to floods and have been badly hit since 1998, none of the families interviewed had any formal plans for preparedness. Construction material and food were named as the two most useful forms of assistance in floods. These beneficiaries have varied access to information; many however did not own television or radio sets and were informed of the rice distribution through word-of-mouth, often via the local community leader.

Impact

During the monitoring visits, it was found beneficiaries in Huainan city receiving rice this year had also received Federation-supported assistance in 2003. This demonstrates the importance of sustained, continuous assistance to these areas, as this information reflects a situation in which poor agrarian-based families are repeatedly affected by regular floods year after year. The restocking of relief supplies that are one of this appeal's objectives (see below) would, if supported by donors, assure that in case of further floods, there will be existing emergency stock for immediate distribution to beneficiaries. It also demonstrates a need for possible longer-term solutions for certain acute problems as well as disaster preparedness measures. The community vulnerability reduction programme, jointly supported by the Federation, RCSC and ECHO through the annual appeal, is a fine example of such solutions.

The monitoring visit also revealed that food relief alone is insufficient to address the flood woes of those affected, although much appreciated. Many expressed the need for other forms of assistance and highlighted possible additional support for construction material in times of floods.

Restocking of relief supplies

Objective: A minimum emergency stock of non-food relief items is rebuilt to allow RCSC to respond to future disasters

Progress/Achievements

The RCSC and the Federation continue to work in partnership to seek out further support for this part of the planned operation.

[Contributions list below; click here to return to the title page](#)

China - floods

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 05EA017

PLEDGES RECEIVED

18/11/2005

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->					TOTAL COVERAGE	
					5,501,604	36.6%
AUSTRALIA - RC		20,000	AUD	18,970	29.08.05	RICE, QUILTS
BELGIUM - GOVT		351,039	EUR	546,568	12.10.05	PROCUREMENT OF QUILTS, TRANSPORT, STORAGE & DISTRIBUTION
BRITISH - GVT		196,078	GBP	446,666	05.10.05	RELIEF ACTIVITIES
CANADA - RC		50,000	CAD	52,275	12.08.05	
FINLAND - RC		50,000	EUR	78,025	19.08.05	
GREEK - GOVT		40,000	EUR	61,820	31.10.05	
ICELANDIC - RC		250,000	ISK	4,900	26.08.05	
IRELAND - GOVT		100,000	EUR	155,000	9.08.05	
JAPAN - RC		213,700	USD	275,032	17.08.05	
MONACO - RC		10,000	EUR	15,570	25.10.05	
PRIVATE DONORS ON LINE				505	25.08.05	
SWEDEN - GOVT		2,000,000	SEK	332,000	16.08.05	
TURKEY - RC		20,000	USD	25,740	26.08.05	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				2,013,071	CHF	36.6%

KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES						
				0	CHF	0.0%

ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED						
				0	CHF	