

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

COLOMBIA: FLOODS

17 November 2004

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 over 181 countries.

In Brief

Appeal No. 24/04; Operations Update no. 1; Period covered: 6 - 15 November 2004; Appeal coverage: 21.4%; ([click here to go directly to the attached Contributions List, also available on the website](#)).

Appeal history:

- Launched on 5 November 2004 for CHF 953,000 (USD 796,312 or EUR 621,646) for 6 months to assist 20,000 beneficiaries.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 100,000.

Outstanding needs: CHF 748,734 (USD 650,951 or EUR 494,837)

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: South America Annual Appeal (01.54/2004), Pan American Disaster Response Unit Annual Appeal (01.51/2004)

Operational Summary: Since the launch of the Emergency Appeal, the number of persons affected by the floods in Colombia has doubled. On 11 November, the Ministry of Interior announced that the government was declaring a state of public emergency in the departments of Atlantico, Bolivar, Cordoba, Cesar, Guajira, Magdalena, Santander and Sucre. Government authorities and the Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) continue to carry out damage and needs assessments and are working together to channel much needed food and relief supplies to the disaster areas. In addition to the food and relief goods that have been reaching the beneficiaries throughout the hardest-hit areas, the Colombian Red Cross Society, with the support of the Federation and Partner National Societies operating in the country, will also play an important role in the delivery of public health campaigns to prevent the spread of water-borne diseases. Once the immediate needs of the affected population have been addressed, the Red Cross will continue to provide rehabilitation support to improve the housing and sanitation conditions, targeting particularly those families whose homes were destroyed or damaged. To date, this operation has received support from the Hong Kong, Japanese and Swedish Red Cross Societies.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

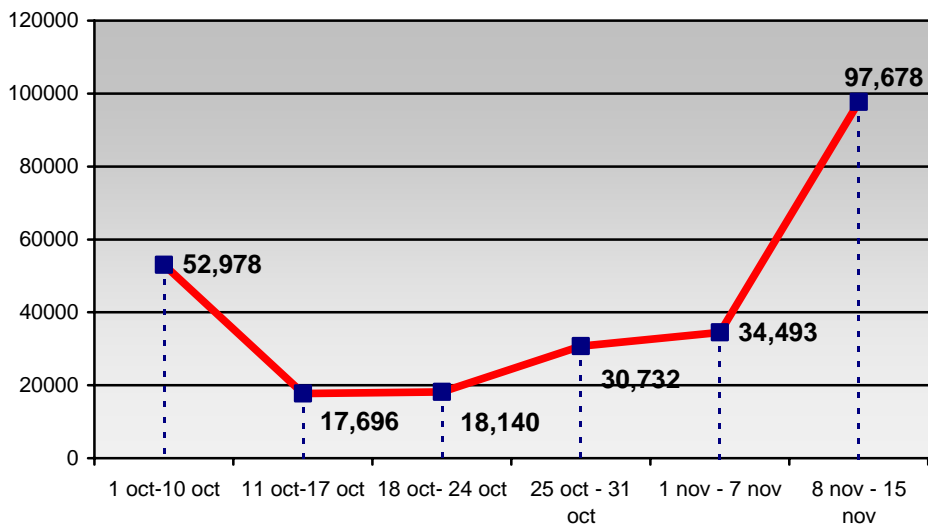
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Background

The strong rains that have been battering Colombia since the beginning of October have already left 23 casualties, 51 injuries, 5 missing persons, 334 destroyed houses and 16,860 damaged houses. To date, 251,717 persons (49,660 families) from 24 of the 32 departments in the country have been affected by heavy floods. Thousands of families from the Caribbean coast in the north have been forced to abandon their homes.

The situation is extremely complex because the floods are affecting persons living in high-risk areas who had been displaced by the long internal conflict in Colombia. In addition, 59 percent of the affected population are children. Both these factors have increased the vulnerability of those affected.



