

VENEZUELA: FLOODS

*12th October
2000*

appeal no. 35/99

situation report no. 11

period covered: May - August 2000

During this period, the Red Cross partners have shifted their activities from relief to rehabilitation. The Venezuelan Red Cross, Federation and PNS have designed a range of programmes reflecting both the needs of the Venezuelan people and the organizational needs of the National Society. Further funding is now urgently required to support these activities.

The context

Weeks of unseasonable and unexpected rains in Venezuela reached torrential record proportions on 15 and 16 December 1999, causing massive landslides and severe flooding in seven northern states of the country. Overflowing rivers swept through poor districts in the capital, Caracas, washing away thousands of homes. In the coastal valleys, mudslides buried most of the towns in Macuto and Caraballeda while the towns of Los Corales, Camuri Chico and Carmen de Uria totally disappeared under avalanches of rock and mud. Venezuela had not experienced a natural disaster for decades and the consequent lack of preparedness and training for such an emergency resulted in its response mechanisms being quickly overtaken by events.

The Ministry of Foreign Relations acknowledged that there could have been between 10 to 20,000 deaths. The exact number may never be known, but a final figure of 30,000 dead has been accepted as reasonable. The latest government figures show 81,137 houses affected and 30,080 families are registered as having suffered total loss of their homes. Out of these, 30% are unemployed. Material damages are put at over USD 3,200 million.

Although the Venezuela Red Cross was not well prepared for a disaster of this magnitude, it responded quickly. The Federation issued a preliminary appeal on December 20th for the amount of CHF 4,460,000. Coordination was well established from the onset of the disaster, and a jointly developed plan of action was the basis for the Federation's appeal which was launched on Jan 4, 2000. The appeal aimed to meet the basic needs of 50,000 people for a period of 12 months at a total amount of CHF 13,2980,000.

Latest events

While reconstruction of houses, roads and other infrastructure is underway, there are still significant needs to be met before life returns to normal for many families affected by the disaster in the northern states of the country. Most people have now left the government-run shelters around the country and returned to their homes as the clean-up operation in Vargas progresses, but many communities still remain without water and sewage services.

Unemployment continues to be a serious issue, as those whose livelihoods were dependent on the tourist industry, mainly in Vargas but also in Falcón and Miranda, seek new opportunities. Short-term employment is being offered by the government to those affected through the 'Plan Bolivar'.

At the end of July, national and regional elections were held, originally scheduled to take place in May. With the completion of the electoral process, an acceleration is expected in the government's plans for rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Whilst phasing out their remaining relief activities, during this period the Venezuelan Red Cross, Federation and PNS have been designing and beginning implementation of a range of rehabilitation programmes, based on a common strategy and shared objectives. The focus is on programmes which meet the needs of the Venezuelan population in post-floods rehabilitation and long-term integrated development, as well as the needs of the Venezuelan Red Cross as an organization.

The Federation has down-sized its delegation during this period with the ending of its relief programmes. The Delegation currently comprises the Head of Delegation and four other delegates - Health, Water and Sanitation, Telecoms and Finance.

Food and Non-Food Distributions •

The *American Red Cross (ARC)* has finished its programme of food distribution in seven states of the country. The food packages were made up in accordance with the Sphere guidelines, and supplementary food was also distributed. A total of 78,250 food parcels and 70,000 bags of food supplements were distributed. The ARC also completed its distribution of hygiene kits during this period, which contained soap, small towels, tooth brushes, tooth paste, and iodine and chlorine pills.

The *Spanish Red Cross* has also concluded its distributions of relief supplies, with a total of 54,084 food parcels provided to beneficiaries in the states of Miranda, Vargas and the Federal District.

The *Italian Red Cross* has distributed pasta to beneficiaries in Falcón, Lara and Merida.

Water and sanitation •

Given the extensive damage to infrastructure, the provision of fresh water to affected communities continues to be a priority. The Federation water and sanitation delegate, provided by the British Red Cross, has been co-ordinating activities in this area with the German, French and Spanish Red Cross Societies.

