

# ***ECUADOR: VOLCANO***

*18 October 1999*

## ***Information Bulletin N° 02***

### ***The Disaster***

Just two weeks ago, the International Federation issued an Information Bulletin after authorities in Ecuador declared an orange alert regarding increased seismic activity around the ***Guagua Pichincha*** volcano. Now, another *orange* alert has been declared for an even more dangerous volcano, ***Tungurahua***, located 128 km from the capital city, Quito. Of the five active volcanoes in Ecuador - Sumaco, Reventador, Sangay, Guagua Pichincha and Tungurahua - the last two represent a major concern for local authorities, since they could have a direct impact on the population in their vicinity.

*Tungurahua* is classified as a pyroclastic volcano, and eruptions are characterised by violent displacements of rock, ash and lava. According to the head of vulcanology of the Civil Defense, the probability of an eruption is 80%. This means that the country is now threatened by two volcanic situations both of which have a high possibility of eruption within the next two months. In the case of *Tungurahua* particularly, such an eruption would threaten a number of large towns and many smaller communities. Ecuador's Geophysics Institute reported on 16 October that over 10,000 of the tourist city of Baños's 20,000 citizens and their neighbors have been evacuated.

The increasing probability of an eruption has been accompanied by permanent changes in the cone of the volcano, and the presence of pyroclastic material, daily emission of ash and mudslides. Further accumulation of lava and mud will create serious risks of larger mudslides. There is already considerable damage to agriculture with some loss of livestock. During the past days hundreds of people have voluntarily evacuated the area. Civil Defense authorities are preparing some 125 shelters in the towns of Chimborazo, Pelileo, Pillaro, Tisaleo, Cevallos Mocha, Ambato, Puyo, Mera, Shell and Veracruz.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The Ecuadorian Red Cross (ERC) has established a Plan of Action and intervention in the region as part of its contingency plan. 200 hundred volunteers are ready to participate should the *orange* alert be upgraded to *red* and some census and disaster preparedness activities have already been undertaken in addition to the action already underway for *Guagua Pichincha* as reported in Information Bulletin N°1. The Baños Branch of the ERC has been temporarily closed due to the evacuation order.

The International Federation's Regional Delegation in Guatemala is in direct contact with the ERC and the Americas Desk Officer in Geneva to ensure co-ordinated support. The release of CHF 30,000 from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) has been approved and two delegates are on standby with additional technical help in communications if needed.

## *Needs*

The Ecuadorian Red Cross has already deployed much of its contingency resources during the first volcano alert and now needs to reinforce its emergency supplies and capacity to meet the new threat. It has requested assistance for the following to which the DREF allocation will be applied: communication equipment, protective clothing, First Aid & oxygen kits, rescue materials, bladder tanks, plastic sheeting and other shelter materials.

National Societies wishing to provide assistance by replenishing the DREF should contact: Iain Logan, Desk Officer, Central Americas: e-mail [logan@ifrc.org](mailto:logan@ifrc.org) / Phone + 41 22 730 4535

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