

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

SURINAME: FLOODS

Appeal No. MDRSR001

Date: 22 May 2006

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

Operations Update no. 01; Period covered: 15 May to 20 May 2006; Appeal target: CHF 854,305 (USD 706,309 or EUR 550,346); see the operational summary below for a list of current donors to the Appeal. *(The Contributions List is currently being compiled and will be attached to the next operations update; it will also be available on the website shortly).*

Appeal history:

- Launched on 15 May 2006 for CHF 854,305 (USD 706,309 or EUR 550,346) for 5 months to assist 4,000 families (20,000 beneficiaries).
- Final Report is due on 15 January 2007.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 100,000 (USD 82,713 or EUR 64,433).

Operational Summary:

The government declared a disaster zone on 8 May 2006 in the affected areas, mainly the southern lowlands, and the Suriname military is currently in the process of moving people to higher ground. A 'medium intensity' scenario has been identified by the recently created National Coordination Centre for Disasters (NCCR) in order to define specific threats to affected populations. This scenario foresees continued rains and flooding during the coming months.

Immediate threats include insufficient nutritional food, the need for hygiene items and shelter, health issues including the possible outbreak of diarrhoea and malaria, the psychosocial and economic impact of the disaster, the lack of functioning schools, and considerable damage to the transportation network. Furthermore, there has been widespread damage to local infrastructure, houses, property, personal belongings and loss of animals and crops.

Some evacuations are currently underway in two badly affected areas, with 300 people targeted in the Brokopondo area and 1,200 targeted in the Tapanahony area. Relief needs assessments have been conducted in the various sectors and five main hubs have been assigned for the channelling and distribution of relief items.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) in Suriname has established a "Medical Crisis Team" which includes experts from the MoH, the Suriname Red Cross (SRC), international organizations and NGOs involved in medical programmes. The Team has conducted detailed assessments along the Saramacca River, the Upper Suriname River and the Tapanahony River covering some estimated 25,000 persons, focusing on an analysis of the needs of affected communities. Based on the advice of the Red Cross, it was agreed to address water and sanitation interventions, particularly in the area of health promotion as a matter of priority. Ten Suriname Red Cross volunteers have been deployed on two separate occasions so far and are involved in assisting military and fire service personnel to provide first aid and general disaster relief assistance where required.

A disaster management delegate from the Federation's Pan-American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) was deployed to Suriname on Wednesday, 10 May upon a request from the National Society. A Water and Sanitation Regional Intervention Team (RIT) of 4 persons from the "Regional Intervention Platform for the Americas - Caribbean" (PIRAC), the French Red Cross's disaster response unit based in Guadeloupe, was also deployed to Suriname. This team was further strengthened by the inclusion of two Federation trained water and sanitation personnel from the Suriname Red Cross who can provide local knowledge to support the operation. The Netherlands Red Cross has mobilized two delegates to support the operation, one as a relief delegate and one as a short term shelter specialist.

CHF 100,000 was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to immediately start relief assistance and this has been reimbursed by the Netherlands Red Cross. The Suriname Red Cross through direct donations, and with some support from the Federation, has been active in the procurement, packaging and distribution of food and hygiene parcels. These have been distributed through the assistance of Red Cross volunteers deployed to the National Crisis Coordination Centre.

Donations from the Netherlands Red Cross, the French Red Cross and the Swedish Red Cross have so far covered much of the Appeal budget. The Suriname Red Cross has received direct, bilateral contributions from the US government/USAID, the Alcoa Foundation, the Spanish Red Cross and from local entities. It is hoped that further donations, including a possible contribution from ECHO, will result in full coverage.

The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Federation's Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- *In Suriname: Mr. Glenn Wijngaarde, Director General, Suriname Red Cross, surcross@sr.net, +597 498 410, fax +597 464 780*
- *In Suriname: Thomas Doyle, Disaster Management Delegate, Pan American Disaster Response Unit, Port of Spain, Thomas.doyle@ifrc.org, +868 789 9493, +597 464 780*
- *In Geneva: Olaug Bergseth, Regional Officer, Americas Department, 41.22.730.45 35; fax 41.22.733.03.95; email: olaug.bergseth@ifrc.org*

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGOs\) 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>



Flooding in the interior of the country along the larger rivers is affecting up to 25,000 people.

