

# ***VENEZUELA: FLOODS***

**appeal no: 35/99  
5 January 2000**

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 13,298,000  
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES  
TO ASSIST 50,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 12 MONTHS  
It replaces the preliminary appeal of 20 December 1999***

## ***Summary***

The President of Venezuela called the torrential rains and resulting flooding and landslides which struck 9 provinces in northern Venezuela in mid-December the worst disaster his nation had seen in half a century, and the Government declared a State of Emergency.

To support the Venezuelan Red Cross (VRC) emergency rescue and relief efforts, the International Federation launched a Preliminary Appeal on 20 December, 1999, seeking CHF 4,460,000 to support 50,000 persons over 90 days. This amount has now been covered by pledges and donations which have helped fund initial relief efforts.

Concurrently with the launching of the Preliminary Appeal, a rapid needs assessment was undertaken. Its findings provide the basis for this full appeal, which replaces the preliminary appeal. The budget for the appeal is CHF 13,298,000, of which CHF 4,700,000 has already been received or pledged.

Heavy rains continue to fall in Venezuela, including in many areas severely affected by the initial floods and mudslides. Further rains are expected, increasing concerns of more flooding, but many people in vulnerable areas have indicated a reluctance to move. In terms of the operation, the rains are creating logistical constraints, hampering the distribution of relief items as well as ongoing needs assessments.

## ***The Disaster***

More than 10 days of continuous rainfall in Venezuela from December 8 to 19 provoked serious flooding and landslides in the Federal District of Caracas, as well as in the States of Miranda, Vargas, Nueva Esparta (the island of Margarita), Yaracuy, Falcon, Carabobo, Zulia and Tachira. The downpour caused rivers to overflow their banks, sweeping through poor districts in the capital, Caracas, destroying thousands of homes. The worst hit areas, where one third of the residents live,

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were the shantytowns perched precariously on steep mountainsides. Entire communities located in coastal valleys were also destroyed, or disappeared in the mass of mud which rolled down from the mountains to the coast.

Although the official death toll (based on the body count) remains very low, the media, local authorities and other unofficial sources estimate that between 25,000 to 50,000 people died in the disaster. Over 600,000 persons are estimated to have been directly affected and, according to the Venezuelan Civil Defence, initial damage assessments indicate that at least 64,700 houses have been seriously damaged and over 32,000 destroyed. In addition, the disaster has caused extensive damage to local infrastructure, and the economic recovery of the population, largely dependent on tourism, small industry and fisheries, will take many months.

## ***The Response so far***

### **Government Action w**

In order to effectively coordinate relief and rehabilitation efforts, the Government of Venezuela established a National Emergency Committee. Its 13 subcommittees include Food, Health, Water, Shelter and Housing.

Thousands of people have been provided temporary shelter in military base facilities and according to government sources they will have first priority when new housing becomes available.

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

Co-ordination meetings bringing together the VRC, the Federation delegation and PNS representatives in the country take place daily.

#### **Venezuelan Red Cross**

Local VRC branches in the affected areas are distributing emergency relief supplies and providing health assistance, while monitoring the evolving situation. Because the Venezuelan Red Cross is one of the few national organisations that are operational, many NGOs have approached it with offers of collaboration.

#### **International Federation**

A team of 15 Federation and PNS delegates is supporting the VRC in the areas of relief, logistics, health, telecommunications, reporting, information and family tracing activities. Other PNS personnel have been allocated field functions in the States of Falcon, Vargas, Valencia, Zulia and Miranda.

The Federation has opened a logistics cell in Panama which can also be used to support PNS procurement. It has contracted a clearing agent and a commercial trucking company to ease the present logistical constraints and has rented a warehouse in the northern state of Vargas, in addition to two large warehouses already being used for the operation

Distributions of Federation funded goods have started in the states of Vargas and Falcon. The Federation has placed an order for 25,000 family food parcels in Panama, and is looking into procurement in Venezuela.

With the reopening of schools next week, the operation will lose the manpower provided by student volunteers. The hiring of workers for the duration of the operation is under consideration with the National Society.

