

# 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  
9 June 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. 2; Period covered: 21 May to 5 June 2006; Appeal target: CHF 854,305 (USD 706,309 or EUR 550,346); Appeal coverage: 100%

*The Contributions List, also available on the website, is currently being updated.*

#### 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 therefore due on 15 January 2007.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 100,000 (USD 82,713 or EUR 64,433).

#### Operational Summary:

Water levels have receded to normal levels for the rainy season in most areas and it has been observed that flood affected people have resumed their normal lives quite quickly after the floods occurred.

The National Coordination Centre for Disasters (NCCR) has distributed 27,000 food packages within the flooded areas so far, of which the Suriname Red Cross (SRC) has provided 4,715 packages. In addition, 4,000 hygiene kits from the SRC and the Federation have been distributed to 4,000 families through the local interior NGO network. 4,000 family food parcels and 5,500 plastic sheets have reached the Suriname Red Cross from the Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) in Panama, and another 2,000 plastic sheets were received on 25 May 2006 from the Regional Intervention Platform for the Americas - Caribbean (PIRAC) in Guadeloupe. Finally, tendering for 500 tool kits for 2,500 families is being carried out locally. It is anticipated that there may be shortages of food since villagers are reluctant to begin re-planting, fearing that renewed flooding will wipe out the crops since the heavy rains usually take place slightly later in the year, in June or July. However, at present, it is not possible to estimate potential food deficits.

In the area of water and sanitation, training took place at the SRC headquarters for 20 volunteers who will be involved in the dissemination of health messages. The volunteers will work in the field, in coordination with the Suriname Ministry of Health and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), following the completion of the training and as soon as the printing of 500 posters and 18,000 flyers containing health messages is finished.

The Appeal has been fully covered and no further contributions are sought at present, although approval is pending of an ECHO funding proposal.

**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".**

#### **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.**

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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 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>*

*For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.*

## **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 kilometres 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 diarrhoea 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**

Water levels have receded relatively quickly in most areas and are now at normal levels for the rainy season As a result, damage to flooded houses and vegetable gardens has been less severe than initially foreseen by the

assessment teams. In addition, the majority of the affected people are not fully dependent on the crops they cultivate from their vegetable gardens as many of them earn their living elsewhere, such as in French Guyana and in the capital of Suriname, Paramaribo. It has been observed that the flood affected people have resumed their normal lives soon after the floods occurred and that they appear to have good coping mechanisms.

Most people who were obliged to leave their houses as a result of the flood waters were able to find temporary shelter with close family members living in the same or in nearby villages. Alternatively, people have relocated to temporary dwellings on higher ground. Only a small percentage of houses have been fully damaged. These are mostly the mud-constructions or houses built of timber frames. However, many household items, mattresses and clothing have been lost, and the conditions inside the houses remain unsanitary due to contamination by flood waters. Nevertheless, no outbreak of diseases has been reported and the cases of diarrhoea and malaria that have been reported are considered to be normal for the rainy season.

The annual rise in river levels usually takes place in June and July; this year the floods were more severe and arrived earlier than usual and more crops have been destroyed since with the later arrival of the rains, crops have matured sufficiently to withstand the water levels. Assessment findings indicate that there is reluctance amongst villagers to re-plant crops, even in areas where waters have receded sufficiently, since there are fears that flooding may recur and destroy crops once again. The floods have therefore substantially increased the risk of food insecurity. At present, it is not possible to estimate the scale of the possible food deficit and the evolution of household food security will depend on traditional coping mechanisms, complementary sources of income and the re-planting of cassava and rice.

The Suriname Red Cross has been involved in the response operation from the outset as part of the national monitoring teams made up of personnel from the police, the military and the fire service.

## **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.**

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

The National Coordination Centre for Disasters, the Suriname Red Cross and NGOs working in Suriname have ensured the distribution of 27,000 food packages within the flooded areas so far, of which the Suriname Red Cross has provided 4,715 packages. On a daily basis, up to 40 SRC volunteers were involved in the preparation of the SRC food packages, and distributions of food rations began as of 6 May comprising one week rations for 4,000 families. On the basis of new assessments provided by field staff, the second round of distribution is planned to reach 7,500 families. In addition, 4,000 hygiene kits from the SRC and the Federation have been distributed to 4,000 families through the local interior NGO network. These kits were distributed to areas including Upper Suriname, Tapanahoney and Upper Marowijne.

4,000 family food parcels and 5,500 plastic sheets have arrived from PADRU's headquarters in Panama. The food parcels will be distributed together with locally procured 25-kg bags of rice. Another 2,000 plastic sheets reached Suriname from PIRAC, the French Red Cross disaster response unit in the Caribbean, on 25 May 2006. In addition, tendering for 500 tool kits for 2,500 families is being carried out locally; the first 150 kits have been delivered to the SRC warehouse in Paramaribo ready for dispatch. All relief items, as per the Federation Appeal, have now been delivered to Suriname. Beneficiary selection is being carried out through the network of NGOs working in the country and monitoring will be carried out by Suriname Red Cross volunteers who are being trained in basic relief methods. It is planned that two Red Cross volunteers will be present in each of the ten main logistics hubs to ensure that relief items are distributed appropriately to remote villages.

The NCCR is currently evaluating distributions carried out to date in order to avoid duplication of aid in certain regions and to fill any gaps during the future distributions. The SRC will distribute the remaining relief goods it has in stock once the outcome of this evaluation is available. The UNDAC team has undertaken three monitoring missions during the reporting period; at the Drietakibi logistics hub, the assessment indicated that shipment and distribution of relief supplies was going well; in Stoelmans Island and Kakaba there had been some difficulties with food distributions and there was a lack of rain water for drinking which meant that people were reverting to drinking creek water; in the Saramaca River region, distributions were going well and living conditions were returning to normal.

With regard to shelter, the exact numbers of people who have lost their homes is not known. A government assessment team is working in the worst-affected areas to define needs more accurately and a report is expected in the coming days.



Relief goods from PADRU are received by the Suriname Red Cross

## Water and Sanitation

**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.

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

As part of the proposed plan for health promotion related to the safe use of water, which will target up to 180 villages in the country, 500 posters and 18,000 flyers with health messages have been ordered through a local printing company. On Saturday, 3 June, training took place at the Suriname Red Cross headquarters for 20 volunteers involved in the dissemination of these health messages. As of 12 June, the volunteers will be deployed to the field, in coordination with the Suriname Ministry of Health and PAHO. The plan involves three days of training in each of 10 locations in Upper Suriname, South Suriname and Eastern Suriname; those targeted to receive training will then return to their villages and, in turn, train the communities, thus involving the local population to the full. Information will be disseminated on the usage of chlorine tablets during the dry season. It has been decided in coordination with the MoH and PAHO/WHO that in the rainy season no chlorine tablets will be distributed, as the affected people are able to collect rain water for consumption.

## **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.

The Federation, with the National Society, attends the regular briefings 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 ensuring coordination of the work of 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 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 operation, 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. 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**

Through continued public and media relations it is hoped that the public will develop a better understanding of the mission of the Suriname Red Cross and the activities the Red Cross undertakes. The International Federation and the Suriname Red Cross seek to promote the Fundamental Principles in all activities, and subsequently facilitate additional visibility of the Movement as a whole. The National Society and the Federation are ensuring coverage

of the emergency operation and news articles and photographs are being published on the Federation's public web site.

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