

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

PANAMA: FLOODS

19 September 2004

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

This Information Bulletin (no. 01/2004) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time. CHF 50,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). The Federation does not anticipate further needs. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the DREF update.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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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>

The Situation

A state of emergency was declared on Saturday, 18 September by the Panamanian government as a result of torrential rains which triggered mudslides and flooding. Heavy rains began Friday afternoon causing rivers to overflow resulting in flash floods in several neighbourhoods. The Eastern portion of Panama City was hardest hit, especially poor residential areas close to river banks. Levels of rainfall in various parts of the capital varied between 26.1 mm and 40.6 mm, causing the Felipillo, Cabra and Chepo rivers to burst their banks. The Province of Colón was also affected where waves reached a height of over 16 feet. On Saturday, emergency workers were searching for at least 20 people swept away by the swollen rivers. According to the National System of Civil Protection (SINAPROC), 11 people died, 9 have disappeared and 11,650 people in total were affected by the flooding. Some 1,405 houses were damaged and 281 were totally destroyed. The flooding has had a serious impact on the affected communities since they are made up of low-income families.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Red Cross Society of Panama immediately activated its search and rescue teams and ensured coordination with the national authorities, the Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Panama Regional Delegation through the emergency operations centre established at the headquarters. The National Society took part in a meeting convened by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and attended by the World Health Organization and UNICEF to analyze needs in the area of health.

54 Red Cross volunteers are working in areas hit by the floods and 65 volunteers in 10 branches are helping to collect relief items for the flood victims. Red Cross volunteers evacuated 200 people in the Chepo district and recovered four bodies. Volunteers carried out distributions of hygiene kits, kitchen sets, blankets, bed sheets, clothing and water to 50 families in the flood-affected area.

The Red Cross Society of Panama developed a plan of action to assist 550 of the most vulnerable families (2,500 people) in the districts of Chepo, San Miguelito and Costa Abajo in Panama City and Escobal in the Province of Colón to recover from the flooding. Beneficiaries are being selected in coordination with the local authorities with particular emphasis on children, the elderly, those who are ill and pregnant women. National authorities set up a collection point at the airport to which members of the population brought in food for those hit by the floods. The Red Cross Society of Panama provided hygiene kits, kitchen sets and jerry cans for 400 families. These were handed over to the government authorities for distribution at the same time as the food items collected at the airport. These goods were flown by helicopter to La Esperanza community in the El Chepo district since the area is currently inaccessible by road. The relief goods were distributed this morning, 19 September. To date, the Red Cross Society of Panama has distributed and/or contributed 511 hygiene kits, 510 kitchen sets, 1,197 jerry cans, 2,260 sheets, 1,184 boxes of clothing and 1,155 blankets to assist those hit by the flood waters.

The Red Cross Society of Panama will purchase 500 further hygiene kits and kitchen kits to assist an additional 500 families in El Chepo, San Miguelito and Panamá centre. In addition, 452 pieces of zinc sheeting and nails will be purchased to assist 33 vulnerable families in the Escobal district of Colón to repair their damaged roofs. Beneficiaries will be assisted in the repair of their roofs by Red Cross volunteers.



Relief goods are collected by the Red Cross Society of Panama to help those affected by flooding.

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

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