

# 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

28 February 2005

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. 3; Period covered: 9 December 2004 – 18 February 2005; Appeal coverage: 38.2%; ([Click here to go to the revised budget and the contributions list - also published on the web - the contributions list is currently being updated.](#))

#### Appeal history:

- Launched on 5 November 2004 for CHF 953,000 (USD 796,312 or EUR 621,646) for 6 months to assist 4,000 families.
- Plan of action and budget revised and increased to CHF 1,698,000 and the number of beneficiaries increased to 40,000 (8,000 families) on 9 December 2004.
- Plan of action and budget revised and increased to CHF 1,996,000 (USD 1,722,562 EUR 1,298,458) and operational framework extended to 8 months to assist 9,500 families.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 100,000.

Outstanding needs : CHF 1,233,154 (USD 1,064,160 EUR 802,251)

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: South America Annual Appeal (01.54/2004); South America Annual Appeal 05AA044; Pan American Disaster Response Unit Annual Appeal (01.51/2004); Pan American Disaster Response Unit Annual Appeal 05AA040.

**Operational Summary:** The Federation's appeal to support the Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) to provide assistance to 8,000 families affected by severe flooding in 2004 forms part of the wider response under implementation by the National Society which seeks to reach 18,697 families in 15 departments, in addition to the 8,000 beneficiary families targeted by the Federation appeal. To date, of the 18,697 families targeted, a total of 10,697 beneficiary families have been reached through one delivery of different food and non-food relief items, according to needs. This has been made possible as a result of a successful fund-raising campaign implemented by the CRCS, targeting local external partners and international organizations, and complements the assistance provided by the Federation. Under the Federation appeal, a total of 5,123 beneficiary families have now been reached with food and non-food items. In the same way, the CRCS is working, through locally-generated income, to provide relief to over 5,000 families affected by recent heavy rains in February 2005 which have affected the departments of Norte de Santander, Santander and Tolima. The Federation's appeal for support to the Colombian Red Cross Society is now being revised upwards to address the increased needs arising as a result of the flooding in February. The revised appeal targets 1,500 additional beneficiary families in the three newly-affected departments who will receive food and non-food emergency relief items. Overall, to date, the CRCS has provided food and non-food items to beneficiaries in the departments of Antioquia, Atlantico, Bolivar, Caldas, Cauca, Cesar, Cordoba, Cundinamarca, Guajira, Huila, Magdalena, Norte de Santander, Sucre, Santander and Tolima. In addition, health brigades have been working in the department of Cordoba and in the coming weeks they will be working in Bolivar and Magdalena.

The government's Institute of Water, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM) has forecast a particularly heavy rainy season from March to June, and the revised plan of action therefore now includes

**a disaster preparedness component to work with the Colombian Red Cross Society branches in high risk areas in order to increase their levels of disaster preparedness and ensure effective contingency planning. Funding is still urgently required in order to assist flood-affected families and to ensure the implementation of a disaster preparedness strategy in targeted CRCS branches.**

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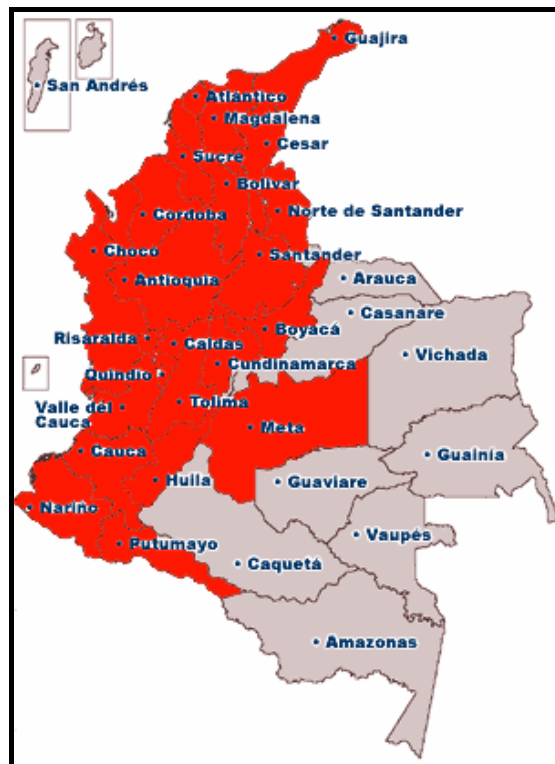
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*All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response - Sphere](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>*

