

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. 05/2004) 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

Nicaragua was hit by a series of tropical waves in June and August, which caused flooding and landslides in several areas of the country. On 4 July, the President of Nicaragua 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 missing. 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 Rio Blanco was 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 6 communities, affected 2,414 people, cut off communications and resulted in the collapse and contamination of water systems. A decision was made to re-house the population of the Cerro Musun as the location is highly vulnerable to further and more serious mudslides. The majority of communities which were hit by the disaster remain cut off and the affected population has been moved to temporary shelters in 14 village schools in lower risk areas. The health and hygiene situation in the shelters remains critical.

Red Cross action

The Nicaraguan Red Cross (NRC) took immediate action deploying a rescue and response team which carried out search, rescue and evacuation missions. During the initial emergency phase, the NRC distributed food relief items to isolated communities and 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 to the affected communities. The local Red Cross branch in Rio Blanco region was involved in response efforts from the outset of the emergency. The NRC ensured coordination with local authorities and other institutions working in the area including: SINAPRED (National System for Prevention of Disasters), WFP, UNICEF, the Ministry of the Family (MIFAMILIA), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and Ministry of Health (MINSAs).

During the first days after the disaster, the NRC in collaboration with the Federation, the Spanish Red Cross and the Netherlands Red Cross, carried out a field evaluation, in order to develop the Plan of Action for the operation.

The major constraint encountered in the development of the operation has been the lack of available land to build temporary housing, as only a portion of the land has been secured. Work will begin on the portion of land already available on 20 October and it is estimated that at least 45 days will be needed to construct the temporary housing.

The operation under implementation by the Nicaraguan Red Cross is financed by several donors: the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Spanish Red Cross, the Netherlands Red Cross and the U.S. Office for Foreign Disaster Aid.

In accordance with the plan of action, distribution of food items to the 450 most affected families is financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Spanish Red Cross and the Netherlands Red Cross as is the distribution of 450 individual family hygiene kits to the most affected families living in the temporary shelters. The distribution of 900 jerry cans to the most affected families in order to store safe water is also financed by Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as is the delivery of 8 community development campaigns on public health issues. The provision of individual family construction kits containing items for construction of family temporary shelters is financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and OFDA. The provision to each family of a construction kit with the necessary items for the construction of communal latrines is financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the distribution of kitchen and complementary kits to 450 families, during the first month of the operation, is financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Spanish Red Cross. Production of safe water for families in living in the temporary shelters is funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Spanish Red Cross and the Netherlands Red Cross. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also financing a distribution and storage system for water for public consumption, a workshop to organize and train local teams in psycho-social rehabilitation techniques, together with the holding of relevant activities in the temporary shelters and the staging of monitoring visits to the local psychosocial teams working with the affected population.

Emergency Relief (food and basic non-food items)

Objective 1: The most affected families receive food items for basic consumption, to meet the daily intake of calories for a period of three months.

Progress/results (activities implemented within this objective)

In September the NRC carried out a distribution of food kits, financed by the Netherlands Red Cross, to 450 families staying in temporary shelters. Each food kit was made up of the following:

Products	Quantity	Measure
Rice	30	Pounds
Beans	30	Pounds
Corn	30	Pounds
Sugar	30	Pounds
Salt	05	Pounds
Oats or other cereal	12	Pounds
Oil	01	Gallon
(Non food) washing soap	01	Box

Impact

Since the affected population and the families living in temporary shelters have lost most of their crops and farm land, these food distributions are vital until such time as they can restart agricultural activity. From July to September, food was provided by WFP, via MIFAMILIA, and from 15 September until 15 December food will be provided by NRC.

Constraints

It has been difficult to access the 14 temporary shelters, as only 5 are accessible with double traction trucks via dirt roads that are in poor condition. The remaining 9 are isolated and can only be accessed by foot or mule. Therefore 7 distribution points were set up where the family food parcels were given to beneficiaries who were then responsible for transporting them back to the shelters.

Objective 2: The families affected by the disaster have access to the means to prevent water-borne diseases.**Progress/results (activities implemented within this objective)**

This component of the operation includes distributions of hygiene kits and other items, as well as community education campaigns with health promotion messages. NRC has organized a preliminary visit in order to plan these activities in the temporary shelters. These activities were scheduled to start on 11 October.

