



FAO's ROLE IN THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC FLASH APPEAL 2009

20 October 2009

Background

On 29 September 2009, Typhoon Ketsana struck southern provinces of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR). The resulting floods and landslides affected some 170 000 people in Attapeu, Champassack, Saravan, Savannakhet and Sekong Provinces – home to a large portion of the country's poorest and most vulnerable families. Over 9 600 households were displaced and 15 human lives lost. In Attapeu, which bore the brunt of the storm, winds reached 140 km/hr, while several villages situated along rivers in Sekong and Saravan were washed away.

In three of the affected provinces, at least one in two people was already food insecure and malnourished. The flooding destroyed homes and the livelihood assets on which poor rural families depend for sustenance. Infrastructure suffered extensive damage, impeding assessments, the delivery of relief to remote areas and access to basic services.

Areas struck by Ketsana have the highest prevalence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Lao PDR – the world's most heavily mined country per capita. The displacement of mapped UXO due to the floods poses a serious threat to communities and humanitarian partners.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic Flash Appeal 2009, launched on 20 October, seeks USD 10.5 million to support ongoing Government efforts in addressing the immediate needs of 170 000 people affected by Typhoon Ketsana.

Challenges facing food security and agriculture

The livelihoods of more than 70 percent of the people in Lao PDR depend on agriculture. Striking during the lean period and as farmers were preparing for the upcoming harvest, Ketsana destroyed the already scarce food and seed stocks and severely damaged fields at a devastating time for farming families and local communities at large. Many are facing immediate challenges in meeting household food needs, particularly families already affected by chronic food insecurity.

Ketsana impacted approximately 28 500 hectares of rice and other crops, with 70-100 percent damage to rice paddies reported in Attapeu, Savannakhet and Sekong Provinces. Numerous villages suffered the near or total destruction of vegetable gardens. Protein-rich food sources, such as large animals and fish stock, were lost to the floods, as were countless productive assets, including farming tools, aquaculture ponds and storage facilities. Consequently, farmers have lost their means of livelihood, immediate access to food and capacity to generate income.

If rice seeds are not provided to farmers and sown in time for the November cropping season, there will be a severe shortage during the next harvest (March-April 2010) estimated at 73 000 tonnes. Combined with the crop losses caused by Ketsana, farmers will face extreme hardship in the coming months to bridge the gap between the two cropping seasons and require immediate support.



Over 50 percent of people in three affected provinces were already food insecure (photo: © Oxfam)



FAO's response

Within the framework of the Lao People's Democratic Republic Flash Appeal 2009, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) seeks USD 1.78 million to support the emergency agricultural needs of families worst affected by Typhoon Ketsana. With donor support, FAO aims to provide farmers with 1 320 tonnes of rice seeds, farming tools and technical support, with priority assistance dedicated to minority groups, women-headed households and families with small children.

Project title: Emergency agricultural response to Typhoon Ketsana affected farmers

Objective: Immediately protect and support food security restoration of the most vulnerable farming families to save lives thorough the supply of agriculture inputs.

Beneficiaries: 15 000 households (91 600 persons).

Partners: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Planning and Investment, and national and international non-governmental organizations.

Funds Required: USD 1 780 118.



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