

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

GUYANA: FLOODS

19 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 150,000 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.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- In Guyana: Guyana Red Cross Society, Dorothy Fraser, General Director; email redcross@sdp.org.gy, phone (592) 227-5190, fax (592) 225-2525
- In Panama: Nelson Castaño, Head, Pan American Disaster Response Unit; email ifrcpa07@ifrc.org, phone (507) 316-1001, fax (507) 316-1082
- In Panama: Daniel Bolaños, Pan American Disaster Response Unit, Panama; email ifrcpa76@ifrc.org, phone (507) 316-1001, fax (507) 316-1082
- In Geneva: Luis Luna, Federation Regional Officer, Americas Department, Geneva; email luis.luna@ifrc.org, phone (41 22) 730-4274, fax (41 22) 733-0395

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

Three days of torrential rains have caused serious flooding in Guyana, affecting more than 20,000 people. This is the third time since late December that rains have caused flooding in the country's capital, Georgetown, and other coastal towns. The heavy rains, which began on 14 January, have cut off some areas along the eastern coast of the country. In addition to the heavier than usual rains, there are reports that one of the main canals in the capital city of Georgetown burst its banks. Houses have been completely flooded and many businesses have been forced to close in an effort to protect their goods. Government offices, courts and schools were also forced to close. In the eastern coastal region of the country, roads are flooded and impassable. In some areas, more than two feet of water are covering the roads, making several communities unreachable for rescue teams.

Georgetown and the surrounding area is divided into two districts: Demerara-Mahaica and West Demerara-Essequibo Islands, both of which have been declared "disaster areas" by the Guyanese government. The district of Mahaica-Berbice, which is located on the east coast of the country, to the southeast of Georgetown, has also been declared a disaster area. The hardest hit communities are Albouystown, Shopia, Better Hope, Coldingen, Enterprise Gardens, Paradise and Enmore. Many residents in these areas live in poverty and the severe flooding has further exacerbated their already precarious situation.

The Ministry of Health is concerned about waterborne diseases and health centres are reportedly operating extended hours. In flooded areas, alternative arrangements are being made to ensure that these services are available to affected persons. Hospitals in the country have been placed on alert to provide additional services. The Ministry of Health is also trying to get people into some of shelters which have been opened, but there have been difficulties in reaching those people most in need. In addition, Environmental Health and Vector Control Units are working with communities to ensure that an adequate supply of disinfectant is available in order to reduce the spread of disease.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The headquarters of the Guyana Red Cross Society (GRCS) has been affected by the heavy flooding and the GRCS has had to move a number of items to higher grounds. Several Red Cross staff and volunteers have been affected by the floods and have not been able to reach their place of work. The electricity in the area is down and the Red Cross is currently operating on a standby generator.

The Guyanese government has asked the GRCS to prepare meals for some of the people affected by the floods. The government will make arrangements to have the meals delivered in the flooded areas. The stoves that the Red Cross uses to prepare meals for the "Meals on Wheels" programme have been moved to higher ground to ensure that the GRCS can continue to provide this service. The GRCS has indicated that the National Society now has to collect water because the water pumps have been turned off, which is hampering the relief effort. However, local gas companies are securing additional supplies for the Red Cross.

The Guyana Red Cross Society has already distributed a number of relief items, such as cots, torch lights and other emergency items received through the Japanese Red Cross-funded container project. The GRCS is currently trying to reach the flooded communities to provide first aid, but the flooding has cut off the access roads to many of the hardest hit areas. It is hoped that the water level will begin receding soon so that relief items and rescue teams can reach those areas. In addition, the GRCS has sent posters on water and sanitation to both radio and television stations for broadcasting; however, these lines of communication are not functioning in some areas. The Red Cross has volunteers monitoring the situation for further action.

The Port of Spain Sub Regional Office, the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Panama Regional Delegation have been coordinating response to support the GRCS. It is planned to deploy the PADRU water and sanitation delegate to Guyana and Regional Intervention Team members are on standby to be deployed should it be considered necessary and should the GRCS request their assistance.

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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