#### **Participating National Societies (PNS)**

Many National Societies have provided critical cash and in-kind support to the operation. The information below reviews the work of those Societies present in Venezuela.

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*Latin American and Caribbean Societies:* Several National Societies are participating in the operation through the organisation of national fundraising campaigns, the dispatch of relief goods, the sending of delegates and other Red Cross workers, and other forms of support.

*American Red Cross:* The nine-member American Red Cross team is assisting the VRC in the family reunification programme and is supporting the coordination of relief supplies and procurement. The ARC team will remain in the field for approximately three months.

*Spanish Red Cross:* The Society has four delegates in the country. It has already made water purification units available and has undertaken to supply several more.

*German Red Cross:* A four delegate team, including a water-sanitation expert, is currently in place. A water distribution operation has begun, using three 18,000 litre water trucks, which are distributing a total of 90,000 litres daily to 16,000 people in the state of Vargas. Trucks donated by Mercedes Benz in Venezuela were handed over to the VRC to reinforce its logistics capacity.

*French Red Cross:* French Red Cross delegates have participated in meetings with WHO, CARE, MSF, OXFAM and the State water authorities on issues of water plant systems, legal authorisations to use natural water sources for distributions, transportation and health education campaigns. Eight mobile water treatment units have arrived, and site selection for these units is ongoing, supervised by the French Red Cross Wat-San delegate.

### **Co-ordination with other agencies w**

The Federation is participating in regular coordination meetings with all UN agencies and NGOs, including Oxfam, Action against Hunger, MSF and others. General meetings are now held every 2 days, in addition to technical meetings on more specific topics, such as water and sanitation, psychological support, and food aid.

OCHA has created a dedicated website (<http://www.reliefweb.int>) in order to gather and distribute information on outstanding needs identified by the Venezuelan Government, and international aid, pledged or contributed. The database can be searched by donor, type (human resources, cash, in kind) and by destination (geographical or technical areas).

## ***The Intended Operation***

Based on the findings of a just-completed needs assessment, the Federation will provide support to an integrated relief and recovery programme for 10,000 target families, or an estimated 50,000 persons, affected by the floods and landslides. The operation will be carried out within a one-year time-frame (December 1999 - December, 2000).

### **Assessment of Needs w**

The initial needs assessment has identified the main priorities as: the distribution of water and food, medical care, measures to prevent disease outbreaks, tracing and psychological support. (Please refer to the table attached as Annex 2 for details on the numbers and locations of the affected population).

### **Red Cross / Red Crescent Objectives w**

- continue first aid and medical support to people in the Government's temporary shelters;
- provide food, blankets and basic household goods to 50,000 people for four months;
- support water and sanitation programmes;
- assess the need for longer-term rehabilitation ;
- strengthen the operational capacity of the Venezuelan Red Cross by providing support to staff training and development.

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## ***National Society/Federation Plan of Action***

During the first four months of the operation, the main emphasis will be on the distribution of drinking water, food parcels, kitchen utensils and basic household goods.

### ***Food w***

Standardised food parcels will be distributed to 10,000 families every two weeks for the first two months of the operation. The food package is based on an initial ration of 1,800 kcals per person per day. The nutritional content of this ration will be closely monitored and increased if necessary. The food security situation will be carefully monitored, and it is expected that rations will be reduced for the majority of beneficiaries during the third and fourth months of the operation. A very limited number of persons with special needs (such as the elderly, single parent households, and children) may continue to receive full rations during this period.

The distribution of these food packages is already under way.

### ***Non-food items w***

All 10,000 families will receive standardised kits of household goods, which include blankets and sheets, kitchen utensils, and common hygiene items such as soap and toiletries.

### ***Water and Sanitation w***

Safe water and the re-establishment of sanitation are urgent priorities. A detailed needs assessment is continuing with the assistance of a German Red Cross water and sanitation delegate. Meanwhile, aid organisations have agreed that the Federation will co-ordinate water and sanitation system plans throughout the affected areas.

