

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

VENEZUELA: FLOODS

26 July 2002

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Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: None

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

As a result of continual heavy rain in Venezuela since June 2002, the State of Apure, located in the southwestern plains, has been seriously affected by widespread flooding, mostly produced by saturation of the soil. This prompted the declaration of an emergency alert situation by the authorities of the regional government.

The situation worsened given constant heavy rainfall on 18, 19 and 20 July, with water levels rising 1.5 metres above normal and causing the Sarare river to overflow its banks. The resulting flooding has impacted more people than previously thought with estimates now reaching over 40,000 inhabitants. In the area of Guadualito, approximately 10,000 people have been evacuated to neighbouring municipalities and are now staying with family, neighbours or in temporary shelters. However, some families are reticent to leave since they are fearful of vandalism and theft. Damage to infrastructure such as bridges and roads is extensive as is loss of crops and livestock. In addition, there is a lack of drinking water as many wells have been contaminated by the flood waters.

A detailed survey has yet to be completed, as numbers of affected people continue to rise. The Venezuelan government has requested financial support in order to meet emergency requirements.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Venezuelan Red Cross (VRC) responded immediately upon notification of the disaster. A team of three disaster response specialists was dispatched to the affected area carry out an evaluation of damage and an analysis of needs (EDAN).

30 volunteers, all members of the national intervention team (NIT), many of whom are from the Apure state branch, are working directly in the affected area providing first aid and are also carrying out registration of the population affected. Furthermore, two doctors from the VRC are working in local hospitals. Two vehicles have been sent to the area to support the operation.

The VRC has sent a plane-load of humanitarian relief goods provided by both the Red Cross and the government to the affected region. The following items have been distributed:

- 640 food kits of 20 kg.
- 320 pest control kits.
- 720,000 litres of potable water.
- 320 cleanup kits.

- 320 hygiene kits.

In addition, 80 latrines have been installed as well as potable water systems such water tanks supplied by Oxfam, water bladders, pumps, water containers, pipes and chlorine tablets for disinfecting contaminated water. Telecom Sans Frontières has arrived in the country and is working closely with the VRC in the affected zone: 6 satellite telephones and 2 satellite internet and fax systems have been set up to facilitate communication.

The National Civil Protection Agency, national Armed Forces and the VRC have set up four temporary shelters housing 128 families in total. The VRC continues to participate actively in inter-institutional coordination meetings. The Company “Bancarias Banesco”, acting as a sponsor to the VRC, has placed one helicopter and one ‘plane at the disposal of the VRC for use in transporting relief items and personnel.

Spanish and American Red Cross representatives have visited the field and are currently developing response plans in cooperation with the head office of the VRC and the branches in the affected areas. The focus of Red Cross work will be on water and sanitation and agricultural rehabilitation.

Further information will be provided as more detailed results of the damage and needs assessment become available.

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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