



PANAMA: FLOODS

DREF Bulletin
no. MDRPA002
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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 185 countries.

In Brief

- This DREF Bulletin is being issued based on the situation described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 69,509 (USD 55,607 or EUR 43,716) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 27 November to respond to the needs in this operation.
- This operation is expected to be implemented over 2 months, and will be completed by 27 January 2007; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation by 27 April 2006. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

This operation is aligned with the International Federation's 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.

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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.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

Background and current situation

Unexpected severe and long-lasting rains have been reported since 11 November in the eastern part of the province of Panama (Panama East) causing significant flooding in the districts of Pacora and Chepo. The powerful rains further affected some areas that were still recovering from bad weather and resulting damages at the end of October 2006.

The unstable weather conditions have continued and on **19 November** - worsened by a cold front – brought heavier rains to regions that were already saturated with water, causing even more flooding. On 23 November, a National State of Emergency was declared due to floods in the province of Colón (Costa Abajo), the Kuna Yala indigenous region, the north of the province of Coclé and the North, West and East of the province of Panama. Up to now, more than 799 homes have been damaged - at least 247 of these completely destroyed - due to the floods and strong winds. According to the initial assessments carried out by the National System of Civil Defence (Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil - SINAPROC) and the Red Cross Society of Panama (RCSP), 11 people have died and around 5,109 people (approximately 1,022 families) have been affected. It is likely that the total number of affected people will rise once assessments are finalized, given that some communities are still isolated because of landslides, collapsed bridges and damaged communication facilities. At least 300 families have been evacuated to temporary shelters in Rio Indio, Colon.



RCSP provides support in rescue and evacuation

Rescue, evacuation and emergency assessments have been coordinated with governmental institutions present in the affected areas, such as SINAPROC, the Panama Fire Brigade (Cuerpo de Bomberos de Panamá), the Ministry of Housing (Ministerio de Vivienda), Ministry of Social Development (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social), Ministry of Health (Ministerio de Salud), Ministry of Public Works (Ministerio of Obras Públicas), National Maritime Service (Servicio Marítimo Nacional), National Air Service (Servicio Aéreo Nacional), the Office of the First Lady (Despacho de la Primera Dama).

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Red Cross Society of Panama provided initial response to the emergency situations by supporting activities such as rescue and evacuation, first aid care, needs assessments and the provision of immediate relief items in the form of clothing, dry food and hygiene kits.

The Red Cross Society of Panama, with the assistance of the Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit, (PADRU) is working to achieve the following objectives:

Objective 1: 550 of the most affected families (approximately 2,750 persons) benefit from the distribution of food and non food items to assist them to recover from the effects of the floods.

In response to the heavy rains as of 11 November, a team consisting of PADRU's Water and Sanitation officer, PADRU's IT and Telecommunications officer, a Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member and other PADRU staff assisted the RCSP during the needs assessment in Pacora and Chepo. Based on the findings of the assessment it was decided to provide humanitarian assistance to 50 families as being the most affected by the floods. Hygiene kits, kitchen sets and blankets have been distributed to these affected families.

As the situation worsened due to continuous heavy rainfall, local Branches identified 500 families in the provinces of Colón, Coclé and the west of the province of Panama (Panama West). In response to the immediate needs 250 of

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these families received a distribution of blankets and food parcels to assist them to cope with the situation. These families, together with the remaining 250 will be receiving additional family food parcels to complement the initial distribution - as well as hygiene kits. Distributions will take place in the beginning of December.

Assistance is planned, as follows:

<i>Emergency started on</i>	<i>Affected provinces</i>	<i>Affected districts</i>	<i>Beneficiary families</i>	<i>Relief items</i>
11 November	Panama East	Pacora/ Chepo	50	Hygiene kit, kitchen set, blankets
19 November	Colon	Donoso/ Chagres	200	Hygiene kit, food parcel, water tanks, blankets.
	Cocle	Cocle del Norte	150	
	Panama West	Capira	150	

[Click here to go to a map of the affected areas](#)

IT and Telecommunications support

The need for IT and Telecommunications support was assessed in several remote areas of the province of Colón. In order to provide the areas with communication resources as quickly as possible the Red Cross Society of Panama and PADRU established an operational telecommunications centre in the Río Indio community in Colón. With the installation of this centre, communication was restored between the provinces of Colón and northern Coclé, and isolated communities have been reached.

A telecommunications kit including a VHF system and repeaters, an HF system, generators, a laptop, a GPS and satellite phones was sent to the field for this purpose. The Federation's IT and Telecommunications team - supported by ten Red Cross volunteers - has also carried out the following activities:



Members of SINAPROC and RCSP using the telecommunication system

- Installation of a VHF repeater in the community of Icacal to connect the National Society headquarters with 60% of the affected communities.
- Telecommunications assistance has been provided to the health centre in Icacal, which enables communication between the centre with the ambulance.
- Communication has been established between Río Indio and 13 other riverside communities.
- RCSP is working on an agreement with the government's communications department in the hope of using the government network as well as a radio frequency that connects all provinces on the northern coast of Panama (from Bocas del Toro to Darién).
- It is planned to establish three HF stations in the communities of Río Indio, Miguel de la Borda, and the north of the province of Coclé for the duration of the operation.

Communications and coordination

As mentioned above, search, rescue and evacuation activities were coordinated with SINAPROC and the Panama Fire Brigade. Institutions such as the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Social Development, as well as other local authorities were present in the affected areas conducting needs assessments and relocating families to safer areas.

