

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

PARAGUAY: DROUGHT

12 October 2002

Information Bulletin N° 01/02

Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: CHF 70,000

- This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below. A DREF allocation of CHF 70,000 has been released. The Paraguayan Red Cross, with International Federation support, are further assessing the needs and preparing a plan of action for an appeal. For the time being, unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed.*

The Situation

An extended drought has affected the departments of Alto Paraguay, Boquerón and Canindeyú in the west of Paraguay over the last two years, in which the Spanish Red Cross and ECHO have provided relief to the most affected people and helped them in several, finally vain, attempts to resume their farming activity. During the last eight months, there has been no rain at all and the situation has deteriorated rapidly; a state of emergency has been declared by the government in these departments. The drought has had a particularly negative impact on agriculture, affecting a large number of families which live on subsistence crops. These families have exhausted all their food and water reserves. In Boquerón department, there are currently 4,970 rural farming families who have no food assistance or provision of water. The drought has resulted in the loss of lives: so far 17 people have died because of contaminated water, and the population's health has been seriously affected as there has been an increase of infectious diseases related to the absence of drinking water and the limited quantities of poor quality water available. The water supply systems called "tajamares": excavations where rain water is collected and distributed to the community, are totally dry. There is only one medical centre which is located far from the affected communities. Furthermore, local health promoters state that they are unable to respond to the needs given a lack of resources.

The government's national emergency committee has formed working groups and visited the affected areas on Friday, 4 October. The emergency committee plans to supply water tankers and food rations to the extent indicated by the evaluation being carried out.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Paraguayan Red Cross branch in Boquerón has joined efforts with representatives of the local authorities of Boquerón, who have declared a food emergency throughout the department. Together with

a team from OCHA, staff from the Paraguayan Red Cross headquarters have been in the drought-stricken area to assess needs. A summary plan of action has been submitted by the National Society, requesting vital support in the areas of food distribution and provision of water, and coordination is ensured with the government and with municipal and departmental authorities. Currently, the Buenos Aires based DP&R Delegate for South America and PADRU's Water/Sanitation Delegate are starting a mission to Paraguay to co-operate with the Paraguayan Red Cross in further structuring the plan of action.

Needs

Immediate needs are for food rations and drinking water for 4,970 families in 83 communities for at least one month. More detailed information relating to needs will be available once the Red Cross team's preparatory work has been completed. However, it is essential to begin urgent provision of food and water to the worst-affected communities in order to save lives.

Further information will be issued early next week.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

For further details please contact :

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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.

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