

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: HEAVY RAINS 15 October 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 01/2004 is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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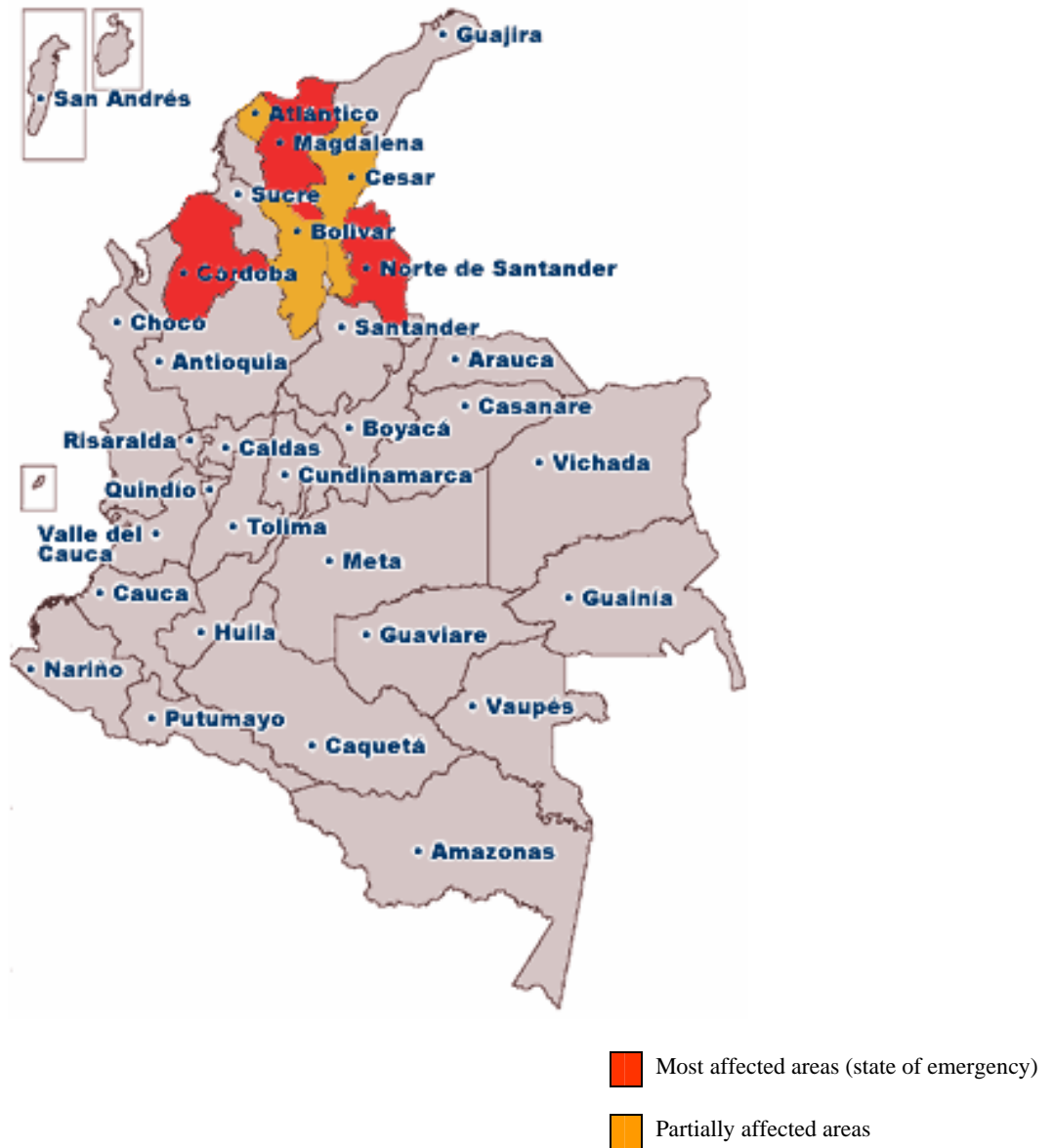
The Situation

The second heavy rainy season in Colombia begins in October and ends in December. This year the season started with strong rain storms during the first ten days of October, affecting many vulnerable communities in the northern departments of Cordoba, Bolivar, Atlantico, Magdalena, Cesar and Norte of Santander. The government's Institute of Water, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM) has forecasted more rains and an increase of river's water levels in the next several days.

A state of emergency has been declared in the departments of Cordoba, Magdalena and Norte of Santander. Preliminary damage and needs assessments have confirmed the figures below:

Department	Families affected	Persons affected
Cordoba	7,340	39,450
Magdalena	159	664
Norte of Santander	70	325
Total	7,569	40,439

Areas affected by the recent severe rains:



According to the local media, over 55,000 persons are affected and 2 deaths have been reported so far. President Alvaro Uribe visited Córdoba on 13 October to supervise the delivery of six tonnes of humanitarian aid supplies, consisting mostly of food items. The government has created a National Donor Council, led by the National Taxes and Customs Department, to appeal for humanitarian aid for the affected communities.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) has already launched a relief operation, working in close coordination with the National Disaster Preparedness and Response System (SNPAD) and other national relief organizations. Ongoing relief efforts include damage and needs assessments, search and rescue activities, delivery of first aid, evacuations of affected families to temporary shelters and distribution of bed sheets, hygiene parcels and kitchen sets. The relief director of the CRCS is now in Córdoba to coordinate the distribution of relief supplies with the local authorities.

The CRCS is also bringing additional non-food supplies into the disaster area from its warehouses in Medellín, Cartagena and Bogotá, including winter clothes for children,

The CRCS and SNPAD are appealing to national institutions for the following goods to assist a total of 5,000 affected families:

- 5,000 family food packages (each package consisting of: one kilogram of lentils, half kilogram of flour, three kilograms of rice, one kilogram of sugar, one kilogram of beans, one kilogram of salt, one litre of oil, half kilogram of chocolate, 400 grams of powder milk, 500 grams of coffee and one tin of tuna)
- 10,000 tents
- 5,000 mattresses
- 10,000 bed sheets
- 10,000 blankets
- 5,000 hygiene kits
- 5,000 kitchen kits
- 5,000 tableware kits

Once the emergency phase of the operation is completed, the CRCS will then concentrate its efforts on public health activities and support the rehabilitation of homes and the recovery of farming activities.

The CRCS has instructed all of its branches located along the Caribbean coast and in the Andean and Orinoquia regions to be ready for future emergencies and to increase their disaster preparedness activities in the most vulnerable communities.

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.

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