

OPERATIONS UPDATE



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

ARGENTINA: FLOODS IN SANTA FE PROVINCE

13 May 2003

This Ops Update is intended for reporting on emergency appeals.

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 178 countries. For more information: www.ifrc.org

Appeal No. 10/03

Launched on 6 May 2003 for CHF 607,000 for three months for 8,000 beneficiaries

Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: CHF 50,000

Beneficiaries: 8,000

Operations Update No. 1; Period covered: 28 April - 11 May 2003; next Update (no. 2) expected: 20 May 2003

IN BRIEF

Appeal coverage: 19.4%; the two pledges recorded in the attached list of contributions are provisional while the pledge is being officially recorded.

Related Appeals: 01.51/2003 South America

Outstanding needs: CHF 489,225

Summary: Despite the fact that rains have lessened, the situation in Santa Fé province, and particularly in the city of Santa Fé, a quarter of which remains under water, is critical as stagnant water is receding slowly and tens of thousands of people remain in evacuation centres or on the roofs of buildings. A fall in the temperature is now further affecting flood victims and more rain is forecast in the days to come. The Argentine Red Cross (ARC), supported by the Federation, is distributing food and non-food items to evacuation centres including clothes, blankets, mattresses, kitchen sets and hygiene kits. A beneficiary survey is on-going to identify those most in need who will receive support in the form of food, relief items and cleaning kits in order to ensure sanitary conditions in their homes once they are able to return. The operation also focuses on health and hygiene promotion, particularly in the evacuation centres, to protect the health of those in shelters and prevent the outbreak of disease. Coordination is being carried out at all levels with both national and regional authorities and humanitarian actors in the field. Donors are called upon to support the operation to assist 8,000 vulnerable flood victims (1,600 families) most affected by the flooding.

Operational Developments w

The situation in the province of Santa Fé continues to be critical despite the fact that water level is slowly receding in all the areas. The worst hit districts in the province are the departments of General Obligado, Vera,

San Cristóbal, San Justo, San Javier, Garay, Las Colonias, and San Martín, although 98% of the total affected population are in the city of Santa Fé. A state of emergency was declared in 35 localities within the affected departments of the province.



The access roads to the city of Santa Fé which were flooded or closed as a preventive measure have now been opened, thus facilitating the delivery of goods to beneficiaries. The breach in the protective dike in the north of the city was closed on Friday night (9 May) at 10:55 pm and pumping of water out of the flooded areas has begun to have an impact. At present, the water level is dropping at an estimated rate of 20 cm per day. Around a quarter of the city of Santa Fé is still flooded and in these areas there is no electricity.

To date, 24 fatalities have been reported, but this number is expected to increase as the level of the water descends and more bodies may be found. Figures on missing people are still unclear, but they are estimated at around 900. According to official figures, the number of those evacuated stands at 44,458, while around 30,000 persons are hosted by relatives or friends. Around 200 centres for evacuees were set up, but given the rapid development of the emergency, many of them still do not have a minimum standard of hygiene and sanitary conditions. Due to the lowering of the water, around 10,000 people have been able to return to their houses in the city of Santa Fé, although it is difficult to obtain precise figures at the level of the province. Some 1,000 people continue to live on rooftops since the floods occurred.

A visit to the disaster zone took place on 12 May by an Argentine Red Cross and Federation team. The pavements and streets in areas where the water has receded is filling up with piles of garbage as people empty their homes of damaged furniture, household goods, appliances and building material; dead animals were also seen among the debris. Municipal crews are attempting to clear away the refuse, but there is a lack of logistical capacity. Local residents indicate particular concern for the sanitation of their homes after water has been standing for almost two weeks. A fall in the temperature is now causing major problems for the displaced and further rain is forecast from Monday, 12 April.

Cases of looting of flooded houses and vehicles carrying humanitarian aid have been reported, together with tension among evacuated people as they feel they are not being assisted equally. The Minister of Justice and Security is coordinating a special security operation with the police and the army; nevertheless, a high level of insecurity remains, and the curfew imposed in the flooded areas as of 6.00 pm is still in place.

