



IFRC | President Konoé highlights continued humanitarian needs of flood survivors following DPRK visit

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Concluding a ten day visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Mr. Tadateru Konoé, President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has warned that the humanitarian needs of thousands of flood survivors in the northeast of the country must not be overlooked.

The floods, which struck on August 30th, affected six counties in North Hamgyong province. Some 600,000 people were affected and 70,000 people were left homeless after their homes were damaged or destroyed by what have been described as the worst floods to have hit DPRK in more than 70 years.

Mr Konoé spent three days travelling in two of the worst affected areas - Musan County and neighbouring Hoeryong City. He witnessed ongoing reconstruction efforts and met with DPRK Red Cross staff and volunteers, local people and government officials.

"It was very positive to see so many houses and apartment complexes completed. Moving into a permanent home not only provides security and protection from the harsh winter, it restores people's dignity and allows them to restart their lives", said Mr Konoé.

"But there is still much to do. Many people lost everything. They need basic relief supplies to get through the winter months and more investment is needed to restore health services, water supply and sanitation systems together with mass awareness campaigns to guard against the spread of communicable diseases."

The Government has been leading efforts to build almost 12,000 new family housing units. The IFRC has contributed to the reconstruction programme by purchasing 52,200 corrugated iron roofing sheets from suppliers in China.

On 20 September the IFRC launched a 15.2 million Swiss Franc emergency appeal (USD 15.5 million, Euros 13.9 million) to enable the DPRK Red Cross Society to reach more than 330,000 people with aid. But so far, only 25% of the appeal target (3.8 million Swiss francs) has been met.

Over the coming months the IFRC and DPRK Red Cross Society will focus mainly on safeguarding the health and improving the welfare of affected families. This means ensuring people have water purification tablets and kits which contain soap, shampoo and other items essential to maintaining personal hygiene.

DPRK Red Cross volunteers are also being trained to carry out community level awareness programmes to reduce the risks associated with waterborne and communicable diseases, which are prevalent in post floods environments where poor environmental sanitation and contaminated water supply often pose health risks.

The IFRC and DPRK Red Cross are in advanced discussions with the government to support rehabilitation of the water supply infrastructure in Musan County. This may extend to repairing the water pumping station in Musan Up (town) that was damaged by the floods and procuring water pipes to connect newly constructed apartment blocks to the main water network.

During his visit to DPRK, Mr. Konoé also met with senior officials of the DPRK Red Cross Society in Pyongyang and with government officials to discuss the wider humanitarian situation in the country.