

DREF operation



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Costa Rica and Nicaragua: Tropical Storm Alma

DREF operation n° MDR43003
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4 June 2008

The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of national societies to respond to disasters.

CHF 200,000 (USD 190,476 or EUR 122,926) has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the National Societies of Costa Rica and Nicaragua in delivering immediate assistance to some 1,500 families (7,500 beneficiaries). Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

Summary: Tropical Storm Alma brought heavy rain and strong winds to the Pacific coast of Costa Rica causing damages in 18 sectors, leaving two casualties and two people missing. In Nicaragua, Alma affected seven Pacific coast departments, leading to three deaths and two people missing. This DREF bulletin is focused on providing the basic needs for the affected families.

This operation is expected to be implemented in three months, and will therefore be completed by 3 September 2008; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 3 December, 2008).

[<click here for contact details,](#)
[or here to view the map of the affected area>](#)



Several Costa Rican Red Cross volunteers performing initial assessments. Source: Costa Rican Red Cross

The situation

On 28 May, a low pressure system off the coast of Costa Rica strengthened to a Tropical Depression on the Pacific coast of Nicoya, **Costa Rica**, reaching **Nicaragua** a day later, on 29 May. It later developed into a Tropical Storm named Alma, which made it the first storm of the 2008 Pacific hurricane season.

The Costa Rican government issued a red alert for the entire country. According to the National Meteorological Institute of Costa Rica (Instituto Meteorológico Nacional de Costa Rica – IMN), constant heavy rain has continued for more than 60 hours along the coastal areas of Nicoya, Central Valley, South Pacific and Central regions saturating the soil with water. Landslides and overflowing rivers have forced people from the regions of Parrita, Aguirre, Canas, Bagaces, and Abangares to leave and seek refuge in one of the opened common shelters or stay with friends and family.

The saturated soil has provoked landslides and floods in high, medium and low altitude regions. Rivers have overflowed; two people are reported dead, two are missing and approximately 55,000 people are affected. Roads, bridges and houses are damaged; aqueducts are destroyed; basic services such as electricity and telephones are cut off; and agricultural crops have been lost in the area of Parrita. There is a need for twelve common shelters. At this moment, ten common shelters have been opened and are housing 737 people from the sectors of Quepos, Parrita, San Marcos de Tarrazu and San Pablo de León Cortes.

On 29 May, additional damages were reported in more than 18 sectors throughout Costa Rica. According to the National Emergency Commission (Comisión Nacional de Emergencia – CNE), the most affected sectors are Parrita, Perez, Zeledon, Puntarenas, Aguirre, Tarrazu, Leon Cortes, Nandayure, Hojanca, Nicoya, Santa Cruz and Bagaces. As segments of a main road in the Perez Zeledon sector collapsed, more than 1,000 people in the province of San Jose, mostly children and elderly, were left isolated.

Evaluations performed by the CNE and reports completed by the Coordinating Emergency Committees concluded that the red alert must be maintained in the South Pacific coast in Perez Zeledon and in the Central Pacific. The Government, through the National Emergency Commission, has been constantly monitoring the evolution of the emergency and has activated their local emergency committees. The Government has relief stocks such as blankets, food parcels and mattresses ready to be distributed and is also coordinating relief actions with other organizations. Roads have already been cleared with machinery sent by the Government.

On 29 May, in **Nicaragua**, Tropical Storm Alma was located approximately 85 km Southwest of Managua, the capital city. Alma had winds reaching 100 kilometers per hour and affected the municipality of PoneLOYa and the city of León amongst others. The president of Nicaragua declared a yellow alert for the departments of Leon, Chinandega, Rivas, Carazo, Masaya, Granada and Managua and a green alert for the rest of the country.

According to the Civil Defense in Nicaragua, more than 280 houses were affected, eight of which were completely destroyed. Three people have died and another ten are reported missing. Some 263 families (1,390 people) were evacuated from the departments of León, Chinandega, Masaya, Managua and Rivas. The displaced people were placed in 13 common shelters.

