

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

PANAMA: FIRE

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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 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.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- *In Panama: José Béliz, Director General, Red Cross Society of Panama; e-mail cruzroja@pa.gbnet.cc; Phone (507) 315 189 or 680 3455; fax (507) 315 1401.*
- *In Panama: Stephen McAndrew, Head, Pan American Disaster Response Unit; e-mail Stephen.McAndrew@ifrc.org, phone (507) 316-1001; fax (507) 316-1082.*
- *In Geneva: Luis Luna, Federation Regional Officer, Americas Department, Geneva; e-mail Luis.Luna@ifrc.org, phone 41-22-730-4274; fax 41-22-733-0395.*

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



Fire has severely affected the island of Miria Ubgigandu

In a period of one month, the indigenous Kuna Yala region¹ in Panama has faced three devastating fires in three different villages - according to official figures from the Panamanian government - affecting a total of 1,436 people and destroying at least 278 houses.

During the night of 20 December 2006, a fire severely affected the indigenous community of Piria in the Mandugandí region of the Darién province. At least 43 houses were completely destroyed, three people were injured and over 314 were directly affected. The school, the small local grocery store and the community centre were completely consumed by the fire.

On 26 December 2006 a second devastating fire affected the island Miria Ubgigandu, also in the Kuna Yala region. With the exception of two children with

respiratory problems, there were no major injuries. In terms of housing, however, major losses were sustained. According to official figures from the Panamanian government, 39 houses were totally destroyed and 348 houses suffered severe damage. The general Kuna council stated that at least 114 houses were destroyed on this island. Furthermore, there has been major damage on the aqueduct and the public telephone and various animals have died.

A team of nurses and doctors from the Ministry of Health (Ministerio de Salud) as well as personnel of Ministry of Housing (Ministerio de Vivienda), Ministry of Social Development (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social), National Maritime Service (Servicio Marítimo Nacional), National Air Service (Servicio Aéreo Nacional), and SINAPROC (Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil – National System of Civil Defence) has visited the affected area.

On 7 January a third fire caused major damage within the Wala community in the Wargandí region of the Darién province. 196 houses were totally destroyed, thus leaving at least 774 people homeless.

Governmental institutions such as the Office of the First Lady (Despacho de la Primera Dama) and Civil Defense (SINAPROC- Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil) have supported the affected population with food and non-food items, such as non-perishable food, milk, water, tents, clothing, diapers, stoves, mattresses, kitchen sets, blankets, construction materials. The Panama Fire Brigade (Cuerpo de Bomberos de Panamá) and a governmental investigation team is currently looking into the causes of the three fires.



A third fire broke in the Wala community in the Wargandí region of Darién

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Red Cross Society of Panama, in coordination with the International Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), has closely monitored the situation but it was not necessary to take actions, as needs were covered by governmental institutions.

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¹ The Kuna Yala region is an autonomous indigenous territory (part on the mainland, part on an archipelago) located in the north-east part of the country, on the Atlantic coast.