



FAO'S ROLE IN THE JOINT APPEAL FOR FLOOD RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION IN THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Background

Between 12 and 18 August, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) was struck by the most severe flood to affect the country in about one hundred years. Tropical storm Kammuri brought heavy rainfall and rising waters to the Mekong Basin, impacting over 200 000 people. The situation was compounded by the saturation of catchment areas during the monsoon season. Flooding was most severe in northern and central provinces, where up to 250 mm of rain fell within a few days and flash floods claimed nearly a dozen lives.

Damage was incurred to homes, infrastructure, schools, wells and sanitation systems, among other vital resources and services. There is a rising danger of water- and vector-borne diseases due to residual flood waters, unsanitary conditions and overcrowding. The loss of food stocks, seeds, standing crops and livestock, coupled with disruption to livelihoods and increased food costs, have further exacerbated precarious levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, particularly among children.

The Joint Appeal for Flood Recovery and Rehabilitation in Lao PDR was launched on 19 September to support Government efforts in responding to the most critical humanitarian and early recovery needs of the affected population within a 12-month timeframe. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is the lead agency for agriculture, encompassing the crops, livestock, aquaculture and agro-forestry subsectors, identified in the Appeal as fundamental areas of intervention to rebuild livelihoods, ensure food security and avoid destitution.

Challenges facing food security and agriculture

Nearly 80 percent of the Lao labour force depends on agriculture for its livelihood. In addition to the income generated for family healthcare, schooling and other essential needs, many depend on agricultural production to meet household food requirements. Preliminary estimates reveal that the floods inundated 75 000 hectares of agricultural land, of which two-thirds suffered damage. Numerous livestock deaths and the complete destocking of fish ponds mean the loss of income as well as access to an immediate source of nutritious food.

Crop growth had already suffered from reduced precipitation in June/July, which coupled with the floods points towards significantly decreased yields and crop losses. Farmers currently lack the productive assets needed in order to resume livelihood activities in time for the upcoming agricultural (dry) season, beginning in October/November. Irrigation channels also suffered damage, which may impede dry crop cultivation. Soaring food and input prices are furthering the plight of rural households to reconstruct their livelihoods while staving off hunger.

Surviving livestock are weakened and more prone to disease, during a time when the risk of outbreaks is heightened due to increased humidity and impure water sources. Restoring food production, livelihoods and self-reliance will be contingent on safeguarding the remaining assets of resource-poor families, replacing lost inputs and providing technical guidance conducive to lasting recovery across all subsectors of agriculture. Inaction would lead to the adoption of harmful coping strategies and dependency on food aid.



Nearly 80 percent of Lao households engage in fisheries-related activities



FAO's response

Within the framework of the Joint Appeal for Flood Recovery and Rehabilitation in Lao PDR, FAO seeks **USD 2 million** to assist Lao rural households to rapidly restore crop, livestock and aquaculture production, livelihoods and self-reliance during this critical time.

FAO's activities aim to:

- **equip farmers** with the rice and vegetable seeds and fertilizers needed in order to plant their fields in time for the upcoming dry season;
- **reduce livestock morbidity and mortality** through carrying out vaccination campaigns, deworming and the provision of vitamins;
- **revive aquaculture production** through the distribution of fingerlings, lime and frogs and rehabilitation of ponds; and
- **provide training** in all of the above areas of intervention to ensure best practices, enhance production and maximize the use of project inputs.





FAO'S COMPONENT OF THE JOINT APPEAL FOR FLOOD RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION IN THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS: USD 2 000 000

Project Title: Emergency supply of cereal and vegetable seeds, mineral fertilizers, veterinary assistance and technical support to flood-affected vulnerable households.

Objectives: To resuscitate and strengthen the livelihoods and food security of flood-affected vulnerable rural households.

Beneficiaries: 12 000 households (72 000 persons).

Implementing Partners: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao Women's Union, Lao Youth Union, Village Committees and international non-governmental organizations.

Funds Required: USD 1 400 126

"Emergency supply of cereal and vegetable seeds, mineral fertilizers, veterinary assistance and technical support to flood-affected vulnerable households" aims to assist farming households to rapidly resume their livelihoods in time for the upcoming cropping season in October/November.

The floods devastated major agricultural areas at a time when household coping capacities were already stretched owing to rising food and agricultural input prices. Consequently, resource-poor farmers will find great hardship in purchasing basic inputs to replace those lost in the floods.

The loss of livestock has also deprived many households of an essential source of income and nutrition. Safeguarding the health of surviving animals is critical as many animals have been weakened by the floods and are more susceptible to disease outbreaks, which are on the rise as a result of overcrowding, residual flooding and contaminated water sources.

With donor support, FAO will distribute rice and vegetable seeds and mineral fertilizers to farming households most affected by the recent floods, as well as prevent further livestock losses and the spread of disease through the vaccination and treatment of surviving animals. The proposed activities will directly benefit 12 000 households.

Inputs will be provided alongside technical guidance and training in improved farming and livestock practices to maximize the impact of project efforts. Expected outcomes of the project will also contribute to increasing access to nutritious foods, thereby raising prospects for improved nutrition levels.

Project Title: Emergency assistance to aquaculture rehabilitation in flood-affected areas.

Objectives: To immediately restore and improve aquaculture production in flood-affected areas among vulnerable, resource-poor and food-insecure rural households.

Beneficiaries: 4 660 households (27 960 persons)

Implementing Partners: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao Women's Union, Lao Youth Union, Village Committees and international non-governmental organizations.

Funds Required: USD 599 874

"Emergency assistance to aquaculture rehabilitation in flood-affected areas" seeks to restore livelihood activities and income generation among the most vulnerable and food-insecure households affected by the recent floods. The damage incurred to ponds has impaired a source of income and rapid access to food for many vulnerable households.

The immediate objectives of the proposed intervention include the rehabilitation and restocking of household fish ponds and the development of homestead frog farms through the provision of key inputs such as fingerlings, lime and frogs. Training will strengthen beneficiaries' knowledge of improved aquaculture practices and pond management, maximize their use of distributed inputs and increase the productivity of their ponds.

In addition to the 4 660 households planned to benefit directly from project activities (equivalent to 27 960 people), the proposed assistance will also increase the availability of aquaculture products in surrounding communities and local markets, thereby enhancing food security. Further, increasing the supply of protein will contribute to reducing the prevalence of malnutrition in the country, which is particularly affecting children.

The assistance will enable households affected by flooding and the surge in food and agricultural input prices to produce their own food and avoid adverse measures to resume their livelihoods. Further, FAO efforts will provide families with a sustainable means to improve their income and avoid dependency on costly protracted assistance, while strengthening their resilience to future shocks.

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