

Viet Nam: Drought and Saltwater Intrusion

Situation Update No. 2 (as of 14 April 2016)



This update is issued on behalf of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Viet Nam. It covers the period from 23 March to 14 April 2016. The next update will be issued as new information becomes available.

Highlights

- Since January 2016, severe drought and saltwater intrusion is significantly affecting the livelihoods, food security and water supply of nearly 2.3 million people (MARD report, 30 March) across all provinces in South-Central, Central Highlands and Mekong Delta regions.
- To date, 39 out of 63 provinces in Vietnam have been impacted by drought, of which 34 provinces have received some support from central Government.
- 14 provinces have declared a state of emergency.
- In April, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, United Nations and NGOs partners conducted a joint multi-sector rapid assessment 6 of the most affected provinces (Ben Tre, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, Gia Lai, Kon Tum and Kien Giang) to inform response planning.
- Priority humanitarian needs are in the following areas: (a) provision of clean drinking water, (b) ensuring access to clean water sources, (c) containing rising cases of diseases, (d) addressing food shortages, and (e) addressing malnutrition.



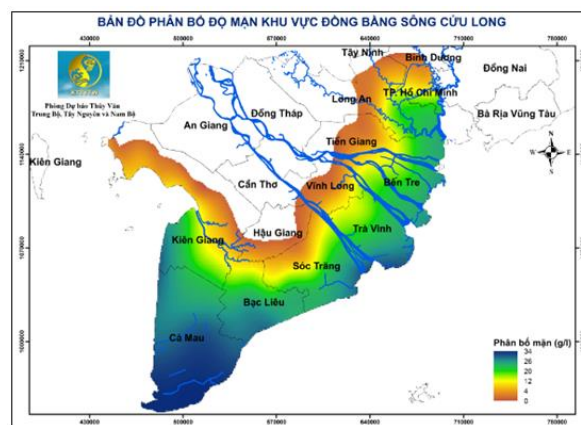
2.3 million People affected by drought and saltwater intrusion	39 Number of provinces affected	14 Provinces in state of emergency	US\$ 232m Estimated total damage to agriculture sector
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Situation Overview

Ongoing drought, water shortage and saline intrusion are affecting some 2.3 million people (MARD report, 30 March) in the South-Central, Central Highlands and Mekong Delta regions of the country. To date, 14 provinces have declared a State of Emergency (Binh Thuan, Ben Tre, Vinh Long, Soc Trang, Ca Mau, Tra Vinh, Tien Giang, Long An, Gia Lai, Kon Tum, Ninh Thuan, Kien Giang, Bac Lieu and Dak Lak).

Induced by the El Nino phenomenon, the drought in South Central Coast and Central Highland provinces has led to serious groundwater depletion in several water-scarce districts. The Mekong Delta provinces are facing saline water intrusion as a result of low water levels in the Mekong River. In coastal areas, saltwater intrusion now reaches inland up to 90 kilometres inland in some areas, making water unfit for drinking, bathing, irrigation and livestock.

Water supply is not reaching some remote communities, commune-level clinics and schools. Increasingly this is forcing families to rely on unsafe and limited water supply from depleted and untreated ponds and rivers.



Hình 1: Bản đồ phân bố độ mặn từ 02/4 đến 08/4/2016

Salt water level as of 2-8 April 2016 (NCHMF, MONRE)

Water supply is not reaching some remote communities, commune-level clinics and schools. Increasingly this is forcing families to rely on unsafe and limited water supply from depleted and untreated ponds and rivers.

Forecast by the National Centre for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting (as of 8 Apr 2016)

The level of salt water intrusion in the downstream rivers of the Mekong Delta continued to increase during the past week, with highest increases recorded in Ben Tre and Tien Giang stations. Salt water intrusion levels in the downstream rivers has lessened slightly in comparison to the previous week, but levels are still higher than the annual average records in most of the hydro-met stations in the Mekong Delta.

There have been slight increases in the water levels in the wider Mekong Delta. This is likely to be due to actions by upstream countries to release additional water upstream as a result of the emergency in Viet Nam. The level in the two main stations of Mekong Delta was 0.2-0.3 meters higher than the previous week at the Sai Gon and Dinh An hydro-meteorological stations. However, water levels in the most drought affected Mekong Provinces such as Ben Tre are still significantly below seasonal averages.

Water levels in the rivers of the Central Region and Central Highlands are at a very low level at 35-60% less than the annual average records. They are particularly low in Cai and La Nga rivers where the water levels are 77-93% lower than the annual average. Drying up of the river is expected to continue in Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, Kon Tum, Gia Lai and Dak Lac.

