

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

12 May 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 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

Costa Rica's National Commission of Disaster Prevention and Emergency Care (CNE) declared a red alert for the Caribbean region of the country, due to flooding that has occurred as a result of heavy rains. A yellow alert has also been declared in the northern region of the country. The rains, the heaviest so far during the country's annual rainy season, began on Thursday 6 May and caused flooding in Sarapiquí, Pococi, Siquirres, Matina and Limón on the Caribbean coast. Swelled river levels were also reported in Turrialba, closer inland to the capital city of San Jose.

The affected districts in the country are: Limón, Guácimo, Matina, Carrandí, Batán, Pacuarito, Siquirres, Puerto Viejo and Horquetas.

According to the latest report from the Costa Rican Red Cross's operations coordination centre, the rains have forced 2056 persons out of their homes and into 24 shelters located in Limon, Guácimo, Matina, Siquirres and Sarapiquí de Heredia. The heavy rains and flooding have also caused two deaths: one in Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí (Heredia) and the other in Batán (Limon). The bodies of both victims were recovered by the Costa Rican Red Cross.

Several roads in the affected areas have been closed by landslides or flooding, temporarily disrupting access to some areas. In addition, dykes in several rivers have broken or been damaged, causing further flooding.

The CNE has been active since the heavy rains began, alerting vulnerable communities and installing a command centre in Limón. The CNE placed two representatives and one radio operator in the region to coordinate with the regional committee in Limón. CNE officers have also been placed in the northern region of the country and in Sarapiquí, Matina, Rio Bananito and Batán.

The CNE distributed 140 mats and blankets to beneficiaries in Pococi and 200 mats and blankets to beneficiaries in Talamanca. In addition, the CNE has authorized spending for food, fuel coupons and fuel.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Due to the torrential rains, the Costa Rican Red Cross initiated a special operation that included preparation of shelters, medical treatment and transport of patients. Medical treatments have been complicated by the road conditions and flooding, but on 10 May the Red Cross was able to assist eight pregnant victims using small boats to gain access to the flooded areas.

The already vulnerable situation in which the people affected by the disasters live prompted the Costa Rican Red Cross to launch a solidarity campaign to encourage donations from the people of Costa Rica. At this time, Red Cross committees throughout the country are receiving basic grains, sugar, oil, pasta, bottled water, non perishable food (including tuna and ultra pasteurized milk), and personal hygiene items (including toothpaste, toothbrush, sanitary towels, bath soap, diapers and hygienic paper). The Red Cross still requires disinfectant products. In addition, three bank accounts are available to collect cash donations.

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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