

# MINOR EMERGENCY



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## COLOMBIA: FLOODS

18 November 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

### In Brief

**CHF 50,000 (USD 38,025 OR EUR 32,318) HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO RESPOND TO EMERGENCY OPERATIONS IN COLOMBIA.**

**UNEARMARKED FUNDS TO REPAY DREF ARE ENCOURAGED.**

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

### The situation

Colombia has been affected by two major disasters in recent months. The country's annual rainy season, which began in September, has been particularly heavy this year, leaving 80 people dead, 93 injured and 4 missing. In total, 58,359 families (268,944 people) have been affected in 26 departments: Antioquia, Atlantico, Bolivar, Boyaca, Caldas, Caqueta, Casanare, Cauca, Cesar, Cordoba, Cundinamarca, Choco, Guajira, Huila, Magdalena, Meta, Nariño, Norte De Santander, Putumayo, Quindio, Risaralda, Santander, San Andres, Sucre, Tolima and Valle. A total of 709 houses were completely destroyed and another 23,479 houses were damaged. More than 5,000 people are currently staying in temporary shelters.



Floods have caused major damage in 26 department in Colombia. The Colombian Red Cross Society is providing relief and evaluating damages in the affected areas.

## Colombia: Floods; Minor Emergency Bulletin no. 1

According to latest reports, rains have increased considerably compared to previous years. These rains often result in landslides and floods. A red alert has been declared in the Cauca basin, in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Sucre, and in the basin of Magdalena and Meta Rivers. 10,000 hectares of farmland has been lost which will cause difficulties in food provision country-wide.

In addition to these floods, the Colombian islands of Providencia and San Andres as well as other Colombian provinces were affected by Hurricane Beta. Beta, the 13<sup>th</sup> hurricane and 23<sup>rd</sup> named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, strengthened to a category 1 storm on Saturday, 29 October, causing 913 affected families (3,074 people) in Providencia, located about 125 miles off the Nicaraguan coast.

## Red Cross action taken so far

### *Building on Experience*

In response to damages caused by floods and hurricanes, the Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) has shown that it has the capacity to respond to disasters. This capacity has been improved through the lessons learned that came out of previous emergency operations, such as the floods operation in 2004 -2005 which assisted more than 9,500 families. (Please refer to previous operations <http://www.ifrc.org/where/appeals/allappeals.asp>). The CRCS has now positioned itself as a leader and one of the key operational agencies in the country for disaster response. Close coordination within the National Disaster Preparedness and Response System (SNPAD) and other national relief organizations has been assured, including the Ministry of Social Protection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ECHO, OXFAM, PAHO/WHO and Partner National Societies present in the country, such as the American French, Netherlands and Spanish Red Cross Societies, as well as with the Federation and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Personnel from the branches in the affected areas have been trained in previous relief operations, including five members of the National Intervention Teams (NITs), two of whom have been mobilized to Providencia in response to Hurricane Beta, two of whom have been mobilized to the Mojana area and one of whom has been mobilized to Santander. The communities in areas which are historically affected by floods also received orientation prior to the disaster. Approximately 2,000 families received educational materials on disaster preparedness during the months of July, August and September in the departments of Valle, Meta, Nariño, Caldas and Atlántico. More than 800 volunteers have, to date, actively participated in the floods, Hurricane Beta and Galeras volcano operations in the last two months, providing humanitarian relief to a total of 4,305 families.

The CRCS has invited the Colombian public, entrepreneurs, and humanitarian organizations to express their solidarity with the most vulnerable as the need for rehabilitation and risk reduction efforts has become clear. In response to this, the CRCS has made an agreement with the company VALREX to activate a response unit specialized in water and sanitation to assist 1,800 families per day in areas affected by the floods. In addition, Project Conexión Colombia, which is working together with the CRCS, has opened a bank account to receive donations (Bancolombia No. 304-2423263-7)

In Montería, one of the areas most seriously affected areas by floods, stagnant water could turn into a source of infectious disease.



