

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

COSTA RICA: EARTHQUAKE

22 November 2004

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 01/2004) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

Costa Ricans are clearing up after a strong earthquake hit the country at 02:02 am on Saturday, 20 November, killing at least eight people. Hundreds of houses were damaged and major highways were cracked in the magnitude 6.2 earthquake, the epicentre of which was located 48 kilometres southwest of the capital city of San Jose. The hardest-hit areas are Quepos and Parrita in the Pacific Coast and the Central Valley regions, where heavy damages to infrastructure and water systems have been reported. In Quepos, ongoing assessments confirm a total of 36 damaged homes and 5 homes that have been totally destroyed as a result of the earthquake and subsequent landslides. The local hospital and some school buildings were also affected. In Parrita, 15 houses and a number of public buildings have suffered considerable damage, and the local police station reportedly collapsed. Power and water supplies in the area remain cut off. Other communities affected include Puriscal, Cartago, Alejuela and some areas of San Jose.

Authorities confirmed that three of the casualties had died from heart attacks. Falling trees knocked out power to the area around Quepos and the beach town of Jaco, according to the spokeswoman for the National Emergency Commission. The Costa Rican Government has declared a "Yellow Alert" in the affected areas and an Emergency Operations Centre has been activated. Emergency relief aid has been sent to the communities, including supplies of clean water. Seismologists, engineers and firemen are working in the affected areas while government institutions continue their efforts to clean roads and re-establish the water network and electricity services.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Costa Rican Red Cross (CRRC) has been actively involved with the Emergency Operations Centre since the start of the relief operation, supporting the centre in the coordination of relief activities. The National Society is now assessing damage and needs in the field, working closely with other organizations involved with the ongoing relief efforts. The findings of this assessment will help the CRRC to define main priority areas for further assistance. Local branches in the affected areas are providing first aid and supporting search and rescue activities. So far, the National Society has deployed a total of 20 vehicles to the disaster areas and human resources to coordinate relief and public health efforts and psychosocial support activities. In addition, water tanks have been sent to the most affected areas of Parrita.

The Costa Rican Red Cross has been maintaining close contact with the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Panama Regional Delegation since the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. PADRU is prepared to support the relief activities if required and some pre-positioned water and sanitation equipment is ready for deployment upon the request of the National Society.

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.

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

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