Graphic showing the number of affected persons per week since the beginning of the emergency:

On 11 November the Ministry of Interior announced that the government was declaring a state of public emergency in eight departments. These are: Atlantico, Bolivar, Cordoba, Cesar, Guajira, Magdalena, Santander and Sucre.

Map showing the eight departments where a state of public emergency has been declared:



There is also a series of alerts for specific regions. Red alert means that the area has been totally or partially evacuated:

ALERT	Region
RED	Morales, Cantagallo, Arenal, San Pablo, Simiti, Zambrano, Achi, San Jacinto del Cauca, El Peñon and Hatillo de Loba in the department of Bolivar.
	Majagual, Guaranda and Sucre in the department of Sucre.
	Puerto Wilches in the department of Santander.
	Nechi in the department of Antioquia.
	Gamarra, Tamalameque, La Gloria, San Martin, Aguachica, Curumani, Becerril, La Jagua de Ibérico, Chimichagua and Manaure in the department of Cesar.
ORANGE	The entire department of Quindio.
	The basin of the Magdalena river, between Barrancabermeja and Plato Magdalena.
	The basin of the Cauca river, between Caucasia and Achi.
YELLOW	The basin of the Tunjuelito river in Bogota.
	The basin of the Magdalena river, between Barrancabermeja and Puerto Berrio.
	The basin of the Atrato river.
	The basin of the San Jorge river.

Sources: CRCS report of 14 November 2004 and the Colombian newspaper "El Tiempo"

The Colombian Civil Defence has confirmed that the municipalities of Barrancabermeja and Puerto Wilches in Santander are in the most critical situation, due to the overflow of the Magdalena River. Hundreds of persons from these places are now living in temporary shelters, assisted by the Civil Defence.



Houses devastated by the heavy floods can be seen throughout the country.

The disaster has also seriously struck the agricultural sector. Authorities estimate that 70,000 hectares of crops in the northern part of the country have been hit, particularly the banana plantations. Other affected crops include the African palm, corn, manioc, fruits and cotton.

The road system has been severely affected due to mudslides that have blocked the path of vehicles. The most affected department so far is Antioquia where over 50 mudslides have occurred, disrupting traffic to the department's capital, Medellin, to the Caribbean region and Bogotá. The department of Nariño is cut off, as well as the municipality of Rionegro in Cundinamarca. In the south of Colombia, the Pan-American Highway is blocked between Pasto and Popayan. The road that connects the departments of Cesar and Magdalena is also flooded in some parts.

Air traffic has also suffered the consequences of the bad weather. Many flights have been cancelled in the airports of Jose Maria Cordova, Barranquilla, Bucaramanga and Cartagena.

Some of the reasons for the magnitude of the impact of the disaster include intensive deforestation in the hillsides, lack of sufficient efforts to replace trees, poor urban planning and inadequate water and sanitation systems in some cities, illegal settlements in high risk areas and poor mining practices.

One of the most affected areas during last week was the walled city of Cartagena, which is a major tourist attraction and where many popular events and celebrations usually take place during this time of the year. Rain in Cartagena fell continuously from Monday 8 November to Wednesday 10 November, causing floods in many poor urban communities and affecting more than 10,000 persons. Local authorities cancelled all planned festivities and parades in solidarity with the affected families. Another department that was badly hit during last week was Cesar, where the municipality of Gamarra was completely flooded by the Magdalena River.

According to the Colombian Institute of Water, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM) this has been the heaviest rainy season to hit the country since 1996 and heavy rains are expected to continue until mid December. In 2003, the total number of affected persons was only half the number reported to date in 2004.

Although the worst effects of the rains are being felt along the Caribbean coast of Colombia, heavy rains are also being registered in the Andean region. The authorities are ensuring close surveillance of the rivers in this region.