Coordination and partnerships

Since the onset of the emergency, the **Costa Rican Red Cross (CRC)** has coordinated actions with the Government through their National Emergency Commission.

The **Nicaraguan Red Cross (NRC)** is part of the National Emergency System and is contributing along other organizations in order to facilitate assistance and to avoid duplication of activities. The NRC has coordinated with the Civil Protection, which is responsible for operations, logistics, health, education, shelter management and also participates in all coordination meetings. Several Partner National Societies are present in the country, including the Canadian Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, the Netherlands Red Cross, and Spanish Red Cross.

The Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation Office for Central America and Mexico in Panama have been monitoring the situation and coordinating relief activities with both National Societies.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The **Costa Rican Red Cross (CRC)** has been monitoring the emergency and has carried out search and rescue and evacuation activities. The local branches of the CRC in the affected areas were activated, as was the Emergency Operations Centre (Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia – COE). The CRC has been providing pre-hospital medical assistance and volunteers have been assisting in the common shelters opened for the affected people. There were five relief CRC officials deployed to the Pacific coast with 4 x 4 vehicles, rescue units and ambulances.

The entire operation has been following the Incident Command System (Sistema de Comando de Incidentes) model. The CRC is concentrating on the distribution of basic relief items such as food parcels, water, non perishable foods and hygiene items. Consequently, the CRC has established two methods to receive assistance: one is through on-line donations and the other is through food items and relief supplies collections by the various auxiliary committees in the country.

The **Nicaraguan Red Cross (NRC)** has held coordination meetings with PNS present in the country and has activated their contingency plan. The NRC's damage and needs assessment team performed their evaluations and elaborated a Plan of Action that will benefit families in the most affected departments.

The needs

The immediate needs identified by the CRC are drinking water, water containers, food parcels, kitchen kits hygiene kits, and plastic buckets.

The immediate needs identified by the NRC are food parcels, blankets, hygiene kits, plastic buckets, sanitation of water wells and health promotion.

The proposed operation

The CRC elaborated a plan of action that will include the distribution of the items mentioned above to benefit 1,000 of the most affected families. The CRC will continue with their search and rescue activities and also called for food and other relief items donations by the Costa Rican population in order to avoid food shortage in the affected areas. In addition, the PoA emphasizes the importance of the coordination of all inter-institutional actions, and hence the cooperation with other institutions present (nationally and locally).

The NRC elaborated a Plan of Action that focuses on the distribution of relief items that are mentioned above to benefit 500 families located in the department of Leon, in the municipalities of Nagarote, La Paz Centro, Telica, Quezalaguaque and La Reynaga. In addition, the PoA includes activities that assure a safe water supply and promote hygiene practices.

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Objective 1: 1,500 families (7,500 people) will benefit from the provision of relief items to recover from the effects of the floods.

Affected families in **Costa Rica** will receive:

- Drinking water
- 20 litre water containers (500 families)
- Food parcels (750 families)
- Kitchen kits (1,000 families)
- Hygiene kits (1,000 families)
- Plastic buckets (500 families)

Affected families in **Nicaragua** will receive:

- Food parcels (500 families)
- Blankets (500 families)
- Hygiene kits (500 families)
- Plastic buckets (5 families, two buckets per family)

Activities planned:

- Conduct needs assessments, census and beneficiary targeting.

- Procurement of relief supplies according to Federation procedures.
- Distribute relief supplies and control supply movements from point of dispatch to end-user.
- Monitor and evaluate the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distribution.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion

Objective: To ensure safe water supply by cleaning the water wells and promote hygiene practices among the affected families in Nicaragua.

Activities planned:

- Evaluate the areas that need immediate water well cleaning.
- Mobilization of a cleaning team and of equipment to the affected areas.
- Cleaning and chlorination of water wells.

How we work

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.

The International Federation's activities 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.

