

# 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

## COSTA RICA: FLOODS

11 November 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 (no. 01/2004) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 40,000 have been granted from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). The Federation does not anticipate further needs. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the DREF update.

*For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:*

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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

The rainy season in Costa Rica this year has been more severe than usual and heavy storms are now lashing the Caribbean lowlands. The rains are causing floods and landslides, displacing families living in vulnerable and high-risk areas, particularly in the province of Limon. The water level of nearby rivers has increased dramatically over the last week and subsequent flooding has damaged local infrastructure and destroyed many homes along the Caribbean coast. Many communities are now inaccessible as bridges have collapsed and roads are blocked with mud and flood waters. Telephone lines were also damaged and the power supply has been cut off in some of the hardest-hit areas.

The National Emergency Commission has declared a state of alert on the Caribbean coast and in the northern region of Costa Rica and local emergency committees were activated. Evacuation and search and rescue efforts are underway in Limon and emergency shelters have been established to accommodate affected families as well as those living in high-risk areas. So far, over 1,000 persons have been admitted to 10 temporary emergency shelters. Additional shelters are being set up to receive more families as the strong rains continue and are expected to worsen in some areas.

**Areas affected by recent severe rains:**



Preliminary damage and needs assessments are still underway. However, national authorities have already confirmed the need for clean water, food and basic relief supplies such as hygiene parcels, kitchen sets and water purification tablets to help the affected families to cope with this disaster. Due to the contamination of water sources caused by the floods, the health situation in Limon will continue to be monitored closely by the Costa Rican health authorities.

**Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

On Wednesday, 10 November, the Costa Rican Red Cross (CRRC) declared a state of Red Alert in the flood-stricken province of Limon. The National Society has already launched a relief operation and is working closely with the municipal authorities, the Ministry of Health, local emergency committees and other national relief organizations. Ongoing relief efforts have concentrated mostly on search and rescue activities and evacuations of affected families to temporary shelters. To date, temporary shelters have been established in the communities of Sarapiquí, Siquirres, Matina, Paraiso, Bribri, Galvilan Canta and Suretka. In the region of Talamanca, where the villages of Margarita, Celia and Sixaola remain cut off, the population is now being evacuated.

The National Society has deployed relief officers to coordinate local relief efforts in the most affected areas. Boats have also been sent and are being used in the rescue efforts. Trucks and tractors have also been mobilized to reopen and rehabilitate damaged roads. During the emergency phase of the operation, the Costa Rican Red Cross will continue to concentrate its efforts on reaching isolated communities and providing them with emergency health care, clean water, and food and non-food items. The National Society is also setting up and managing temporary shelters throughout the province of Limon and plans to distribute basic food rations to a total of 1,000 families for a period of one month. Once the emergency phase of the operation is completed, the CRRC will focus on public health activities and support the rehabilitation of contaminated water sources.

Since the onset of the disaster, the Costa Rican Red Cross has been working closely with the local emergency committees, some of which had previously received training in disaster preparedness from the National Society.

The Costa Rican Red Cross has instructed all of its branches located along the Caribbean coast 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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*For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.*

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