Operational developments

The Colombian government has allocated approximately USD 1 million from its National Disaster Fund in response to the emergency. These funds are being used to dredge rivers, provide logistical support to the emergency prevention and response committees, and provide humanitarian aid. The government is mobilizing humanitarian aid through its National Disaster Preparedness and Response System (SNPAD), the Social Solidarity Network and the Ministry of Social Protection. Relief supplies being distributed by the government include food and non-food items such as hygiene parcels, kitchen sets, clothes and medicines to support public health campaigns and prevent the spread of water-borne diseases. President Alvaro Uribe, who visited Cartagena on 11 November, confirmed that there are 60,000 volunteers from the Social Emergency Battalion working throughout the Colombian territory and providing aid to affected persons. This number includes the Colombian Red Cross Society volunteers who are members of the Social Emergency Battalion. A total of 21 temporary shelters have been activated throughout Colombia. The government has also announced the delivery of 60 tons of humanitarian aid and the implementation of a building project for 2,829 houses in Cartagena that will cost over USD 5 million.

The National Direction of Taxes and Customs has delivered clothes to the affected population from its warehouse; this aid was valued at approximately USD 80,500. National companies are also contributing to the government's humanitarian aid assistance and are committing funds for cleaning water sources and sanitary systems. The Colombian military forces are supporting the delivery of food and mattresses to the affected areas.

Health authorities have adopted measures to avoid the spread of epidemics due to contaminated water, targeting mostly tropical areas with vaccination and fumigation campaigns. The Ministry of Social Protection declared that the first phase of response includes food supply, shelters and primary health care, while the second phase will include the drainage of water.

While visiting Cartagena, President Uribe highlighted the action of the Red Cross, the Civil Defence, the National System of Firemen, the National Institute of Roads, the Social Solidarity Network and the ministries involved in the response operation. However, authorities estimate that the needs of only 60 percent of the affected population have been covered.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action - objectives, progress, impact

The Partner National Societies (PNS) in the country have mobilized support and resources to the affected regions to support the Colombian Red Cross Society in its operation. The American, French and Netherlands Red Cross Societies are concentrating their efforts on the areas of Magdalena, Guajira, Bolivar, Cordoba and Sucre.

A Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) disaster management delegate is accompanying a representative of the European Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) in an evaluation mission to the affected areas of Bolivar and Cartagena.

Emergency relief (food and non-food)

The CRCS is working in close coordination with the National Disaster Preparedness and Response System and other national relief organizations to deliver and distribute humanitarian aid. On 11 November, the CRCS, with the support of the mass media, launched a national solidarity campaign to collect food and non-food relief items in its warehouses throughout the country. The CRCS has also activated a bank account for cash donations. To date, the CRCS has collected 65 tons of emergency relief items and approximately USD 30,000, donated by companies and private citizens.



Volunteers from the Cordoba Red Cross branch prepare hygiene kits for the affected population in the municipality of Monteria

Objective 1: 4,000 families will have benefited from the provision of food items for a three month period.

- The Red Cross branches of Bolivar, Caldas, Cordoba, Norte de Santander and Sucre have been making periodic deliveries of food and non-food items to the affected communities in their departments since the onset of the emergency. The selection of beneficiaries is being carried out based on the local government's survey; the lists are now being reviewed and updated by Red Cross volunteers.
- To date, the CRCS has sent several shipments of relief items to the affected area. On 7 November, the CRCS accompanied the government's delivery of 16 tons of humanitarian aid to Valledupar in the department of Cesar. A second shipment was sent from the CRCS national headquarters on 12 November, carrying a total of 10.5 tons of humanitarian aid to Bolivar. On 14 November, eight tons of humanitarian aid were sent to Sucre from the national headquarters, and another ten tons of food, medicines, clothes and kitchen tools were shipped from the Red Cross branch of Valle del Cauca to support the affected population of Cartagena.
- The CRCS has recommended that the population make food donations taking into consideration the following products included in a standard food relief package: lentils, flour, rice, sugar, beans, salt, oil, chocolate, coffee, powdered milk and tuna fish.



