

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

BOLIVIA: FLOODS

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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 180 countries.

For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

This document is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

On 23 December 2003 torrential rainstorms caused flooding of the Chapare River near the city of Villa Tunari, some 650 kilometres southeast of the Bolivian capital, La Paz. The floods caused the collapse of one of the main bridges linking the Bolivian cities of Cochabamba and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the Alfonso Gumundo Reyes bridge, killing 50 people. An additional 50 people have disappeared as a result of the flooding, and many vulnerable farmers have suffered heavy losses to their crops and cattle.

The next day, on 24 December, the President of Bolivia declared a state of emergency in the area surrounding Villa Tunari, the most seriously affected region.

The season of heavy rains has just started in Bolivia, and further emergencies are expected during the months of January and February.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Chinese government immediately responded to the emergency with a donation of USD 50,000 to Bolivian organizations. From this donation, USD 10,000 was allocated to the Bolivian Red Cross (BRC), at the request of the Red Cross Society of China. This allowed the Bolivian Red Cross to carry out an immediate damage and needs assessment between 27 and 31 December, and to organize humanitarian aid for some 490 families in the community of Shinahota, located close to Villa Tunari. The assessment was carried out in coordination with the Bolivian Civil Defence.

The BRC participated in all community disaster committee meetings that were held to address the situation relating to the floods. During these meetings, it was decided that the National Society would be in charge of Shinahota, while the Civil Defence and the relief organization, Caritas, would provide the same assistance to 830 families in Villa Tunari, in order to avoid duplication of the distribution of aid.

During this week, the Cochabamba branch of the BRC is conducting a survey in Shinahota, and a distribution of food packages is planned for Saturday, 10 January. Each food package contains 40 kilograms of food aid, including rice, sugar, pasta, flour, oil and salt, and is calculated to provide a family of five with food for one month. In total, BRC food packages will benefit 2,450 people.

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Since the collapse of the bridge, the floods have caused a number of smaller emergencies that are being attended to by local municipalities. However, as heavier rains are expected in the coming days, the BRC has put all its branches on alert to monitor any incidents.

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

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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.