

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

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BOLIVIA: FLOODS

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 185 countries.

In Brief

This Bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the situation and the information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to achieve the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- **Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.**
- **Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.**
- **Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.**
- **Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.**

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

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

Severe and long-lasting rainfall in Bolivia during the first months of 2007 has caused significant flooding, particularly in several regions of Chuquisaca, Santa Cruz, Cochabamba and northern La Paz and Beni departments. In addition, there was hail reported in Potosi and flooding in Tarija. The continuous rains and the overflowing of major rivers such as Rio Grande, Pilcomayo, San Juan del Oro, Bermejo amongst others, have caused landslides and obstruction of some of the main roads, and isolated several rural communities. The flooding is still continuing, particularly in the Bolivian lowlands. Santa Cruz is one of the most affected departments. At this moment, the city of Santa Cruz is under red alert as the nearby Pirai River dramatically increased its flow, herewith necessitating the immediate evacuations of several neighbourhoods in the city.

The General Directorate for Emergency and Relief (Dirección General de Emergencia y Auxilio), under the Vice-Ministry of Civil Defence and Integral Development Cooperation (Viceministerio de Defensa Civil y Cooperación al Desarrollo Integral) reported that a total of 18,806 families (94,030 people) have been affected, including 17 persons dead and three missing in several regions throughout the country. It is likely that the total number of affected people will rise once assessments are finalized, given that some communities are still isolated because of landslides and destroyed roads.

Number of affected families to date ²

Department	Affected families
Beni	486
Chuquisaca	4,219
Cochabamba	3,953
La Paz	2,067
Oruro	14
Potosí	2,830
Santa Cruz	3,217
Tarija	2,020
TOTAL	18,806

Due to the widespread flooding, the Bolivian government has declared a state of emergency for seven departments in Bolivia- out of nine - in order to ensure emergency measures to improve the situation of thousands of victims. Constant rainfall and a rise in water levels, particularly in the east of the country, prompted the Ministry of Health to declare a nationwide “red alert” in order to prevent possible dengue outbreaks, as an increase in the number of waterborne and respiratory diseases among displaced families has been reported.

Furthermore, agriculture and cattle-rearing activities have been severely affected throughout Bolivia, particularly in the departments of Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, Chuquisaca, Tarija, Potosi and La Paz. It is estimated that, in only the department of Santa Cruz, some 50,000 hectares of crops were lost.

Bolivia’s rainy season lasts from November to March. The National Meteorological Service in Bolivia predicts that the exceptionally heavy rain will continue through February. According to some weather experts this year’s unusually bad weather is related to the El Niño phenomenon, which causes heavy rain and floods in some places and drought and unusually warm temperatures in other locations.

Response to the emergency so far

National Response:

² This table also includes the 2,415 families affected in the rainy season in December of last year, and 16,391 in January this year.

- The Bolivian Government undertook needs assessments in the affected areas, in coordination with regional and local authorities. Health units have been deployed to affected areas and search and rescue teams are assisting in the evacuation from at-risk areas.
- Bolivia's Navy has offered to deploy vessels and rescue boats to the affected areas in Beni. They will also conduct technical assessment missions and offer assistance to affected families upon request of the local authorities.
- The Bolivian Road Management authority (Administradora Boliviana de Carreteras) has announced the implementation of an emergency plan and has already started repairs on roads affected by landslides, floods etc.
- Assistance has also been provided by the Civil Defence, regional and municipal authorities. Some Departments have established their own Regional Emergency Centres. In Okinawa (Santa Cruz) three shelters have been established.
- In Santa Cruz, the Departmental Coordination Centre (COED) along with the Civil Defence has defined its emergency work plan and has already assisted families in different areas of the Department. Some 25 shelters will possibly need to be established in Santa Cruz. Local authorities in coordination with COED are identifying secure places to install temporary shelters.
- Assistance is being distributed to those affected through the General Directorate for Emergency and Relief. 20 tonnes of food and other provisions were sent to Santa Cruz and 13 tonnes to Tarija.
- The Ministry of Health is mobilizing disease-prevention resources in order to deal with possible cases of yellow fever, diarrhoea, malaria and dengue.
- 400 tents have been collected with the support of the Civil Defense, UNICEF and World Vision.

Response by other humanitarian organizations or governments:

- World Food Programme (WFP) authorized the delivery of food aid to 8,297 affected families in the departments of Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, Potosí, Chuquisaca and Tarija. In the department of Santa Cruz alone, 5,490 families are receiving WFP food aid.
- The United Nations Emergency Technical Team (UNETT) is closely coordinating with the General Directorate for Emergency and Relief and has offered technical assistance to facilitate the coordination process and is prepared to respond to further needs.
- The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) donated an important quantity of drugs that will be distributed mainly in the cities of Santa Cruz and Cochabamba and is coordinating with the National Health System for public health actions and provision of drugs.
- OCHA is deploying a United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team upon the request of the UN Resident Coordinator to support the UN Country Team and UNETT actions in Bolivia, for a two week period.
- UNICEF has hired a national consultant to assess the needs in water and sanitation, protection and education sectors. UNICEF will also provide 90 tents, 200 mosquito nets and 30,000 rations of children food supplement.
- The United States government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), provided USD 50,000 through USAID/Bolivia to support the carrying out of vigilance flights and facilitate logistics.
- In addition, the People's Republic of China announced that it would donate USD 50,000 to the Bolivian Red Cross for the purchase of medicines, food and other vital items in accordance with identified needs.
- The Church of the Latter Day Saints (Iglesia de los Santos de los Últimos Días) will provide USD 200,000 in clothes, tools and school kits.
- World Vision has provided 310 packages of clothes.
- Other cooperation agencies and NGOs such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the Spanish International Cooperation Agency, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Telecommunications Sans Frontiers are ready to respond pending further assessment information and request from the Government of Bolivia.

Red Cross action

The Bolivian Red Cross (BRC) has received a contribution of USD 50,000 from the Chinese government, which enables the National Society to support a community located on the border of Santa Cruz and Cochabamba, which has not received attention by other organizations.

The BRC has closely monitored the situation and is in constant communication with their local branches in order ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation of the effects from the floods in all areas of the country, and is currently carrying out needs assessments in order to formulate a Plan of Action.

The local branch of Tarija in coordination with the local government and the local television channel carried out a collection of funds through which they financed a distribution of humanitarian aid to the affected people in El Puente region.

From the onset of the emergency, the BRC has been in close communication with the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) through the Disaster Management delegate assigned to the Lima Regional Delegation. The BRC will continue to monitor the situation and if further assistance is required, PADRU will immediately deploy a Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member to the affected area. Furthermore, the Disaster Management delegate who is currently deployed to an emergency in Paraguay will be mobilized in the coming hours to Bolivia to assist the BRC.

The BRC has been participating in several inter-agency meetings with the United Nations, the World Food Programme, World Vision, CARE, PAHO and the Bolivian Civil Defence in order to coordinate joint actions. As a result, it has been decided that the organizations will cover different areas in order to avoid duplication of efforts. The BRC is currently awaiting further information in order to define next steps. The Bolivian government, through the National Coordination Centre (COEN) is preparing a donor meeting to be held on 8 February, when an official appeal for international assistance will probably be launched.

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