Background

Torrential rainfall in Suriname since the beginning of May 2006 has caused flooding in the interior of the country along a number of the larger rivers, namely the Saramacca River, the Upper Suriname River and the Tapanahony River, with approximately 25,000-30,000 square kilometers under water. It is estimated that up to 25,000 people have been affected by the rising water levels, with the most severe damage concentrated along the riverbanks in the south and east of the country. It is anticipated that up to 157 villages in the remote lowlands, where most families live in thatched-roofed houses, have been affected, with at least three deaths reported, but not confirmed, to date.

The rainy season in Suriname will continue to until the end of July. Further increased water levels are expected as the ground is already saturated. It is therefore envisaged that shortages of clean water and food will be experienced for the remainder of the next two months as normal logistical supply routes are severely disrupted.

The government declared the affected areas an emergency disaster zone on 8 May 2006, and the Suriname military has moved some people to higher ground. A 'medium intensity' scenario has been identified by the recently created National Coordination Centre for Disasters in order to determine specific threats to affected populations. This scenario foresees continued rains and flooding. Immediate concerns include health risks such as diarrhea and malaria, the psychosocial and economic impact of the disaster, the lack of functioning schools, and considerable damage to the transportation network and infrastructure.

Operational developments

Evacuations have taken place in two of the worst affected areas, with 300 people targeted in the Brokopondo area and 1,200 targeted in the Tapanahony area. The relief needs assessment has been completed and five main hubs have been assigned to channel relief items. Ten relief teams have been deployed to the affected areas and SRC volunteers are included in the teams to assist military and fire service personnel to provide first aid and general relief support as required.

The Ministry of Health in Suriname has held a number of "Medical Crisis Team" meetings which included personnel from the MoH, the Suriname Red Cross and NGOs involved in medical programmes. Arising from this

Country or Region: Disaster; Appeal no. MDRSR001; Operations Update no. 1

initiative, a number of working groups have been formed to cover medicines, water and sanitation, epidemiology and diseases and general health.

The MoH Medical Crisis Team has conducted a detailed assessment in a number of the most affected districts and has compiled an analysis of the needs of the communities. Based on the advice of the Red Cross, it was agreed to address water and sanitation interventions as a matter of priority, and the SRC, supported by the Federation, was tasked to be an active partner in this sectoral working group. Medical Mission is a local NGO that manages small health clinics throughout the interior. Of the 52 Medical Mission clinics in the region, 51 are operational; four had been flooded, but three of those have relocated to temporary posts on higher ground. However, access to the clinics by the affected population is constrained by the loss of boats and damage to roads. A consignment of medicines and sundry items, which will cover the needs for the next six months, has been delivered to the Medical Mission, which plans to start distributions to the clinics in the coming weeks.

Neither the Federation nor the Suriname Red Cross is planning to undertake any medical intervention as all needs to date are covered.

A disaster management delegate from the Federation's Pan-American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) was deployed to Suriname on Wednesday, 10 May at the request of the National Society. CHF 100,000 was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) in order to ensure immediate relief assistance and this has been reimbursed by the Netherlands Red Cross.

The situation, as of 20 May, is stabilizing. Water levels in the Upper Suriname region are receding. Flooding has been minor in the Kwamalasamutu area, although crops have been severely affected. High water levels continue to affect populations in the eastern region along the Tapanahony River. Food, water, and shelter needs are being met through local capacities, governmental and non-governmental interventions, and support from the international community, although there are pockets of vulnerable groups in some areas.

Contingent on there being no further un-seasonal rains, the situation will continue to normalize. The general situation could worsen, however, should the levels of rainfall increase in the coming weeks. Priority needs are fuel, replacement of damaged food stocks, disease surveillance, house cleaning kits, school materials, repair of generators, replacement of hand tools for woodworking (related to home repair), and livelihood recovery. Some NGOs have reported that the harvest of rice, which is one of the main staple crops, will be delayed until December 2006 or January 2007. However, the other food crops, such as beans and vegetables, can be recovered sooner. A period of decreased food access is expected during the period leading up to the dry season and the annual harvest.

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

Emergency relief (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: 4,000 affected families in the southern and eastern districts of Suriname benefit from relief supplies in the form of family food and hygiene parcels and plastic sheeting.