Overview of Needs and Response

- An inter-sectoral rapid needs assessment undertaken by experts from Government, UN, NGOs and Red Cross took place over 21-25 March and highlighted humanitarian needs, particularly among highly vulnerable groups in the lowest socio-economic quintile and in hard to reach areas in the 6 visited provinces (Gia Lai, Kon Tum, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, Ben Tre, Kien Giang). On 30 March, assessment teams presented key findings at a meeting co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.
- In 2016, the Prime Minister allocated VND 523.7 billion (US\$ 23.5 million) for the winter-spring cropping season 2015-2016 in 34 of the affected provinces.
- On 11 April, the Prime Minister approved a second relief package of VND 485 billion (US\$ 20 million) for 21 provinces and 2 water resource companies of MARD. Provinces were asked to combine the contingency fund and other resources being mobilized with the approved budget to maximise effectiveness and efficiency of response.
- The Steering Committee on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control continues to monitor the situation closely, and is mobilising all forces to meet minimum needs for domestic water supply and urgent food supplies.
- UNDP has allocated US\$ 100,000 from TRAC 1.1.3 to support the emergency coordination, needs assessments and initiation of early recovery in Viet Nam.
- A Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) proposal is being put forward jointly by UN agencies to contribute towards addressing immediate needs in water, sanitation and hygiene; food security; health; and nutrition sectors.
- The UN is finalizing an Emergency Response Plan covering a period of 6 months which will be released around 21 April.
- INGOs (e.g. Oxfam Novib, World Vision, Plan International, Save the Children, UMCOR, Catholic Relief Services) and private sector companies (e.g. Coca Cola) have mobilized some funds for the response with support for water, sanitation, hygiene and some minimal provision of food support and cash vouchers in affected provinces such as Ben Tre, Gia Lai, Binh Thuan, Kon Tum and Kien Giang.

The main needs and responses, particularly in the most-affected provinces, are summarized below.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Cluster focal point: Lalit Patra (lpatraa@unicef.org)

Damage and needs:

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development estimates a need to urgently provide drinking water to 1.93 Million people, including over 500,000 children, in 15 of the most affected provinces. This figure is expected to rise as the impact of the drought increases this month.
- Open defecation practices threaten to contaminate already limited water sources. Limited access to clean water, combined with poor sanitation and hygiene practices have already resulted in increased incidences of diarrhoea, dysentery, foot-mouth and skin diseases.
- Increased time spent in collection of water, and lower frequency of bathing has made over 1.1 million women more vulnerable to adverse effects on their health.



Image of women collecting water from nearby river in Gia Lai province. Photo: United Nations

- The costs for buying water in many affected areas have risen more than tenfold, and are now beyond the reach of poor households.

Response:

- The Government is providing immediate support through various implementation modalities: including exploring new bore holes, extending existing piped water systems and through mobile water distribution (water trucking).
- The Viet Nam Red Cross, INGOs and UN agencies are exploring possibilities to complement Government response.

Gaps:

- At least 150 schools and 150 health centres in the affected provinces are estimated to have poor WASH as a result of this recent crisis.



Food Security and Livelihoods

Cluster focal points: Roberta Tranquilli (roberta.tranquilli@fao.org)

Damage and needs:

- Food shortages, particularly among poor households, have been recorded in 2 out of 6 provinces covered through the joint assessment. If conditions persist, number of persons requiring food assistance will rise. On 30 March, provinces have requested for 4,656 tons of rice to be distributed to households affected by food shortages.
- Over 1.75 million people have lost their income due to the impact of drought on the agriculture sector. 392,700 hectares of crops (including 232,434 hectares of rice) have been severely affected. As the drought is expected to continue until mid-2016, it is likely that over 600,000 hectares of rice could be affected. Most affected households expect drastically lower rice yields in damaged fields in the coming months with seed losses in excess of 70%.
- Livestock are also impacted with a loss of more than 5,383 animals (cows, buffalos, chickens and pigs).
- Aquaculture has been damaged by fresh water evaporation (4,052 hectares) and 14,4513 hectares are currently at risk in the Mekong Delta region.

161,027 ha

Agricultural land for rice, vegetables, fruit and industrial plants >70% damaged

Response:

- Government has distributed 8,610 tonnes of rice in the first months of 2016.
- Prime Minister has requested the Ministry of Finance to release the distribution of 5,223.71 additional tonnes of rice to address the food shortage.
- FAO is coordinating with MARD and partner UN agencies to target immediate, medium and long term response needed to strengthen resilience for food security and nutrition of affected communities.
- FAO has mobilized US\$ 35,000 for development of a drought index as part of an integrated early warning system.

Gaps:

- Provision of additional tonnes of rice to reach all households affected by food shortage is urgently required.
- Additional in depth assessment of the impact of the drought on livelihoods and food security of the affected communities is needed.