Provincial authorities indicate that there are an estimated 25,000 homes damaged of which 4-5,000 have been totally destroyed, 15-16,000 have suffered significant damage and 4-5,000 have incurred minor damage. Among the many buildings that were affected, the two branches of the Argentine Red Cross located in the flood-stricken area: Santa Fé and San Cristóbal, were partially or totally flooded. The most modern children's hospital in the country "Orlando Alassia" and a geriatric hospital had to be evacuated and will need significant renovation. Other private hospitals have also been evacuated, such as the Italian hospital, and 27 community health centres in the flooded areas have been affected. Additionally, 46 schools have been flooded (35 public and 11 private), and 17 are reported to have been destroyed. One hundred and eleven schools are currently being used as shelters and these are expected to be evacuated by 26 May, although no alternative shelter accommodation has been defined as yet.

Four thousand and three-hundred hectares of fruit and vegetable farming land is flooded. Most of this land is worked by small scale farmers who lease or share crops and whose harvests are ruined.

Thanks to continuous media coverage, there has been significant mobilization of people from all over the country since the beginning of the emergency; contributions and spontaneous donations are now more organized and ARC warehouses, as well as governmental buildings, are continuing to receive food and non food items from citizens on a daily basis.



Red Cross and Red Crescent action w

ARC activities are now focusing on the immediate emergency phase with funds from the National Society and the Federation. In the first 24 hours, 2,500 persons benefited from relief items for a one week period in four centres for evacuees. As of 9 May, 49 trucks carrying an average of 13 tonnes of food and non food items had reached Santa Fé from 22 ARC branches and the central warehouse in Buenos Aires. Items distributed include food, clothes, blankets, mattresses, kitchen sets and hygiene kits. In addition, three airplanes from the Baja Blanca military air base reached Santa Fé delivering a total of

30 tonnes of the same items. Goods are centralized in warehouses in Santa Fé, and 66 distributions have been carried out to date in 40 centres for the evacuees. However, a shortage of trucks is slowing down the distribution of the donations. Nurses from the Red Cross school are cooperating in the vaccination campaign set up by the Ministry of Health whereby those accommodated in the evacuation centres are vaccinated against hepatitis A and B. A total of 24 cases of hepatitis have been reported in the city of Santa Fé.

A team composed of a project coordinator and assistant, a logistician, and finance, human resources, communications and press officers was set up at the headquarters of the Argentine Red Cross on the first day of the flooding, and is cooperating closely with the Federation's sub regional office in Buenos Aires. The ARC team working at the Santa Fé branch includes a relief coordinator, an administrator, logisticians and a health officer.

The ARC has mobilized 150 volunteers at the branch in Santa Fé, and an additional 557 volunteers from 20 other branches in the affected areas. Among the volunteers are lifeguards and nurses from the Red Cross School of Nursing; first aid materials and radio-communication equipment are available, as well as boats for rescue operations, vehicles and other technical equipment. More than 7,000 volunteers were mobilized in 64 branches in order to collect, classify and send non-perishable food, clothes, water, mattresses, blankets and other donated items.

Objectives, activities and results w

An assessment team composed of experts in disaster management, logistics, health and information, members from the Argentine Red Cross, the Federation's sub regional office based in Buenos Aires, the regional delegation in Lima, the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Spanish Red Cross, were mobilized to assess damage and needs and to work on a plan of action. Following the damage and needs assessment carried out together with other actors in the field, the ARC operation will focus on provision of food and non food items, hygiene and kitchen kits, and the promotion of hygiene in the evacuation centres. The operation also seeks to enhance community disaster preparedness in the event of future disasters.

