

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. 06/2004) 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 that 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.

This operation is 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 period of the operation. Given delays in implementation as a result of the difficult circumstances and the lack of land for housing, the operation has been extended to cover a six month period.

Red Cross action

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 October, the Nicaraguan Red Cross (NRC) carried out a second distribution of food kits to 450 families staying in temporary shelters. In addition, complementary food items were distributed to the beneficiaries by the World Food Programme. The food kits should last for a period of one month. Each food kit was made up of the following:

Rice: 30 pounds
 Beans: 30 pounds
 Corn: 30 pounds
 Sugar: 30 pounds
 Salt: 05 pounds
 Oats or other cereal: 12 pounds
 Oil: 01 gallons
 (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 farmland, these food distributions are vital until such time as the families can restart agricultural activity. Since October, many have started to cultivate their land once again. In most cases, the families accommodated in temporary shelters have stopped using the communal kitchen and are now preparing their own meals.

Constraints

It has been difficult to access the 14 temporary shelters. Therefore, seven 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)

During the period covered in this bulletin, a total of 450 hygiene parcels were distributed. Meanwhile, educational campaign activities on public health and nutrition have been carried out since the beginning of October. The campaign is managed by the NRC health department and implemented by the health brigades in the temporary shelters.

Impact

The health campaigns have been successful in terms of actively engaging community leaders and volunteers and thus having a positive impact on the public health, hygiene and nutritional situation of the affected families accommodated in the temporary shelters.

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, as well as the distribution of relief kits to families. All relief kits were distributed to the beneficiary families during the most recent distribution in November. Each kit consisted of three mattresses, three bed sheets, three towels, one brush and one bucket. The actual construction of homes has not been started because there is no

land available for the construction yet. The National Society is looking for temporary accommodation/shelter solutions while it continues to discuss the land issue with government authorities. However, the NRC has purchased part of the materials necessary for the construction of housing, with the intention of putting together kits so that construction can begin as soon as land is made available.

Impact

The distribution of relief kits will improve the living conditions of affected families living in temporary shelters or accommodated with relatives or friends.

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 590,000 litres of water have been distributed so far. This objective will also include the distribution of two 5-gallon containers to 900 families for safe storage of 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. Thus far, the NRC health department has 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 significant impact as it addressed the lack of safe water in the shelters, where the hygiene situation is precarious, and also in the communities whose water systems were destroyed by the mudslides.

Constraints

The main challenge encountered for the distribution of clean water is the difficult access to many of the temporary shelters. Adequate roads are required to transport the water plants and, therefore, some shelters could not be reached.

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. The NRC team, in cooperation with health authorities and external experts, has carried out a number of psychosocial sessions targeting children and adults in the temporary shelters during October and November. In addition, psychosocial training activities were carried out to enable adults to support families and children in more difficult cases.

Impact

These activities are having a positive impact in helping affected families and particularly children to cope with the trauma of the disaster and with day-to-day living conditions in the temporary shelters. The engagement of people trained in psychosocial activities will be important in order to ensure that adequate support continues to be provided in the future.

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, most of the planned training courses have been delivered, covering key areas such as first aid and search and rescue. Over 70 volunteers attended the training.

Impact

The impact of such training initiatives will be particularly relevant due to the number of volunteers trained and the level of their commitment. Within the affected area, the level of preparedness of Red Cross teams is crucial because of the high level of vulnerability of local communities in the event of disasters.

Objective 7: Links between the vulnerable communities, NRC and SINAPRED have been strengthened.**Progress/results (activities implemented within this objective)**

Since the start of the operation there has been regular coordination between the NRC, the local authorities and SINAPRED, as well as with the leaders of the communities affected by the disaster. Dissemination activities have also been carried out targeting mostly community leaders as well as affected families accommodated in temporary shelters.

Impact

The information campaigns have helped to strengthen links with the affected communities and have improved the coordination of activities with the branches of the NRC and the local authorities involved in the operation.

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. Teams of branch volunteers and volunteers from the temporary shelters have been organized and the training was concluded in November.

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, the National System for Prevention of Disasters (SINAPRED), the Municipal Commission for the Prevention of Disasters (COMUPRED), the Ministry of Health, the 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.

Communications – Awareness raising and public information

Communications have been considered a key aspect of this operation, particularly the need to ensure visibility to the Movement and to donors. A press conference was organized before the start of the operation in order to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Nicaraguan Red Cross, the Federation and Partner National Societies present in the country in the implementation of the relief and rehabilitation operation. A video has been produced, showing the living conditions of the affected families living in temporary shelters, the food distributions and other Red Cross activities. The video also highlights the problems created by the lack of land for the reconstruction of homes in an attempt to encourage the local government to find a solution for this problem.

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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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