

CHILE: FLOODS

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The Disaster

With the onset of the austral winter, an estimated number of 72,408 people in Santiago (20,000) and regions IX and X have been seriously affected by storms and heavy rainfalls re-occurring since 2 June.

At least 4,731 severely affected people have been accommodated in public shelters set up by the National Emergency Office. The majority of affected people, however, refuse to leave their homes in fear of looting.

The assessment of the damage inflicted on the second and third floors of the Chilean Red Cross headquarters is underway. Serious telecommunication problems occurred between the headquarters and the affected Red Cross branches.

Fishing activities in the province of Valdivia came to a standstill and the income of the fishermen families has decreased dramatically making it difficult for them to purchase food.

The insufficient food and damage inflicted on homes has prompted the affected population to evacuate. At the moment, they are accommodated in 15 temporary shelters located in the communities of Niebla, Los Molinos, San Ignacio and Curiñanco.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Given the seriousness of the situation, however, the Federation has released CHF 73,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) for the purchase of relief supplies (mainly food), fuel and telecommunication equipment badly needed for the coordination of the relief activities, particularly between the Chilean Red Cross headquarters and the affected provinces.

The Chilean Red Cross has mobilised its wide network of volunteers to collect food, clothes and other relief supplies; to assist the sheltered victims of the floods and to help repairing damaged houses.

Seven hundred volunteers working constantly have managed to distribute 275 tons of food and clothes in the metropolitan area of Santiago and the southern provinces.

The Chilean Red Cross has set up a warehouse in the Santiago capital. The National Society has also established several centres to collect donations, including a toll free phone line which, by last Friday, had already raised a total of 30,000 pesos.

Diverse and intensive Red Cross activities have been going on in the metropolitan area of Santiago, particularly in 31 public shelters. Moreover, the volunteers, with six mobile relief posts (with doctors, nurses, tents, medicines and other resources) have assisted a number of victims still staying in their flooded homes. Scarcity of food has been the main problem in the capital, too.

Seven tons of food and winter clothing have been distributed by plane and by bus to the southern branches located in the regions IX and X.

Three trucks containing 60 tons of coal, mats, clothes, non-perishable food and medicines were sent out on 9 June. In Temuco, half of the load was redirected to region X. The remaining aid in two trucks continued to the coastal communities of Teodoro Schmidt, Tolten and Puerto Saavedra. With the access roads cut off, these communities badly needed assistance. The aid was distributed with the support of the firemen, national police (carabineros), civil defence and military personnel. The Chilean Red Cross, together with the communities of Lastarria and Padre Las Casas, have committed to rebuild the roofs of the houses of the flood victims.

On Tuesday, 13 June, a 25 ton truck containing food and clothes was sent to Valdivia. However, 5 tons of aid were unloaded and distributed in Penco, Arauco and Chiguayante due to the needs in region VIII.

The children accommodated in shelters have been a cause for concern for the Red Cross. Six youth volunteers from Santiago left for Loncoche in order to assist children. They have also been engaged in roof repairs and paid visits to the affected people in their homes to assist them in fulfilling their needs. In region X, youth volunteers from the Osorno branch have assisted three shelters located in the city and entertained children with clowns, puppets, candies and games.

While the regional committees and the branches in the most affected areas of the country have been primarily involved in the relief operation, their buildings have been, at the same time, used as supplementary temporary shelters as the shelter facilities indicated by the local authorities could not accommodate the increasing number of people in need .

Some of the flood victims have been accommodated in Lancoche, Pucón and Lago Ranco, in region IX. Four families are still staying in the Loncoche local branch.

Needs

The national authorities and Chilean Red Cross consider the situation under control, and no international appeal is anticipated at this time.

Donors are invited to replenish the DREF and be on alert in case the rains continue or a more thorough and presently carried out needs assessment shows the need for additional assistance.

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