## Background

Last year, Colombia experienced one of the heaviest rainy seasons in the past decade. Rains continued incessantly from October through the end of the year, affecting 90,000 families in 24 departments (244 municipalities). A total of 831 houses were completely destroyed and another 24,210 houses were damaged. Thousands of families from the Caribbean coast in the north of the country were forced to flee their homes. The main Colombian rivers increased their levels, causing floods in both agricultural and urban areas. The road system was also severely affected due to mudslides that blocked the path of vehicles.

**Map showing departments affected by heavy rains**



*Map developed by the Federation*

The profile of the persons affected by these heavy rains is diverse: many are persons who have been displaced by the country's long internal conflict who were living in high risk areas near the rivers; another group that has been seriously affected is small farmers, whose main income is their crops. In addition, people living in poor urban areas that lack basic infrastructure and public services have been affected.

On 11 November the government declared a state of public emergency in eight departments: Atlantico, Bolivar, Cordoba, Cesar, Guajira, Magdalena, Santander and Sucre.

Health authorities have warned of potential epidemics due to stagnant waters including Leptospirosis, an illness caused by exposure to water that has been contaminated by animal urine, which has caused at least 6 deaths in Cartagena de Indias.

### Operational developments

The new rainy season which was expected to begin in March arrived a month early, just 45 days after the end of the previous rainy season. This second wave of rains began in early February and has already caused 56 deaths and 117 injuries, and has affected approximately 17,000 families. Some 6,116 houses have been destroyed and another 4,404 have been severely damaged. Of the 60 municipalities in 11 departments currently being affected by the most recent rains, some 30 municipalities were also hard hit by last year's flooding. The departments most seriously affected by this latest emergency are Norte de Santander (the municipalities of Puerto Santander, Tibu and Zulia), Santander (the municipalities of Bucaramanga, Cimitarra, Giron and Lebrija) and Tolima (the municipalities of Ataco and Rioblanco). In these departments, local capacities to respond to the emergency have been overwhelmed. The National Disaster Preparedness and Response System (SNPAD), which includes the Colombian Red Cross Society, has intervened in these areas to support the local communities. The Colombian government is considering declaring states of emergency in Santander and Norte de Santander in order to speed up relief efforts in these areas.

*The number of houses destroyed is 7 times higher than houses destroyed during the previous floods.*



The IDEAM is predicting that the situation will worsen by March and the heavy rains could last until June. Of particular concern is the fact that the water level of the Atrato River, which crosses the departments of Cauca, Norte de Santander and Tolima, is rising. There are many families in this area that have been displaced by the armed conflict, making them even more vulnerable to natural disasters. The rains are currently moving inland towards the Andean, Amazonic and Choco regions and there could be increased needs in this part of the country in the future.

**Table showing levels of affectation in February 2005**

Department	Number of Families Affected	Total Number of People Affected	Number of Houses Damaged	Number of Houses Destroyed	Persons Wounded	Number of Deaths
Santander	9,161	45,745	2,941	5,886	98	46
Norte Santander	5,481	28,724	836	110	14	1
Tolima	1,717	8,589	291	89	2	5
Quindio	259	1,295	259	0	0	0
Choco	76	395	36	10	0	0
Caldas	75	375	0	0	1	1
Huila	41	220	38	1	1	1
Boyaca	19	95	0	19	0	0
Meta	15	74	0	1	0	1
Cundinamarca	3	15	3	0	0	0
Antioquia	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,847</b>	<b>85,527</b>	<b>4,404</b>	<b>6,116</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>56</b>