As a first step, water tanker trucks will continue to deliver drinking water to large water tanks, where beneficiaries with jerry cans will be provided with potable water from multiple tapstands. This operation is expected to last 2-3 months until the basic water facilities and infrastructure have been restored.

Later, small scale water systems and latrines will be rehabilitated and/or constructed in 50 communities, and special emphasis will be placed on health education activities relating to water and sanitation. Communities will be selected on the basis of their level of vulnerability, the involvement of other organisations, and community participation. Communities will be expected to supply labour and local materials, where available. Water and sanitation committees will be set up in each of the communities, and will be responsible for maintenance after training.

The VRC will focus on community mobilisation, organising village water committees and unskilled labour, as well as community health education. This last item, in addition to reinforcing capacity, will also serve to provide an exit strategy for the programme.

Red Cross youth and other volunteers will be equipped with the necessary tools for clean-up campaigns in 50 communities. Where necessary, vector control (spraying and drainage) will be conducted.

A Water-Sanitation delegate will be appointed for a one year assignment.

### ***Health w***

In consultation with PNSs and the VRC, a rapid health needs assessment has been carried out by the Regional Health Delegate, highlighting priority areas in the flood affected communities and in temporary shelters. The operational focus will be on direct interventions, health education,

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preventive health and mobile clinics. Epidemiological surveillance and vector control is needed to prevent outbreaks of cholera, malaria, dengue and other epidemics.

In response, the Venezuelan Red Cross is setting up four mobile teams to provide basic health care services for people in the shelters and others in affected areas. Each team consists of a doctor, two or three nurses, a first aider and a psychological support person. These teams will maintain their services in selected communities during the rehabilitation phase. They will closely coordinate their activities with public health authorities and form part of the nation-wide epidemiological monitoring and health information network and system.

Health education and preventive health campaigns are planned, targeting the hardest hit areas. They will use the media, the mobile teams and pamphlets to convey information.

Medical supplies are needed, basically corresponding to the WHO New Emergency Health Kits, for the mobile health teams.

Psychological support will be integrated into other services, in particular into the work of the mobile teams. A more long-term programme will eventually be needed. The American and Mexican Red Cross Societies are assessing needs, and will assist in training VRC staff.

A Federation health co-ordinator is being recruited.

### ***Tracing w***

The current tracing team will continue its activities for the first two months. To date, over 6,000 requests have been received and several hundreds have been processed. The special telephone hotline will be continued. On the job training of VRC volunteers will be a key factor, enabling the National Society to maintain tracing after this phase.

### ***Branch Reconstruction w***

One VRC branch building was destroyed by the floods and four others damaged; they will be rebuilt or repaired.

### ***Disaster Preparedness w***

A Federation regional programme of community based education in disaster preparedness (CBDP) will be extended to affected communities in Venezuela as well as to other communities in areas of high vulnerability. The programme will provide training at the community level in disaster prevention or preparedness.

The disaster response capacity of the VRC will be increased, mainly through training of staff and volunteers in damage and needs assessment, procedures, systems, standards and techniques, and information. Two disaster management workshops are planned for VRC personnel in the course of 2000.

### ***Logistics w***

Since the VRC has limited means of transport, 15 vehicles will be made available for the operation.

A basic radio communications network will be set up, to enhance communications during the operation and will eventually be expanded and linked with the Latin American, Central American and Caribbean radio communication networks. Staff will be trained in its use and maintenance. Depending on the results of a communications survey (see below), this network may be incorporated into an integrated communications system.

## **Rehabilitation**

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## **Rehabilitation**

While the programme outlined above is being carried out, the VRC/Federation will undertake assessments to determine the need to provide assistance for the repair and reconstruction of housing and to explore the feasibility of setting up micro project schemes to assist recovery through community level support.

Under such schemes, the Venezuelan Red Cross, with Federation-delegate support, would assist some of the most vulnerable communities to identify their own needs and solutions in the areas of water & sanitation, health, disaster preparedness, income generation, social welfare & education. With continued Red Cross support and monitoring, the communities themselves would plan and implement these solutions, as well as manage the resources allocated and report on their activity.

