

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



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

## ***COSTA RICA, PANAMA / FLOODS***

5/12/2002

*Information Bulletin N° 1/02*

*Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: CHF 40,000*

- This Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider international support through an Appeal.*

### ***The Situation***

Strong rainfalls and winds have struck the Caribbean provinces of Panama and Costa Rica for the last ten days, resulting in severe flooding in more than 110 communities in the two countries. According to government reports, six people died, nine people are missing and 53 injured. Approximately 50,000 people have been affected in Costa Rica and 15,000 people in Panama. Local authorities evacuated 7,000 people in Costa Rica. Almost 2,500 are living in 21 temporary shelters, organised by the authorities, and supported by the Emergency National Commission and the Costa Rican Red Cross. Drinking water has also been provided to 5,000 of those most affected.

In Costa Rica, the affected areas are:

- Limon province: Valle La Estrella, Limon Centro, Bananito La Bomba, Matina, Bribri, Olivia, Paraiso, Margarita, Catarina, Celia, Bambu, Suretka, Shiroles, Coroma and Gavilan.
- Heredia province: Pangola.
- Cartago province: San Pablo, Grano de Oro and Turrialba.

Approximately 25,000 houses were affected by flooding and landslides in Matina, Siquirres, Limon, Talamanca, Sixaola and Cartago. The drinking water distribution in Siquirres, Matina, Batan, Bananito, Bribri, Sixaola and Valle La Estrella has collapsed, because all wells have been contaminated. The floods cut several roads, isolating dozens of communities in Batan, Matina, Valle La Estrella, Sixaola, Cartago and Siquirres. Around 70 per cent of crops have been affected.

In Panama, the provinces affected are Bocas del Toro, Colon, Veraguas, Cocle, Kuna Yala and Panama west. The most affected communities are Maria Chiquita, Rio Indio, Santa Maria de Belen, Congo, Ciri Grande, Santa Rita, Ollas Abajo, Nueva Arenosa and Los Faldares. Winds blew off many roofs in Chorrera and Arraijan, west of Panama City.

Hundreds of people were also evacuated from the area surrounding the Panama Canal and housed in temporary shelters and schools, as several rivers overflowed their banks. Many families have lost their crops and the few animals they depend on for survival.

The Panamanian Ministry of Health, the National Civil Police, the National System of Civil Protection and the Panamanian Red Cross have coordinated the search and rescue actions and the first medical assistance in the field. Due to the floods and landslides, a government helicopter was used by Red Cross teams to reach severely affected communities and provide humanitarian aid. Hundreds of volunteers have helped vulnerable families to reach safe areas during the last three days and the Panamanian government has distributed food parcels.

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

Several field teams of the Costa Rican Red Cross have conducted a damage and needs assessment in the affected communities, participating in search and rescue and temporary shelter management, in support of the local authorities. The urgent needs are for clothes, food, drinking water and hygiene kits for 10,000 people, and blankets and mattresses for 5,000 people.

The Panamanian Red Cross (PRC) has deployed 80 volunteers from headquarters and the branches of La Chorrera, Capira and Colon, assisting the most affected families and supporting the evaluation of damage and assessment of needs.

The PRC is distributing 500 kitchen kits, 500 food kits, 500 blankets, 500 plastic sheeting with funds provided from the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF). On request of the Guatemala Regional Delegation for Central America, the Regional Logistics Unit (RLU) of the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) has supported the operation, with 500 kitchen kits and 500 plastics sheeting from its contingency stock.

The PRC plan of action also calls for the distribution of jerry cans and chlorination supplies for 675 families and drinking water for 15 days in provinces hit by heavy rain. As the water subsides more communities become accessible and the evaluation and needs assessment will continue with possible subsequent modifications to the plan of action. Immediate needs include: food, jerry cans, water purification supplies, drinking water, sheets, household sanitation kits and rescue equipment, including lifejackets for volunteers and cash for operational expenses.

The *German Red Cross* supported the Panamanian Red Cross with 500 blankets and first aid goods, and has offered possible support to the Costa Rican Red Cross once a plan of action is ready. The Panamanian Red Cross has received CHF 40,000 from the DREF.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

*For further details please contact :*

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

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

*For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.*

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