*Source: CRCS report of 23 February*



*Flood waters surround the home of a family in Monteria, Cordoba, one of the most severely affected departments.*

In the event of emergencies, the Colombian government mobilizes humanitarian aid through its National Disaster Preparedness and Response System (SNPAD), the Social Solidarity Network and the Ministry of Social Protection by setting up regional disaster response committees. During last year’s rainy season (October-December), some 150 private companies and 6,000 citizens contributed to the government’s emergency fund, and the government is hopeful that it will receive similar support in response to these most recent floods and throughout this latest rainy season. In addition, health authorities and agencies such as OXFAM, the Pan American Health Organization

(PAHO) and Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) are working in coordination with SNPAD to avoid the spread of epidemics.

In response to the flooding in the country, the central government has already distributed 2,000 food packages, 2,500 mattresses and other non-food relief items. The regional and local committees of Huila, Meta, Norte de Santander, Santander and Tolima have mobilized initial relief aid for affected families. In the municipality of Giron, 15 community kitchens have been opened. In addition, the department of Tolima has received COP 270 million (approximately CHF 135,000) from the Colombian government for emergency humanitarian assistance. The Civil Defense and the National Fire Brigade continues to support search and rescue efforts, first aid, transportation of beneficiaries to temporary shelters, and delivery of relief items.

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

Since the onset of this most recent wave of heavy rains, the CRCS has been mobilizing its rapid response units in the branches of Meta, Norte de Santander, Santander and Tolima. These units are carrying out search and rescue activities, transporting evacuees to temporary shelters, conducting damage and needs assessments, carrying out assessments of the management of shelters and distributing humanitarian aid provided by the local governments. The CRCS is also providing logistics support for local relief operations through the provision of vehicles from its national relief transportation network. The Boyaca branch of the CRCS has sent two rescue dog teams to assist the search and rescue efforts.

Coordination within the SNPAD and the Ministry of Social Protection has been carried out through national operational committees and field meetings. One very important result of this coordination has been the pledge of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Response to support the logistics of the Red Cross in Santander with COP 10 million (approximately CHF 5,000). The National Society has opened a bank account for citizens and institutions to make contributions.

As of 22 February, with funding raised locally, the Colombian Red Cross Society had reached the following numbers of families with food and non-food assistance in response to the recent flooding.

Department	Municipalities	Number of Families Assisted	Assistance provided
Norte de Santander	Tibú	382 families	Food parcels, hygiene articles, water, medicine and mattresses.
	Puerto Santander	162 families	Food parcels, hygiene articles, kitchen utensils, water and mattresses.
	Cúcuta	50 families	Food, mattresses and sheets
	Villa del Rosario	35 families	Food, hygiene articles and mattresses
	El Zulia	300 families	Food
	Sardinata	10 families	Food
Santander	Girón	569 families	Food, blankets, mattresses, hygiene articles and kitchen utensils.
	El Playón	90 families	Blankets, mattresses, hygiene articles and kitchen utensils.
	Lebrija	80 families	Blankets, mattresses, hygiene articles and kitchen utensils.
	San Vicente del Chucurí	50 families	Blankets, mattresses, hygiene articles and kitchen utensils.
Tolima	Ataco	500 families	Food and non-food items
	Chaparral	613 families	Food and non-food items
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,841 families</b>	

A disaster management delegate was deployed from the Pan American Disaster Response Unit to Colombia to provide technical support to the National Society. The delegate evaluated the situation in the country following the latest floods and, given the forecast from the IDEAM that heavy rain can be expected for the next several months. In view of this forecast, the revised appeal includes a component of disaster preparedness which aims to strengthen branch capacity in zones which are at risk of flooding and landslides in order to enhance preparedness measures both at branch and community level.