### *Floods*

Among the activities carried out by the CRCS to help people affected by floods is the national appeal launched on 18 October in order to mobilize assistance from around the country to manage the disaster using local capacities. The CRCS worked with the television programme “Factor X”, which held concerts in the cities of Ibagué, Villavicencio and Valledupar to encourage donations of non perishable food items (rice, beans, lentils, tuna and other canned food) to be shared among 5,000 affected families. So far, a total of about USD 13,200 in food and non food help has been provided through this appeal.

Two members of the CRCS National Intervention Team (NIT), along with 10 local volunteers, are working in the Mojana area (department of Sucre), where some 6,000 families have been affected. A water and sanitation unit is also working to provide safe water to 1,000 families in the Mojana Sucreña. Other NIT members are supporting relief operations in their respective areas. Four response teams of 62 volunteers and CRCS employees have been assisting the affected families in the city of Villavicencio. In the municipality of Guaranda, a response team of 10 volunteers is assisting 210 families in San Matías, Las Parcelas, El Humo and Los Arrastres.

The CRCS, together with the SNPAD, is also continuing to provide food and non-food relief to 105 families in the departments of Sucre, Meta and Antioquia. In addition, some 478 families from the municipality of Gamarra (department of Cesar) will be assisted with food packages to complement the hygiene kits, kitchen kits, sandbags and plastic mobilized by the government.

The CRCS continues monitoring the situation in the municipality of Supia (department of Caldas) specifically in Jagua, la Esperanza, Galpones and El Salado to keep the at-risk communities informed and prepare possible operations as needed. A programme on community preparedness in case of disaster will be implemented in the following days. In the meantime, the CRCS has assisted 103 families with mats, hygiene kits and sheets in the neighbourhoods of Villa Dela, Zarabanda and Villa del Rey.

### *Hurricanes*

In response to Hurricane Beta, the CRCS activated its hurricane contingency plan. The CRCS coordinated with the National Disaster Response and Preparedness System (SNPAD), including attending meetings with the National Operations Committee, and participated in the local and national mobilization of resources.

The CRCS provided support to volunteers on Providencia and San Andres to carry out evacuations and to store and distribute relief goods. Some 20 volunteers from the San Andres branch were mobilized, together with a response team from the Bolivar branch and two National Intervention Team members, to work in coordination with and as part of an inter-institutional team from the SNPAD. With support from the government, the CRCS assisted 600 families with non food relief, pre-hospital care, first aid, temporary shelter and psychosocial support, and carried out a preventative health campaign. In addition, the CRCS HF telecommunications system on the island of Providencia was activated and telecommunications equipment was moved from the San Andres branch of the Red Cross to Providencia. The CRCS operation in response to Hurricane Beta has now been finalized.



In addition to these activities carried out in response to Hurricane Beta, the CRCS, in coordination with the Colombian Institute of Wellbeing, the Ministry of Social Protection, the SNPAD and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sent 9 tons of medicine, 100 mats, 100 hygiene kits, 500 sheets, 200 blankets, 100 kitchen sets and clothes to the Guatemalan government in order to assist more than 100 families in Guatemala affected by Hurricane Stan.

Affected people in Providencia receive mats from Colombia Red Cross Society volunteers.

**Coordination**

The CRCS is working in close coordination with the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) in response to the recent emergencies. The CRCS is also coordinating with the National Disaster Response and Preparedness System (SNPAD), including attending meetings with the National Operations Committee, and participated in the local and national mobilization of resources.

**Budget outline**

CHF 50,000 has been allocated to Colombia in response to recent emergencies. Of this total, CHF 25,000 has been allocated in response to the floods. Another CHF 25,000 has been allocated for disaster preparedness activities in anticipation of increased volcanic activity in the area around the Galeras volcano (please see volcanic activity Minor Emergency Bulletin).

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