The Argentine Red Cross will provide assistance to 8,000 persons (1,600 families) who are accommodated in 16 evacuation centres in Santa Fé. The assistance comprises one month of food assistance, hygiene kits, cooking sets, and water storage containers. In addition, further food assistance will be provided, together with psycho-social support to some 4,000 people obliged to remain in shelters for a longer period. On their return

home, 800 families will be provided with cleaning kits consisting of two brooms, a large garbage bag and gloves to help them clean their homes. In addition, each beneficiary family will receive a 20 litre water storage container.

Relief: distribution of food and basic non-food items w

Objective 1: To provide humanitarian assistance in the form of food for one month, together with a kitchen set and hygiene kit for 8,000 persons affected by the floods.

Within 20 hours of the onset of the emergency, ten tonnes of food were sent from the Argentine Red Cross central warehouse and distributed immediately on arrival in Santa Fé. Four teams of volunteers and equipment were sent during the first 48 hours to Santa Fé province.

Relief items were provided through Disaster Relief Emergency (DREF) funding and donations made available to the Argentine Red Cross for immediate emergency response. On 9 and 10 May, the ARC delivered the following items, received from the Argentine public, to 21 evacuation centres.

Food Items	Non Food Items	Personal Hygiene Kits
Rice: 935 kg	Blankets: 1,139	Bleach: 342 litres
Sugar: 835 kg	Candles: 2,016 units	Soap: 780 packs
Lentils: 50 kg	Clothes: 689 sacks	Toilet paper: 1,590 units
Polenta: 1,101 kg	Shoes: 318 sacks	
Noodles: 948 kg	Mattresses: 393	
Oil: 36 units	Nappies: 12,848 units	
Mineral Water: 11,981 units	Napkins: 142 packs	
Milk: 1,143 litres	Matches: 251 packs	
Powdered milk: 69 kg	Bed sheets and towels: 93 sets	
Flour: 618 kg		
Salt: 126,5 kg		
Tinned tomatoes: 113 units		
Crackers: 1,150 packs		
Biscuits: 18 cases		
Yerba mate (tea): 489 kg		

In addition to the above assistance, the ARC operation, supported by the Federation, will focus on 8,000 of the most vulnerable affected by the floods. The process of beneficiary identification is ongoing and 93 evacuation centres in which 14,000 people are living have been surveyed to date. The composition of family food packages, kitchen sets and personal hygiene kits to be distributed is as follows:

Family food package	Kitchen Set	Personal Hygiene Kit
Rice (4 kg)	5 glasses	2 pieces of unscented soap
Sugar (2 kg)	5 plates	1 sponge
Soup broth (24 units)	5 sets of knives, forks and spoons	5 tooth brushes
Noodles for soup (3 kg)	2 pans	2 tubes of tooth paste
Noodles (3 kg)	2 1 litre bowls	12 sanitary towels
Lentils (3 kg)		5 rolls of toilet paper
Beans (1 kg)		1 bottle of shampoo
Cocoa (1 kg)		1 10 litre bucket
Powdered milk (2.4 kg)		
Flour (3 kg)		
Salt (0,5 kg)		
Tinned tomatoes (3 kg)		
Oil (3 l)		
Yerba mate (tea) (3 kg)		
Total (43.14 kg)		

Objective 2: To facilitate the return of evacuees to their homes and promote sanitary conditions.

Unfortunately, the situation does not currently permit the development of this part of the plan of action. The distribution of cleaning supplies and the hygiene promotion activities will start once selected beneficiaries return home.

Health and Care w

There is particular concern regarding the possible outbreaks of disease since:

- there is a high level of stagnant water in many areas;
- many bodies and animal carcasses have appeared as the water recedes;
- living conditions are crowded and there is a lack of hygiene in the shelters;
- there is a lack of sanitation both in the centres and amongst families stranded on rooftops.

Objective 1: To improve the health situation of those affected by the floods through health and hygiene promotion and disease prevention.

