

# 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

## ***COLOMBIA: SEVERE STORMS***

*07 June 2001*

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*This Information Bulletin is for information only. Although the Federation is not seeking or providing any funding or other assistance for this operation at this time, the Colombian Red Cross would very much appreciate bilateral support from sister societies to replenish its warehouses, as in similar past emergencies.*

### ***The Situation***

In May the start of the heavy rainy season in Colombia, first and foremost affected the provinces in the northern part of the country. On 1 June a severe storm, lasting two hours and with winds measuring over 50 kilometres per hour, struck the province of Atlántico. This was followed by heavy rains which caused rivers and streams to overflow. Eight poor neighbourhoods in the provincial capital Barranquilla and the municipality of Soledad were severely affected. The latest figures by the Red Cross indicate that two persons died, three persons disappeared and 200 were wounded. Approximately 300 houses were completely destroyed and 400 were damaged as a result of the strong winds and resultant flooding, leaving 4,500 persons without dwellings. Schools and sports facilities are being used as temporary shelters. The local government of Atlántico declared a provincial disaster.

On 3 June a new storm struck three other neighbourhoods in Soledad, leaving two hundred houses without roofs and wounding four persons. The tropical disease dengue fever, common even before the disaster struck, became more widespread.

The remote, rural municipalities of Sampués in the province of Sucre and Sitionuevo in the province of Magdalena were also affected. In Sampués, official figures indicate that 24 houses were destroyed and 700 persons were left without shelter. So far, no figures are available for Magdalena.

The Meteorological Institute (IDEAM) predicts strong winds and further storms on the Atlantic coast with continuous rains which may lead to more flooding. IDEAM issued warnings of possible mudslides in the provinces of Caldas, Quindío, Risaralda and Antioquia.

Through the National Disaster Fund, the Government of Colombia pledged economic assistance worth USD 1.1 million to the province of El Atlántico.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

Forty Colombian Red Cross volunteers assisted in search and rescue efforts and provided first aid. A damage and needs assessment is being undertaken in co-ordination with the National Disaster System.

The Colombian Red Cross will cover the initial operational expenses in the affected areas. Two trucks from its strategic warehouses in Bogotá, the capital, and the province of Risaralda reached the area with 14 tons of non-food relief items. Three volunteers accompanied the shipment.

A press release issued by the national society informed the public about its initial response and requested national collaboration. To that purpose, it opened a special bank account for donations. The national society is also elaborating a local appeal aimed at members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement working in Colombia.

The Colombian Red Cross is co-ordinating its response with the National Disaster System of the Interior Ministry at the national and local levels.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

### **Needs to be met •**

Volunteers from the Atlantic coast provinces are present in the affected areas and are carrying out a needs analysis. The Red Cross branch in Barranquilla identified the immediate needs, such as mattresses, blankets, plastic sheeting, water, personal hygiene kits, kitchen kits, plates and mugs and non-perishable food items.

The Red Cross branch in Sucre requests mattresses, blankets, plastic sheeting, tarpaulins, personal hygiene kits, kitchen kits, plates and mugs and food supplies.

### **National society plan of action •**

In the initial two-week emergency phase the priorities are to assist the affected persons in Atlántico and in Sampués, province of Sucre, with complementary feeding rations, shelter, blankets, mattresses, clothes and plastic sheeting. Some non-food supplies come from the national society's strategic warehouses, while others and food supplies will be bought locally. The Colombian Red Cross also plans to assist in basic health care with emphasis on water and sanitation.

The number of persons to be assisted will be defined in consultation with the National Disaster System and other organizations working in the affected areas.

The planned post-emergency phase will last three months and include three main interventions:

- complementary feeding rations for the most vulnerable population, such as children and breast-feeding mothers;
- tool kits and technical assistance; and,
- construction materials.

The Colombian Red Cross has the administrative and operational experience to attend to the needs of the victims of this disaster, with 300 experienced volunteers from branches all over the country on standby to assist in the operation.

*For further details please contact :*

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*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.*

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