

# OPERATIONS UPDATE



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

## GUYANA: FLOODS

18 April 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

**Appeal No. 05EA001; Operations Update no. 4; Period covered: 18 February to 14 April 2005; Appeal coverage: 63.7%** ([click here to go directly to the attached Contributions List, also available on the website](#)).

#### Appeal history:

- Launched on 24 January 2005 for CHF 2,042,000 (USD 1,724,515 or EUR 1,321,970) for 6 months to assist 30,000 beneficiaries (6,000 families)
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 300,000

**Outstanding needs :** CHF 740,666

**Related Emergency or Annual Appeals:** Caribbean Sub Regional Programmes Annual Appeal 05AA041; Hurricane Ivan Emergency Appeal 21/2004

**Operational Summary:** Flood waters have now receded from all previously affected areas; however, heavy rain fell on 7 April, further affecting some communities in Region 3 (West Demerara/Essequibo Islands) and Region 4 (Demerara/Mahaica). The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimates that 70 percent of households were seriously affected in Region 3, Region 4 and Region 5 (Mahaica/Berbice), as well as Georgetown. To date, the Guyana Red Cross Society (GRCS) has distributed more than 12,000 food parcels and 13,000 blankets to 9,000 beneficiary families in the country. A total of 8,175 hygiene kits, 12,375 jerry cans, 8,266 mosquito nets and 3,243 clean up kits have also been distributed to beneficiaries to reduce their vulnerability to water- and vector-borne disease. Assessments are ongoing to select beneficiaries to receive kitchen sets; most will be selected from communities that were previously inaccessible due to high flood waters. Relief efforts are now beginning to focus on preparing the country for the next rainy season, which normally begins in April or May. To date, 26 training sessions in health and hygiene have been carried out in 20 communities for more than 582 adults, plus their children. Subjects covered included water, sanitation, latrines, vaccinations, TB, first aid, HIV/AIDS/STIs, and skin and parasitic infections. Two trainers from the Guyana Red Cross Society also took part in a regional workshop for the "Together We Can" (TWC) youth peer education methodology to address HIV/AIDS that was held recently in Curaçao. Activities are also ongoing in psychosocial support: a team of three members of the Jamaica Red Cross visited Guyana on 23-25 March to conduct a psychosocial support workshop for 29 Red Cross staff and volunteers, social workers, hospital/NGO personnel and beneficiaries. The Federation is currently recruiting a head of operations for the Guyana Floods relief operation; it is urgent to identify a candidate for this position in order to ensure that all of the objectives are met in a coordinated manner.

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## Background

Three days of torrential rains which began on 14 January caused serious flooding in Guyana, affecting more than 150,000 people. This was the third time since late December 2004 that rains caused flooding in the country's capital, Georgetown, and other coastal towns. After a day of relative sunshine the rains started again on 22 January causing increased flooding in many parts of the country, including the capital and surrounding areas. Whilst the main airport continued to function, the state owned radio station was not operating and the Municipal Airport was temporarily forced to close. Furthermore, the heavy rains cut off some areas along the eastern coast of the country. There were also reports that one of the main canals in the capital city of Georgetown burst its banks. Houses were completely flooded and many businesses were forced to close in an effort to protect their goods. Government offices, courts and schools were also forced to close. In the eastern coastal region of the country, roads were flooded and impassable. In some areas, more than two feet of water were covering the roads, making several communities unreachable for rescue teams.

Georgetown and the surrounding area are divided into two districts: Demerara-Mahaica and West Demerara-Essequibo Islands, both of which were declared "disaster areas" by the Guyanese government. The district of Mahaica-Berbice, which is located on the east coast of the country, to the southeast of Georgetown, was also declared a disaster area. The hardest hit communities are Albouystown, Shopia, Better Hope, Coldingen, Enterprise Gardens, Paradise and Enmore. Many residents in these areas live in poverty and the severe flooding has further exacerbated their already precarious situation. Thousands of people have been displaced by the floods and have been forced to seek refuge in one of the shelters set up in East Coast Demerara by the Guyana Defence Force. The GRCS headquarters was also transformed into an emergency shelter, assisting those in need from the surrounding area. Tens of thousands more were affected by the floods and were in urgent need of potable water and food. The Guyanese government initially released 200 million Guyanese dollars (approximately USD 1,120,448 or CHF 1,332,025) for emergency relief. On 20 January, a telethon was held in Berbice County; money and food supplies from which were channelled through the Guyana Red Cross Society (GRCS).

The Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) deployed a team leader and a water and sanitation delegate to Guyana; the regional health delegate was also in the country; a regional intervention team (RIT) member who is an expert in water and sanitation also travelled to Guyana to ensure support for the National Society.

CHF 300,000 was released from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) in order to facilitate prompt mobilization of relief goods from PADRU.

## Operational developments

Flood waters have now receded from all previously affected areas; however, heavy rain fell on 7 April, further affecting some communities in Region 3 (West Demerara/Essequibo Islands) and Region 4 (Demerara/Mahaica).

The president's office reported that the economic loss from the floods was massive and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has estimated this at 60 percent of the GDP. ECLAC also estimated that 70 percent of households were seriously affected in Region 3 (West Demerara/Essequibo Islands), Region 4 (Demerara/Mahaica) and Region 5 (Mahaica/Berbice), as well as Georgetown. As such, households in these areas will each receive a grant of USD 50. The government acknowledged that the sum offered to households is small, but hopes that this could be used to help defray the cost of cleaning up houses and carrying out minor repairs. A *Recovery Planning and Implementation Secretariat* to administer the grants was

established and assessment teams commenced their work to determine the loss of crops and livestock in farming communities.

The manufacturing industry suffered USD 30 million in losses after factories were flooded and retail businesses were forced to close. Damages also included thousands of acres of ruined agricultural crops and thousands of lost livestock, ECLAC reported. The fledgling eco-tourism industry also lost about USD 5 million. ECLAC, in its assessment of the flood, also urged the government to improve its drainage system before the April-June rains.

The government of Guyana has received some USD 6 million in cash and in-kind donations, and aid from a number of countries. The president of Guyana announced an initial USD 14 million package to help flood-affected communities and sectors to recover over the next three months. He said the disaster response phase of activities in the wake of the devastating January floods in the three coastal regions was over and the programme he outlined covers only short-term interventions.

The government of Guyana has allocated the following funds to the relief effort:

- USD 3.5 million was set aside for agriculture grants, while a similar sum was earmarked for assistance to farmers in cash or kind, including seeds, fertilizers and other inputs.
- USD 1.6 million was allocated to water treatment plants and water transmission systems, heavily hit by the floods. A task force was established to identify needs in the drainage systems which require urgent attention, and USD 500,000 has been allocated for this.
- USD 4 million will be expended on short-term repairs to the East Demerara Water Conservancy and drainage infrastructure in Georgetown.
- USD 750,000 was allocated to the education sector and will be used to provide textbooks, school uniforms, furniture and improving water and sanitation facilities in affected schools.
- USD 250,000 will be spent to repair health facilities; the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) will provide support for the health recovery programme.
- In addition to the USD 250,000 already spent on post-flood garbage disposal, an additional USD 250,000 will be provided for this activity. Garbage accumulated during the floods is still a visible problem.

Activities over the next three months of recovery will include:

1. Cleaning and restoring the physical environment
2. Providing support for households in restoration activities
3. Improving drainage systems and restoring other infrastructure
4. Restoring pre-disaster levels of public services in education, health and water
5. Providing start-up assistance in the produce sector

The following short term measures have been identified for urgent attention:

1. Repairs to release drainage canals from the East Demerara Water Conservancy
2. Repairs to sluices in the affected areas
3. Clearing of drainage channels in East Demerara Water Conservancy
4. Strengthening the East Demerara Water Conservancy Dam
5. Improving drainage systems (secondary drains)

Life is slowly getting back to normal; shops are open and people have gone back at work. Most of the evacuated populations have now returned home; the clean-up campaign is still ongoing, supported by authorities and the Red Cross. Some farmers have started planting again. The surveillance information as monitored by PAHO/World Health Organization indicates that there is no current threat to life from flood-related diseases, and health indicators have returned to their pre-flood levels. The PAHO/WHO office announced that the county is now safe for visitors.

At the end of February, PADRU handed over the operation to the Federation's Port of Spain Sub Regional Office, although PADRU is still following up on technical activities, such as telecommunications. The Regional Intervention Team (RIT) members from the American Red Cross, the Barbados Red Cross Society, the Red Cross Society of Panama and the Saint Kitts and Nevis Red Cross Society all completed their missions by 15 March.

The Federation recruited locally a finance and administration officer on 11 February but has yet to identify a head of operations. This position has been posted on the Federation's 'Open Positions' list and is urgently required.

