

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

ARGENTINA - SANTA FE PROVINCE: 2 May 2003 **FLOODS**

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DREF Allocated: CHF 50,000

This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below. A DREF allocation of CHF 50,000 has been released. The launch of an international appeal is being considered.

The Situation

The waters in the Argentine province of Santa Fé have started to decrease slowly and weather conditions have improved slightly, although it continues to rain in the north of the province. Nevertheless, it is forecast that heavy rainfall will resume on Sunday, 4 May. The Salado river has reached an historic record level with a depth of 7.88 metres. A third of Santa Fé province remains water-logged and access by road is almost impossible; half of the city of Santa Fé remains under water, and it is estimated that a two week period is needed for the water to subside, should there be no further rain. Two embankments on the outskirts of the capital of Santa Fé were dynamited to facilitate drainage. Electricity has been cut off in 70% of the province and has been re-established only in those places where waters have totally receded; however, communications are functioning for the most part. Cases of looting of flooded houses and vehicles carrying humanitarian aid have been reported. As a result of looting, it is difficult to set up centres in which to stock relief goods.

The Italian hospital and a geriatric centre were obliged to evacuate patients. Results of a more detailed survey indicate that between 100,000 and 120,000 persons have been evacuated and, to date, 12 casualties have been reported. A total of 118 shelters have been set up in Santa Fe province and are housing between 28,000 and 30,000 people, whilst many more have left their homes and are staying with relatives. The police is responsible for the security of these centres and the Argentine army is in charge of the security of the water-logged areas. The Minister of Justice and Security is coordinating a special security operation and the Minister of Health also reached Santa Fé on 1 May to carry out an assessment of health conditions.

The national government has donated USD 7,000,000 and 40,000 boxes of food and the government of the province of Córdoba has sent 70 tonnes of food, mattresses and clothes. UNICEF has donated USD 150,000

to the municipal government of Santa Fé. The Japanese government has announced a contribution of USD 133,000 and the Embassies of France and Switzerland in Argentina have offered donations. In addition, a number of firms, together with Red Cross branches in the country, are contributing relief goods for the operation.

The worst hit areas are the northern and central zones of the province of Santa Fé, mainly the nine departments of Garay, General Obligado, La Capital, Las Colonias, San Cristóbal, San Justo, San Martín, Vera and San Javier.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action



Argentine Red Cross (ARC) staff and volunteers have helped to rescue and evacuate 1,500 persons suffering from hypothermia, dehydration and exhaustion. Many of these rescues were carried out by life-savers who swam to save the victims. The ARC continues to conduct boat patrols in order to survey areas of risk and evacuate those in danger. However, it is hoped that rescue and evacuation activities will conclude today, 2 May.

The ARC participated in the evacuation of the Italian hospital and is currently providing first aid to those evacuated. Following a request from the Ministry of Health, capacities are being assessed whereby the Argentine Red Cross would take on responsibility for health care in some six shelters housing between seven and eight thousand evacuees. Those evacuated can be grouped into two categories: those who will be able to return home once the waters recede and those whose houses have been lost in the flood waters who will need more longer-term assistance to be able to resume their lives; the current estimate is that some four to five thousand families have lost their homes.

The Argentine Army and the Civil Defence have put at trucks at the disposal of the ARC to deliver donations from Buenos Aires to Santa Fé. The travelling time between the capital and Santa Fé is of eight hours. The company, Movicom, has provided the ARC with 20 cell phones. Other goods which have been donated are: 300,000 diapers, 23,000 litres of mineral water, 400 mattresses, 14 tonnes of biscuits, 1 ton of polenta and 1 ton of noodles.

The Argentine Red Cross has now distributed 6 tonnes of the initial 10 tonnes of food transported on 29 April, but was obliged to interrupt activities given the lack of security, as several cases of robbery of vehicles carrying goods have occurred. Food is being distributed to the communal kitchens of four centres, the schools of JJ Paso, Colón, San Martín and Almirante Brown, where some 2,500 people are sheltered. This food is sufficient for a 15 day period. In addition, distribution to seven centres each housing some fifty

people, took place. Health is a major concern and vaccination is taking place in the shelters, given fears of outbreaks of disease.

On 30 April, the Santa Fé Red Cross branch had to be evacuated due to the high level of the waters. The staff temporarily moved to the National 'Universidad del Litoral', but the branch premises were rehabilitated on 1 May. The Argentine Red Cross is in contact with the Santa Fé Civil Defence authorities and with the crisis committee and is also liaising with UN agencies both in the capital and in Santa Fé in relation to the response to the flooding.

The ARC visited nine shelters housing some 3,690 people. The centres are, for the most part, well administered and are receiving some medical assistance. There are no problems with water which is being supplied. However, there are needs with respect to sanitation and garbage removal is essential.

A team made up of members of the Argentine Red Cross including the executive director and the coordinator of the National Society, a disaster management delegate from the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), a Federation health consultant based in Buenos Aires and a representative of the Spanish Red Cross began a assessment of damage and needs in Santa Fé province on Thursday, 1 May. A German Red Cross delegate will also arrive in Santa Fé later today, 2 May and the disaster management delegate from the regional delegation in Lima will arrive in Buenos Aires to provide support for the operation. The team is setting up an operations centre in the Universidad del Litoral in Santa Fé.

Initial results of the damage and needs assessment are expected tomorrow, 3 May. Current information indicates that there are needs for medicines for hospitals and evacuation centres and for blankets, mattresses, clothing, shoes, kitchen utensils, cleaning and hygiene kits and plastic sheeting. A decision will be taken concerning the possible launch of an appeal as soon as sufficient information has been collated by the assessment team.



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

For further details please contact :

- *The Argentine Red Cross in Buenos Aires; Phone (54) 114 951 1391; Fax (54) 114 952 7715; email cgimenez@cruzroja.org.ar*

- *Olaug Bergseth, Phone 41 22 730 4535; Fax 41 22 733 0395; email olaug.bergseth@ifrc.org*

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