

# 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

## GUYANA: FLOODS

18 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. 05EA001; Operations Update no. 3; Period covered: 4 – 17 February 2005; Appeal coverage: 14%** ([click here to go directly to the attached Contributions List, also available on the website](#)).

#### Appeal history:

- Launched on 24 January 2005 for CHF 2,042,000 (USD 1,724,515 or EUR 1,321,970) for 6 months to assist 30,000 beneficiaries (6,000 families)
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 300,000

**Outstanding needs : CHF 1,757,017**

**Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: Caribbean Sub Regional Programmes Annual Appeal 05AA041; Hurricane Ivan Emergency Appeal 21/2004**

**Operational Summary:** Dry weather is now forecast in Guyana; however, along the east coast some regions are still flooded with water levels which remain as high as four to five feet. These areas remain dependent on food distribution, and the provision of clean drinking water. However, on the west coast beneficiaries have begun going back to their homes to start the clean up process and the rebuilding of their houses. Accumulation of garbage is becoming alarming and the authorities are ensuring communications to the public regarding waste disposal arrangements. There have been increased admissions to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation of persons who may have contracted leptospirosis. The Ministry of Health (MoH), in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), has been undertaking rigorous disease surveillance to determine potential disease patterns. The distribution of food parcels has continued during the reporting period and the Guyana Red Cross Society (GRCS) has distributed a total of 12,329 parcels in over 84 communities. In addition, a total of 9,494 blankets have been distributed; four relief teams are carrying out distributions of food parcels and blankets throughout the affected area. In addition, thus far, the GRCS has ensured the distribution of a total of 5,851 hygiene kits and 12,359 jerry cans to targeted beneficiaries. The Guyana Red Cross Society's public health awareness campaign includes the distribution of posters containing key health messages focusing on "Health in Disasters" and the "Use of Mosquito Nets." Together with the mosquito nets, the Guyana Red Cross Society plans to distribute 6,000 clean up kits as part of the Red Cross campaign entitled "For a Fresh Start". Training of volunteers in disaster preparedness, including a component of first aid, is now scheduled.

**Given that the Appeal coverage currently stands at 14 per cent, further funding is urgently required in order to ensure the success of the floods operation and to continue to assist those in need.**

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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](#) 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

Three days of torrential rains which began on 14 January have caused serious flooding in Guyana, affecting more than 150,000 people. This is the third time since late December that rains have caused flooding in the country's capital, Georgetown, and other coastal towns. After a day of relative sunshine the rains started again on 22 January causing increased flooding in many parts of the country, including the capital and surrounding areas. Furthermore, the heavy rains have cut off some areas along the eastern coast of the country and there are also reports that one of the main canals in the capital city of Georgetown burst its banks. Houses have been completely flooded and many businesses have been forced to close in an effort to protect their goods. Government offices, courts and schools were also forced to close.

Georgetown and the surrounding area is divided into two districts: Demerara-Mahaica and West Demerara-Essequibo Islands, both of which have been declared "disaster areas" by the Guyanese government. The district of Mahaica-Berbice, which is located on the east coast of the country, to the southeast of Georgetown, has also been declared a disaster area. The hardest hit communities are Albouystown, Shopia, Better Hope, Coldingen, Enterprise Gardens, Paradise and Enmore. Many residents in these areas live in poverty and the severe flooding has further exacerbated their already precarious situation. Thousands of people have been displaced by the floods and have been forced to seek refuge in one of the shelters set up in East Coast Demerara by the Guyana Defence Force. The Guyana Red Cross Society headquarters was also transformed into an emergency shelter assisting those in need from the surrounding area. Tens of thousands more have also been affected by the floods and are in urgent need of potable water and food. The Guyanese government has released 200 million Guyanese dollars (approximately USD 1,120,448 or CHF 1,332,025) for emergency relief. On 20 January, a telethon was held in Berbice County; money and food supplies from which will be channelled through the Guyana Red Cross Society.