The first phase of the German Red Cross bilateral project developed with the GRCS was completed (see below) and the German Red Cross is now focusing on a community health centre, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, targeting pregnant women and women with children less than two years of age.

Solidarity among the Caribbean and overseas-based Guyanese has been strong and the Guyana Red Cross Society has received significant amounts of cash and in-kind private donations.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action - objectives, progress, impact

### Emergency relief (food and basic non-food items)

**Objective 1: 30,000 vulnerable beneficiaries (6,000 families) in Guyana have benefited from the provision of food and non-food items to assist them during the flood emergency.**

#### Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

The GRCS coordinated with the World Food Programme (WFP) and other stakeholders involved in the distribution of food, including representatives of NGOs and the Civil Defence Commission (CDC). The distribution of food parcels has continued and to date 14,638 parcels from the Federation and the WFP have been distributed in over 100 communities. In addition, 13,000 blankets were distributed. This objective has now been met with regard to food and blankets. There are still a large number of kitchen sets remaining; needs are being assessed in the communities. Catchment populations for those items are families living in areas previously inaccessible due to the high flood waters and the distance from main roads.

To date, the following number of relief items has been distributed through the Federation's emergency appeal:

Item	Quantity distributed to date	Total of items for distribution as per the Emergency Appeal
Food parcels	12,518	12,000
Blankets	13,000	13,000
Kitchen sets	28	1,000

A total of 9,000 families received food parcels; approximately 3,000 received two distributions, 6,000 received one distribution.

The following number of WFP food parcels has been distributed with logistics support from the Federation:

Item	Quantity distributed to date
Food parcels	2,640

The following number of kitchen sets has been distributed through the German Red Cross bilateral project:

Item	Quantity	Total for distribution
Kitchen sets	1,000	1,000

#### Impact:

The most vulnerable beneficiary families have received immediate relief assistance. Essential assistance provided through the GRCS, such as food parcels, blankets and kitchen sets, is helping expedite the recovery process of those affected.

**Constraints :**

Kitchen sets are only now being distributed in areas that previously were not accessible and needs are to be reassessed.

**Health**

**Objective 1: The water and sanitation needs for 30,000 vulnerable beneficiaries (6,000 families) in Guyana have been assessed, and assistance delivered in this sector.**

**Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)**

To date, 3,243 clean up kits containing machetes, shovels, brushes, boots, gloves, garbage bags, buckets, bleach and disinfectant have been distributed.

Under the campaign entitled '*For a Fresh Start*', the GRCS distributed cleanup kits, comprising one machete, one shovel, one yard brush, one pair of rubber boots, one pair of rubber gloves, 10 heavy duty garbage bags, one bucket, bleach and disinfectant. Awareness leaflets containing tips on good sanitation practices were given to the heads of families. The packaging of cleanup kits was organized in the GRCS warehouse, with local Red Cross volunteers, students, and other community members taking part. At the same time, new assessments commenced in areas that are now accessible given that the waters have receded.

Training sessions on health and hygiene were conducted in 20 communities (*see Objective 2 below*). The GRCS also continued its public health awareness campaign, which included the distribution of posters containing key health messages focussing on "Health in Disasters" and "Use of Mosquito Nets."

To date, the following items have been distributed through the Federation's emergency appeal

Item	Quantity distributed to date	Total of items for distribution as per the Emergency Appeal
Hygiene Kits	8,175	12,375
Jerry cans	*12,375	12,375
Mosquito nets	*8,266	12,000
Clean up kits	3,243	6,000

\* 2 per family

The following items have been distributed through the German Red Cross bilateral project:

Item	Quantity distributed to date	Target
Mosquito nets	2,400	4,000
Buckets	1,200	2,000
Water filters	1,200	2,000

**Impact:**

As the flood waters recede, vulnerable families whose houses require cleaning and sanitizing are receiving appropriate materials, as well as information stressing the importance of carrying out these activities.

**Constraints :**

There is currently a world-wide shortage of impregnated mosquito nets as most stocks are destined for the Asia Tsunami response. These would have provided a physical and chemical barrier to mosquito-borne disease. The Federation made a decision that a physical barrier was better than none at all, and went ahead with the procurement of un-impregnated nets. In addition, the awareness leaflet alone is not sufficient to ensure a raised

level of awareness in communities on the benefits of a clean environment considering the high illiteracy rate in many communities in Guyana.

