

# ***VENEZUELA: FLOODS***

19 December, 1999

## ***Information Bulletin N° 1***

### ***The Disaster***

Ten days of continuous rainfall in Venezuela has provoked serious flooding and landslides in the Federal District, as well as in the States of Miranda, Vargas, Nueva Esparta (the Island of Margarita), Yaracuy, Falcon, Carabobo, Zulia and Tachira. The number of deaths remains difficult to confirm (initial reports vary widely from an official figure of more than 700 to as many as 25,000); over 500,000 people are estimated to have been directly affected. The Government of Venezuela has declared a State of Emergency.

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

The Venezuelan Ministry of Interior, through the National Civil Defence Authorities, are coordinating the relief operation. The Red Cross is supporting this by:

- assisting in the ongoing rescue and search operations;
- transporting the injured for medical treatment (utilising the airports of Caracas, Carlota, and Maiquetia); and
- assisting people who have taken refuge in temporary shelters by providing food parcels, blankets, clothes, and other general relief items.

These emergency activities are being carried out with the support of over 1,200 Red Cross first aid and other volunteers. Two Federation delegates have arrived in country to support the operation, and the Federation has received information about action by the American Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, and German Red Cross. A number of Participating National Societies have indicated readiness to provide financial support as soon as an appeal is launched. The release of CHF 60,000 from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) has facilitated the initial phase of the emergency assistance operation, pending the launch of a Preliminary Appeal on Monday morning, December 20.

### ***Needs***

The action is still mainly focused on rescue, but those made homeless require material assistance. Assessment efforts are underway, and detailed needs as well as quantities will be communicated in the coming Preliminary Appeal. There is a clear need for blankets, water purification equipment and tablets, generators, vehicles, vector control measures, and shelter material.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Director  
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Santiago Gil  
Director  
Americas Department

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