Measures taken so far to respond to the emergency are as follows:

- Health promotion activities are carried out at the Children's Hospital;
- Around 800 persons were vaccinated against hepatitis by ARC nurses;
- A delousing campaign is taking place;
- Volunteers have been trained in health and hygiene promotion;
- Volunteers have been vaccinated;
- Home visits, including to those still living on roofs, are being carried out.

Home visits included a joint assessment with Médicos Sin Fronteras (MSF) which was carried out by boat in the flooded areas where people continue to live on the top floors and roofs of their homes. Water, bleach and first aid supplies were provided in the area. Further activities are being coordinated together with NGOs, local authorities and international organizations.

Objective 2: To reinforce the capacity of individuals to prevent and mitigate the effects of post traumatic stress experienced when affected by a disaster, thus facilitating the readjustment of disaster victims to their usual social, personal and work routines.

The ARC branch in Santa Fé has been providing psychological support teams to the centres for evacuees since the onset of the disaster, assisting thousands of people who lost all their property. Staff from psychiatric hospitals and universities, as well as an association of professionals from the city and the region, numbering 150 experts, are supporting the Red Cross in this complex task. Workshops on psycho-social support are being held for both medical and paramedical staff and volunteers. Forty volunteers who were trained through a specific course are working together with medical staff. Furthermore, a telephone line was set up at the ARC headquarters in Buenos Aires and a team of experts is providing psychological support.

Objective 3: To improve access to medicines and basic supplies by providing these to 16 evacuation centres and 10 primary health centres in the affected area.

- volunteers are currently cataloguing medicines and medical equipment which is received.
- visits are taking place to primary health centres in order to define those which are most in need of support.

Disaster Preparedness w

Objective 1: To strengthen the preparedness and response capacity of the population for future emergencies and disasters through the promotion of community education in risk management.

Community education activities in this field will start once the emergency situation allows.

Advocacy w

Objective 1: To promote the reduction of potential tensions between social groups through appropriate design and implementation of humanitarian activities

In order to achieve this objective, programme coordinators and volunteers will be trained in the use of the Better Programming Initiative (BPI) methodology and in Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA).

Coordination w

Meetings with the national and provincial Ministers of Health have been held in relation to assistance for evacuees, focusing on preventive health and hygiene. Likewise, coordination has taken place with UNICEF which is considering working in psycho-social support with children in shelters in conjunction with the ARC. Meetings with UNDP have also been held, with the Provincial Directorate of Education, directors of schools, the governmental Crisis Committee and representatives of other national and international organizations.

Coordination with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has resulted in logistical support for the headquarters in Buenos Aires and in the province of Santa Fé which will ensure tracking of relief supplies received and their distribution. SUMA logistics training was carried out by ARC staff in order to be in a position to monitor national donations.

The ARC, supported by the Federation, is participating in a coordinating body with provincial and local institutions, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, PAHO and other humanitarian organizations. This coordination will ensure optimum response to the disaster and avoid duplication of activities.

A meeting with the ECHO representative for South America was held. Two German Red Cross representatives have arrived in Santa Fé and are coordinating with the ARC/Federation team which organized a visit to the affected areas with other organizations.

The Argentine Red Cross has various operational agreements: with UNICEF for the distribution of brochures with health recommendations; with UNDP for the assessment of evacuation centres; with the Scouts for logistical support to Red Cross members working in the warehouses and with a team of mental health experts to undertake psychological support initiatives. One of the benefits of the flood response operation is that cooperation between the Argentine Red Cross and the Ministry of Health has been enhanced.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement -- Principles and Initiatives w

- The planned operation, as well as search and rescue and emergency assistance activities carried out to date, are based on the principle of humanity; beneficiary selection criteria focus on the level of vulnerability of those affected, respect of the culture of the beneficiaries, ensuring gender sensitivity and prioritizing assistance to children and elderly people.
- Activities are based on the SPHERE project humanitarian charter and the code of conduct for emergency response.
- The operation is guided by principles and rules relating to transparency in the drawing up and dissemination of narrative and financial reports.
- All objectives put forward in the appeal are in line with Strategy 2010, as well as the Strategy for the Movement and the Principles and Rules of the Movement.