4,000 hygiene parcels were air-lifted to Suriname from the Federation's Pan-American Disaster Response Unit in Panama on Sunday, 14 May 2006. A group of Suriname Red Cross volunteers assisted in unloading the plane and moving the parcels to a local warehouse. The parcels will be distributed in parallel with the distribution of food parcels by the Suriname Red Cross. Some of the distributions are being completed by road while others, to the more isolated districts, are being carried out by air.

It is estimated that up to 70% of the food crop has been destroyed due to the flooding. The Federation is preparing to receive 4,000 food parcels which again will be distributed through the existing Suriname Red Cross distribution network. NCCR, the Suriname Red Cross, and local NGOs have organized food distributions throughout the affected region. The Suriname Red Cross was the first organization to commence food and hygiene parcel distributions. The National Society established a packing line at the headquarters with the assistance of Red Cross volunteers and other personnel. The target was to supply a one-week ration to 5,000 families and the National Society has the capacity and resources to realize this. The Suriname Red Cross received direct cash donations which supported its operation.

Country or Region: Disaster; Appeal no. MDRSR001; Operations Update no. 1

On the basis of new assessments provided by field staff of the number of affected people, the second round of distribution is planned to reach 7,500 families.



Federation stocks arrive in Suriname and relief goods are distributed by boat

The NCCR requested and received 5 helicopters to consolidate the logistical system already in place. The NCCR has established five distribution and refuelling hubs at Lange Tabbetje, Stoelmanseiland, Dritabiki, Djumu and Kwamalasamutu to enable helicopters to deliver the goods closer to affected villages. In each hub, coordination teams composed of staff from the police, the Ministry of Defence, fire fighters, and local NGOs are present to control distributions.

There are three main types of housing structures in Suriname: brick structure, wooden frame houses and mud huts. Only the latter two types have suffered structural damage due to flooding and the most affected dwellings are on the river banks. Because the rivers rose slowly for the most part, families had time to leave their houses and take valuables with them. However there are regions where river water levels rose very rapidly during the night, i.e. 2 meters in 6 hours and this caused people to flee more rapidly and with less preparation.

A large majority of displaced persons are staying with relatives or host families on higher ground. In the Eastern part of Suriname there is also a seasonal trend where families relocate to French Guyana to avoid the flooding. As the waters recede, people will need to restore their houses or build new ones. For this, many villagers have requested woodworking tools.

The Federation has taken on the responsibility for the coordination of the participant organizations involved in the emergency shelter sector. Following field assessments, the emergency shelter sector working group has analyzed the situation based on the available information and agreed on an emergency shelter package for five families composed as follows:

- 15 reinforced plastic sheets of 4x6 meters
- 50 meters of nylon rope
- 2.5 kg of nails
- 1 toolkit: 1 hammer, 1 machete with wet stone and 1 shovel
- 1 ground sheet.

It is intended that the shelter package will assist both displaced persons and returnees.

Country or Region: Disaster; Appeal no. MDRSR001; Operations Update no. 1

The Federation has committed to provide all of the items; 5,500 pieces of plastic sheeting will be air-lifted from the stocks in PADRU and the remaining 2,000 pieces will be made available from PIRAC stocks in Guadeloupe.

After packaging is completed in Paramaribo, 250 emergency shelter kits will be transported to four officially established hubs;

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Pokigron | 115 |
| Stoelmans eiland 1 and 2 | 40 |
| Drietabiki | 45 |
| Djumu | 50 |

Distribution will take place in the same manner as the food distributions and assessment forms will be used for further evaluation of needs. Scaling up will take place in accordance with the consolidated needs assessment which is due to start on Tuesday, 23 May.

Impact

It is notable from the various assessments and field visits by personnel from international organizations, the government, NGOs and others there have been no alerts as regards chronic shortages of drinking water, food or hygiene items. Therefore it is apparent that basic needs are being addressed by the current relief operations and the Suriname Red Cross and the Federation are providing a valuable contribution to this effort. The food parcels that will arrive from the Federation will also provide timely assistance to those affected at the end of the rainy season when people will be prevented from planting their seasonal crops and food shortages are likely.

Emergency shelter needs will be ensured for at least 250 families, taking into consideration the climatic conditions and the situation of those displaced.

Constraints

The key challenge has been to access the affected populations. Under the leadership of the NCCR, an operational plan was established and is functioning well. Immediate relief, primarily food packages, was delivered by commercial airplanes to ten military posts, with onward distribution by boat. Some airstrips in the region were rendered unusable by the floods and there were some remote villages which could not be assessed at all until the arrival of helicopters from Brazil and the Netherlands. There is now a need for new impact assessments and verification of existing data. This will be addressed by the deployment of nine teams, which will include Red Cross volunteers, scheduled for the coming week.