Constraints

No activities have been carried out thus far because it was decided not to distribute hygiene kits to temporary shelters in order to avoid their possible sale on the local market.

Objective 3: The families affected by the disaster have adequate temporary living conditions (shelter and other supplies) to live with dignity.**Progress/results (activities implemented within this objective)**

This objective includes the construction of 450 temporary houses and 225 latrines by trained construction brigades and the distribution of relief kits to families. NRC has purchased part of the materials necessary for the house construction, with the intention of putting together kits so that construction can begin as soon as land is made available. They have also organized the construction brigades with the families living in temporary shelters, managed by technicians and volunteers of NRC. These activities have not been started because there is no land available for the construction.

Objective 4: Clean water is produced and distributed to affected families, as well as the materials for adequate storage.**Progress/results (activities implemented within this objective)**

Since the beginning of the operation, the NRC has been treating and distributing water to the displaced families in shelters, as well as to communities whose water systems have been damaged. A total of 424,980 litres of water have been distributed thus far. This objective will also include the distribution of two 5-gallon containers to 900 families for storage of safe water; however progress has been slowed by difficulties in accessing the temporary shelters. It is also planned to carry out eight community education campaigns with messages related to how to maintain clean water. These campaigns will be carried out in the temporary shelters and the NRC health department carried out planning visits and has set up a calendar of events, which will be carried out during October and November.

Impact

The treatment and distribution of water has had a very important impact, due to the difficulties of providing water to the shelters, where the hygiene situation is precarious, and the communities whose water systems were destroyed by the mudslides.

Objective 5: Psychosocial rehabilitation activities have been carried out with the affected population, in coordination with government institutions and UNICEF.

Progress/results (activities implemented within this objective)

This activity includes the organization and training of local teams in psychosocial support in order to assist affected persons in dealing with the trauma associated with such a disaster. Despite some delays in accessing the temporary shelters, the NRC health department has carried out a planning visit to the NRC branch in Rio Blanco where the majority of the temporary shelters are located.

Objective 6: The communities most affected by the mudslides are organized and strengthened so that they can carry out activities in risk reduction and health.

Progress/results (activities implemented within this objective)

This project includes training volunteers in the Rio Blanco branch of the NRC and displaced families in disaster reduction and health. So far, groups of volunteers have been organized and are participating in a training course which started in the second week of October.

Objective 7: Strengthen the links between the vulnerable communities, NRC and SINAPRED.

Progress/results (activities implemented within this objective)

Since the start of the operation there has been regular coordination between the NRC, local authorities and SINAPRED, as well as with the leaders of the communities affected by the disaster.

Objective 8: The network of volunteers has been strengthened in community intervention techniques via a range of activities including strengthening, monitoring and follow up of actions.

Progress/results (activities implemented within this objective)

Volunteers of the Rio Blanco branch of the NRC will be trained in a number of basic themes, such as first aid, search and rescue, disaster management, damage and needs assessments, and vulnerability and capacity assessments. Groups of volunteers have been organized and these trainings were scheduled to begin in the second week of October, facilitated by experts and specialist volunteers from the NRC.

Federation coordination

The Federation and the Nicaraguan Red Cross are coordinating all activities with the Italian, Netherlands and Spanish Red Cross Societies. In the days immediately following the disaster, the NRC also ensured that its actions were undertaken in coordination with the local authorities, SINAPRED, COMUPRED, the Ministry of Health, World Food Programme, UNICEF and other organizations working in the area.

Red Cross Red Crescent Movement – Principles and initiatives

All the planned activities have been developed within the scope of the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. In particular, the criteria for the selection of beneficiaries have been based on their level of vulnerability, with respect for the culture and a focus on gender. The emergency relief and support activities are being implemented within Sphere standards.

Strengthening the capacity of the National Society

Initiatives to build the capacities of the NRC are being included in all phases of the operation. The NRC's relief, health and planning departments have played a key role in the design and implementation of this operation. In order to further increase the National Society's capacities, and National Intervention Team (NIT) training is scheduled to be carried out in November.

Communications – Awareness raising and public information

To increase the visibility of the operation, journalists will visit the operation in Rio Blanco when key activities are being carried out, such as distribution of food and construction of housing. In addition, information and communication materials are being produced, including banners and brochures.

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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>

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