



VENEZUELA: FLOODS

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The Disaster

Following several days of heavy rains, a state of emergency has been declared in nine states in Venezuela as a result of widespread flooding: Merida, Trujillo, Falcón, Zulia, Carabobo, Aragua, Miranda, Sucre and Vargas. According to the Venezuela civil defence authorities, three people have been killed and thousands made homeless.

The Venezuelan authorities have already evacuated several thousands of people from their homes in Vargas and are arranging temporary shelter facilities for those affected. River levels are being closely monitored as the bad weather continues.

Floods and landslides in the country last December left up to 30,000 dead, with tens of thousands more made homeless. Many communities are still living in high-risk areas affected by last year's landslides, despite government efforts to relocate people to the interior of the country. The Venezuelan Red Cross (VRC), supported by the Federation and several Participating National Societies, is still assisting those affected in Vargas state, within the framework of appeal 35/99 launched following severe flooding.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Volunteers from the Vargas branch of the Venezuelan Red Cross, headed by the branch's seven-person relief team, have been responding to the emergency situation since Sunday. In the first instance, the branch assisted with evacuations in the affected areas and subsequently conducted an initial needs assessment in conjunction with the Venezuelan authorities. Provisions and basic supplies have been provided in eight shelters, mostly located in schools, theatres and military centres, where more than 750 families are staying.

The national relief department of the VRC has been supporting the Vargas branch through the provision of resources and operational assistance, including volunteers and vehicles. A contingency plan has been drawn up and an operations post established in Maiquetía airport.

The Federation's Venezuela delegation and PNS active in the country have been closely co-ordinating with the VRC and have provided supplies, vehicles, communications equipment and technical support to facilitate implementation of the operation.

Needs

For the present, the Venezuelan authorities have not considered requesting international assistance and anticipate meeting immediate needs using national resources.

However, additional funding within the framework of appeal 35/99 can assist the ongoing process of strengthening the response capacity of the Venezuelan Red Cross and assisting vulnerable, flood-affected communities, especially within the state of Vargas.

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