Volunteers from the Sucre Red Cross branch deliver humanitarian aid for the affected people in the community of San Pedro, devastated by flood waters from the Tio Agustin River.

Objective 2: 4,000 families will have benefited from the provision of non-food items for a period of three months.

- The CRCS, in its solidarity campaign launch on 11 November, has recommended that the population make donations according to the standard non-food family relief kits, which include: 3 mattresses, 4 mosquito nets, 1 kitchen set, 4 tableware kits and 4 hygiene kits.
 - Kitchen sets include: 3 different pots and 2 cooking spoons.
 - Tableware kits include: 3 different dishes and 1 spoon.
 - Hygiene kits include: 1 bar of soap, 1 toothpaste, 1 toothbrush, 1 bottle of shampoo, 1 towel, 1 deodorant. The female kit also includes 5 sanitary pads and the male kit includes 2 razors.
- The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) assisted the CRCS in implementing the Humanitarian Supply Management System (SUMA) for rational and efficient management of relief items in Bogotá and Cartagena.
- With the CHF 100,000 (approximately USD 80,000) allocated earlier by the Federation from its disaster relief emergency fund (DREF), the CRCS is implementing a one month operation that will benefit 500 affected families from Cordoba and Sucre with non-food relief aid. Meanwhile, other humanitarian organizations are also distributing food in these communities.

Distribution of non-food relief items:

Department	Municipality	Beneficiary families	Non-food relief items
Cordoba	Monteria	400	400 kitchen kits, 1,600 tableware kits, 1,600 hygiene kits, 1,200 mattresses, 1,200 tents, 1,200 bed sheets, 1,200 blankets
Sucre	San Pedro	100	100 kitchen kits, 400 tableware kits, 400 hygiene kits, 300 mattresses, 300 tents, 300 bed sheets, 300 blankets
TOTAL		500	500 kitchen kits, 2,000 tableware kits, 2,000 hygiene kits, 1,500 mattresses, 1,500 tents, 1,500 bed sheets, 1,500 blankets

Health

The activities in the area of health are being carried out by the National Society with the assistance of the Federation and in coordination with the Ministry of Social Protection and PAHO.

Objective 1: 500 families will have benefited from access to basic health services.

- The CRCS is carrying out a health assessment in two municipalities of the Cordoba district to determine the health needs of the affected population. This exercise is taking place in coordination with the municipality, PAHO and the private sector.
- Staff members from the Antioquia branch of the Colombian Red Cross Society are supporting primary health care campaigns in the affected municipality of Nechi.

Objective 2: 1,100 families will have benefited from an increased awareness of health, hygiene and sanitation issues.

No activities have been reported so far under this objective.

Disaster preparedness – Strengthening of response capacity

Objective 1: The capacities of the communities in the affected areas will have been strengthened.

No activities have been reported so far under this objective.

Objective 2: The CRCS branches and municipal units will be better prepared for future disasters.

- On 11 November, the CRCS appealed to the population to support the ongoing emergency operation by volunteering. The National Society estimates that some 4,000 new volunteers will be needed to implement all the activities.
- The Red Cross branches have received instructions to scale up their efforts to involve the communities in volunteering.

Rehabilitation

Objective: Evacuees will have returned to their homes and 500 families will have improved their housing and water and sanitation conditions in the departments of Sucre, Cordoba and Norte de Santander.

On 14 November, the CRCS assessed conditions and possibilities for the management of temporary shelters in the department of Bolivar.

Federation Coordination

The Federation is coordinating its work closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the American, French, Netherlands and Spanish Red Cross Societies, which are present in the country. The Federation has contacted the ECHO office in Bogotá and possible support for the CRCS operation is under discussion. The Federation is also representing the PNSs present in Colombia in this dialogue with ECHO.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement -- Principles and initiatives

The Federation is working to support the Colombian Red Cross Society to assist the most vulnerable. The planned operation is based upon the principle of humanity; beneficiary selection criteria focuses on the level of vulnerability of those affected, taking into account the particular vulnerability of those displaced by the armed conflict, respect for the culture of the beneficiaries, and ensuring gender sensitivity.