Contact information

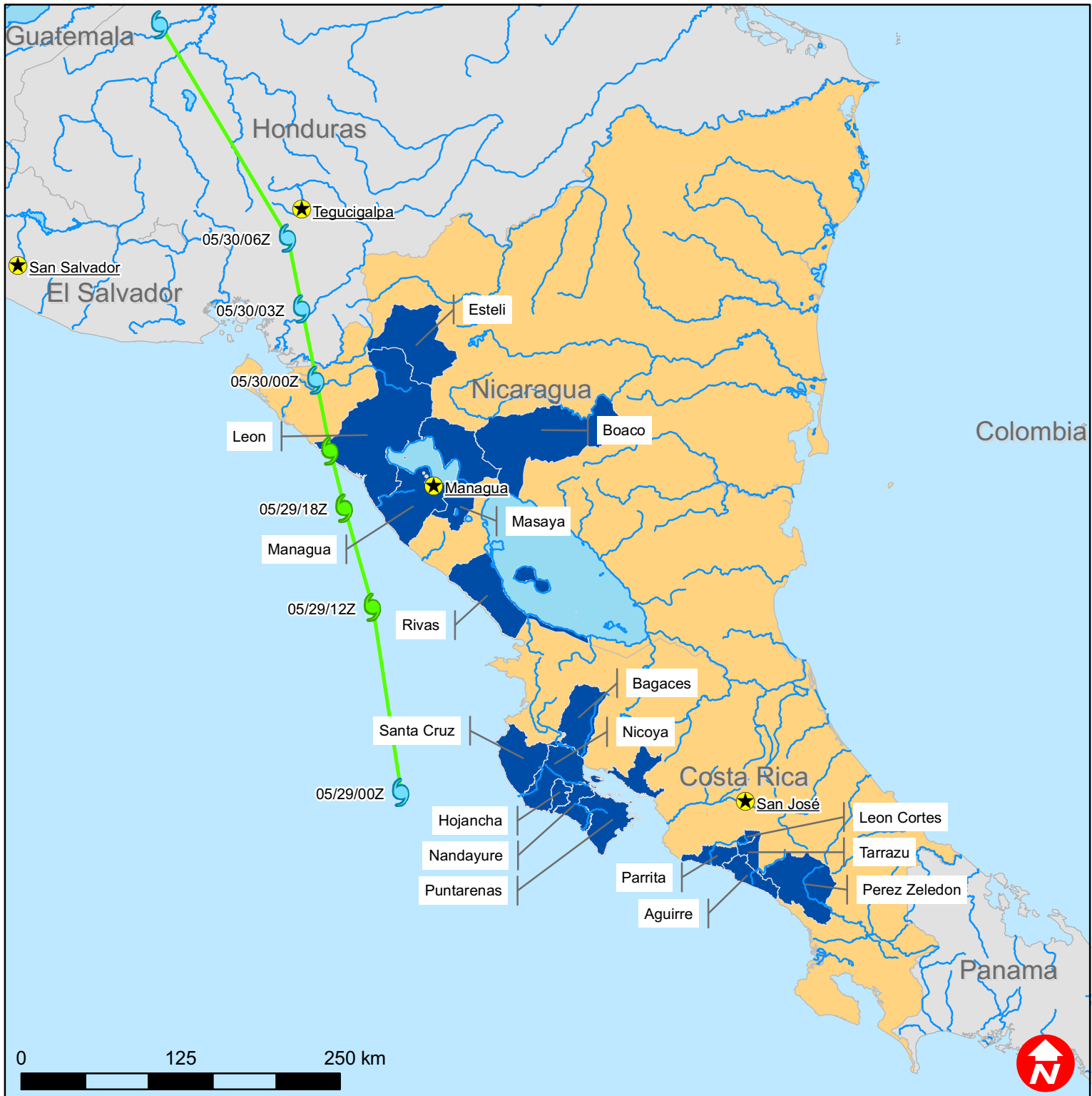
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[<Map below; click here to return to the title page>](#)



Costa Rica and Nicaragua: Tropical storm Alma



Alma

-  TROPICAL DEPRESSION
-  TROPICAL STORM
-  Capitals
-  Affected areas