

11 February 2000

VENEZUELA: FLOODS

appeal no. 35/99

situation report no. 8

period covered: 18 January - 7 February 2000

The Federation, the Venezuelan Red Cross and Participating National Societies are increasing the scope of emergency relief assistance to flood victims. It includes food, clean water, health care and psychological support. The bad weather is continuing in some areas, causing further damage and adding to logistical difficulties.

The disaster

Weeks of torrential rains in Venezuela at the end of 1999 caused massive landslides and severe flooding in seven northern states. The official death toll is 30,000 but other sources put the figure as high as 50,000. Over 600,000 persons are estimated to have been directly affected and according to the Venezuelan Civil Defence's initial damage assessments at least 64,700 houses have been damaged and over 23,200 destroyed.

Update

- A state of alert is still in effect in the State of Vargas as rains continue in the mountains. Eight districts are still only accessible by air. The cave-in of one lane of the highway to El Junquito has cut off seven towns. The collapse of the highway between Morón and Coro has isolated the state of Falcón.
- Twenty four new landslides and floods were recorded during the past week. A growing lagoon has built up above Caracas because of debris blocking the rivers.
- The authorities have started to demolish condemned homes and shanty houses built in dangerous areas such as ravines and canyons because warmer weather is producing cracks in the mud banks and badly damaged homes are collapsing under their own weight.
- Severe damage to the agricultural sector was sustained in the States of Miranda, Zulia, Falcón, Mérida, Tachira, Cojedes, Yaracuy and Carabobo. Most petroleum ports remain closed, reducing exports by as much as 25%. Tourism has dropped by 90% since last December with an estimated fourteen billion dollars loss in the services sector in the states of Vargas and Miranda.

- Several local NGOs are offering free legal counselling to affected families on collecting insurance claims, replacing lost legal documents, and obtaining death certificates, and to the homeless who are squatting unfinished constructions.
- 63,072 persons are housed in 280 national shelters. In Caracas, 2,400 displaced living in the central stadium (Poliedro) are being offered a house in the interior of the country, but there is some reluctance to move.
- Five government offices in charge of housing will be fused into one, to carry out new housing projects.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

International Federation w

There are 20 delegates in the field. Recent delegate support has come from the National Societies of Finland, Great Britain and Sweden. The Regional Disaster Response Delegate is coordinating relief activities. A Telecom specialist from Geneva, working with a Telecom delegate from the Colombian Red Cross, is completing the installation of equipment and the review of longer term VRC and Delegation radio and communication needs. The Netherlands Red Cross will support this activity.

Venezuelan Red Cross (VRC) w

The Federation and the VRC are continuing to support 1,000 families from the State of Vargas with food rations, relief supplies and integral health care:

Branch:	No. of Families:
Anzoátegui	50
Apure	70
Barina	40
Bolivar	40
Cojedes	98
Lara	180
Mérida	70
Monagas/Punta de Mata	107
Nueva Esparta	50
Portuguesa/Acarigua-Araure	95
Trujillo	50
Yaracuy	150
Total: 12 Branches	1,000

The Aragua and Carabobo-Valencia branches of the VRC are supplying 8,000 and 6,500 people respectively with food and other relief items.

The Lara, Mérida, Nueva Esparta, Zulia, Táchira and Barinas branches hold health workshops every three days. They deal with preventive measures against dengue, cholera, AIDS and other sexually transmissible diseases, and have reached a total of 1,646 people.

An internal information bulletin "Red Cross in Action", reporting all ONS, PNS and Federation activities, is published three times a week. Eight have been issued so far.

The VRC is strengthening its capacity with a programme to recruit and train 170 volunteers.

The VRC has the following plans:

- Building 500 new houses for families that lost their homes

- Training Community Social assistants
- A programme to develop cottage industries
- Strengthening the Department of Tracing and Disaster Welfare Inquiries
- Strengthening the Information Department.

The Federation is recruiting an Information and an Institutional Development delegate to assist with these activities.

Relief distributions (see appendix II)

Location	Red Cross Distributor	Number of Families
Vargas	Federation	7,000
Carabobo	Federation	800
Aragua	Federation	1,200
Other states	Federation/VRCS	1,000
Total		10,000
Aragua	American Red Cross	1,600
Carabobo	American Red Cross	1,800
Falcón	American Red Cross	3,000
Vargas	American Red Cross	5,000
Total		11,400
Vargas	Spanish Red Cross	1,093
Miranda	Spanish Red Cross	515
Caracas	Spanish Red Cross	1,800
Total		3,408
Vargas	German Red Cross	4,000
Total		4,000

The lists of family beneficiaries are under further review by the Relief Coordinator.