**Objective 2: Awareness of vulnerable families will be raised in key health messages through an HIV/AIDS/STI and TB campaign.**

**Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)**

Four GRCS volunteer health teams visited community health centres to give one-hour talks on health and hygiene messages. These teams are composed of 3-4 youths who are qualified first aid instructors or first aid workers, some of whom have also taken the 'Fundamentals of Health' training. To date, 26 trainings have been carried out in 20 communities for more than 582 adults, plus their children. Subjects covered included water, sanitation, latrines, vaccinations, TB, first aid, HIV/AIDS/STIs, and skin and parasitic infections. The methodology used was a pre-prepared flip chart. After each talk, the team spent half an hour answering any questions from the community and verifying that all the information was understood and relevant. Each health centre and other community buildings then received a package of health education posters to put up in prominent places, as well as condoms. In addition, the GRCS conducted three health and hygiene trainings for 70 children at the "School for the Deaf" using sign language.

A regional workshop for the "Together We Can" (TWC) youth peer education methodology to address HIV/AIDS recently took place in Curaçao; two TWC trainers from the Guyana Red Cross Society took part. The workshop included the introduction of updated tools and information as well as a monitoring and evaluation tool which will be incorporated into the TWC workshops in Guyana, scheduled for each quarter. In preparation for the next rainy season, in Rupununi, a high flood-risk area in the south of Guyana, the GRCS also conducted a Training of Trainers course in health and hygiene for teachers and Red Cross volunteers from six communities.

Schools were not open for six weeks as they were either flooded or used as community shelters for the flood-affected population; however, high school and primary school teachers are indicating that they are now ready to receive training in HIV/AIDS/STIs and other health topics.

**Impact:**

Communities have verified that the health messages are relevant, both in terms of this flood emergency as well as in terms of their general day-to-day living. For the first time, the children who attend the "School for the Deaf", many of whom live in flood-affected areas, had access to health information presented in a way they can fully understand. Communities have also asked for additional Red Cross training courses, such as first aid and further health awareness, as has the "School for the Deaf". In addition, there are a number of individuals who have received the health and hygiene awareness community training who would now like to become Red Cross volunteer trainers themselves; GRCS will wait until there are sufficient numbers to conduct a Training of Trainers course.

**Constraints :**

There has been some resistance to the HIV/AIDS/STIs awareness campaigns because of religious and cultural traditions. An additional constraint is that there has been limited interest on the part of some beneficiaries in the awareness campaigns.

Trained Red Cross volunteers have returned to their schools and jobs now that the flood waters are receding. They are therefore no longer available to focus on the emergency operation as before. Neither are they available to provide as much training for new trainers. There is also an insufficient number of vehicles available to the Guyana Red Cross Society for the transportation of the volunteer health teams. In addition, there has been a delay in the printing of some water and sanitation posters.

**Psychosocial Support**

**Objective 1: Staff and volunteers of the Guyana Red Cross Society plus the affected communities have benefited from psychosocial support to assist them in recovering from the effects of the floods**

**Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)**

A team of three members of the Jamaica Red Cross visited Guyana on 23-25 March to conduct a psychosocial support workshop for Red Cross staff and volunteers, social workers, hospital/NGO personnel and beneficiaries. A total of 29 people took part. The workshop covered the following subjects:

- Stress – physical signs, emotional signs, behavioural signs, types of stressors and coping styles
- Psychological support – what is it?
- Characteristics of a disaster – the phases of disaster, the consequences of disaster, emotional responses in disasters
- Helping the Helpers – job stresses in humanitarian work, taking control of stress, what to do/what not to do

The Jamaica Red Cross team also conducted two debriefing sessions, one for the workshop participants and one for Red Cross relief volunteers, to help them come to terms with issues they had dealt with during the relief operation, such as facing hostile communities during distributions, working long hours and uncomfortable physical conditions.

**Impact:**

The two debriefing sessions were well received. Amongst the participants there was an appreciation of their own and others' behaviour and actions during the disaster. The Red Cross volunteers began to understand *why* they volunteered, for *whom* they were doing it and issues of vulnerability. They also reported a change in attitude towards the beneficiaries through personal discovery of the Red Cross "principles in action". Red Cross volunteers also recognized that there is a major need for training and awareness to be better prepared for the next disaster.

**Constraints :**

The psychosocial support component of this operation was originally planned to take place earlier than it did. Unfortunately, the team from the Jamaica Red Cross was involved in psychosocial support activities in the Cayman Islands as part of the Hurricane Ivan emergency response. The team was in Guyana for only three days, one of which was a national holiday, instead five days, as had been originally planned.

