

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

PERU AND BOLIVIA: SNOWSTORMS

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Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)Allocated: CHF 80,000 (USD 55,233/EUR 54,615)

This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below. A DREF allocation of CHF 80,000 has been released by the International Federation. The launch of an appeal is possible depending on the result of the ongoing needs assessments in both countries. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed.

The Situation

A strong cold front has settled into Peru and Bolivia over the past two weeks especially in the Department of Potosi in Bolivia and throughout several regions in Peru, Northern Argentina and Chile.

While Bolivia and Peru have been the hardest hit areas, several provinces in northwest Argentina have suffered intense snowstorms with winds up to 100 km per hour leaving hundreds of people isolated, especially in the town of Salta where railroad tracks and highways were shut down. In Chile, those affected by the storm number about 25,000 and the authorities in Arica report one death due to hypothermia.

• PERU

At least 59 people have died in southern Peru, because of heavy snow and the coldest temperatures in a decade, devastating rural regions. The number of people who have died during the unusually cold winter conditions in southern Peru is rising daily, with the majority being small children who contracted pneumonia. Others normally used to bitter temperatures at altitudes of more than 4,000 meters have been treated for respiratory problems.

According to the Civil Defense (INDECI) over 70,000 people have been affected by temperatures as low as minus 20 degrees Celsius. Many roads are impassable because of heavy snow. An estimated 80,000 livestock, principally llamas, have died and 23,048 hectares of crops have been destroyed. Over 17,000 homes have been damaged, 198 of which are destroyed. Twenty percent of the Andean country's alpacas and llamas could be wiped out by the coldest weather in a decade. According to the Ministry of Health and WHO/PAHO, medical attention is being provided to those suffering from respiratory diseases such as pneumonia and bronchitis, whose numbers have increased as a consequence of the emergency.

The Peruvian Government has declared the state of emergency in the departments of Tacna, Arequipa, Puno, Ayacucho, Cuzco, Moquegua and Apurimac. The Government, as well as humanitarian organisations, are having difficulty in getting aid to the zone given weather and road conditions. Authorities have only had three helicopters to provide people with the supplies and that many areas remain completely cut off.

To date, INDECI and other government agencies has distributed 450 tons of relief items. The Ministry of Health has dispatched all available health personnel in order to control an outbreak of respiratory ailments. Heavy machinery has been sent to the affected areas in an attempt to clear passage to communities and the Ministry of Agriculture has begun to assess damages to crops and livestock.

• ***BOLIVIA***

Bolivia has also been struck by intense snowstorms and extreme cold temperatures. The department of Potosi has reported snow and ice from 30 cm to 1.5 meters deep. More than 2520 families (or 12,600 people) located in 60 communities in 4 provinces have been isolated because of precarious road conditions and due to the quantity of snow that has fallen. More than 100 people have disappeared in the storms. Five people, including two children have died as a result of the frigid temperatures. Hundreds of people have been treated for hypothermia and frostbite.

Respiratory problems have increased dramatically. Many children are reportedly in serious danger of freezing and starving, trapped alone in their houses as a result of their parents leaving to vote in national elections and being trapped with no way to return home. Most of those affected present symptoms of acute respiratory diseases.

People do not possess adequate clothing and have no means of heat as manure is the principle fuel and is now covered by snow. Most communities are self-sufficient in terms of food, utilising local crops and the meat provided by llamas and alpacas. Authorities are worried of wide spread starvation given that the storms and cold weather have killed 50,000 of the 120,000 animals in the region. The remainder of the animals are also at risk of dying due to a lack of forage. The disaster has resulted in the death of protected species such as vicuñas and flamingos.

According to the national census carried out in September 2001 79.7% of the population of the region lives below the poverty line, and 36.1% of the overall population lives in absolute poverty. This places already vulnerable and high-risk communities in a very precarious situation.

