

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

COLOMBIA: EARTHQUAKE

10 December 2004

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

This Information Bulletin 02/2004 is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 50,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). Unearmarked funds to repay DREF will be needed.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

One of the most powerful earthquakes to affect Colombia in recent years struck the Pacific coast of the country on 15 November 2004, registering 6.7 on the Richter scale. According to the Colombian National Institute of Geophysics, the epicentre of the earthquake was located in the Pacific Ocean, approximately 50 kilometres from the coastal municipality of Bajo Baudó, in the department of Chocó, which borders Panama. The event caused structural damage and some injuries, although, given the magnitude of the earthquake, the damage was relatively small. This was due in large part to the fact that the area nearest the epicentre is fairly sparsely populated. Five aftershocks registering 4.0 and 1,026 low intensity aftershocks have taken place. The earthquake was felt in the capital city of Bogotá, where it caused electricity outages in the neighbourhoods of Bochica and Villas de Granada, but the most affected departments were Valle del Cauca and Chocó, both located on the Pacific coast. Chocó is the poorest department in Colombia and is very prone to earthquakes. The department is also affected by the country's ongoing internal armed conflict.

Damage and Persons Affected

Department	Municipality	Families affected	Persons affected	Houses damaged	Houses destroyed	Other remarks
Choco	Litoral de San Juan	151	767	124	27	1 school and the municipal building damaged; 2 communities affected
	Bajo Baudó	538	2733	437	101	12 injuries; 9 schools destroyed; 7 churches, 4 bridges, 3 community centres, 4 health centres and 2 cultural centres damaged
	Medio Baudó	321	1630	249	72	3 schools, 1 church, 1 restaurant, 1 bridge and a government office damaged
Valle del Cauca	Cali	610	2,160	610	0	2 hospitals and 12 buildings damaged
	Buenaventura	128	615	91	37	7 injuries; 1 sports centre and 1 church damaged
	Cerrito	2	10	2	0	1 injury
	Restrepo	1	5	1	0	1 church damaged
	Zarzal	4	20	3	1	2 schools, 1 health centre and the fire station headquarters damaged
	Bugalagrande	3	16	3	0	1 school and 1 health centre damaged
	Calima Dariem	12	60	10	2	
	Vijes	0	0	0	0	1 church damaged
TOTAL	11 municipalities	1,770	8,016	1,530	240	

Source: CRCS Report of 30 November 2004



Some houses in the department of Choco could not withstand the force of the earthquake. Fortunately, the light weight of the materials used to build houses in the region ensured that the collapsed buildings caused no deaths.

The earthquake struck Colombia at the same time as a large portion of the country is being affected by serious flooding.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

There has been excellent coordination between the Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) branch in Choco, the National Directorate for Disaster Response and Preparedness and the local governments in Choco's three most affected municipalities: Litoral de San Juan, Bajo Baudo and Medio Baudo. This coordination has resulted in a plan of action in which the role of the Red Cross as an auxiliary to the government in disaster response is clearly stated.

The CRCS branches in the all of the departments where the earthquake was felt: Choco, Valle del Cauca, Quindio, Cauca and Nariño, have carried out damage and needs assessments, with support from the CRCS municipal units and local emergency prevention and response committees. A disaster management delegate from the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) was deployed to Colombia to evaluate damages and immediate needs and, together with the Federation representative in Colombia, is coordinating activities with the CRCS.



Colombian Red Cross Society personnel evaluating damage in a community in Choco

Funds provided through the Federation's disaster relief emergency fund (DREF) are being used to conduct damage and needs assessments, mobilize personnel to the affected areas and provide immediate humanitarian assistance to affected families, including food, water and shelter, in coordination with the government. The difficult security conditions in the area have required the presence of additional CRCS relief personnel in Bajo Baudo, Choco.

The CRCS has helped in the evacuation of persons from damaged buildings in Valle del Cauca, particularly the patients of two hospitals that were affected in the municipality of Cali. The CRCS has also carried out two deliveries of relief items in the municipality of Buenaventura, in the department of Valle del Cauca; the first delivery provided food assistance to 70 families, and the second provided food and non-food assistance to 128 families. In the department of Choco, the CRCS carried out an assessment in cooperation with the Netherlands Red Cross and an ECHO representative. Relief items have been delivered to 337 families in this area.

In the coming weeks, 1,138 affected families will benefit from rehabilitation activities planned to repair damaged houses. A total of 1,010 families will receive a family tool kit and 128 families will receive technical and logistics support from the Red Cross municipal unit of Buenaventura.

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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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