More than 200,000 litres of fresh water have been produced daily and distributed to previously installed tanks in various communities affected in the states of Vargas, Falcón and Miranda. This activity is being supplemented with educational lectures and the distribution of hygiene promotion materials. 20,000 water containers and purifying pills have also been provided to 10,000 families in Vargas, Falcón and Miranda.

Large capacity tanks have been given to communities in Caraballeda, Vargas and Anare. The communities have been trained to operate the equipment, and to ensure that it is properly maintained. A temporary gravity fed aquaduct is now operating in Caraballeda, run by the local community, the Federation is providing materials and technical input as required, to expand the existing coverage. A water treatment plant, installed by French Red Cross in Anare, is still operating under Federation supervision.

A programme of latrine installation has started in rural zones of Miranda and Falcón, accompanied by hygiene promotion activities. Special educational materials have been developed targeting 2,000 school aged children. This has been done in collaboration with Italian Red Cross.

<i>Location</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Activity</i>
Caraballeda	Vargas	22,000	water supply / solid waste / hygiene promotion
Anare	Vargas	2,200	water supply / hygiene promotion
Macuto	Vargas	500	water supply / hygiene promotion
Naiguatã	Vargas	3,000	hygiene promotion
Rural areas	Falcón	5,000	water containers / hygiene promotion / latrines
Cupida	Miranda	750	water containers / hygiene promotion / latrines

It is estimated that 33,450 people are benefiting from the Federation water and sanitation programme. The British Red Cross has expressed an interest in providing new funding for these activities.

The *Spanish Red Cross* has installed 11 drinking water treatment plants. Furthermore, it has commenced, in co-ordination with the Federation, a training programme for volunteers from the VRC branches in five states. These volunteers will complete their basic level training in October. The Spanish Red Cross plan to implement a latrine programme in States of Lara, Carabobo and Vargas in November 2000.

The *French Red Cross* completed its water and sanitation activities in July, handing over its equipment to the Federation. The Federation team has also taken over the monitoring of water distribution activities in Vargas initiated by the French Red Cross.

The *German Red Cross* has donated water tanks to schools and community centres. It has now also finished its water activities in the country.

Health •

A one year Federation and VRC health programme commenced in May with funding from the Swiss Red Cross and Swiss Solidarity Chain. The programme aims to assist 50 communities in five states: Vargas, Falcón, Miranda, Carabobo and Lara.

The main components of the programme are:

- Strengthening of the VRC health department.
- Mobile health brigades.
- Sanitation.
- Vector control.
- Training of community health workers.

Mobile health brigades - The health brigades have been carrying out activities in 41 communities comprising a total of 83,285 people. The predominant problems encountered include parasites, viral syndromes, respiratory and skin diseases. A large proportion of the population was also found to be suffering from dental problems, as dental treatment is beyond the economic means of most people.

Month	Patients attended	Homes visited	Educational sessions	Participants	Leaflets distributed
May	1,616	672	138	2,277	3,807
June	934	456	93	1,242	1,714
July	827	687	67	1,025	937
Total	3,377	1,815	298	4,544	6,458

From the beginning of August, the activities of the health brigades have been scaled down, with the brigades visiting the communities twice a week rather than on a daily basis.

Sanitation and vector control - With respect to epidemiological surveillance, water and sanitation and vector control, the Federation is working together with the communities to implement a range of micro-projects. The main activities are epidemiological surveillance through community inspections, vector control (rats, flies and mosquitoes), distribution of faecal collectors and analysis of samples. These activities are being conducted with the technical support of the Malaria Department of the Ministry of Health (MoH), which is providing access to its laboratories and participating in the technical training of volunteers.

Two vector control brigades were active until the end of July, one in Vargas and the other in Falcón, working jointly with the MoH. In Falcón, the brigade was focusing on four areas: malaria, Chagas, vector control and control of parasites. As a result of these activities, 8,705 homes have been protected, benefiting 39,267 inhabitants.

Community health - 17 community health promoters have been identified and trained in planning, community micro-projects and basic first aid. Communities have been supported in identifying environmental hygiene problems at the local level. Together with the water and sanitation programme, educational and training materials are being developed relating to personal and community health, and environmental hygiene.