Distributions are proceeding more slowly than anticipated, largely due to heavy congestion in the port and on damaged roads. In addition beneficiaries staying with relatives or friends are scattered over a wide area involving a large number of distribution sites which makes distribution journeys more complicated.

In Vargas there are currently 7 distribution sites; as of 24 January, a total of 1,945 families had received a two-week ration. For a detailed distribution report, please see attached consolidated report.

In Carabobo, one distribution to 800 families has taken place and a second is scheduled.

The Federation is co-ordinating with the American Red Cross on logistics, personnel and food kits.

The biggest obstacle facing the Red Cross partners in Venezuela is the increasing impact on distribution logistics of severe congestion, bureaucracy and customs clearance delays at the main port. Military roadblocks are causing long delays in distributions.

Logistics (Caracas)

There are 3 containers with 2,500 kitchen sets and 20 containers with 394 mt. of food parcels and corn flour at customs in Puerto Cabello. Port congestion and custom clearance delays are an ongoing problem that the logistics delegates are endeavouring to resolve. All vehicles and warehouses will be equipped next week with fire extinguishers and first aid kits provided by the Spanish Red Cross.

Logistics (Panama City)

Currently, the main logistics issues are to coordinate the movement of containers from Puerto Cabello, Venezuela, and to obtain customs clearances.

10,000 hygiene parcels have been ordered. It is hoped that all the containers can be shipped with ETA in Puerto Cabello on 14 or 15 February. Food parcel purchases have been completed and forwarded. Cooking sets are in containers in port, awaiting release.

Health

Tools, work clothes (coveralls, boots, gloves and disposable face masks) have been purchased to allow health brigades and sanitation teams to continue work.

The Health Brigades' activities in Vargas, 15-28 January, have been as follows.

Communities	Home Visits	Patients Treated	Education sessions	Persons attending	Pamphlets Distributed
VARGAS					
Montesano	10	52	2	30	20
Marlboro	20	37	2	12	10
Canaima	20	39	7	52	10
La Tropical	30	128	14	117	20
Atanacio Girardot	49	171	8	54	20
Colinas de Pariata	35	58	20	90	40
Quenepe	32	127	3	50	20
Cerro Jesus	20	65	12	129	24
Cerro Los Cachos	36	60	14	111	20
Quiriqui	20	47	4	82	32
Parque Central	0	32	1	36	120
La Chivera	39	71	2	58	12
Manonga	39	71	2	91	16
Los Cocoteros	34	59	2	63	24
Las Lluvias	23	62	2	62	24
La Tropicana	45	56	2	62	32
FALCON					
La Montana	8	7	0	0	0
Palmasola I,II	25	44	5	80	135
Tamoro-El Paray	20	27	5	50	0
TOTAL	511	1,209	108	1,272	611

Medical Case study analysis

Diagnosis	N° Cases	%
Skin Infections	207	17.45
Virus Syndrome	158	13.07
Intestinal Parasites	192	15.88

Diarrhoea	113	9.35
Respiratory Infections	163	13.48

While awaiting a decision on an additional health brigade in Vargas, the second brigade has been deployed and is working in Miranda. Another health brigade may be needed in Falcon for the area of Punto Fijo, in the Península de Paraguaná where there is a high number of cases of Dengue. The team would work with 3,000 families living in a high risk areas because of sanitation and water supply problems.

The new vehicles for the Health Teams have arrived.

The Vector Control workshop was held on 9 February for Federation, VRCS, and Bilateral PNS health staff, with input from Ministry of Health representatives and PAHO and UNICEF advisers.

Psychological Support Programme

The psychological support delegates trained Red Cross branch personnel in psychological first-aid in Zulia, Mérida, Valencia and Barquisimeto.

Activities from 17 to 21 January:

ACTIVITY:	NUMBER:	PARTICIPANTS:
Group sessions	2	36
Training sessions	2	54
Training sessions w/ARC	2	36
Contacts w/ other institutions	4	Ministry of Health Mental Health Division
Visits to shelters	2	36
Psychological support to volunteers	17	17

Water-sanitation

The Federation is continuing to act as the coordinator for Red Cross and NGO activities in this area. Further assessments are underway and a permanent water and sanitation delegate will be arriving in the field shortly. PNS-led water and sanitation activities are on-going and are described later in this report.

Tracing Programme

During the week of 20 to 28 January the following activities were carried out:

- Visits were made to the branches of Aragua and Miranda to update the lists of IDPs and coordinate tracing activities.
- Arrangements were made to maintain an updated photographic registry of the programme. This registry will be televised and a weekly print-out will be made.
- The American Red Cross provided a vehicle for field work.
- The Colombian Red Cross undertook to sponsor a training programme for 80 VRC volunteers.
- Coordination meetings were held with the National Institute for Minors to obtain information on missing children.

