

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

21 January 2004

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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.

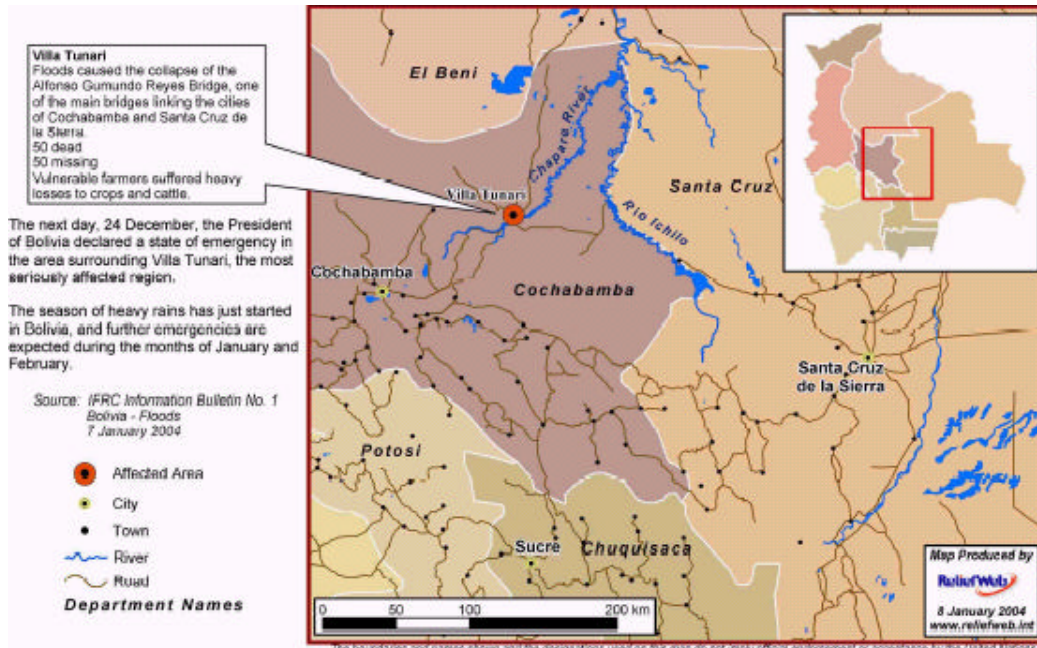
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In Brief

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

The rainy season in Bolivia, which begins in December, brought torrential rains that caused the Chapare River to flood near the city of Villa Tunari on 23 December, killing 50 people and affecting hundreds of families.



Since then, more rains have caused flooding in several areas of Bolivia, including the capital city of La Paz, and the Jilusaya, Rosasani and La Paz rivers have broken their banks. Flooding has also occurred in El Alto, Trinidad and Cochabamba as a result of the flooding of the River Mizque and in Santa Cruz where the Rio Grande has overflowed. These floods have destroyed homes, isolated communities and wiped out crops and cattle.

Red Cross action

In December 2003, the government of the People's Republic of China responded immediately to the emergency in Chapare with a donation of USD 50,000 to Bolivian organizations. From this amount, USD 10,000 dollars were allocated to the Bolivian Red Cross (BRC), at the request of the Red Cross Society of China. The funding was used to conduct a damage and needs assessment and to deliver humanitarian aid to some 490 families in Villa Tunari. Food packages were distributed on 10 January, with each 40-kilogram food package containing rice, sugar, pasta, flour, oil and salt. The packages were designed to provide food to a family of five for one month. In total, BRC food packages benefited 2,450 people.



Families from the communities of Ibuelo, Dorado Grande, Dorado Chico, San Luis, Florida, Villa Fernandez, Santa Rosa de Ibuelo and Manuel Asencio Padilla benefited from the BRC food aid distribution in Villa Tunari on 10 January.

The area around Trinidad was also badly hit by the floods. Volunteers from the Beni branch of the BRC have been assisting with coordination of the evacuation efforts and have been helping to provide primary health care to the families from the city of Trinidad, where the floods forced 12,000 people out of their homes and into temporary shelters. A total of 33 shelters have been set up in public schools in Trinidad.

The provision of health care in Trinidad is being coordinated by the Ministry of Health, while the Bolivian Red Cross has provided medicines and first aid kits. World Vision and Doctors without Borders are overseeing basic hygiene and water and sanitation, while the United Nations World Food Programme and USAID are taking care of food aid assistance. The spread of epidemics is a major concern at present in Trinidad as there is no sewage system. Another issue is that evacuees from nearby communities that were also affected by the floods are overcrowding the Trinidad shelters.



Heavy rains flooded several regions in Bolivia, leaving behind scenes like this one.

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The Cochabamba branch of the BRC has also reported 950 families affected by rains, mainly vulnerable farmers that have lost their crops of maize, potatoes and fruit.

As heavier rains are expected in the next two months, the BRC has put all its branches on alert to monitor any other incidents. In addition, the National Society is a member of the government's emergency committees that are active in every department of the country.

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.