On July 18, the Sub-Director of the National Defense officially declared the area an emergency zone and at the same time indicated that the humanitarian aid received thus far was insufficient to meet the needs of the affected population.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

• ***PERU***

On July 11, 2002 the Peruvian Red Cross (PRC) declared a general state of alert and began developing a plan of action to address the needs of those affected. As a result the following decisions/actions were taken:

- A National Operations Centre was opened at the Headquarters of the PRC.
- Regional Operations Centres was opened in the branches in Arequipa, Juliaca, Cuzco and Tacna with strategic warehouses set-up in Arequipa (utilising CARE facilities), Juliaca and Cuzco (utilising ADRA facilities). In Arequipa there are 2000 blankets in stock which will be distributed as well as 1000 in Lima.
- 200 volunteers were mobilised.
- An evaluation of damage was initiated in all centres and in conjunction with INDECI and the Ministry of Health.
- A campaign called "Ayudemos nuevamente al sur" was launched, in conjunction with Channel 5 television, in order to collect funds and in-kind donations from the public. The response to date has been significant.
- Inter-institutional co-ordination meetings were scheduled. On July 16 a meeting with representatives from government, NGOs and several Embassies was held to exchange information and to build a common strategy. On the same date a meeting was called by the PRC at which representatives from 11 national and international NGOs participated to further refine the planned response.
- Strategic warehouses have been set.
- An agreement with the airlines Aerocontinente was negotiated for the transport of goods to Puno, Cuzco and Arequipa.
- 10 vehicles from the PRC and 3 from the German Red Cross have been mobilised for the transport of humanitarian goods

- To date, 19 tonnes of relief items (clothing, food and medicine) donated by the public were transported to Arequipa.
- In Moquegua, a temporary shelter has been set up for both people and livestock.
- In Arequipa 4 health campaigns have been carried out and have provided services to 600 people.

• ***BOLIVIA***

Mobilisation of the National Defense, various government ministries as well as local and international NGOs including the Bolivian Red Cross (BRC) and its branches in Potosi, Chuquisaca and Tupiza occurred quickly. Heavy machinery to clear snow from the roads and helicopters to reach some communities was dispatched immediately. The government of Peru provided a helicopter in order to transport needed aid to the affected communities. However, this Peru-Bolivian rescue team had difficulty reaching the affected zone because of the quantity of snow and the sub-zero temperatures. The Bolivian Army Force mobilised 10,000 troops from nearby regiments to help with road clearing and helping those affected in the area.

CARE and WFP, both of whom have ongoing projects in the area, were quick to respond, with support from BRC volunteers. Food had to be moved from the WFP warehouse in Tupiza to the city of Uyuni in order to gain better access to the affected region.

Volunteers from the BRC branches have provided first aid to those affected as well as the transportation of the injured to health facilities. They have also provided support in the distribution of 100 tonnes of food in very difficult circumstances. The Civil Defense has also distributed 40 tons of food from the warehouses in Uyuni.

Needs

• ***PERU***

The initial focus of the operation is on providing food, shelter and health services to the affected communities, with particular attention given to children and seniors, because of their susceptibility to respiratory infections.

The PRC has initially identified the following areas of focus in their operation:

- Food distributions (cooking oil, sugar, rice, flour, quinoa, salt and pasta)
- Health (medicines for respiratory illnesses and sunglasses)
- Roofing materials due to the number of roofs destroyed
- Tools (shovels, picks)

The PRC will continue to assess the number of those affected by the snowstorms as currently there are only partial records of the damages due to the continuation of the extreme cold, heavy snowstorms and the lack of access to the affected areas.

• ***BOLIVIA***

While there is a great need for medicines, food, clothes, gas and tools, it is the loss of livestock which has caused concern, for it is a means of survival for many of the communities. The Ministry of Agriculture convened an inter-institutional meeting with representatives from the governments of Japan and Italy as well as USAID, CARE, WFP, FAO, BMZ, the BRC and other national organisations. The focus of the meeting was to inform those who attended of the grave agricultural situation. The Ministry calculates that 1300 tonnes of forage is required, with a cost of USD 100,000, to meet immediate needs. USAID and the Japanese government has agreed to provide the necessary funds. However a second phase, consisting of more forage as well as replenishing livestock numbers and damaged crops will be needed.

The BRC has officially been asked to provide assistance in the form of food, blankets, winter clothing to support the Ministry of Health through mobilising health brigades as there are few health professionals in the area. The BRC is meeting with Ministry officials as well as with PAHO to coordinate the response. The BRC will also assume a major role in the Evaluation of Damage and Analysis of Needs to be undertaken and been solicited to provide support in the above mentioned second operational phase.

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.

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