Total number of cases resolved: 2,307

Total number of cases pending: 4,480.

Participating National Societies (PNS) w

American Red Cross

The American Red Cross warehouse in Valencia is providing supplies to distribution warehouses in Falcón, Aragua, Carabobo and Vargas. A strategic food distribution plan has

been developed and supplementary food has been purchased locally. 846 food parcels were distributed to Falcón beneficiaries.

Hygiene kits, kitchen kits and clean up kits have been ordered.

38 mental health professionals attended an instructor training course which included on the job counseling training in shelters. The disaster mental health programme is currently being implemented country wide.

The family reunification programme is currently developing a country-wide information data base.

Spanish Red Cross

The ECHO project food distributions for 1,470 beneficiaries in Montesano and Santa Barbara will consist of two food distributions a month, and will last four months.

The census of the population living in the hills surrounding Santa Barbara (approximately 250 persons) is almost finished. This will allow their incorporation into the Santa Barbara distributions.

Food distribution will begin in the Naiguatá region as soon as the census of the affected population is finished.

The two water tankers in Vargas will continue water distributions for two more months,.

Two purification plants and one tanker are providing drinking water to the Santa Barbara population. Distribution points are being identified in the state of Falcón for additional plants.

After coordination meetings with the Ministry of Education, it was decided to rehabilitate and equip 8 schools.

An agreement has been reached with the National Housing Institute (INAVI) to rehabilitate 42 houses and rebuild an additional 115 homes. These will be built by the beneficiaries themselves and will cost approximately USD 5,000 to 8,000 each.

German Red Cross

The GRC has increased the quantity of water distributed daily at 14 distribution points in the State of Vargas to 140,000 litres, for approximately 30,000 persons.

STATE OF VARGAS - DISTRIBUTION SITES (GRC):	
1. Calle 5 de Julio	8. Prolongacion Soubllette
2. Callejón Colombia	9. Calle los Dos Cerritos
3. Redoma Soubllette	10. Maribal
4. Parmigiani	11. Canaima Zona 2- Parte Baja
5. Canaima Parte Alta	12. Calle Brisas de Lourdes, Las Tunitas
6. Sorocaima	13. Bloque 10 de marzo, Maquetia
7. Calle Sucre, Canaima	14. Pedrera

To date, a total of 2,700 families in the State of Vargas (Todasana, Puerto Maya, Oritapo) and in the State of Aragua (Puerto Cruz and Chichiriviche de la Costa) have received food parcels consisting of:

Food Items:	Quantity:
Cooking oil	7.2 mt
Table salt	1.8 mt
Rice	21.6 mt
Grains (beans)	10.8 mt
Sugar	10.0 mt
Wheat flour	54.0 mt
Total: 6 items	104.4 mt

French Red Cross

The FRC has hired 2 water tankers of 10,000 litres each for water distribution at the following distribution points:

Communities in State of Vargas:	Points of Distribution:	Number of Bladders (10 m3):	Number of Beneficiaries:
Las Tunitas	3	3	1,500
Macuto	2	3	3,500
Caraballeda	3	3	5,600
T o t a l :	8	9	10,600

One treatment plant in Anare, State of Vargas is supplying up to 30,000 litres of water daily to a total of 1,200 persons. A second plant is now functioning in the town of Sanare, State of Falcón, and a third plant will be installed at the same site next week.

Italian Red Cross

The Italian Red Cross delegates are continuing their project of refurbishing one medical laboratory in Vargas and have submitted a proposal to UNDP for two additional laboratories (one in Vargas and one in Miranda). The IRC will have a permanent Health delegate based in the country until at least the end of February.

Netherlands Red Cross

The Netherlands Red Cross in collaboration with the Colombian Red Cross has begun distributing food parcels and non food items (kitchen sets, hygiene sets for adults and children, mattresses, and blankets) to 114 families in Zulia and 92 families in Tachira State.

The NRC will supply one electric plant to Ureña and another to San Antonio in Tachira.

It has set up 6 small bladders (2,500 litres each) and 1 large bladder of 5,000 litres and supplied PVC piping and plastic sheeting for water distribution.

As part of a capacity building and training programme, the NRC held a workshop on Disaster Preparedness, Telecommunications, Logistics in an Emergency Operation, and Dissemination.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Coordination meetings have been held with OXFAM and Action against Hunger on WatSan issues, with the Ministry of Health, WHO and PAHO on health issues; and with the Ministry of Health, Mental Health Division, on psychological support issues.

Outstanding needs

Water containers are needed. Administration and Relief Coordination delegate posts remain open.

Contributions

See Annex 1.

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