

DREF Bulletin Update



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

PANAMA: FLOODS

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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 185 countries.

In Brief

Period covered by this update: 30 November 2006 to 15 January 2007.

History of this Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)-funded operation:

- CHF 69,509 (USD 55,607 or EUR 43,716) allocated from the Federations DREF on 27 November 2006 to respond to the needs of this operation, or to replenish disaster preparedness stocks distributed to the affected population.
- This operation is expected to be implemented over 2 months, and will be completed by 27 January 2007; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation by 27 April, 2007. Un-earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

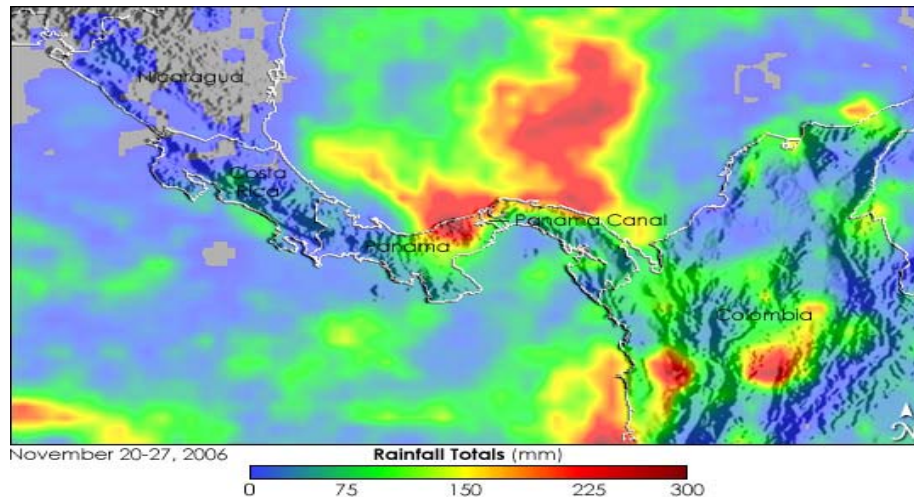
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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

Background and current situation

Unexpected severe and long-lasting rains were reported since 11 November in the eastern part of the province of Panama (Panama East) causing significant flooding in the districts of Pacora and Chepo. The heavy rains further affected some areas that were still recovering from bad weather and subsequent damages at the end of October 2006.



The unstable weather conditions continued and on 19 November – worsened by a cold front – brought heavier rains to regions that were already saturated with water, causing even more flooding. On 23 November, a National State of Emergency was declared due to floods in the province of Colón (Costa Abajo and Costa Arriba), the Kuna Yala indigenous region, the north of the province of Coclé and the North, West and East of the province of Panama. The total number of affected people significantly increased since assessments were finalized. It is estimated that 11 people died, one person is still missing and more than 4,800 families (24,000 people) were directly affected by these floods. More than 799 homes were damaged – of which more than 247 were completely destroyed. At least 1,253 people were evacuated to temporary shelters.

The Red Cross Society of Panama has been involved in this emergency in the provinces of Colón, Coclé and Panama.



Destroyed bridge in Rio Indio

In the province of Colón, floods were reported in several communities of Costa Arriba and Costa Abajo causing severe damage to houses, schools, health centres, and infrastructure (inaccessible roads and destroyed bridges). The capital of the province underwent similar floods and strong winds, although not on the same scale as in Costa Arriba and Costa Abajo. More than 2,900 families were affected in this province and part of the population had to be evacuated to temporary shelters.

In the province of Coclé, the severe rains mainly affected the Atlantic coast, as well as Coclé Norte and Coclesito. The overflowing rivers, along with landslides and destruction of the basic infrastructure (destroyed

bridges and highways), caused difficulties in accessing the area around the mountain. In the province of Coclé it was estimated that more than 1,160 families were affected.

In the province of Panama, the heavy rains severely affected the western part of the province. Landslides as a result of the flooding caused natural dikes, which worsened the problems with the increased water levels. In this province, more than 740 families were affected by the floods and landslides. The flooding caused severe damages to houses, schools and infrastructure, as well as to the water supply system of the districts of Arraiján, Chorrera and Capira. Due to the strong winds the Red Cross volunteers experienced some difficulties with the search, rescue and evacuation activities. Significant flooding in the eastern part of the province of Panama in the districts of Pacora and Chepo has affected over 50 families.

The dry season has set in and water levels have considerably receded, which has allowed villagers to gradually return to their normal lives and seasonal activities. An inter-institutional commission has been formed by the Ministry of Housing (Ministerio de Vivienda), the Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación) and Ministry of Public Works (Ministerio of Obras Públicas) in order to accelerate the rehabilitation phase in terms of repairing schools, houses, public infrastructure, etc.

Red Cross action

The Red Cross Society of Panama mobilized more than 300 members from nine local branches and the National Society headquarters, ensuring direct response to the emergency situation by supporting activities such as rescue and evacuation, first aid, establishment of temporary shelters, needs assessments and the provision of immediate relief items in the form of clothing, non-perishable food and hygiene kits.

From the onset of the disaster the National Society has been in close contact and coordination with Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU). A Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member specialized in Water and Sanitation as well as the IT and Telecommunications expert from PADRU have been deployed to the field. Furthermore, a telecommunications kit including a VHF system and repeaters, an HF system, generators, a laptop, a GPS and satellite phones was sent to the field to restore communication between the provinces of Colón and northern Coclé, and isolated communities.



Federation relief items being distributed in coordination with SINAPROC

The Red Cross Society of Panama, with the assistance of the PADRU, has achieved the following objective:

Objective 1: 550 of the most affected families (approximately 2,750 persons) benefit from the distribution of food and non food items to assist them to recover from the effects of the floods.

The following table shows how the food and non-food items were distributed to the 550 targeted families according to the plan of action.

Affected provinces	Affected districts	Beneficiary families	Relief items distributed
Panama East	Pacora/Chepo	50	Hygiene kits, kitchen sets, blankets
Colón	Donoso/Chagres	200	Hygiene kits, food parcel, water tanks, blankets
Coclé	Coclé del Norte	150	
Panama West	Capira	150	

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With the support of DREF funds and private food and non-food items contributions the Red Cross Society of Panama was able to distribute a total of:

- 550 hygiene kits,
- 50 kitchen kits,
- 3,000 blankets,
- 1,350 bags of food and
- approximately 2,500 gallons of water.

Communications and coordination

All the activities carried out by the Red Cross Society of Panama during the operation were coordinated with all governmental and non governmental institutions present in the affected areas, such as National System of Civil Protection (Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil - SINAPROC), the Panama Fire Brigade, the Ministries of Housing, Social Development, Health, Public Works and Education, the National Maritime Service (Servicio Marítimo Nacional), National Aerial Service (Servicio Aéreo Nacional), the Office of the First Lady (Despacho de la Primera Dama), Governmental Water Agency (Instituto de Acueductos y Alcantarillados - IDAAN) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Two reports have been issued through the Disaster Management Information System (DMIS) on the International Federation website. The communications plan has been developed to support the additional activities in response to the flooding and has five main target audiences: the media, the Red Cross Movement, beneficiaries, local authorities and donors. The different channels of communication include national media and the Red Cross Society of Panama, the Federation regional and global websites. Special sections were created on the Federation regional website – www.cruzroja.org – as well as on the Red Cross Society of Panama website. Two press releases has been issued and distributed to national and local media, and published on the various Red Cross websites. Furthermore, t-shirts and caps with the Red Cross logo have been designed and disseminated among Red Cross volunteers in order to increase visibility.

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