

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

PARAGUAY: DROUGHT

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Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: CHF 70,000

This Information Bulletin is to request donors to maintain their interest in this hidden and silent disaster while the Paraguayan Red Cross (PRC), in coordination with other agencies and with help from the International Federation's Buenos Aires Regional Delegation (BARD) and the Panamerican Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), is completing its plan of action for an international appeal. In the meantime, donors are invited to send unarmarked contributions to replenish DREF and further continue the operation.

The Situation

An extended drought has affected the departments of Alto Paraguay, Boquerón and Canindeyú in western Paraguay over the last two years (see map at end). During the last eight months, there has been no rain at all and the situation has deteriorated rapidly and on October 2 a National State of Emergency was declared. In Boquerón the drought has had a particularly negative impact on agriculture, affecting 4,968 rural indigenous farming families in 56 communities who live principally on subsistence crops. Traditional water supply systems called “tajamares”, excavations where rain water is collected and distributed to the community, are completely dry. Communities have exhausted their food and water reserves. The situation is further complicated as the lack of rain has delayed the planting of new crops that may lead to a prolonged period of hunger.

To date 17 people have died because of diseases related to contaminated water, and the population's health has been seriously affected. The poor quality of the drinking water has resulted in an increase of associated infectious diseases and the local health system is unable to meet the needs given a lack of medicines and other resources. There is only one medical centre which is located far from the affected communities. There is concern that the health situation will deteriorate given that daytime temperatures are now rising to above 40 degrees Celsius.

The government's National Emergency Committee (NEC) and the Departmental Emergency Committee (DEC) have formed working groups and visited the affected areas. An accurate census has been carried out allowing for more precise planning. On October 15 the NEC and the DEC began, in Boquerón, to distribute one week of food supplies to be used for community kitchens established in schools and an 8

day water supply by water tankers. Municipal leaders and members of the NEC and the DEC fear this will exhaust remaining resource.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

In the last two years, the Paraguayan Red Cross, helped by Spanish Red Cross and ECHO, assisted the most affected families in Boquerón.

To date the Paraguayan Red Cross (PRC) is the only non governmental organization to visit the area. Together with a team from OCHA and members of the DEC, staff from the PRC National Headquarters carried a preliminary Evaluation of Damage and Assessment of Needs (EDAN) throughout Boquerón resulting in a DEC plan of action. The PRC will participate in this plan focusing on food distribution, provision of water and institutional coordination and support.

Staff from the National Headquarters together with volunteers from the branch in Boquerón, both of whom are members of the NEC and DEC respectively, are validating information and visiting communities. The sub-branch of Bella Vista, in the Department of Itapúa, launched a campaign to collect food and water and have shipped 20 tons of provisions to the Boquerón branch for immediate distribution to communities.

The International Federation has allocated CHF 70,000 from the DREF fund to assist in the operation and is the only international organization to date, that has dedicated resources to the emergency. The Regional Disaster Preparedness and Response Delegate from the Regional Delegation for South America along with the Regional Water and Sanitation Delegate from the Pan-American Disaster Response Unit arrived in Paraguay on 11 October to work with the PRC to validate the EDAN and develop a DREF plan of action. Along with representatives from the PRC National headquarters and volunteers from the Boquerón branch co-ordination meetings have been held with municipal authorities and members of the DEC.

In addition, meetings were held representatives of ESSAP, the private company responsible for the provision of water in the country, to determine availability of water and to locate the closest water sources. The Regional Water and Sanitation Delegate was able to take sample to assess the quality of the water. Visits were also made to communities to assess the current conditions of the “tajamares” system and to speak with community representatives. Again water samples were taken from various sources in the communities in order to evaluate the quality.

As a result of the meetings held and given the resources available through the DREF allocation, two areas of action were identified: 1) food items will be distributed to the 25 most vulnerable communities; and 2) a one month water supply will be provided to these same communities. The operation is calculated to take one month and will be based in the community of Filadelfia. In total 5,950 people (1,193 families) will receive assistance. Table 1 details the beneficiary communities and the corresponding number of families and people.

The selected communities will receive a one month 47 kg. supplementary food packages consisting of the following items:

ITEM	QUANTITY
Rice	10 kg
Flour	5 kg
Pasta	5 kg
Beans	10 kg
Sugar	5 kg
Salt	2 kg
Cooking Oil	5 lt

Yerba Mate (traditional tea used by the indigenous population)				5 kg	
Nº	COMMUNITY	ETHNIC GROUP	DISTANCE FROM FILADELFIA (closest urban centre)	NUMBER OF FAMILIES	NUMBER OF PEOPLE
1	Ebetogue	Ayoreo	38	120	600
2	Canaán	Guaraní Ñandeva	55	80	400
3	Emaús	Guaraní Ñandeva	56	30	150
4	Damasco	Guaraní Ñandeva	56	71	355
5	Timoteo	Guaraní Ñandeva	58	17	85
6	Belén	Guaraní Ñandeva	63	27	135
7	Jerusalén	Guaraní Ñandeva	59	10	50
8	Macharety	Guaraní	53	75	375
9	Nasuc	Nivaclé	85	50	250
10	San Ramón	Nivaclé	90	26	130
11	Primavera	Nivaclé Manhui	85	15	75
12	San Pio X	Nivaclé	93	18	90
13	San Miguel	Nivaclé Manhui	90	54	270
14	Jotoicha	Nivaclé	93	75	375
15	Sta. Elena	Guaraní Ñandeva	76	20	100
16	Yichinachat	Nivaclé	185	125	625
17	Quenjaclai	Nivaclé	170	18	90
18	Sta. Elena	Guaraní Ñandeva	76	20	100
19	San Lázaro	Guaraní Ñandeva	74	15	75
20	Koé Pyahú	Guaraní Ñandeva	60	35	160
21	Campo Ampú	Nivaclé	178	32	160
22	Pycasu - Nueva Asu	Guaraní Ñandeva	280	70	350
23	Abundancia	Nivaclé	39	50	250
24	Ñu Guazú	Guaraní Ñandeva	280	40	200
25	San José Esteros	Nivaclé	318	100	500
Total				1.193	5.950

Beneficiary Population

In cooperation with the municipality of Boquerón and ESSAP, government water tanker trucks will be used to fill community water storage facilities for one month. This process will be time consuming given the amount of water needed, the number of trucks available and the considerable distances between very isolated communities and Mariscal Estigarribia, the nearest source of potable water.

On Tuesday, October 15 an inter-institutional meeting called by the United Nations will be held. At this time support the remaining communities need will be solicited and individual organizational responsibilities will be defined. The IFRC delegates along with PRC staff will attend the meeting which will help in focusing the eventual appeal to be launched within the next few days. The IFRC is also in contract with the Spanish Red Cross who is currently preparing a funding proposal to present to donors in support of the emergency appeal.

Needs

Immediate needs remain three months of food rations and clean drinking water for 3 months. This situation could change if the rains do not arrive and crops cannot be planted.

Health issues are also becoming increasingly critical. However, the provision of clean water along accompanied by an awareness raising campaign should reduce instances of acute diarrhoea, specifically among children.

More detailed information relating to the specific role of the Red Cross, to be reflected in the appeal, will be available after the inter-institutional meeting on October 15.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see 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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