The Ministry of Health is also trying to ensure that people are able to locate to shelters which have been opened, but there have been difficulties in reaching those people most in need. In addition, Environmental Health and Vector Control Units are working with communities to ensure that an adequate supply of disinfectant is available in order to reduce the spread of disease.

CHF 300,000 was released from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) in order to facilitate prompt mobilization of relief goods from PADRU.

## Operational developments

Dry weather is now forecast in Guyana; however, the authorities estimate that it will take 10 to 14 days for the floodwaters to drain from the land in many affected areas; in the area of Mahaica Creek it could take two to three weeks for the waters to recede. Furthermore, along the east coast some regions are still flooded with water levels as high as four to five feet. These areas remain dependent on food distribution, and the provision of clean drinking water. However, on the west coast beneficiaries have begun going back to their homes to start the clean up process and the rebuilding of their houses. Accumulation of garbage is becoming alarming; the authorities are ensuring communications to the public regarding waste disposal arrangements and providing advice as to the healthy handling of fresh produce.

There have been increased admissions to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation of persons who may have contracted leptospirosis. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization, has been undertaking rigorous disease surveillance to determine potential disease patterns. There is an expectation that, as many animals and rodents were in the flood waters, most of the population may have been exposed to leptospirosis, although the Ministry of Health has ensured a degree of doxycycline prophylaxis. The Federation is monitoring developments regarding the health situation through daily meetings with representatives of the MoH.

The Federation team is now composed of: a team leader (this position was previously filled by a Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) disaster management delegate who has now left the country and a replacement team leader is currently under recruitment); a logistic delegate; two relief delegates who are regional intervention team (RITs) members, a health delegate and a finance and administration officer. Currently, the field also benefits from the direct support of both water and sanitation and telecommunication delegates from PADRU. Delegates from the German Red Cross and the French Red Cross have arrived in Guyana to develop bilateral activities with the National Society.



**Affected families continue to live in difficult conditions, under water, a month after the floods**

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

### **Emergency relief (food and basic non-food items)**

**Objective 1: 30,000 vulnerable beneficiaries (6,000 families) in Guyana have benefited from the provision of food and non-food items to assist them during the flood emergency.**

### **Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)**

The distribution of food parcels has continued during the reporting period and 12,329 parcels have now been distributed in over 84 communities. In addition, a total of 9,494 blankets have been distributed; four relief teams are carrying out distributions of food parcels and blankets throughout the affected area. The packaging of food parcels is being organized in the GRCS warehouse, with local Red Cross volunteers, students, and other community members taking part. Distribution lists are being prepared by Red Cross volunteers and community representatives prior to distributions. In general, distributions have been orderly, with community members

assisting in unloading trucks and organizing distribution lines. The Guyana Red Cross Society is ensuring coordination with the World Food Programme and a number of stakeholders involved in the distribution of food, including representatives of NGOs and the Civil Defence Commission (CDC). The principal objective is to address the needs of the population of approximately 2,000 families who have not yet been reached by food distributions on the east coast area of Demarara River, between Friendship and Victoria communities. These communities are located in the “backlands” where difficult access is slowing down assessments and the distribution process. Each organization is focusing on a specific community to ensure that needs are covered. The WFP has agreed to provide food to implementing partners, as needed. As part of this strategy, the Federation and the WFP signed an agreement for the distribution of 1,876 additional food hampers. The Federation and the WFP continue to fund warehouse facilities for joint distribution and are also providing support to Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

Thus far, distributions of emergency relief items have taken place as follows:

Item	Quantity
Federation food parcels:	11,569
WFP food parcels:	760
Total Food parcels:	12,329
Blankets	9,494

### Impact

The distributions taking place in Guyana are ensuring that the most vulnerable beneficiary families receive relief assistance. Essential assistance provided through the GRCS, such as food parcels and blankets, is expediting the recovery process of those affected.

