

# ***BOLIVIA : FLOODS***

*7 May, 1997*

*appeal no. 4/97*

*situation report no. 1*

*period covered: 28 February - 2 May 1997*

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*Since the launching of the Federation's appeal, continuing heavy rains have increased the numbers affected by flooding, bringing the total to 32,139 families, while slowing down relief efforts. However, because of a shortfall in funding, the Bolivian RC is not yet in a position to enlarge the scope of its relief operation to take in any of the newly affected. Distributions of family food parcels have begun, despite major logistical difficulties and high transport costs. The closing date for the operation has been put off for two months, until the end of June .*

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## ***The context***

Although the beginning of the year is normally a dry season in Bolivia and heavy rains start only in September, this year from 3 January onwards there have been very heavy and frequent rains over the high central mountains, causing vast flooding in February in all of the country's nine departments. By the end of February, when the Federation appeal was launched, 18,013 families (about 108,000 people) were severely affected.

## ***Latest events***

In March the waters rose to such an extent that many other areas in the same departments were flooded, affecting 14,126 more families. At the end of April most of the disaster areas were still flooded. In a few areas the rainfall has decreased and the water level has dropped by several metres, but in other areas it is still raining and in some places the water is over ten metres deep. The situation is particularly critical in Pando and Beni departments.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

The Bolivian Red Cross (BRC), together with a Federation Delegate and, in four departments where there is a high concentration of indigenous communities, with a Swiss Red Cross Delegate, visited all areas in March and mid-April, despite huge difficulties due to the size and the ruggedness of the terrain, continuing heavy rains and transportation and communication difficulties. After a detailed needs assessment and beneficiary census, BRC drew up a well structured and detailed plan of action.

The relief operation has been divided into two parts, which are being implemented simultaneously. The first part is being carried out by the BRC with the assistance of the Federation Delegate in all the affected departments and for all categories of victims. The other part is being implemented by the BRC with the Swiss RC Delegate's assistance and is targeting the indigenous communities in the departments of Beni, Santa Cruz, Tarija and Pando.

*Part implemented with the Federation Delegate's co-operation:*

The BRC prioritised the most affected 6,294 families (35% of the initial target population, but only 20% of the total population affected by mid-April), and co-ordinated its action with the assistance efforts of other humanitarian organisations and the Bolivian authorities. In some areas the number of people affected is higher than the initial estimates.

The location of those families is as follows:

<i>Department</i>	<i>Initially-targeted families</i>	<i>Prioritised families</i>
1. La Paz	1,286	500
2. Oruro	135	200
3. Potosí	182	200
4. Cochabamba	1,765	500
5. Chuquisaca	0	200
6. Tarija	1,306	300
7. Santa Cruz	7,800	1,400
8. Beni	4,839	1,995
9. Pando	700	799
<i>Total</i>	<i>18,013</i>	<i>6,294</i>

The BRC's plan contains additional modules to assist other disaster victims should more resources become available. Right now, based on recent contribution pledges to the appeal, BRC is preparing the immediate extension of assistance to another 2,706 families, bringing the total to 9,000 families (54,000 people).

Each family will receive two food parcels. Each parcel will contain at least 45 kg of food as follows: 15 kg of rice, 5 kg of maize, 10 kg of flour, 5 kg of sugar, 2 kg of salt, 2 kg of edible oil and 3 kg of spaghetti. Household and kitchen items will be added in keeping with the needs assessment. The first parcel distribution, scheduled to take place mid-April/mid-May, has begun but is not yet completed. To date 63 mt of food has been delivered to about 1,400 families located in the less accessible areas. The distribution will be more rapid in the more accessible areas. The second distribution is planned for mid-May/mid-June.

Besides the BRC's permanent staff at national, provincial and local levels, 100 BRC volunteers were selected to head the operations in the field. They are divided into groups of five for the distribution of the family parcels. There are 15 volunteers leading the distribution in La Paz, 5 in Oruro, 5 in Potosí, 10 in Cochabamba, 5 in Chuquisaca, 15 in Tarija, 20 in Santa Cruz, 20 in Beni and 5 in Pando. They are co-ordinating their activity with that of CARITAS and also with a USAID/OFDA food distribution.

On the logistics and procurement-process side, one of the main problems encountered has been the scarcity and high prices of transportation, due to very bad road conditions and very long distances. For instance, to transport 400 hundred-weight bags, BRC has to

pay BVN 26 (about USD 5) per bag for the truck trip between La Paz city and Puerto Motor. A Bolivian Navy ship costs BVN 26,000 (about USD 5,000) to go to Riberalta and charges BVN 8,000 (about USD 1,535.50) for distribution along the river. Although every effort is made to purchase goods close to distribution areas, prices are almost the same as in La Paz or Santa Cruz cities. These high costs explain why priority assistance has been limited initially to only 6,294 families.

*Part implemented with the Swiss R.C Delegate's co-operation:*

The BRC and the Swiss RC have signed a memorandum of understanding, under which the Swiss national society, which was already working on the development of indigenous communities with four departmental branches of the BRC, will increase its support to these communities, since they were particularly badly affected by the disaster. ECHO, under a contract with the Federation Secretariat, is funding this part of the relief operation (see annex), aimed at providing 1,260 families with food, medicines and other relief supplies.

To date, 1,209 families have received 158 mt of food (rice, maize, sugar, salt, edible oil, flour, lentils, spaghetti, "mate", a local tea-like drink, coffee, meat and beans), 170 boxes of medicines, 340 blankets and 678 kg of soap and detergent.

The planning and implementation of this part of the operation has faced greater difficulties than the other part, notably high transportation costs.

## ***Outstanding needs***

Since the appeal is still 26.2 % underfunded, it is not yet certain that the BRC will be able to assist all the 18,013 families targeted by the appeal, let alone add any of the more recent victims to the relief rolls.

The budget of the operation has been internally adjusted as follows (the appeal total remains the same):

	<i>CHF</i>
Food stuffs (2,412 mt)	1,850,000
Household and other supplies	62,000
Transport and warehousing	223,000
Personnel	69,000
Information	21,000
Administration	42,000
Communication	32,000
Equipment and training for rescue and relief workers	39,000
Federation Secretariat support	112,000
<i>Total</i>	<i>2,450,000</i>

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

The BRC, assisted by the Federation Delegate, has actively co-ordinated its activity with the national authorities, although the National Disaster Committee has not met since February, and with other humanitarian agencies, particularly CARITAS BOLIVIANA, USAID/OFDA, OXFAM and Medicos sin Fronteras.

## ***Contributions***

See annex 1.

## ***Conclusion***

Current contributors to the operation are warmly thanked for their effective support.

The increase in the extent of the disaster in March/April and the almost two-month postponement of the operation's closing deadline, due to huge initial difficulties in the needs assessment and planning, make continued support by donors very necessary if the initial beneficiary target is to be reached. As of now, CHF 641,000 (26.2%) of the appeal is still uncovered.

The BRC, the Bolivian authorities and several humanitarian agencies are currently discussing the attribution of relief tasks in aid of the 14,126 families most recently affected. This may result in an increase in the responsibilities of the BRC and have an impact on the appeal total. Donors will be kept informed of any changes.

For further information, please contact Luis Luna, Desk Officer for the Southern Cone and Haiti in the Americas Department (phone 41-22-7304274, fax 41-22-7330395 and internet, luna@ifrc.org).

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