

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

21 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 150,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). An additional CHF 150,000 has been made available from DREF, should the funds be required for immediate relief efforts. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider international support through an Emergency Appeal.

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

Approximately 150,000 people in Guyana have been affected by floods brought on by unrelenting rains. This is the third time since late December that rains have caused flooding in the country's capital, Georgetown, and other coastal towns. The most recent wave of heavy rains began on 14 January and has cut off several areas along the eastern coast of the country. Over one metre of rain has fallen since 26 December, the most for a comparable period in more than 100 years, and the Meteorological Office in Guyana has predicted another week of heavy rainfall. 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 obliged 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.

The coastal districts of Demerara-Mahaica, West Demerara-Essequibo Islands and Mahaica-Berbice have been declared "disaster areas" by the Guyanese government. The areas under water are mainly from Golden Grove to Georgetown and the most affected communities are Albouystown, Shopia, Better Hope, Coldingen, Enterprise Gardens, Paradise and Enmore which are located in eastern regions 1, 4, 5 and 6.

Health and sanitation is becoming a major concern as sewage mains have burst, releasing raw sewage into the water. Health centres have been operating for extended periods. The Ministry of Health is operating extended hours and, in areas where health centres are flooded and inoperable, alternative arrangements are being made so that services are delivered in a suitable location. The Ministry of Health is also trying to ensure that people are housed in 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.

The president of Guyana has released 200 million Guyanese dollars (approximately USD 1,120,448) to be used in the relief effort and has instructed the army to set up additional shelters in the hardest hit areas. The president has also requested that 50 water tanks be deployed in the worst affected communities on the East Coast, West Coast and around the city of Georgetown to ensure that persons in the affected areas have a continuous supply of potable water. The army was tasked with collecting and positioning the tanks.

Police in Guyana reported at least one road fatality on Monday, when a minibus skidded off a highway and crashed into a house, killing an unidentified passenger. There have been no more reports of casualties. Dozens of vehicles remained submerged in ditches and canals.

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 ground. 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 Red Cross to prepare meals for those affected. The government will make arrangements to have the meals delivered. A private business and a Shell oil outlet have assisted the Red Cross in acquiring fuel for cooking. Food supplies have been provided on credit from a grocery. Between the Red Cross and other organizations that are also working to supply meals to beneficiaries it is estimated that approximately 25,000 meals are being distributed daily.

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. In addition, on Friday the Federation sent a flight from the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) in Panama carrying the following relief supplies to assist some 1,000 affected persons:

Item	Quantities
Blankets	5,000
Hygiene kit (family of 5)	1,000
Kitchen kit (family of 5)	1,000
Collapsible jerry cans (10 litre)	1,000
Plastic sheeting rolls	26
Federation visibility items	1

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 and the Panama Regional Delegation are coordinating response to support the GRCS. The coordinator from the Port of Spain Sub Regional Office, the regional health delegate from the Panama Regional Delegation, a water and sanitation delegate from

PADRU, and a Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member have all been deployed to the country and are working together with the National Society to evaluate needs and facilitate the implementation of relief efforts.

The Federation is currently considering launching an emergency appeal to assist those affected in Guyana, pending the outcome of ongoing damage and needs assessments.



Volunteers from the Guyana Red Cross Society unload relief materials destined for the hardest hit areas in the country, where more than 150,000 people have been affected.

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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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