The objectives of the Federation's emergency appeal have been revised as follows:

### Emergency relief

#### **Objective 1: 8,000 families affected by floods between October and December 2004 have benefited from the provision of food and non-food items for a three month period.**

Under the umbrella of the Federation appeal for funding, the CRCS has, to date, reached 5,123 of the 8,000 targeted families. However, given a shortage of contributions, a non-standard package of assistance was provided, taking into account the major needs in the municipalities and departments assisted. Since the beginning of the operation, the CRCS has been able to provide emergency relief assistance to an additional 10,697 families in a one-off delivery of food and non-food items. Families have received various items, in accordance with needs, and deliveries of assistance have not been standardized.

The table below shows assistance provided to beneficiaries affected by the floods in 2004 in accordance with the Federation appeal for assistance in Colombia.

Department	Municipalities	Number of families	Emergency relief
Cordoba	Puerto Libertador	400	Food and non-food items
	Cerete	60	Non-food items
	Ciénaga de Oro	70	Non-food items
	San Pelayo	50	Non-food items
	Monteria	900	Non-food items
Bolívar	Zambrano	70	Food and non-food items
	Barranco de Loba	656	Food and non-food items
	Pinillos	54	Food and non-food items
	Magangue	77	Food and non-food items
	Mompox	186	Food and non-food items
Sucre	San Pedro	100	Non-food items
	San Benito Abad	350	Food and non-food items
	Majagual	400	Food and non-food items
	Sucre	400	Food and non-food items
	Caimito	225	Food and non-food items
Guajira	Riohacha	150	Food and non-food items
	Manaure	450	Food and non-food items
	Maicao	150	Food and non-food items
Magdalena	El Banco	375	Food and non-food items
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>5,123</b>	

The CRCS, with funds available in response to the Federation appeal, is targeting a further 3,567 beneficiary families (which will result in a total of 8,690 families reached).

#### **Objective 2: 1,500 additional families affected by floods of February 2005 will have benefited from the provision of food items and non-food items.**

The 1,500 additional families that will receive food and non-food aid are located in the departments that have been most seriously affected by the latest floods:

Department	Municipalities
Norte de Santander	La Parada
	Puerto Santander
	Tibu
Santander	Zona Metropolitana (Bucaramanga and Giron)
	Betulia
	Cimitarra
	Puerto Wilches
	San Vicente de Chucuri
Tolima	Ataco
	Chaparral

These families will receive food packages, mattresses, mosquito nets, kitchen kits, tableware kits and hygiene kits.

The CRCS standard food relief package is in line with the SPHERE standards.

1. Lentils (1 kg): 3,390 k-cal
2. Flour (0.5 kg): 1,800 k-cal
3. Rice (3 kg): 10,920 k-cal
4. Sugar (1 kg): 3,730 k-cal
5. Brown Colombian sugar (2 kg): 8,000 k-cal
6. Beans (1 kg): 3,280 k-cal
7. Salt (0.5 kg): 0 k-cal
8. Oil (1lt): 9,380 k-cal
9. Chocolate (0.5 kg): 2,000 k-cal
10. Coffee (0.5 kg): 0 k-cal
11. Powdered milk (0.4 kg): 1,924 k-cal
12. Tuna (0.37 kg): 966 k-cal
13. Cold meat for sandwich (0.5 kg): 1,500 k-cal

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 tube of 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.

## Health

**Objective 1: 1,100 families will have benefited from access to basic health services and medical attention for ailments caused by the flooding will have been provided by CRCS health brigades.**

The CRCS has carried out health activities in Cordoba, one of the most affected departments in the country, in the communities of Jerusalen, Nispero, Vid, Villa Cielo and Furatena. All activities took place under the coordination of the government's General Health Directorate and with support from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

- Health brigades reached 325 families in Cordoba, delivering medicines and providing treatment against parasites to 310 people.
- 112 children were vaccinated and underwent a nutritional evaluation. Of these children, 50 were deemed to have poor nutritional health and received a food supplement.
- The CRCS monitored the blood pressure of 148 elderly persons.
- In the next several days, four health brigades will travel to the municipalities of Cerete and San Pelayo in Cordoba with the objective of providing health services to 600 persons. In addition, three other health

brigades will travel to the department of Bolivar to assist 300 persons and one brigade will travel to the department of Magdalena to assist 350 persons.

