

One of the major concerns, in emergency situations, caused by extensive floods, is the immediate provision of drugs and medicaments to reduce the risks of water borne diseases, such as cholera, and leptospirosis infections (disease affecting the kidney system and which spreads through contaminated water).

■ CHINA 1992 marked by typhoons and hailstorms

In September, "Polly", a typhoon of exceptional violence, caused 146 deaths, destroyed 10,000 houses and caused damage estimated at 2.4 billion yuan.

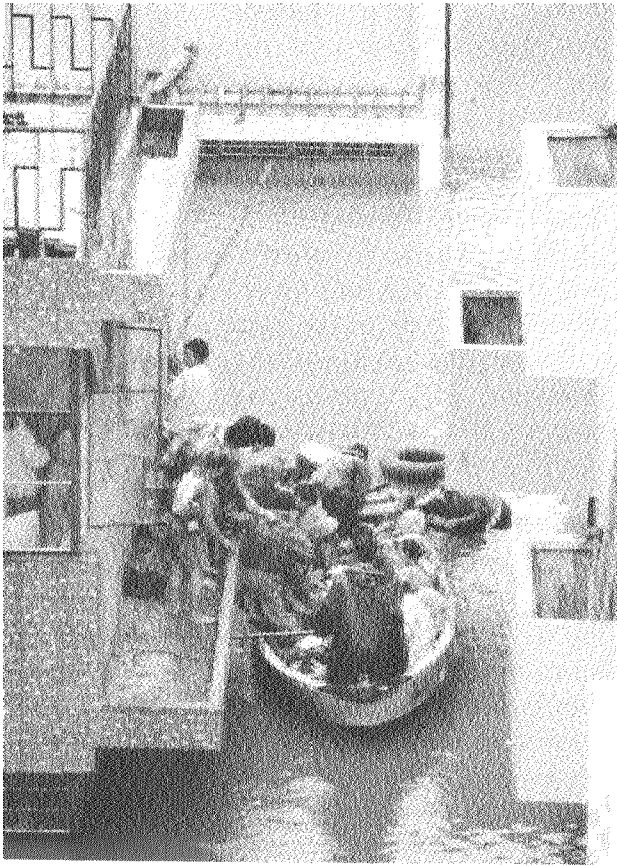
Between 18 and 21 April, the Hunan and Sichuan provinces were affected by rains and hailstorms causing 109 deaths.

Previous disasters:

The People's Republic of China frequently experiences natural disaster - floods, drought, typhoons and earthquakes - of considerable magnitude. Some of them, like the Tangshan earthquake in 1976, the heavy rainfall in 1980 which flooded the Hubei Province in southern China - while at the same time drought struck the northern Hebei province close to Beijing affecting all together more than 21 millions of people - have become well-known. Historically, the Valleys of China's most important rivers, the Yangtze, Yellow, Huai and Hai, were liable to flooding. Between 1644 and 1911, the Yangtze river experienced more than 200 severe floods. In 1987 forest fires in the Daxinganling region, destroyed over 700,000 ha of timberland and rendered many thousands of inhabitants homeless. In November 1988 an earthquake struck the province of Yunnan causing 930 deaths and affecting one million people. The 1946 drought was the world's



The entrapped flood victims were being evacuated by rescue boats.



Jiangsu Provincial Flood Control Headquarters Photo

The Social Welfare House of Wuxi City urgently transfer the masses

worse. The floods which began on 18 May 1991 and swept across 13 of China's 30 provinces, were the worst in over fifty years and affected 220 million people.

■ **COLOMBIA** Three cataclysms in less than 48 hours

On 17 October a violent earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale shook the province of Antioquia, some 140 km north-west of Medellin and 370 km north-west of Bogotá. Hundreds of people had to be evacuated to safer areas. On 18 October a second earthquake followed by several after-shocks struck Colombia, this time causing

no deaths but considerable material damage. Due to this seismic activity, the Cacahual mud volcano erupted, spilling flows of hot mud over dwellings. Several people were injured and 700 were left homeless. Murindo, one of the poorest villages of the region, was 90 per cent destroyed.

Previous disasters:

The Cacahual eruption, in the Uruba area, near the village of San Pedro, brings back to memory the tragedy of Nevado del Ruiz on 13 November 1985. The tragic destruction of the little town of Armero, that was swallowed up in enormous mud flows, will always be remembered. More than 23,000 people died in this disaster and the damage caused totalled some US \$212 million.



DHA Photos

Injured children following the volcanic eruption of Nevado del Ruiz