

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

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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 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 3/2004) 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

A series of tropical waves swept across Nicaragua in mid June, bringing heavy rains and causing serious damage in some areas of the country. On 4 July, the Nicaraguan President declared a state of disaster in the Departments of Matagalpa and the Autonomous Regions of the North and South Atlantic (RAAN and RAAS). A total of 5,751 people were affected by mudslides and flooding (including 21 killed and 7 disappeared). In the RAAN and RAAS, the rain caused river levels to rise, affecting several communities and causing serious damage to farmland in the area. In the Department of Matagalpa, the municipality of Río Blanco has been particularly badly hit with the heavy rains saturating the land and causing severe mudslides in the Cerro Musun, a mountainous area of natural reserve located northeast of Managua. The mudslides hit six communities, affected 2,414 people, cut off communications and resulted in the collapse and contamination of water systems. The decision was taken to re-house the population of the Cerro Musun (approximately 500 families) as it is highly vulnerable to further and more serious mudslides. Today, the majority of communities which were hit by the disaster remain cut off and the affected population has been moved to temporary shelters mostly in village schools in lower risk areas.

The national disaster response and prevention system, SINAPRED, of which Nicaraguan Red Cross is a part, has been coordinating response to the disaster, and organizations including the World Food Programme (WFP), the Ministry of the Family (Mi Familia), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Ministry of Health, (MoH) have been working in the affected areas since 15 July. Psychosocial support has been provided together with training in shelter management and health promotion through multidisciplinary teams composed of members of the MoH, UNICEF, Mi Familia, PAHO and the Nicaraguan Red Cross (NRC). Work is currently taking place to

identify areas in which temporary shelters can be constructed in order to allow the school to resume their primary function.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

As of 1 July, the Nicaraguan Red Cross deployed response teams which carried out search, rescue and evacuation missions. A total of 60 volunteers were mobilized from Masaya, Granada, Tipitapa, León and Chinandega, together with 8 members of rescue and response brigades. The NRC distributed food relief items to isolated communities between 13 and 15 July. As of 4 July, the National Society mobilized four water treatment plants, each with a production capacity of 1,200 gallons of water per day, in order to provide clean drinking water in the affected communities. The local Red Cross branch in the Río Blanco region was involved in response efforts from the outset of the emergency. The branch provided food for members of isolated communities who took part in the work to repair damaged roads and facilitate access. The NRC ensured coordination with members of SINAPRED working in the area. This phase of the operation was funded by Nicaraguan Red Cross, with further financial support from SINAPRED and the Inter-American Development Bank.

The Nicaraguan Red Cross has drawn up an integrated plan of action for the provision of assistance to 450 families most affected by mudslides over a 4 month period, due to start in mid-August (although dependent upon SINAPRED identifying appropriate site(s) for the construction of temporary housing. Damage and needs assessments have taken place and surveys are being carried out to identify vulnerable beneficiaries. The objectives of the plan are to reduce the impact of the mudslides on the health of the most affected families and strengthen the response capacities of the communities through community based disaster preparedness and health promotion approaches.

Within this plan, actions will include:

- Distribution of relief items (including food, hygiene kits, water containers and kitchen kits)
- Production and distribution of clean water (911,250 gallons in 3 months)
- Construction of small-scale community water distribution systems
- Training and monitoring of community brigades to respond to community health and risk reduction needs such as health and nutrition education, provision of psycho-social support for adults and children, community disaster preparedness, temporary shelter management
- Construction of temporary housing: individual housing for families, construction of showers and latrines.

This plan of action is being supported by the Netherlands Red Cross, the Italian Red Cross, the Spanish Red Cross, the United States Foreign Development Office (USAID/OFDA) together with a significant contribution from an emergency fund of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Italian government. This is a jointly administered fund with the International Federation and the Federation is providing technical support throughout the four month period of the operation.

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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