Health

Cluster focal point: Vu Quang Hieu (vuh@wpro.who.int)

Damage and needs:

- A lack of clean water supply in healthcare facilities, especially at commune health stations, is reported in affected areas. According to joint assessment results, an estimated 150 commune health stations of 6 provinces have urgent needs in terms of access to clean water supply. Adequate water supply in district hospitals may be disrupted if the situation continues over the coming months.
- Increase of common infectious diseases, such as diarrhoea, dengue, and hand-food-and-mouth disease has been reported in some affected communities.
- The situation of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies requires immediate response actions to avoid recovery costs for addressing the consequences, for which pregnant and lactating women and children under 5 are the most at risk.
- Low awareness levels regarding sanitation, personal hygiene, food safety and prevention of infectious diseases among communities affected by the drought pose health risks.

150

Estimated commune healthcare facilities in 6 provinces lack clean water

Response:

- The Ministry of Health distributed 200,000 aqutabs and 200,000 chloramine B tablets in Ca Mau, and Ninh Thuan.
- The Ministry of Health is collaborating with WHO to develop a health response plan to the ongoing drought and saltwater intrusion.

Gaps:

- Water supply for 150 commune healthcare facilities is needed to restore primary healthcare for communities.

**Nutrition**

Cluster focal point: Nguyen Dinh Quang (ndquang@unicef.org)

Damage and needs:

- In the Joint Rapid Assessment in six of the emergency declared provinces at the end of March, alarming levels of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies were noted among children and women, particularly in 3 provinces (Gia Lai, Kon Tum, Ninh Thuan). Current child stunting figures are also high. In addition, 33% of pregnant women and 28% of children under 5 are anaemic. According to surveillance reports, a high rate of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) was reported by provinces (1.9-2.1%), which increased compared to the previous year (1.3-1.8%) This suggest that the quality of daily dietary intake reduced.
- In the Joint Assessment urgent needs were identified in the 18 most affected districts of three provinces Ninh Thuan, Gia Lai and Kon Tum, including: ready to use therapeutic food (RUTF) for about 3,050 children with severe malnutrition; multiple micro-nutrition supplements for about 7,400 pregnant and lactating women; and multiple micro-nutrition powder for about 16,600 people affected by stunting for the purpose of home food fortification.

Response:

- UNICEF is developing a specific response plan for affected provinces, in which UNICEF will focus on Ninh Thuan, Gia Lai and Kon Tum.

Gaps:

In three provinces of Ninh Thuan, Gia Lai and Kon Tum, the following needs were identified:

- Multiple micro-nutrient tablets (66,000 units) required for pregnant and lactating women over a period of 3 months.
- Multiple micro-nutrient powder (1,500,000 sachets) for 16,600 stunted children under five.
- RUTF (42,700 tons) for treatment of about 3,050 children with severe acute malnutrition.

Data collection on this sector is ongoing and broader information on the 14 emergency declared provinces is expected to be available following the Nutrition Working Group meeting next week.

**Early Recovery**

Cluster focal point: Bui Viet Hien (bui.viet.hien@undp.org)

Damage and needs:

- Pressing needs for restoration of water supply services and expansion of water transportation services from commune centralized water supply hubs to remote localities have been observed in affected communes of the 14 emergency declared provinces.
- Salt water intrusion has severely affected farm land, particularly in the Mekong Delta provinces.

Response:

- Provinces have established numerous measures in attempts to cope with the situation including: temporary dams to store water in rivers and channels; extending water pipelines from centralized water supply hubs to neighbouring areas with water shortages; and digging boreholes in areas that have fresh water. Also as a temporary solution, provinces have constructed new centralized water supply hubs (Mekong Delta) and water trucking (Central Highlands).
- Local Agriculture Departments are providing guidance on cleaning salt water affected soil for the next crops.

Gaps:

Image of landscape in Gia Lai province. Photo: United Nations

- Most affected communities in the Mekong region need support for desalination of farmlands in April-May and for the upcoming crop cycle starting in June.
- Many farmers are in debt due to previous crop losses and do not have resources to restore their farmland and aquaculture plots in order to stabilize their livelihoods in the coming months.
- Further market and early recovery assessments have begun and results will be used in the coming weeks to develop effective early recovery action and response.

General Coordination

The Government, through MARD, UN agencies, INGOs and the Red Cross are coordinating responses to affected provinces in South-Central, Central Highland and Mekong Delta regions. The Disaster Management Working Group is regularly updating information on agency responses.

The UN is currently working towards finalising an Emergency Response Plan which will be validated with Government.

Government, national authorities, UN, and partners continue to monitor the situation closely in affected provinces.

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