In August, a training course for primary health care workers was held, attended by 19 health representatives from 17 VRC branches. The course will be accredited by the Venezuelan Medical Federation and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

In preparation for the implementation of the next phase of the health programme, project coordinators have been identified in each of the participating branches and an initial training workshop has been conducted.

The *American Red Cross* is continuing to sponsor the psychological support programme, carrying out training workshops. Volunteers have started to identify communities to participate in the next stage of the programme.

A community-based child health programme will be implemented as part of an agreement signed between the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the American Red Cross, in coordination with the Ministry of Health, Venezuelan Red Cross health department and the Federation. The programme aims to reduce the mortality rate of children under five before 2002, and will be carried out in communities affected by the floods as well as other vulnerable communities in accordance with the IMCI (Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses) model.

The *Italian Red Cross* has provided assistance to more than 3,387 patients, carrying out 13,225 clinical analyses through the installation of clinical laboratories in Carballeda, Naiguatá and Chaguaramal. With

funding from UNDP, and in coordination with the Federation, it is also carrying out a project of latrine installation and environmental and health education in Falcón. In this same state, it has established a pilot project for the development of the installation and operation of popular pharmacies.

The *Spanish Red Cross* has started a dengue prevention campaign in Libertador which aims to reduce the prevalence and morbidity/mortality of the disease. Activities include control of vectors and health education in high risk communities.

Disaster preparedness •

In collaboration with the Federation, the *Spanish Red Cross* has run a series of five basic water and sanitation training workshops for various branches with the aim of strengthening the disaster response capacity of the VRC.

The Spanish Red Cross have also initiated a community disaster prevention project. 120 communities in the six states affected by the severe rains and which are in high vulnerability zones will be identified to participate in the project.

Telecommunications •

The *Federation, Colombian Red Cross and Netherlands Red Cross* are jointly conducting a project to strengthen the telecommunications network of the VRC. Four HF radio systems and repeaters are being installed in Vargas, Táchira, Lara and Carabobo. Base and portable radios are also being provided for Zulia, Miranda, Nueva Esparta, Aragua and Falcón. Once the equipment is installed, training workshops for 60 volunteers will be carried out.

Agricultural support •

The *American Red Cross* is running an agricultural support project with funding from the FAO, which aims to support farmers affected by the floods in rehabilitating their land. The project will be completed in two months and its objective is to support 3,000 beneficiaries in four municipalities in Falcón which were most adversely affected by the disaster in terms of agriculture. In addition to providing technical support to the rehabilitation of the soil, tools and seeds will also be distributed.

The *Spanish Red Cross* are supporting six agricultural communities in Miranda state, whose fields were inundated following the collapse of the El Guapo Dam. The project aims to make productive at least one hectare per beneficiary and to provide an agricultural kit consisting of seeds, tools and plants.

Income generation •

The *Spanish Red Cross* has initiated an income generating project to assist the integration of families who have been displaced from the State of Vargas and relocated to the State of Lara.

Reconstruction •

One of the priorities of the VRC is the construction of housing for 250 families, together with a community centre, medical services, a school and green areas. This project will be supported by the Federation, and will receive substantial financing from the Kuwait Red Crescent.

The *French Red Cross* is constructing 100 houses in the State of Miranda.

The *Spanish Red Cross* has started the rehabilitation, improvement and equipment of ten schools in Miranda, eight of which were affected by the severe rains and two which were affected by the consequences of the collapse of the El Guapo Dam. 1,377 school children will benefit from this project.

The *Netherlands and Colombian Red Cross*, with support from the Federation, have jointly developed a programme to improve the common areas and recreation area for children, and to provide

fresh water, showers and bathrooms in a shelter located in Caricuao, Caracas, assisting 120 affected and displaced families from the State of Vargas.

Institutional development •

The Federation Head of Delegation has been working with the VRC in supporting the updating of their National Development Plan. The plan was developed prior to the December 1999 disaster, and now requires revision in order to bring it into line with current realities and priorities.

The Federation, American Red Cross and Spanish Red Cross have all provided support for the renovation of the VRC headquarters. The Spanish Red Cross has also provided two emergency ambulances and one urban rescue vehicle which will operate in Caracas.