A general evaluation will also be conducted of national and international communications requirements -- telecom, radio, VHF, HF, satellite, cellular phone, e-mail, and computerised information management -- in order to build an integrated system.

Depending on the results of these surveys, the present appeal may be revised.

### **Federation Capacity w**

In the first phase of the emergency the Federation supported the operation with up to 20 delegates. The number of expatriates is currently 15. It is foreseen that a team of 13 delegates will be needed for the four months of the first phase and approximately 8 delegates for the next phase. The delegates will assist the NS in the implementation of the agreed plan of action, and provide expertise and on the job training as required for the NS staff and volunteers.

The Federation will draw extensively on the excellent personnel base in the National Societies in the Americas to staff the delegation. Current recruitment priorities are for a Head of Delegation, a Water Sanitation engineer, a health co-ordinator and an information officer.

### **Capacity of the National Society w**

The VRC has branches in most of the 22 states of the country, plus 22 sub-branches. As hospital services are one of its principal activities, there are more than 500 employees in this area. Some 16,000 volunteers take part in activities focusing on health, social welfare, relief/preparedness, dissemination, youth, and tracing.

The NS will need to employ national expertise and short term staff in order to carry out this large operation.

### **Evaluation w**

In addition to regular monitoring and donor reports, a mid-term evaluation and post operation assessment will be undertaken.

## ***Budget summary***

See Annex 1 for details.

See Annex 3 for list of contributions to date.

## ***Conclusion***

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## ***Conclusion***

All National Societies are requested to provide advance notice and the necessary clearance documentation for all in-kind donations, so that the VRC and the Federation can ensure the effective reception and tracking of all goods.

For more information donors should contact the Americas Department (Santiago Gil, Director, phone 41-22-7304391, [gil@ifrc.org](mailto:gil@ifrc.org); Iain Logan, Desk Officer, 41-22-7304535, [logan@ifrc.org](mailto:logan@ifrc.org); and Luis Luna, Desk Officer, 41-22-7304274, [luna@ifrc.org](mailto:luna@ifrc.org)).

Margareta Wahlström  
Under Secretary General,  
Disaster Response & Operations Coordination

Didier Cherpitel  
Secretary General

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Disaster Response & Operations Coordination

Didier Cherpitel  
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**Venezuela: Floods**35/99R  
IN CHF

	<b><u>Initial Budget</u></b>	<b><u>Revised Budget</u></b>
<b>RELIEF NEEDS</b>		
<b><u>Food items</u></b>		
Rice/Beans/Oil/Sugar/Salt	1,580,000.00	
Food parcels (60,000 family parcels - 2 weeks each)		3,000,000.00
<b><u>Non food items</u></b>		
Kitchen sets (10,000)	375,000.00	375,000.00
Blankets (50,000)	300,000.00	300,000.00
Bedlinen sets (50,000)		550,000.00
Plastic sheeting	180,000.00	130,000.00
Tents	300,000.00	
Jerrycans (10,000)	40,000.00	40,000.00
Hygiene parcels (revised needs: 30,000 parcels)	300,000.00	600,000.00
Water purification powder	190,000.00	190,000.00
Sanitation kits (2,000)		30,000.00
Volunteer tools for clean-up campaign		5,000.00
Water/Sanitation & Vector control		1,440,000.00
Training material		160,000.00
<b>Repair/Reconstruction of 5 RC branches</b>		300,000.00
<b><u>Medical items</u></b>		
WHO New Emergency Health Kits (8)		65,000.00
<b>TOTAL RELIEF NEEDS</b>	<b>3,265,000.00</b>	<b>7,185,000.00</b>
<b><u>Capital equipment</u></b>		
Vehicles (15 4WD)		750,000.00
Basic telecommunications equipment		300,000.00
<b><u>Programme Support</u></b>		
Programme management		897,000.00
Technical support		268,000.00
Professional Services		298,000.00
<b><u>Transport, storage &amp; vehicles costs</u></b>		
Airfreight/Seafreight/land	660,000.00	1,000,000.00
Storage/Warehousing costs	30,000.00	405,000.00
Vehicles running costs	130,000.00	220,000.00
<b><u>Personnel</u></b>		
Expat staff (13 dels x 4 months, 8 dels. x 8 months)	90,000.00	1,160,000.00
National staff	90,000.00	450,000.00
Training (2 Disaster Management workshops)		130,000.00

