

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

COLOMBIA: FLOODS

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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 180 countries.

For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

This document is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

As a result of constant rains in Colombia and the rising levels of the rivers Magdalena, Cauca and Atrato, 142 emergency situations have occurred in recent months in the departments of Antioquia, Atlántico, Bolívar, Boyacá, Caldas, Cesar, Cordoba, Cundinamarca, Chocó, Guajira, Huila, Magdalena, Norte de Santander, Quindío, Risaralda, San Andrés, Santander Sucre, Tolima and Valle del Cauca. Of these 142 emergencies, there have been 110 floods, 29 landslides and 3 windstorms, which have affected a total of 7,139 families, or 35,695 people. There have been 42 deaths as a result of these situations, and another 57 people were seriously injured. In addition, some 1,100 homes have been destroyed. Ongoing rains in these regions are continuing to cause flooding, both flash floods and gradual floods, and landslides and tropical storms are also bringing with them strong winds.

According to the Institute of Water, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM), rains will continue in December 2003 and January 2004. The levels of the rivers Magdalena, Cauca and Atrato, will remain high and could create emergency situations in the middle and lower river basins. In the mountain regions, there is a high probability of flash flooding and landslides. Urban areas are also vulnerable, including Bogotá, Barranquilla, Medellín, Bucaramanga, Manizales, Pereira and Armenia.

The Colombian government has declared emergency situations at local level in the affected regions and has activated early warning systems in the areas which are at risk of floods and landslides. Local government committees are managing resources to provide relief in the municipalities.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Colombian Red Cross (CRC) is supporting the disaster prevention programmes of the National System for the Prevention and Management of Disasters through mitigation, training and community organization activities in coordination with local and regional committees. The CRC has a response team on call 24 hours a day. All of these groups are working according to previously established contingency plans.



60% of the Colombian territory is vulnerable to floods during this rainy season.

The Colombian Red Cross is providing the affected communities with humanitarian aid.

Thus far, the CRC has provided first aid to 128 people, and has evacuated 820 people from areas with a high risk of floods and landslides. The CRC has also conducted search and rescue missions to assist 27 people, 12 of whom had disappeared and 15 of whom were trapped in the departments of Caldas, Cundinamarca and Boyacá. The CRC is conducting damage and need assessments in the affected areas where there is a permanent Red Cross presence (municipal units or relief teams). In these areas, the CRC has, to date, surveyed 12,490 people, made up of 2,498 families in the departments of Atlántico, Bolívar, Boyacá, Caldas, Córdoba, Norte de Santander, Santander Magdalena, Quindio, Guajira and Tolima.

In order to assist families affected by floods or landslides, the Colombian Red Cross has provided the logistical support needed to transport food and non-food relief goods to the emergency areas. Some 230 families have received food kits for one month which are being provided by regional and local government. In addition, 945 men, women and children have been assisted with non-food relief goods, including 300 kitchen kits, 150 clothing kits, 200 hygiene kits, 230 sets of crockery, and 370 sets of mattresses, sheets and blankets.

In order to continue to respond to the emergency situation, the CRC plans to provide humanitarian assistance through non-food relief items, supporting emergency evacuations and setting up temporary shelters. The Colombian government has allocated USD 170,000 for the purchase of non-food relief items which will be channelled through the Colombian Red Cross whose volunteers will be responsible for distribution. The CRC will continue carrying out activities in coordination with the National System for the Prevention and Management of Disasters. In addition, the National Society will support hospitals and medical centres by developing basic health care activities, and is monitoring risk factors given the winter conditions such as the spread of vectors.

Needs

According to the preliminary information provided by the CRC departmental branches, food and non-food relief items are required in order to provide humanitarian assistance to the families currently affected by the winter season. Among the items needed are crockery sets, kitchen kits, hygiene kits, clothing kits, mattresses, blankets, sheets, mosquito nets and hammocks, together with associated administrative and logistic costs.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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Colombia: Floods ; Information Bulletin no. 1/2003

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.