

MINOR EMERGENCY



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

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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

CHF 55,000 (USD 42,751 OR EUR 35,496) HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO RESPOND TO THIS OPERATION.

UN earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

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For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The situation

A period of prolonged drought is once again affecting 4,900 families in the department of Boquerón in Paraguay this year, where little to no rain has fallen since April. The western region of Paraguay, called the "Paraguayan Chaco", which includes the department of Boquerón, covers an area of 246,925 km², equivalent to 60 percent of the country, and has a population of 160,214 inhabitants. This region experiences droughts on an almost annual basis.



The main limiting factor for the development of the Chaco region is the recurrent scarcity of drinking water due to the climate, which varies from sub-humid and semi-humid to semi-arid and arid. Drought also frequently affects neighbouring regions of Argentina and Bolivia. This problem has generally been tackled with two different types of cisterns used for rainwater harvesting: cisterns or storage tanks called *aljibes*, and cutwater cisterns called *tajamares*. These cisterns are

The Chaco region in western Paraguay is regularly affected by drought conditions.

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now totally dry. The drought has also damaged crops throughout the area, which is primarily populated by subsistence farmers.

On 26 September 2005, the Paraguayan National Conference declared a state of emergency in the Chaco region for six months. Government ministries, the National Emergency Secretariat (SEN) and other organizations working in the region will work together with farmers and residents to provide assistance in response to this situation. The department of Boquerón has a Departmental Emergency Committee (CDE) to work on problems such as severe drought; however this committee has not held meetings for 2 years now.

An estimated total of 11,518 families (52,990 people) in 265 communities in the 3 departments in the Chaco region have been affected as shown below:

Department	Affected families	Number of communities	Total
Presidente Hayes	4,920	102	20,000
Boquerón	4,182	83	20,910
Alto Paraguay	2,416	30	12,080
Total	11,518	265	52,990

Source: SEN ó Assistance Programme database CEN/COOPI ó Asociaci³n de Cooperaci³n Indígena Menonita ó Gobernaci³n de A. Paraguay ó Red Cross census ó Statistics and Census Department.

Following a severe drought in 2000 – 2001, the Paraguayan Red Cross (PRC) intervened in the region, with support from the Spanish Red Cross and the Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid of the European Commission (ECHO), to provide assistance to the communities with food and the building of water systems. In 2002 – 2003 the Federation, the Spanish Red Cross, ECHO and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), together with the PRC, financed humanitarian aid operations supplying food to 5,976 families in 57 communities. At this time, another 4,194 families also benefited from the distribution of safe water, and 74 water supply systems were built. The relief operation also included training and information on better hygiene and water and sanitation practices. After the emergency phase, the Federation also supported a transition project, using the community integrated programme methodology. The Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) methodology was applied in order to complete a diagnosis of the community and carry out community-based planning. Volunteers were trained in the use of specific tools to work with communities, and hygiene, water and sanitation and disaster preparedness activities were carried out.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action taken so far



A view of a tajamar (cutwater cistern) in the open fields in the Chaco region of Paraguay

Based on surveys carried out in the affected departments, it has been determined that the Paraguayan Red Cross will provide food supplements to 1,150 families in 22 communities in the department of Boquerón. Communities that are reliant on locally grown crops, have exhausted their food reserves and are located far from urban centres will be prioritized. The local communities are being organized in order to better manage these food distributions, which are being carried out with funding provided by the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF).

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The Paraguayan Red Cross is also working to create and train a community-based team to promote better practices in water and sanitation management and to improve the use and availability of safe water. This phase of the response operation is being carried out in close coordination with other relevant national actors.

Additional projects will be carried out for rehabilitation, including training activities and community integrated programming (CIP). A longer term project, supported by the Federation, will also be developed in order to improve water and sanitation systems, benefiting more than 1,150 families.

The needs

Water

An urgent need to be tackled is to work on the improvement of the water supply system and safe water access for the affected families

Health

There has been an increase in the incidence of infectious diseases related to the lack of clean drinking water. Health personnel in the region stress that there is little they can do without the necessary resources. There is also a need to promote good hygiene practices in the affected areas.

Agriculture

Both commercial and subsistence farmers have been hard-hit by this disaster. Community food reserves have already been used as the previous year's crops were also affected by low amounts of rain.



Filtration and water deposits coming from the tajamares in the community of La Preciosa, department of Boquerón.

Coordination

The Paraguayan Red Cross plays an important role within the Executive Committee of the National Emergency Secretariat (SEN) and is working in close coordination with other institutions and organizations, including the National Indigenous Institute, government bodies, municipalities and representatives of indigenous communities, in order to carry out an updated assessment of the communities affected. This assessment takes into account their capacities, resources, existing technology and prioritized needs in order to plan further actions and ensure the communities' self-sustainability.

The Canadian Red Cross has pledged CAD 25,000 (approximately CHF 27,372) to support the drought operation which will be used to reimburse part of the DREF funds allocated.

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