Two reports have been issued through the Disaster Management Information System (DMIS) on the global Federation website. The communications plan has been developed to support the additional activities in response to

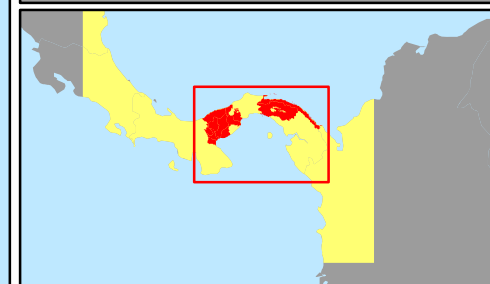
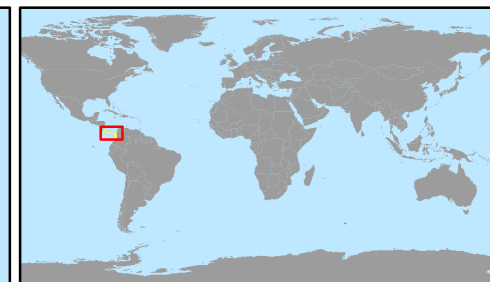
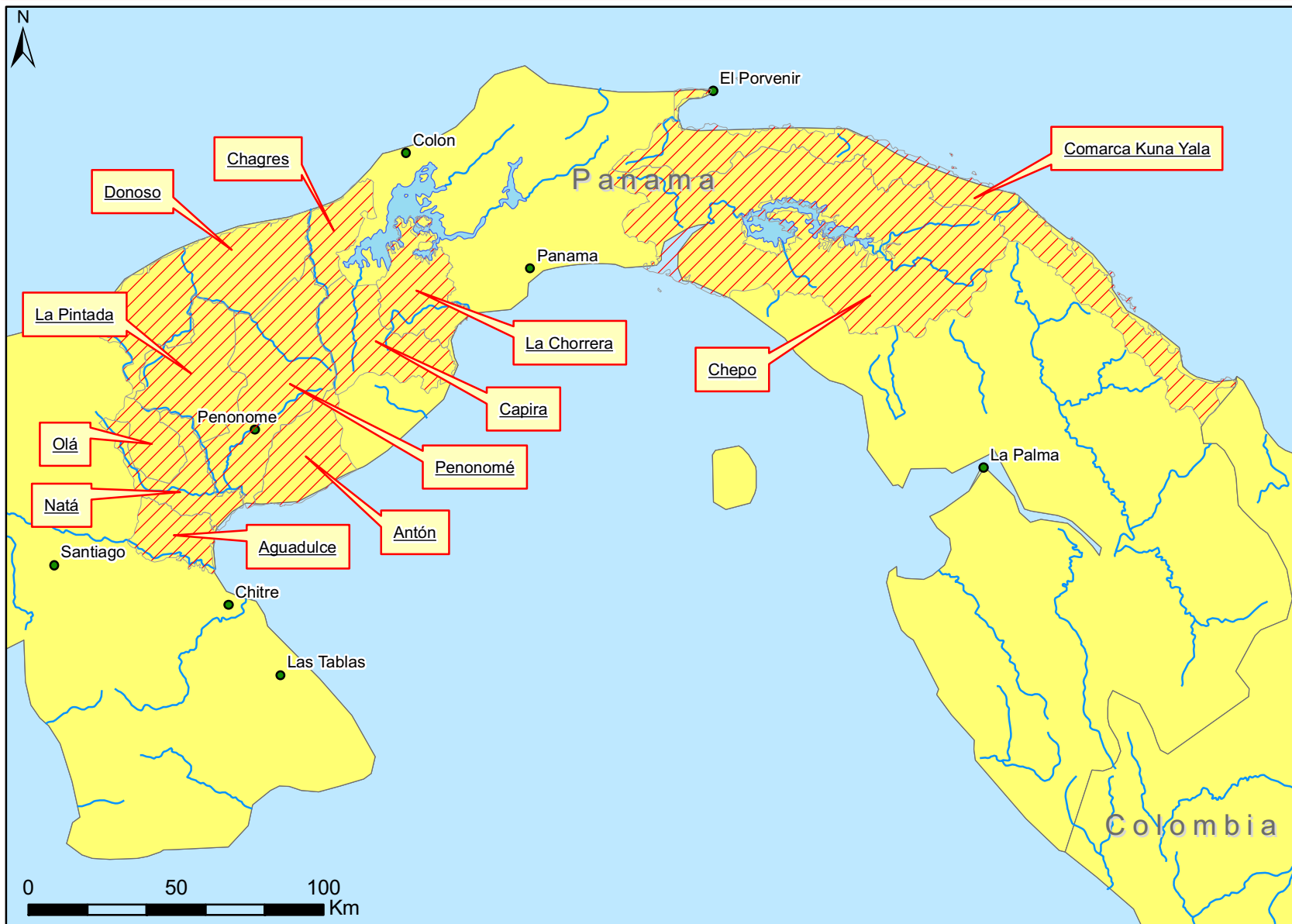
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the flooding and has five main target audiences: the media, the Red Cross Movement, beneficiaries, local authorities and donors. The different channels of communication include national media and the RCSP, the Federation regional and global websites. Special sections were created on the Federation regional website – www.cruzroja.org – as well as on the RCSP website. An additional press release has been issued and distributed to national and local media, and published on the various Red Cross websites. Furthermore, t-shirts and caps with the Red Cross logo have been designed and disseminated among Red Cross volunteers in order to increase visibility


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DREF will cover relief operation for 550 families. Target families will almost be in Colon Province. Census activities still on process.

 Affected area selection