Review of Major Operations •

As one of a range of initiatives designed to strengthen the Federation's disaster response systems, a review has been conducted of the Venezuela Floods, Hurricane Mitch and Hurricane Georges operations. A member of the review team visited Venezuela in July and conducted interviews with a wide range of stakeholders from within the Red Cross and Red Crescent and with external actors. The review report will be issued in the autumn.

Red Cross/Red Crescent rehabilitation plan

A VRC commission has been established to identify, design, implement and follow-up on rehabilitation projects. The commission consists of the branch presidents of Lara, Falcón and Monagas and is working with the support of the Federation, American, Italian and Spanish National Societies.

In order to effectively coordinate external assistance, the formation of a consortium has been proposed, consisting of the VRC, Federation and all Participating National Societies. The consortium will be established through a Memorandum of Understanding, agreed and adhered to by all. Common objectives will be established through a mutually agreed upon "Country Assistance Strategy". The Federation will assume the lead role for the consortium until the end of 2000, at which point the consortium will be reviewed. It is expected that one of the PNS will then take over the lead role.

The main objectives for the rehabilitation phase are the following:

Objective 1: To meet the needs of vulnerable communities affected by the disaster

- Provision of clean water to disaster victims remains a priority.
- Reconstruction of housing and social infrastructure will be carried out by the VRC, French, Italian and Spanish Red Cross.
- Provision of seeds and tools will be carried out in collaboration with FAO.
- Income generation projects will be implemented for displaced families.
- Integrated community development will be supported by Spanish Red Cross.

Objective 2: To increase capacities in disaster response, mitigation, preparedness and recovery, both at the community level and within the Venezuelan Red Cross

- Risk mapping will be carried out in Vargas, possibly in other high-risk areas.
- Training in disaster response will be carried out, both at the community level and within the VRC.
- The VRC will be supported in the development of disaster preparedness and contingency plans at HQ and branch level.
- An early warning system is proposed in Vargas.
- Community-based disaster preparedness will be promoted, following regional strategies and methodologies.
- The VRC DP/Relief Department will be strengthened.

Objective 3: To develop and implement activities in health promotion and prevention, recovery and rehabilitation of population at risk and/or affected by the disaster, improving their general situation

- Health interventions will be based on the Federation's regional strategy, focusing on mother & child health, sanitation, health promotion, HIV/AIDS and First Aid.
- Health brigades will continue, emphasizing health promotion rather than medical care.
- Sanitation activities will focus on health promotion and vector control.
- The Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses initiative will be piloted in three departments.
- Disaster mental health will be promoted, both in training of volunteers and as a component of regular programmes in health and DP.
- First Aid training for staff and volunteers will be enhanced, and commercial courses will be promoted.
- Community-based first aid will link health and disaster preparedness.
- HIV/Aids campaigns and peer education programmes will be implemented.
- Promotion of safe blood will be encouraged through campaigns and other events.
- A possible social pharmacies project will be proposed.

Objective 4: To strengthen the organizational capacity of the Venezuela Red Cross both at the branch level and at the headquarters

- Support to institutional development will prioritize human resource development, strategic planning, finance and administration systems and financial resource management.
- The VRC National Development Plan will be updated and an institutional diagnostic carried out.
- The volunteer system of the VRC will be strengthened.
- A new headquarters will be built for the Vargas branch and for the Caraballeda sub-branch.
- The VRC national headquarters will be renovated.
- Communications and information activities will be carried out to strengthen the public image of the VRC.

Outstanding needs

The Federation appeal for Venezuela has not yet been fully covered. There is an urgent need for further funding to meet the ongoing needs of the vulnerable in Venezuela, as well as to support the strengthening of the Venezuelan Red Cross. Health, water and sanitation, disaster preparedness and institutional development activities all require additional funding; financing for the core costs of the reduced Federation delegation is also needed for it to continue its role as the coordinator of the rehabilitation process.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Close relations have been developed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with regards to the signing of a status agreement for the Federation in Venezuela. Likewise, there has been close coordination with the Ministry of Health, Hidrocapital, the Ministry of Education and the Vargas state authorities. At the local level, relationships have been established with community representatives in the affected states.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Director
Americas Department

This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>