

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

11 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. 01/2005) 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) for relief operations in Costa Rica. 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

For several days, heavy rains have been falling over the Atlantic region of Costa Rica, causing several of the main rivers in the province of Limón to overflow. Flooding has caused damage to housing, agriculture and communication systems. To date, a total of 1,550 people have been evacuated and at least 50 shelters have been set up in Sarapiquí, Guápiles, Bribri, Cahuita, Puerto Viejo and Valle de la Estrella, which are housing some 1,100 families. Several national highways have been closed because of the flooding and landslides, making access to the region more difficult and cutting off several communities. There is currently only one route open to the affected area. Many residents in these areas have taken refuge on rooftops while they await assistance. The National Meteorological Institute is predicting that the heavy rains will last for at least two more days. The rains are also affecting the Atlantic province of Bocas del Toro in Panama, which borders Costa Rica, although detailed figures of the exact number of people affected is currently unavailable.

The following details the number of persons affected in Costa Rica to date:

Description	Persons	Families
Dead / Missing	7	
Staying in shelters (50)	5,500	1,200
Total affected population	37,500	7,500

Map showing the affected region in Costa Rica



Initial evaluations indicate the following preliminary needs:

- Water and sanitation (distribution of potable water and containers)
- Foods (emergency rations for 5,000 families)
- Temporary shelters (including items such as blankets, mattresses, cleaning kits and latrines)
- Kitchen kits
- Personal hygiene kits
- Clothes
- Rescue equipments (boats, personal safety equipment)

The Costa Rican government, through the National Emergency Commission, has been monitoring the weather and has activated local emergency committees. On 9 January the government declared a Red Alert in the affected areas. 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.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

In response to the flooding, the Costa Rican Red Cross (CRRC) has activated the Emergency Operations Committee. Thus far, the actions of the Red Cross have been focused on search and rescue, evacuations, emergency care and support for the installation and administration of temporary shelters. Because of the difficulty in accessing many of the affected areas, personnel from the CRRC conducted an aerial survey on 9 January, which allowed them to identify isolated communities in need of immediate assistance. Costa Rican Red Cross staff and volunteers from 13 auxiliary committees in the region have responded to the emergency, with the support of seven National Intervention Teams (NITs). It is estimated that at least 250 CRRC volunteers are currently taking part in the relief effort.

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.

The Red Cross Society of Panama (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.

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.

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

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