### Constraints

The relief phase of the operation is progressing more slowly than planned due to difficulties in accessing the affected areas, many of which can only be reached by boat.



**A Federation delegate monitors distribution lists in the Georgetown area.**

## Health

**Objective 1: The water and sanitation needs for 30,000 vulnerable beneficiaries (6,000 families) in Guyana have been assessed, and assistance delivered in this sector.**

### Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

While relief supplies of water continue to be provided, national and international partners, including PAHO and UNICEF, are planning interventions in the sanitation sector, which are instrumental in order to create a healthy environment for the affected populations. The sanitation systems in the country have been drastically affected as many septic tanks, pit latrines and sewage systems are flooded or are overflowing. The Federation provided 15 septic tanks to the authorities to be installed in the areas where these are most urgently needed.

The Federation is attending the meetings held at the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) headquarters with the water and sanitation coordination group. According to survey figures in the most affected areas, 127,000 people have been affected by the flooding and are currently in urgent need of water. The main concern with regard to the distribution of water is the amount of time that it takes to refill the trucks. The planned water distribution system for the east coast of the country includes one water tank at each of the 50 distribution points. The GRCS has identified additional personnel to carry out water and sanitation activities in the affected areas and is currently planning rapid training sessions with material provided from the sub regional office in Trinidad.

Thus far, 5,851 hygiene kits and 12,359 jerry cans have been distributed by the GRCS.

The National Society's public health awareness campaign includes the distribution of posters containing key health messages focusing on "Health in Disasters" and the "Use of Mosquito Nets." Together with the mosquito nets, the Guyana Red Cross Society plans to distribute 6,000 clean up kits as part of the Red Cross campaign entitled "For a Fresh Start"; 600 of these kits are already in Guyana and distribution, targeted at the most vulnerable families, has now begun. The GRCS will provide both written and verbal instructions to beneficiaries describing the clean up process; the material has been approved by the Ministry of Health and is based on information provided by PAHO.

A third relief flight from PADRU will arrive shortly in Guyana containing further supplies of clean up kits which are composed of the following items:

- 1 machete
- 1 shovel
- 1 yard brush
- 1 pair of rubber boots
- 1 set of gloves
- 10 heavy duty plastic bags
- 1 bucket
- Bleach
- Disinfectant

### Impact

The GRCS work in the area of water and sanitation, the provision of clean drinking water, the implementation of clean up campaigns, the promotion of the use of mosquito nets and the dissemination of key messages in health and hygiene are assisting vulnerable beneficiaries and protecting their health.

### Constraints:

Given a shortage of mosquito nets worldwide as a result of the tsunami response operations, there is a delay in procuring the mosquito nets which will affect the time table for their distribution.

**Objective 2: Awareness of vulnerable families will be raised in key health messages through an HIV/AIDS/STI and TB campaign.**

**Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)**

The GRCS has distributed posters containing key health messages in health centres, public places and pharmacies. In addition, Red Cross personnel are continuing to distribute condoms as part of their relief activities. Plans are currently being drawn up to carry out a “Together We Can” workshop, and the necessary materials have been forwarded to Guyana from the Sub Regional Office. “Together We Can” is a youth peer education methodology that addresses HIV/AIDS. Venues to conduct these workshops are being coordinated with the affected communities and with shelter managers.

**Impact:**

The dissemination of health messages in health centres, public places and pharmacies helps reinforce key information in the area of HIV/AIDS/STI as a first step towards behaviour change.

**Constraints:**

The distribution of condoms is being limited by religious and cultural beliefs.

**Psychosocial Support**

**Objective 1: Staff and volunteers of the Guyana Red Cross Society plus the affected communities have benefited from psychosocial support to assist them in recovering from the effects of the floods**

**Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)**

Work in this area will be carried out as soon as the emergency needs of the affected population have been met. With the support of the Grenada and Jamaica Red Cross Societies, which have experience of working in this area following the relief operation implemented in response to Hurricane Ivan, a group of specialists will visit Guyana in March in order to train National Society volunteers who already have some experience in the field of psychosocial support. Several other mental health organizations which are active in Guyana will also be invited to participate. Once fully trained, volunteers also may provide services at health/wellness centres, working in conjunction with UNICEF and the Ministry of Health.