Soil conditions and the fact that the earth remains wet for a long period of time needed to be taken into consideration when deciding upon the emergency shelter package. Since it is possible that a number of men have left their families to seek work elsewhere, the capacity for families to carry out construction may be reduced; provisions will therefore be made for families who are unable to build or rebuild for themselves and a monitoring and assistance system will be put in place to guarantee shelter for families in these circumstances.

Objective: Staff and volunteers are provided with training in basic water and sanitation principles by the Suriname Red Cross, with the support of the Federation, and appropriate water and sanitation interventions are carried out in the worst-affected areas.

Following a formal regional 'Alert' process, a Federation water and sanitation Regional Intervention Team arrived in Suriname on Saturday, 13 May 2006. The 4 person team was from PIRAC, the French Red Cross's disaster response unit in the Caribbean. The team also includes two additional persons from the Suriname Red Cross who have received RITs training in water and sanitation under an ECHO funded programme. The team is working in cooperation with the water and sanitation working group of the Ministry of Health. The team carried out an initial assessment of the worst affected areas to determine the immediate needs of the population.

The severely affected population, mostly the Amerindian and other indigenous groups, traditionally drink rainwater. The river water is contaminated by human waste, sediment, rotten food, and garbage that have been washed into the river due to the flooding. In the dry season, some village communities also drink 'creek' or small river water, which typically increases the incidence of diarrhoea. Assessments have shown that most villages are

Country or Region: Disaster; Appeal no. MDRSR001; Operations Update no. 1

not suffering from a lack of drinking water at the current time due to rainfall levels. However, relief efforts will focus on doubling the percentage of households with access to the 'Durotank' system for the collection of rainwater, from 5% to 10%.

Following field assessment visits to a number of areas, the PIRAC water and sanitation team has proposed a plan for health promotion related to the safe use of water. The plan targets some 39,000 persons living in 138 villages in 23 areas. It will comprise media promotion in newspapers and announcements in local radio and television as well as a poster and flyer campaign to homes and clinics. The two water and sanitation RIT trained members will continue with the promotion after the departure of the PIRAC team.

There is a growing need to strengthen the local sanitation system, replace stand-alone latrines, and encourage better hygiene practices. Indiscriminate defecation is a common practice, and the faeces are spread with the rise in flood water. Education and awareness building are strongly recommended to address this problem.

The targeted areas for the water and sanitation intervention plan are shown below:

| POPULATION PER MEDICAL CENTRE IN EAST & UPPER SURINAME | | | | |
|---|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| UPPER SURINAME | DJOEMOE | DJOEMOE | 5182 | |
| | | KAJANA | 1193 | |
| | | SEMOISIE | 1548 | |
| | DEBIKE | HEKOENOE | 1662 | |
| | | KAMBALOA | 1950 | |
| | | DEBIKE | 1052 | |
| | | PIKIEN SLEE | 2138 | |
| | LADOANI | GOEJABA | 2663 | |
| | | LADOANI | 1607 | |
| | | JAW JAW | 1404 | |
| | | SOEKOENALE | 1468 | |
| | | POKIGRON | 1698 | |
| | | TOTAL | | 23,565 |
| | EAST SURINAME | STOELMANSEILAND | COTTICA | 434 |
| | | | AGAIGONI | 767 |
| STOELMANSEILAND | | | 4363 | |
| APOEMA | | | 1211 | |
| NASON | | | 1074 | |
| LANGATABIKI | | | 1292 | |
| GAKABA | | | 1296 | |
| NASSAU | | | 3 | |
| DRIETABIKI | | GODORO | 1396 | |
| | | DRIETABIKI | 2866 | |
| | | KARMEL | 452 | |
| | TOTAL | | 15,154 | |
| TOTAL | | | <u>38,719</u> | |

It has been agreed with PAHO/WHO that the transportation of purified water to supplement rainwater is not practical given logistical constraints and local habits. With support from the Netherlands Government, PAHO/WHO will provide 1,000,000 water purification tablets, 1,000 water tanks, and training to set up systems for an alternative water supply when rainwater is not available during the dry season.

