

# 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

## *COSTA RICA; PANAMA: FLOODS*

10 May 2002

*Information Bulletin N° 2/02*

***DREF Allocated: CHF 25,000***

This Information Bulletin is

being issued based on the needs described below. A DREF allocation of CHF 25,000 has been released, and the Federation does not anticipate further needs. The British RC has confirmed a CHF 5 000 contribution for reimbursement of DREF. Further unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the quarterly DREF update.

### ***The Situation***

As a result of continuous heavy rain since Sunday, 5 May in Costa Rica, the National Emergency Commission declared a red alert along the Atlantic coast on Monday, 6 May; rains have since slackened, but are continuing. Numerous bridges were washed away or damaged as a result of the swollen rivers of Horquetas, Reventazón, Sixaola, Estrella and Pacuare which burst their banks, and several villages are cut off by landslides which have blocked access roads.

The Costa Rican Red Cross (CRCR) estimates that some 4,000 families are affected by the severe flooding in Valle de la Estrella, Talamanca and Siquirres in the province of Limón and Sarapiquí in the province of Heredia. Around 45 houses have been destroyed and 180 are seriously damaged. A more detailed assessment is yet to take place since water levels remain high, complicating further analysis of damage.

In Panama, heavy rain has been falling for over 84 hours in the area on the border with Costa Rica; the downpour continues in Bocas del Toro, the north of Veraguas and the centre and west of Chiriquí. Four rivers have reached dangerous levels: the Changuinola, Crícamola, Balsas and Sixaola. A number of communities have been severely affected: Finca 51; Tibité; Finca 4; El Silencio; Las Tablas; La Mesa; Almirante; Boin; Bota and Bella Vista, and it has not yet been possible to access Boin, Bota and Bella Vista which remain totally cut off by flood waters. The rural aqueduct of Tibité has collapsed.

Given previous surveys carried out in the area, the Red Cross Society of Panama (PRCS) estimates that approximately 10,000 people are affected by the flooding. A detailed survey of nine communities with a total population of 3,633 people indicates that each community has been hit by either floods or landslides.

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

On 6 May, the Costa Rican Red Cross distributed food and mattresses to flood victims in Valle de la Estrella, the area which has been most severely hit. The branches of Limón, Batán, Siquirres, Guacimó, Valle de la Estrella and Talamanca are involved in the relief effort and a member of the national intervention team (NIT) is leading the operation in the field, assisted by a total of 250 volunteers. To date, the Costa Rican Red Cross has carried out rescue and evacuation of those injured and in danger with the assistance of the Standard Fruit Company which provided two helicopters, and a further helicopter from the Ministry of Health. The National Society has organized the setting up of 29 temporary shelters, currently accommodating some 4,845 people, in coordination with the local authorities.

On 9 May, in Valle de la Estrella, those in danger continued to be evacuated by air, and food is also being distributed via air to communities such as Besta, Gavilán Canta, Playades, Pandora Oeste, Platanares, Hitoy Cerere; it is also planned to supply blankets and mattresses. Liaison is maintained with the Emergency Commission, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Public Security to coordinate and plan assistance initiatives. In Talamanca, food is also being supplied to those affected, but there are various areas which remain inaccessible.

The Costa Rican Red Cross plans to assist 1,000 families in the area of Valle de la Estrella. Beneficiary families will be selected according to the following criteria: families affected by flooding who have incurred substantial losses; families living in extreme poverty; families who have not received assistance from other agencies; widows with children; elderly or handicapped people.

In response to a national appeal for assistance to the flood victims, the IREX company has committed to donate hygiene products. 3,600 bottles of 1 litre of drinking water have also been donated by the Dos Pinos company.

In Panama, approximately 1,500 people were evacuated. The Red Cross Society of Panama has mobilized 50 volunteers, five members of the national intervention team (NIT), four assessment teams and two teams made up of search and rescue specialists. Two branches are involved in the relief operation: Changuinola and Almirante. Currently, used clothing and blankets are being distributed. The PRCS is managing two shelters for those whose homes have been washed away.

The Red Cross Society of Panama is working in cooperation with the Costa Rican Red Cross in rescue and evacuation operations and has offered to assist with evaluations on the Costa Rican side of the river Sixaola which is more easily accessible from Panama.

Quantities of food and some blankets have been received in response to a national appeal launched by the PRCS; an inventory and packaging of goods received are currently being carried out.

The National Society plans to assist 400 families for a one month period with food and non-food items. The following relief goods are to be distributed: jerry cans, tarpaulins, blankets, bleach, drinking water, canned food, hygiene kits and kitchen sets. Beneficiary criteria have been defined as follows: families who have lost their belongings; families whose houses have damaged roofs; and families in communities with damaged water systems.

Two water tankers from the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) are being deployed to areas where drinking water is desperately needed. PADRU has put a disaster management delegate and a water and sanitation delegate at the disposal of the Red Cross Society of Panama for the relief operation. The delegates will be travelling to the affected areas with PRCS teams as of 10 May.

The Nicaraguan Red Cross (NRC) has donated 3,000 comfort kits for Costa Rica, together with 1,800 comfort kits and 600 blankets for Panama. These relief goods are to leave Managua today, 10 May, for San José and Panama.

## ***Outstanding Needs***

### ***Costa Rica***

Immediate needs are for 1,000 families in Valle de la Estrella, Limón province:

- Food rations for one month consisting of 2 kilos of maize flour, 10 kilos of rice, 4 kilos of lard, 4 kilos of pasta, 4 kilos of beans, 500 g of salt, 6 kilos of sugar and 4 small tins of tuna.
- 500 family hygiene kits consisting of 16 toilet rolls, 6 tooth brushes, 2 large tubes of tooth paste, 1 bar of soap and 1 pack of sanitary towels (taking into account the NRC donation of 3,000 individual comfort kits).
- Drinking water.

### ***Panama***

Immediate needs are for 400 families in the flood affected area:

- 100 family hygiene kits (taking into account the NRC donation of 1,800 individual comfort kits)
- 400 jerry cans (5 gallon); bleach.
- 1,400 blankets for a warm climate (taking into account the NRC donation of 600 blankets).
- Tarpaulins (number to be determined).
- Canned food
- 400 kitchen sets

Further details will be provided as soon as available.

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

*For further details please contact :*

- *The Costa Rican Red Cross in San José; Phone (506) 233 7033 Fax (506) 223 7628 email [prensacr@racsa.co.cr](mailto:prensacr@racsa.co.cr)*
- *The Red Cross Society of Panama, Phone (507) 315 1389; Fax (507) 315 1401; email [cruzroja@pan.gbm.net](mailto:cruzroja@pan.gbm.net)*
- *Olaug Bergseth, Federation Desk Officer, Phone 41 22 730 45 35 Fax 41 22 733 0395; email [bergseth@ifrc.org](mailto:bergseth@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.*

John Horekens  
Head  
Relationship Management Department

Santiago Gil  
Head  
Americas Department