

INFORMATION BULLETIN



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

CENTRAL AMERICA: FLOODS

31 May 2002

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***Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated:
CHF 25,000 for Costa Rica and Panama***

This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below. A DREF allocation of CHF 25,000 has been released for operations in Costa Rica and Panama, and the Federation does not anticipate further needs. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the quarterly DREF update. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider international support through an Appeal

The Situation

Floods have occurred as of early May in Costa Rica and Panama (see information bulletins no. 1 & 2 Costa Rica; Panama - Floods, issued on 8 and 10 May). In Costa Rica, it is estimated that a total of 8,000 families have been affected, particularly in the province of Limón where heavy rains in the early hours of 5 May caused rivers to burst their banks and severe flooding. The most affected district is Valle de la Estrella where torrents of water washed away banana and plantain plantations, destroyed houses and flooded over half of the villages, of which the inhabitants have lost everything they owned. At least 600 houses and two schools have incurred damage, and one school and a bridge have been destroyed. In total, 6,000 people have been evacuated, with some 4,800 accommodated in shelters.

In Panama, in addition to flooding in Bocas del Toro (see information bulletin no. 2 Costa Rica; Panama - Floods), heavy rains caused by swelling of the rivers Chivo Chivo, Mataznillo and Pacora have now affected the centre of the country and the capital. As a result, flooding and landslides occurred in several districts of Panama City and in San Miguelito; a total of 1,500 people are affected, three people have died and one has disappeared. The following communities have been worst-hit by the floods: Chanis, Parque Lefevre, Panamá Viejo, Santa Clara, Villa Lobos, Juan Diaz, Ciudad Radial, San Miguelito and Las Cumbres; in addition, six landslides were reported in San Miguelito.

Three days of rain in Honduras have resulted in floods and landslides in the departments of Olancho, Francisco Morazán, El Paraíso and Valle. In the municipality of Juticalpa, department of Olancho and the municipality of Talanga, department of Francisco Morazán, a total of 14 houses have been destroyed and around 70 people have been evacuated to shelters. According to the national emergency body, COPECO, in the capital, Tegucigalpa, around 300 housing areas, home to some 500,000 inhabitants, are in high risk areas. In El Paraíso, to date 13 houses and a school have been damaged and in the department of Valle, 13 communities have been affected, of which three have been totally cut off by flood waters.

In Nicaragua, as of 28 May, flood waters have affected the capital, Managua, together with Masaya, Rivas, Matagalpa, Ocotal and Chinandega. Given the heavy rains, a status of yellow alert was declared by the government, followed on 29 May by a request from the government of Nicaragua for international assistance to come to the aid of flood victims. Torrential rain has resulted in the flooding of hundreds of houses and damage to roads and bridges; it is estimated that approximately 2,000 people have been evacuated, of a total of 9,000 affected, mostly in Managua and on the Pacific coast.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Costa Rican Red Cross is implementing an assistance operation for 1,000 families in 14 districts in the province of Limón whose major needs are food, hygiene kits, kitchen sets, potable water, given that wells have been contaminated and rural aqueducts destroyed, jerry cans and water purification tablets. To date, 1,111 mattresses, 887 blankets, 418 food rations, 102 kitchen sets and 352 bottles of water have been distributed by the Costa Rican Red Cross in Limón province in coordination with the National Emergency Commission.

The Red Cross Society of Panama mobilized 52 relief volunteers in the capital and San Miguelito who took part in rescue operations and assessment of damage. A survey of those affected was carried out and some relief items were distributed. Immediate needs are for water, food including baby food, blankets and shelter.

The Honduran Red Cross is monitoring the situation closely, and the National Society's relief department, OPADE, is liaising with municipal and local emergency committees. Red Cross volunteers are carrying out evacuation of families at risk and are assessing damage and needs. In addition, three national intervention teams (NITs), mobilized in the south and centre of the country, coordinated the evacuation of 21 families with the Talanga branch. These families received food rations for a week, two blankets and used clothing.

In Managua, the Nicaraguan Red Cross mobilized 34 volunteers, together with 10 members of rescue teams and 5 drivers who participated in the evacuation of some 90 families from various areas of the city, the worst affected area being Hugo Chávez. Departmental and local branches are on alert and relief brigades are on standby. In the department of Granada, 582 people were evacuated by Red Cross volunteers from the communities of Paso Real, Ochomogo, Río Medina, El Manchón and Las Enramadas. The US Embassy has contributed USD 50,000 to the Nicaraguan government for relief goods for the worst-affected flood victims; the Nicaraguan Red Cross, with the support of the American Red Cross, will be responsible for distribution of the relief items to the beneficiaries.

Needs

In Costa Rica, immediate needs are for food, hygiene kits, kitchen sets, potable water, jerry cans and water purification tablets. In Panama, the National Society is assisting 400 families in the area bordering Costa Rica for a one month period with jerry cans, tarpaulins, blankets, bleach, drinking water, canned food, hygiene kits and kitchen sets. Immediate needs in Panama city and San Miguelito are for water, food including baby food, blankets and shelter.

Assessment of needs in Honduras and Nicaragua is ongoing.

Forecasts indicate that rain will continue in the region until early next week. Further information will be provided as the situation develops.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

For further details please contact :

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

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

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