**Objective 2: 1,050 families will have benefited from a primary health project that includes activities focusing on increased awareness of health, hygiene and sanitation.**

- Training in common, preventable diseases such as diarrhoea and respiratory infections, as well as in issues such as nutrition, management of garbage and treatment of water was given to almost 400 persons through workshops and lectures.
- Four training workshops are planned in the department of Bolivar to reach 160 persons.

**Disaster Preparedness**

**Objective: Targeted CRCS branches will have strengthened their response capacity through the training of staff and the acquisition of logistics equipment.**

Identification and selection of the branches to benefit from this component of the appeal will be carried out in order to focus attention on branches located in areas in which severe flooding is anticipated in view of the forecasts for a particularly intensive rainy season between March and June.

As part its strategy, the CRCS will focus on three main aspects of disaster preparedness:

- Development of contingency plans for branches in high risk areas with potential exposure to floods.
- Training of branch volunteers to prepare them as national intervention team members.
- Improvement of telecommunications equipment within the CRCS branches and training of staff and volunteers in communications techniques
- Promotion of branch involvement within the national emergency response system.

**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 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. Given 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 using its expertise in logistics, transportation, 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 Red Cross volunteers at all levels. In addition, the National Society has gained important experience in community programmes through the Amazonico programme it has been implementing during the past five years (more information can be found at [www.cruzroja.org](http://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 (SNPAD). As a result, the National Society has a great deal of experience in attending to vulnerable people affected by conflict or disasters, particularly in the areas of preparedness, emergency response and rehabilitation.

### **Communications – Advocacy and Public Information**

The provision of accurate information to the public regarding 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.

With the support of the national media the CRCS launched two national campaigns to collect relief goods and cash contributions. These campaigns served to increase the number of Red Cross volunteers among the Colombian population.

**[Contributions list below; click here to return to the title page.](#)**

**REVISED BUDGET SUMMARY**

APPEAL No. 24/2004

**Colombia - floods**

TYPE	REVISION 1	REVISION 2	VARIANCE
<b>RELIEF NEEDS</b>			
Shelter & constructions			
Clothing & textiles	568,000	568,000	
Food	343,000	343,000	
Water & sanitation	21,000	21,000	
Medical & first aid	67,000	67,000	
Utensils & tools	76,000	76,000	
Other relief supplies	154,000	154,000	
<b>TOTAL RELIEF NEEDS</b>	<b>1,229,000</b>	<b>1,229,000</b>	
<b>CAPITAL EQUIPMENT</b>			
Computers & telecom. equipment	9,000	33,000	24,000
<b>PROGRAMME SUPPORT</b>			
Programme support (6.5% of total)	110,000	130,000	20,000
<b>TRANSPORT STORAGE &amp; VEHICLE COSTS</b>			
Distribution & storage	24,000	29,000	5,000
Transport & vehicle costs	74,000	80,000	6,000
<b>PERSONNEL</b>			
Expatriate staff		3,000	3,000
National staff	91,000	97,000	6,000
Workshops & training	35,000	213,000	178,000
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE &amp; GENERAL SERVICES</b>			
Travel & related expenses	38,000	45,000	7,000
Information expenses	50,000	89,000	39,000
Administrative & general expenses	38,000	48,000	10,000
<b>TOTAL OPERATIONAL NEEDS</b>	<b>469,000</b>	<b>767,000</b>	<b>298,000</b>
<b>TOTAL APPEAL CASH, KIND, SERVICES</b>	<b>1,698,000</b>	<b>1,996,000</b>	<b>298,000</b>
<b>LESS AVAILABLE RESOURCES (-)</b>		<b>762,846</b>	
<b>NET REQUEST</b>		<b>1,233,154</b>	

