

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

URUGUAY: FLOODS

7 June 2001

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This Information Bulletin is for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

Uruguay's north and central regions were affected by severe flooding caused by heavy rains (over 100 mm in some areas) which fell from 1 to 4 June. The most affected area is the province of Artigas, whose capital, of the same name, is a town built on the banks of the Cuareim river. The rapid overflowing of this river, which is now receding, caused the evacuation of 5,500 persons, the destruction of 240 houses and severe damage to an additional 1,200 houses and the public service infrastructure.

Part of the displaced population is returning to their homes, but many others are afraid their houses may soon collapse.

The provincial authorities of Artigas roughly estimate the cost of flood-related damage at USD three million, however losses of the agricultural sector are not included in this figure. Representatives of the Housing Ministry and other national authorities are assessing the damage and planning the mid and long term responses to the disaster.

The 4,000 most affected evacuees were provided shelter and food thanks to the combined efforts of the provincial and national authorities. The National Food Programme (*Instituto Nacional de la Alimentación* - INDA) sent 18 metric tonnes of food, apart from other relief supplies, to the area.

The president of Uruguay announced that the government is willing to use the National Emergency Fund to respond to the disaster.

Last reports from the International Federation's regional delegation in Buenos Aires stated that people in the area down from El Salto dam, particularly the populations living on the banks of the Uruguay river (of which the Cuareim river is a tributary), are very concerned with possible adverse effects of the current releasing of water from the dam. This manoeuvre can add 11 metres to the level of the Uruguay river,

while 11.5 is the limit from which the river overflows. Until yesterday the level had risen 10 metres and seemed stable, after a fast increase on Sunday.

In Artigas province, the duration of the emergency sheltering for most of the evacuees is estimated at 10 days if heavy rains stop or up to 60 days if they continue. The health situation is under control and the authorities sent medicines to the disaster area.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Uruguayan Red Cross offered its support to the authorities in responding to the disaster. The vice-president of the Disaster Response Commission and the communications director travelled from the national society's headquarters to the disaster area to co-ordinate the initial response and the needs assessment. The regional delegation in Buenos Aires is in permanent contact with the national society. Also, the Pan-American Disaster Response Unit is on alert to intervene, if necessary.

For a full description of the national society's profile, see www.ifrc.org

Needs

No international appeal was made by the Uruguayan Government or the national society.

The results of the Red Cross' needs assessment will be shared with all national societies as soon as it is available.

For further details please contact:

- *The Uruguayan Red Cross in Montevideo; Phone +598 (2) 4802112; Fax +598 (2) 4800714; email cruzroja@adinet.com.uy*
- *Luis Luna, Phone 41 22 730 4274; Fax 41 22 733 0395; email luna@ifrc.org*

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Head, a.i.
Relationship Management Department

Santiago Gil
Head
Americas Department