COSTA RICA AND PANAMA: EARTHQUAKE

25 December, 2003

Information Bulletin Nº 01

Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: CHF 50,000 (preliminary)

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 180 countries. For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

This document is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. A DREF allocation of CHF 50,000 is being released to assist the initial search and rescue, and relief efforts. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, and requests from the national societies, the Federation will consider international support through an Appeal.

The Situation

A severe earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter Scale struck the border area between Costa Rica and Panama at 02:11 local time on 25 December 2003. Initial reports indicate that the major force of the earthquake was focused on the towns of Puerto Muelles (Costa Rica) and Puerto Armuelles (Panama). Preliminary reports indicate 2 dead and over 75 injured in Puerto Muelles, with 1 dead and over 40 injured in Puerto Armuelles. Hundreds of homes in both towns have reportedly been severely damaged or destroyed, and two hospitals or health centres have been significantly damaged. The casualty and injured figures are expected to rise as rescue efforts continue and are reinforced.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Federation’s Regional Delegation in Panama and the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) is facilitating and coordinating action, working in close partnership with the Costa Rican Red Cross which has responded immediately by activating its relief teams during this critical search and rescue phase. The teams are providing assistance not only to the affected population in Costa Rica, but also significant cross border support to the Panama Red Cross in the form of relief staff flown to Puerto Armuelles.

An assessment is underway of the quantities of relief supplies available in local relief stocks. The Costa Rican Red Cross has indicated a need for assistance with communications equipment and teams, pre-hospital care, tents for temporary shelter, and first aid equipment. It can be anticipated that water and other basic non-food relief supplies will also be needed. Transport assistance for the delivery of relief items and teams is also required. Both national societies have indicated that they will request further assistance in the form of an international appeal, not only for this critical search, rescue, and relief stage, but also for the anticipated longer-term reconstruction needs.

For a full description of the national society profiles, see www.ifrc.org
Costa Rica and Panama; Earthquake; Information Bulletin no. 1

For further details please contact:

- Federation Regional Delegation in Panama; Gilberto Guevara; email: ifrcpa51@ifrc.org
- PADRU; Duty Officer cell phone 00507 672 5355, or Red line 00507 618 5550
- Federation Desk Officer, Luis Luna; office phone 41 22 730 4274; mobile phone: +41 79 217 3320; Fax +41 22 733 0395; email: luis.luna@ifrc.org

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.

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

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation’s Annual Appeal.