National Society Capacity Building w

The ARC is currently simultaneously implementing an operation in response to the social crisis in the country which is unprecedented in the history of Argentina.

The National Society has formed a technical team which is leading the flood response operation, through which immediate response to the flood disaster was organized at branch level. The branches located in the flood-affected zone are supported by personnel trained as members of the regional intervention teams and Field Assessment and Coordination Teams (FACT), and a RITs-trained member of staff is coordinating the operation at headquarters level.

A priority of the flood response operation will be the improvement of the disaster management capacity of the branches, as well as the strengthening of volunteer management and of governing bodies. Red Cross branches will receive training in the technical areas linked with the operation: water and sanitation, community health, as well as in the identification, drawing up and management of projects.

A major emphasis of capacity building will be strengthening of disaster response, particularly of the Santa Fé branch. Disaster response preparedness will be enhanced through work relating to planning, establishing of procedures and definition of standards. The ARC will be assisted by a disaster relief expert, trained in the RITs methodology, with support from the Pan American Disaster Response Unit. Volunteers and staff will also benefit from training in health education and hygiene promotion.

Federation Delegation w

The Federation's sub regional office is based in Buenos Aires in the premises of the Argentine Red Cross. The office is staffed by a sub regional coordinator, a finance officer, an information officer, a technical assistant and the regional focal point for the humanitarian values programme. The team also benefits from the support of a health consultant and a reporting delegate who are assigned to the social crisis operation. Two delegates from PADRU, a disaster management delegate and a logistician from the regional logistics unit (RLU) are in Santa Fé for a maximum period of 15 days to support the ARC operation. A regional intervention team (RIT) member from the Ecuadorian Red Cross will arrive in the next few days to support the ARC in the coordination of the operation over a four month period.

In order to improve support to the ARC which is currently implementing two significant relief operations, the staff of the Federation's sub regional office will be temporarily increased in the days to come, to include a logistician, a member of PADRU, who will help in the planning and implementation of the operation, an expert in water and sanitation from OXFAM and an auxiliary staff member.

Media/Public Information w

Various activities are carried out on a daily basis to inform the media and the public both at the ARC and Federation level. Press releases are sent to the media and published on the ARC web site and the Argentine Red Cross executive director was interviewed by the BBC on the activities carried out. The sub regional office's information officer covered the first days of the crisis from Santa Fé. The ARC disaster information centre's web page (<http://www.cruzroja.org.ar/desastres/index.html>) is continuously updated with information from the field, as is the Federation's DMIS web page.

Local and national television are broadcasting images of ARC volunteers involved in the affected areas. An informative video shot in Santa Fé illustrating ARC activities was shown on the occasion of the presentation to the public of the status of progress relating to the plan of action for the social crisis operation. The presentation was held on World Red Cross Day, 8 May, attended by representatives of international organizations, the Ministry of Health, the ICRC and local and international NGOs.

Outstanding needs w

Contact has been established with several potential donors and discussions are underway related to support for this appeal. The Federation mobilized CHF 50,000 from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund which was allocated to cover the immediate relief needs of those affected by the floods.

Given the critical situation, contributions are urgently needed and donors are strongly encouraged to support this process.

For further details please contact: Olaug Bergseth, Phone: 41 22 740 45 35; Fax: 41 22 733 03 95; email: olaug.bergseth@ifrc.org

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

This operation seeks to administer to the immediate requirements of the victims of this disaster. Subsequent operations to promote sustainable development or longer-term capacity building will require additional support, and these programmes are outlined on the Federation's website.

For further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>.

Argentina - floods						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 10/2003		PLEDGES RECEIVED				13.05.2003
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						TOTAL COVERAGE
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				607'000		19.4%
FINNISH - RC		25'000	EUR	37'775	09.05.03	
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		500'000	SEK	80'000	09.05.03	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				117'775	CHF	19.4%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	