**Venezuela: Floods**35/99R  
IN CHF

	<b><u>Initial Budget</u></b>	<b><u>Revised Budget</u></b>
<b>RELIEF NEEDS</b>		
<b><u>Food items</u></b>		
Rice/Beans/Oil/Sugar/Salt	1,580,000.00	
Food parcels (60,000 family parcels - 2 weeks each)		3,000,000.00
<b><u>Non food items</u></b>		
Kitchen sets (10,000)	375,000.00	375,000.00
Blankets (50,000)	300,000.00	300,000.00
Bedlinen sets (50,000)		550,000.00
Plastic sheeting	180,000.00	130,000.00
Tents	300,000.00	
Jerrycans (10,000)	40,000.00	40,000.00
Hygiene parcels (revised needs: 30,000 parcels)	300,000.00	600,000.00
Water purification powder	190,000.00	190,000.00
Sanitation kits (2,000)		30,000.00
Volunteer tools for clean-up campaign		5,000.00
Water/Sanitation & Vector control		1,440,000.00
Training material		160,000.00
<b>Repair/Reconstruction of 5 RC branches</b>		300,000.00
<b><u>Medical items</u></b>		
WHO New Emergency Health Kits (8)		65,000.00
<b>TOTAL RELIEF NEEDS</b>	<b>3,265,000.00</b>	<b>7,185,000.00</b>
<b><u>Capital equipment</u></b>		
Vehicles (15 4WD)		750,000.00
Basic telecommunications equipment		300,000.00
<b><u>Programme Support</u></b>		
Programme management		897,000.00
Technical support		268,000.00
Professional Services		298,000.00
<b><u>Transport, storage &amp; vehicles costs</u></b>		
Airfreight/Seafreight/land	660,000.00	1,000,000.00
Storage/Warehousing costs	30,000.00	405,000.00
Vehicles running costs	130,000.00	220,000.00
<b><u>Personnel</u></b>		
Expat staff (13 dels x 4 months, 8 dels. x 8 months)	90,000.00	1,160,000.00
National staff	90,000.00	450,000.00
Training (2 Disaster Management workshops)		130,000.00

Travel & Communications	5,000.00	150,000.00
Assessment and Evaluation	40,000.00	50,000.00
Printing Costs/Information/Visibility	10,000.00	20,000.00
Other administrative costs	20,000.00	15,000.00
Secretariat operational support	120,000.00	
<b>TOTAL OPERATIONAL NEEDS</b>	<b>1,195,000.00</b>	<b>6,113,000.00</b>
<b>TOTAL APPEAL CASH &amp; KIND</b>	<b>4,460,000.00</b>	<b>13,298,000.00</b>
LESS PLEDGES ANNOUNCED	0.00	4,700,000.00
<b>NET REQUEST CASH &amp; KIND</b>		<b>8,598,000.00</b>

N.B. This budget does not include community microprojects, house repairs and reconstruction, and most of the information technology and telecommunications programme, which are being planned.

Travel & Communications	5,000.00	150,000.00
Assessment and Evaluation	40,000.00	50,000.00
Printing Costs/Information/Visibility	10,000.00	20,000.00
Other administrative costs	20,000.00	15,000.00
Secretariat operational support	120,000.00	
<b>TOTAL OPERATIONAL NEEDS</b>	<b>1,195,000.00</b>	<b>6,113,000.00</b>
<b>TOTAL APPEAL CASH &amp; KIND</b>	<b>4,460,000.00</b>	<b>13,298,000.00</b>
LESS PLEDGES ANNOUNCED	0.00	4,700,000.00
<b>NET REQUEST CASH &amp; KIND</b>		<b>8,598,000.00</b>

N.B. This budget does not include community microprojects, house repairs and reconstruction, and most of the information technology and telecommunications programme, which are being planned.