**Strengthening of Preparedness and Response****Objective 1: The capacity of the Guyana Red Cross Society and vulnerable communities in disaster response and community based disaster preparedness (CBDP) including First Aid have been strengthened****Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)**

The American Red Cross confirmed that they will provide 1,070 first aid kits to the GRCS, including 640 family kits and 430 personal kits. These will be handed out to participants in the forthcoming disaster preparedness trainings to take place in May, before the next rainy season. In addition, a total of 200 community-based first aid books were printed and used for first aid training for community representatives that took place in the GRCS headquarters. To date, 60 people have received this training.

There is an ongoing distribution in the flood-affected communities of 800 posters containing four disaster preparedness messages (200 posters of each design) printed by the Port of Spain Sub Regional Office. These posters are visible in shops, market places, health centres and schools. Some 100 posters were given to the Ministry of Health to be distributed by their mobile health clinics.

**Impact:**

The community representatives who received the first aid training are now active Red Cross first aid volunteers.

**Constraints :**

The delivery of the first aid kits is taking longer than originally expected, which in turn has delayed the start of the disaster preparedness training.

**Objective 2: The capacity of the Guyana Red Cross Society in the area of telecommunications has been reinforced.**

**Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)**

The GRCS has installed a DSL line, two extra telephone lines and a PBX (a private telephone network) with 11 extensions in the headquarters building. Unfortunately, the telecommunications equipment identified by the PADRU telecommunications delegate during his visit in February has still not arrived in the country.

**Impact:**

The additional telephone lines and PBX for the GRCS headquarters has significantly improved both internal and external telephone communication.

**Constraints :**

Permission from the National Frequencies Management Unit for the use of HF and VHF frequencies by GRCS has not yet been granted. Furthermore, the DSL is only linked to one computer and not the whole computer network, which means e-mail and internet access is still limited. In addition, delays in the delivery of telecommunications equipment mean that there is still limited communication with the Lethem branch, which is a 14-hour drive away on unpaved roads from Georgetown.

**Federation Coordination**

Upon the announcement that the emergency phase was complete, the Civil Defence Commission ceased its coordination function in mid-March. The Guyana Ministry of Health is discussing with hospitals and the GRCS the latter's role in blood donor recruitment and blood drives during disaster. Currently, the GRCS organizes four blood drives a year, but the Ministry of Health would like this increased to 12 times a year and would like the GRCS to take the lead role in coordinating NGOs and other organizations in blood donor campaigns.

**Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement -- Principles and initiatives**

- Relief activities being carried out are based on the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- Beneficiary selection criteria focused on the vulnerability of those affected; as a result, food and non-food distributions targeted the elderly, disabled, evacuees to shelters, pregnant women, children and female heads of household.
- In addition to the targeted communities, specific assistance is being provided to groups with special needs which are not receiving assistance from other organizations: these include "The Guyana Association for the Blind" (food), the "Children's Convalescent Home" (food), the "School for the Deaf" (health and hygiene awareness messages) and a shelter for Persons Living with HIV/AIDS (food).
- Activities are based on the SPHERE Project humanitarian charter and the code of conduct for emergency response.

**National Society Capacity Building**

One staff member and one volunteer from the Guyana Red Cross Society attended the 'Public Health in Emergencies' RITs training in Panama in March 2005. In addition, two staff members attended a regional workshop for the "Together We Can" youth peer education methodology to address HIV/AIDS in Curaçao in order to better facilitate TWC workshops in Guyana.

**Communications – Advocacy and Public Information**

The GRCS has provided pictures with comments on the relief operation to CNN and a major interview was given to the BBC by the Federation Team Leader. The absence of a head of operations in Guyana has impacted on the Federation's ability to provide this service.

[Contributions list below; click here to return to the title page.](#)

# Guyana - Heavy rains and floods

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 05EA001

## PLEDGES RECEIVED

13/04/2005

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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### CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->					<b>TOTAL COVERAGE</b>	
				<b>2,042,000</b>		<b>63.7%</b>
ECHO		650,000	EUR	1,000,675	02.03.05	
JAPANESE - RC		56,800	USD	64,298	08.02.05	
MONACO - RC		10,000	EUR	15,485	14.02.05	
NETHERLANDS - GOVT		32,086	EUR	49,685	01.02.05	
SWEDISH - GOVT		1,000,000	SEK	171,000	01.02.05	
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO PRIVATE		1,000	TTD	191	28.02.05	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				1,301,334	CHF	63.7%

### KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%

### ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	