Activities planned for this appeal are based on the SPHERE project humanitarian charter and the code of conduct for disaster relief. 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

The Colombian Red Cross Society was founded in 1915 and operates in 31 of the 32 departments of the country, including 195 municipal units and 45 support groups. The CRCS has an operational national network of 35,000 volunteers. Because of this coverage, the National Society enjoys a high level of trust and acceptance within the local communities. All branches and units of the CRCS make up the national relief system that facilitates relief operations by using its expertise in logistics, warehousing and telecommunications. There are branches, municipal units and support groups throughout the flood-affected areas, and the CRCS activities in response to the floods will be carried out with the support of the volunteers from these organizations. In addition, the National Society has gained significant experience in community programmes through the implementation of the Amazonico programme, which has been ongoing for five years (more information can be found at www.cruzroja.org).

The CRCS belongs to the national system that provides care to displaced people, and also belongs to the National Disaster Preparedness and Response System. Therefore, the National Society has vast experience in assisting vulnerable people affected by violence or disasters, particularly in the areas of preparedness, emergency response and rehabilitation.

CRCS branches in areas that have not been affected by the rains have received instructions to increase their activities in disaster preparedness.

Capacity of the CRCS in the regions where operations are taking place:

Department branch	Municipal units	Support groups	Warehouses	Volunteers	Vehicles				
					Ambulance	Truck	Boat	Car	Van
Bolivar	Cartagena, El Carmen de Bolivar, Magangue, Zambrano, San Juan de Nepomuceno.		1	80	1		1		3
Cordoba	Monteria, Cerete, Loricá, Sahagun, Planeta Rica, Montelibano, Valencia	Tierralta and Ciénaga de Oro	1	75	1		1		1
Magdalena	Santa Marta, Plato, El Banco and Ciénaga		1	120				1	1
Norte de Santander	Cucuta and Ocaña	Tibu, Abrego, Herran, Pamplona, La Playa and Ragonvalia	3	122	4				2
Santander	Bucaramanga, Barrancabermeja and Malaga	San Gil	3	295	3		2		4
Sucre	Sincelejo and Corozal	San Marcos, and Sampues	1	65	1	1		1	
TOTAL			10	757	10	1	4	2	11

Communications – Advocacy and Public Information

The provision of accurate information to the public of the impact of Red Cross operations is a key activity. From this point of view, relations with the media are particularly important in order to convey the message of the Red Cross Movement. The National Society has been working to provide visibility to the Red Cross relief efforts by coordinating with the national media.

Since the launch of the Emergency Appeal, the number of persons affected by the floods in Colombia has doubled, attracting the attention of the international media to the huge emergency faced by the country. Most news published during the last week highlighted the role of the Colombian Red Cross Society, which is leading the disaster response process in the country and is requesting that the government declare a state of emergency in order to better mobilize resources to respond to the situation.

With support of the national media, the CRCS launched a campaign to collect relief goods and money contributions on 11 November. The campaign also aims at increasing the number of volunteers among the Colombian population.

More articles on the emergency can also be found in the International Federation's web page (www.ifrc.org).

[Click here to return to the title page.](#)

Colombia - floods

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 24/2004

PLEDGES RECEIVED

23/11/2004

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

						TOTAL COVERAGE
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				953,000		21.4%
HONG KONG - RC		21,847	HKD	3,535	11.11.04	EMERGENCY RELIEF
JAPANESE - RC		26,280	USD	33,231	16.11.04	
SWEDISH - GOVT		1,000,000	SEK	167,500	12.11.04	IMMEDIATE NEEDS
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				204,266	CHF	21.4%

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	