**Strengthening of Preparedness and Response**

**Objective 1: The capacity of the Guyana Red Cross Society and vulnerable communities in disaster response and community based disaster preparedness (CBDP) including First Aid have been strengthened**

**Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)**

A round of disaster preparedness training is already scheduled and will span a period of approximately two months. The goal is to complete the training of several hundred people in small groups prior to the onset of the rainy season in May/June. Approximately 4,000 first aid kits are being procured through the American Red Cross. These kits will be distributed to the participants taking part in the disaster preparedness training; in addition, the Guyana Red Cross Society will retain a stock of at least 500 kits for future needs. Disaster preparedness/first aid refresher courses will then be offered, as appropriate.

**Objective 2: The capacity of the Guyana Red Cross Society in the area of telecommunications has been reinforced.**

**Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)**

The Telecommunications Delegate from PADRU undertook a mission to Guyana to accelerate the process of obtaining VHF frequencies, installing a VHF repeater for the relief operation and in order to support improved

communications in the context of the floods operation. From the outset of the operation, a delegate's kit with a satellite phone kit was sent together with five cell phones in order to ensure communications.

The main objectives of the telecommunications plan of action are as follows:

- Installation of a VHF standard Federation radio in the GRCS headquarters in Georgetown
- Installation of a VHF repeater for the relief operation
- Installation of an HF radio in the GRCS headquarters in Georgetown
- Installation of the HF radio now in Georgetown in the Lethem branch.
- Organization of a training session for the GRCS concerning the use and maintenance of equipment
- Installation of a switchboard system in the GRCS headquarters, with 10 to 15 extensions and two to three lines; one of these lines will be for Federation use.

### **Federation Coordination**

A number of initiatives are taking place in order to ensure coordination of relief efforts and to avoid duplication amongst the humanitarian agencies and national bodies working in Guyana:

- The Civil Defence Commission (CDC) has now taken over the management of relief coordination meetings from the Joint Operations Centre (JOC).
- The GRCS/Federation is monitoring developments regarding the health situation through daily meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Health.
- The GRCS/Federation is ensuring coordination with the World Food Programme and a number of stakeholders involved in the distribution of food, including representatives of NGOs and the Civil Defence Commission.
- The GRCS/Federation is attending the meetings held at the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) headquarters with the water and sanitation coordination group

### **Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement -- Principles and initiatives**

- Relief activities being carried out are based on the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- Beneficiary selection criteria focus on the vulnerability of those affected; as a result, food and non-food distributions target children and female heads of household as a special priority group.
- In addition to the targeted communities, specific assistance is being provided to groups with special needs which are not receiving assistance from other organizations: these include "The Guyana Association for the Blind" the "Children's Convalescent Home" and a shelter for Persons Living with HIV/AIDS.
- Activities are based on the SPHERE Project humanitarian charter and the code of conduct for emergency response.

### **National Society Capacity Building**

The Federation team working closely with the National Society structure through local counterparts at all levels. The sharing of experience and methodologies among Red Cross staff has enhanced the quality of work in the field.

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

During the current reporting period, six pictures with comments on the relief operation were provided to CNN and a major interview was given to the BBC by the Federation Team Leader.

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

# Guyana - Heavy rains and floods

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 05EA001

## PLEDGES RECEIVED

15/02/2005

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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### CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->					<b>TOTAL COVERAGE</b>	
					<b>2,042,000</b>	<b>14.0%</b>
JAPANESE - RC		56,800	USD	64,298	08.02.05	
NETHERLANDS - GOVT		32,086	EUR	49,685	01.02.05	
SWEDISH - GOVT		1,000,000	SEK	171,000	01.02.05	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				284,983	CHF	14.0%

### 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	