Country or Region: Disaster; Appeal no. MDRSR001; Operations Update no. 1

Some cases of water related diarrhoea have been detected, but there is no major outbreak currently. The Health Crisis Team, under the direction of the Ministry of Health, is carefully monitoring the situation. Cases of diarrhoea are reported to the Team's Surveillance Unit, and they in turn compare current trends with historical data.

A small malaria outbreak has been detected in the Asigron area, near Brokopondo Lake. However, this outbreak is not believed to be associated with the flooding. Nevertheless, it remains critical to monitor and prepare for malaria with prevention and early treatment measures. All teams who are deployed to the interior are required to have the appropriate immunizations, particularly malaria and yellow fever.

Impact

The PIRAC water and sanitation team has proposed a plan for health promotion related to the safe use of water. The plan targets some 39,000 persons living in 138 villages in 23 areas. The two water and sanitation RIT trained members will continue with the promotion after the departure of the PIRAC team.

Constraints

It is important to note that lowering water levels do not automatically lead to improvements in the health situation. Malaria and diarrhoea outbreaks are still a risk over the next several weeks. Lack of access to clean drinking water is an on-going concern and can lead to an increase in water related diseases.



Water and sanitation and shelter remain major concerns

Federation Coordination

There are three key areas in which the Federation is involved in coordination within the operation.

The Federation is coordinating response to the floods through the involvement of the French Red Cross (PIRAC) in the area of water and sanitation, the deployment of two delegates from the Netherlands Red Cross for relief and shelter inputs and through close cooperation with the Suriname Red Cross. The Federation's operational office is located with the Suriname Red Cross headquarters.

Secondly, the Federation, with the National Society, attends the daily briefing staged by the NCCR and participates with National Society counterparts in the water and sanitation, the shelter and the medical crisis working groups. Through this means, the Federation is leading a coordinated Red Cross response operation.

Finally, the Federation is the lead agency in the coordination of the organizations involved in the emergency shelter sector. The Netherlands Red Cross delegate who is responsible for this role ensures that shelter activities and proposals are agreed and implemented in a complementary manner as regards the overall emergency

Country or Region: Disaster; Appeal no. MDRSR001; Operations Update no. 1

operation. This requires close cooperation with all interlocutors involved in the operation including the NCCR, the government, the UN, NGOs and others such as the 'Map Action' volunteers.

Many organizations are working under the coordination of the NCCR including a number of international agencies and NGOs such as: the International Development Bank, Map Action, Medical Mission, Nederlandse Assessment Team, the Organization of American States, OCHA, the Pan American Health Organization, Telecoms Sans Frontières, UNDAC, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement -- Principles and initiatives

All Red Cross actions are in line with the Fundamental Principles.

Issues related to diversity and gender are important in the Suriname flood operations taking into consideration the different ethnic groups in the interior of the country, particularly the Amerindians. It has also been noticeable the many households consist of women and children only as the men are displaced due to lack of job opportunities in the remote areas and therefore have to relocate to the capital, Paramaribo or even to French Guyana.

HIV/AIDS is a major concern particularly in the rural areas. The Ministry of Health has been actively promoting the distribution of condoms, through the NGO network, along with the relief distributions. The Suriname Red Cross is including condoms in the hygiene packages which are currently being distributed.

National Society Capacity Building

There a number of key opportunities for capacity building with the National Society. Two personnel from the Suriname Red Cross are integrated as full members of the water and sanitation Regional Intervention Team having been trained as part of the ECHO programmatic funded project called "Strengthening the disaster management capacity of National Societies in the Caribbean region". This operation provides an ideal opportunity for National Society personnel to gain experience in a disaster operation.

In addition to this, other RIT trained personnel are assisting as direct counterparts in the shelter and relief and logistics elements of the operation. Two members of National Society personnel are trained as regional intervention team members in the area of logistics, two in the area of IT and telecommunications and two have received general RITs training.

Built in to the water and sanitation intervention is capacity strengthening through the health promotion whereby the two Suriname Red Cross trained water and sanitation RIT team members will continue to implement and monitor the activities after the departure of the current water and sanitation team.

Communications – Advocacy and Public Information

The Suriname Red Cross has issued a press release to coincide with the release of the Federation's Emergency Appeal. The national television station covered the arrival of the hygiene parcels from PADRU and it was televised on national television and the Netherlands Red Cross delegates also participated in media interviews.

[*Click here to return to the title page.*](#)