

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

12 January 2005

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. 02/2005) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 90,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support operations in Costa Rica. Additional DREF funds are being considered for Panama. The Federation does not anticipate further needs. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. This operation will be reported on through the DREF update.

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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

Following several days of torrential rains that brought heavy rain to the Caribbean regions of Costa Rica and Panama, reports indicate that at least 45,000 people in the two countries have been affected by flooding and landslides. In Costa Rica, the heavy rains caused several main rivers in the area to overflow, affecting numerous communities in the provinces of Limón, Siquirres, Guácimo, Guápiles, Talamanca, Valle la Estrella, Batán and Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí. The most seriously affected provinces are Valle la Estrella, Talamanca and Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí. The entire Caribbean region of the country remains on Red Alert.

The latest available reports from Costa Rica indicate that more than 7 thousand persons have taken refuge in some 70 shelters that have opened in the area. In addition, 27 health clinics and 11 roads that provide access to the Caribbean region have been damaged. Several areas in the region were completely cut off by flood waters and landslides, preventing relief personnel from accurately assessing the extent of the damage. However, as conditions

have improved and the water level has begun to recede, relief personnel have now been able to reach most of the previously isolated communities in Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí. Thus far, there have been five missing persons cases reported and one reported death.

The Costa Rican government, through the National Emergency Commission, has been monitoring the weather and has activated local emergency committees. Damage evaluations in the region have begun and the government is supporting the coordination of activities being undertaken by response groups, such as the Red Cross. The Costa Rican government has also sent equipment to the affected area to help repair roads, as well as relief items such as blankets, mattresses and basic food items.

In Panama, the heavy rains have affected the provinces of Veraguas, Chiriquí and Bocas del Toro, and the Nogbë Buglé region. The Cricamola, Changinola and Sixaola rivers have flooded and several roads in Bocas del Toro have been closed because of flooding and landslides. The most affected areas are Calobebora, Calobeborita and Rio Luis in Veraguas; Boquete Paso Ancho and Volcán in Chiriquí; and Changuinola, Almirante, Guabito, Las Tablas and El Empalme in Bocas del Toro. The indigenous region of Nogbë Buglé is currently inaccessible and specific levels of affectation are not yet known. At this time, it is estimated that around 7,000 people in Panama have been affected by the floods and the Panamanian government has issued a Red Alert for the affected areas.

Initial evaluations indicate that the greatest needs are in water and sanitation and emergency relief; the high flood waters have affected the supply of potable water in the region and have caused latrines in the most affected areas to overflow, which has further contaminated water sources. There is also a need for basic relief items, such as blankets, kitchen kits and water purification filters.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

In response to the flooding, the Costa Rican Red Cross (CRRC) has activated the Emergency Operations Committee and has sent 14 relief teams to the affected region. Thus far, the actions of the Red Cross have been



The Costa Rican Red Cross (CRRC) has sent 14 relief teams to the affected region to provide emergency relief to the affected population.

focused on search and rescue, evacuations, emergency care and support for the installation and administration of temporary shelters. Teams are also in the region with boats and other equipment that are allowing them to access areas that have been cut off by the flood waters. Some 3,365 persons have been evacuated from their homes by the Red Cross, although the actual number of people forced out of their homes is estimated to be much higher as many were able to reach safer areas by their own means.

Initial assessments by Red Cross teams in the field indicate a serious need for water purification plants since wells, tanks and water distribution plants in the region have all been affected. The headquarters of the CRRC, as well as all 119 branches throughout the country are currently accepting donation for the affected persons, and the CRRC has opened bank account to collect monetary donations.

The CRRC has drafted an initial plan of action, which includes providing emergency relief for at least ten more days and launching a national appeal to collect relief items and clothes to support the affected population. The Costa Rican Red Cross will also support inter-institutional relief activities through coordination at the national and local level. CHF 90,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to assist at least 1,000 families in the affected areas.

In Panama, more than 200 relief personnel from the Red Cross Society of Panama (PRC) are taking part in the relief operation. Thus far, the PRC has evacuated some 300 persons from their homes and has provided emergency first aid to 150 people. The PRC is carrying out damage and needs assessments in coordination with local authorities, SINAPROC, the national police, the Panamanian government's Social Investment Fund (FIS) and NGOs working in the country. The PRC is working closely with the Pan American Disaster Response Unit

(PADRU) and the Panama Regional Delegation, both of which are located in Panama City. A satellite phone has been provided by PADRU to the PRC to guarantee communication and communication.

The PRC has drawn up a plan of action to respond to this emergency that seeks to assist 400 families affected by the floods through distributions of basic relief items such as blankets, hygiene kits and kitchen kits. This aid is expected to complement relief assistance provided by the Panamanian government and other relief organizations. The PRC will also strengthen the disaster response capacity of the PRC branches in the affected area through training of volunteers in disaster preparedness. Thus far, the PRC has sent the following relief items to the affected areas:

| Item | Amount |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Blankets for children | 32 |
| Blankets for adults | 130 |
| Water purification filters | 4 |
| Jerry cans | 20 |
| Kitchen kits | 10 |
| Water tanks (15 litres) | 5 |

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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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