

# MINOR EMERGENCY



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

## VENEZUELA: FLOODS

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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

#### CHF 100,000 HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FOR THIS OPERATION FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF)

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>

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

### The situation

The torrential rains that have been battering Venezuela for the last 10 days have now moved further inland, providing some relief to the northern and central coasts of the country but bringing death and destruction to the Andean region near the Colombian border. The death toll has now grown to 61 according to the latest report from the Venezuelan Red Cross (VRC). More than 175,500 persons (128,000 children) have been affected by the floods and mudslides, 42 have been injured and 43 have been reported missing. Almost 18,000 persons are now staying in temporary shelters. Nine states have declared states of emergency due to this disaster: Aragua, Carabobo, Falcon, Merida, Miranda, Tachira, Vargas, Yaracuy and Capital Federal. The States of Trujillo and Zulia have also been seriously affected by the rains.



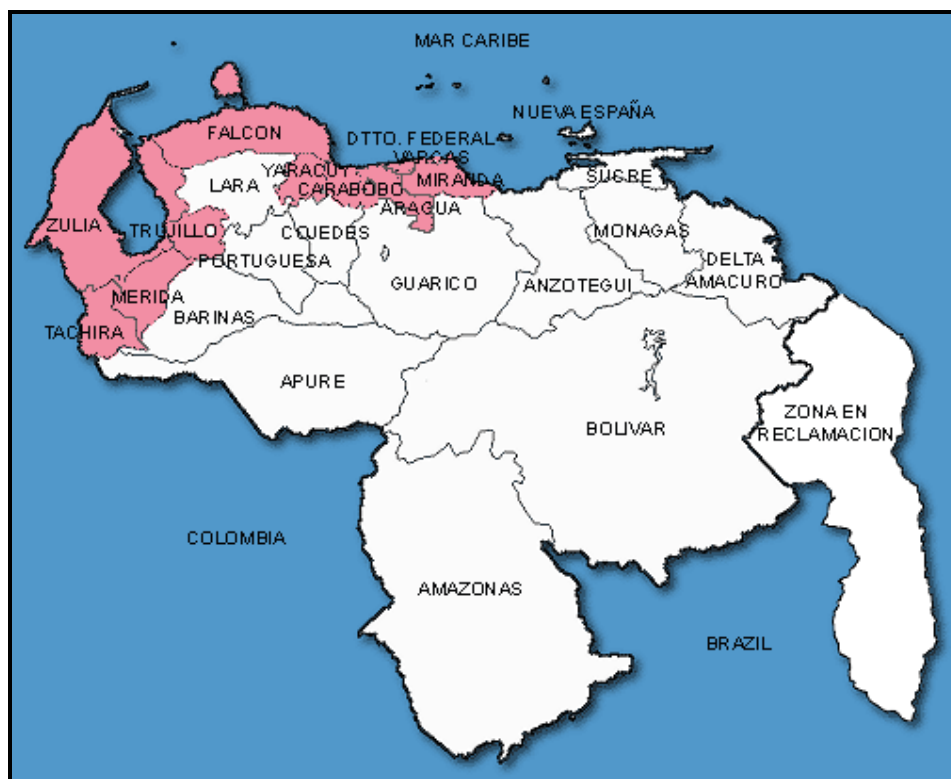
Workers clear a road flooded by a river during torrential rains.

Picture courtesy of Alertnet.org

Roads and lines of communications from the two states most recently affected (Merida and Tachira) have been cut off. Venezuelan rescue workers have been struggling to reach the remote Andean mountain villages hit hard by the floods, but

authorities are now clearing the roads. The government is also managing all the temporary shelters in the country, as well as collection centres for relief items.

**Map showing affected States**



*Map developed by the International Federation*

**Table showing levels of affliction in the 11 States battered by rains**

State	Families affected	Deaths	Adults	Children
ARAGUA	267	1	439	880
CARABOBO	794	11	1,719	3,438
DTTO. CAPITAL	1,118	3	2,052	1,428
FALCON	944	1	1,830	3,658
MERIDA	27,000	40	45,043	90,087
MIRANDA	574	3	1,543	3,085
TACHIRA	3,537	1	6,308	5,017
TRUJILLO	439	0	743	1,435
VARGAS	1,863	0	3,105	6,210
YARACUY	900	0	1,500	3,000
ZULIA	2,808	1	5,021	10,043
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40,244</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>69,303</b>	<b>128,281</b>

*Source: Venezuelan Red Cross report from 16 February 2005*

Rescue activities and relocation of evacuees to temporary shelters in the coastal States where states of emergency were declared have almost ceased. Relief activities are currently focusing on the Andean region, which is now being seriously affected by the “*vaguada*” phenomenon.

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The government has already allocated 100,000,000,000 Venezuelan Bolivares (approximately USD 52,000) to support the States' relief plans. The government has also received generous donations from the Venezuelan public and private sector and from the foreign governments of Colombia, Spain and Switzerland.

Donor	Donation
Colombia	7 tonnes of baby food 400 kg of children's medicines
Spain	EUR 150,000 for reconstruction in Vargas
Switzerland	Funds for a building site in Vargas
Puma TV Enterprise	VEB 1,300,000,000 in food and non-food humanitarian aid
Ministry of Justice	400 water boxes
Banco Occidental de Descuento	VEB 500,000,000 in food and non-food humanitarian aid
Senior	3 tonnes of humanitarian aid
Ministry of Health	3 tonnes of medicines
University Bolivariana	1.5 tonnes humanitarian aid

The heavy rains have stirred up fears about a repeat of the disaster in 1999 when thousands of people were buried alive or swept out to sea in the state of Vargas after storms turned hillsides into rivers of mud and rock.

### The needs

As soon as the Venezuelan government declared a state of emergency, the Venezuelan Red Cross (VRC) activated its national and regional emergency plans by mobilizing relief personnel from the branches in the affected States. The VRC is working in coordination with the Civil Protection and the National Fire Brigade in different states and with its volunteers in twelve branches: the nine branches each of the states that have declared an emergency, plus three neighbouring state branches that are supporting the relief activities. There are currently 485 relief volunteers throughout the country, including 90 youth volunteers that are working in the coastal region and another 360 VRC volunteers who are assisting in search and rescue, transportation of evacuees, collection of humanitarian relief goods, assessments of shelter management and provision of first aid services.



*Red Cross volunteers help in rescue and transportation.  
Picture courtesy of Alernet.org*

The National Society has carried out a damage and needs assessment in the state of Merida, specifically in the most affected provinces: Tovar and Santa Cruz de Mora. The VRC has also installed telecommunications equipment in Merida to help the coordination of the operation. In the states of Tachira, Trujillo and Zulia events are being closely monitored by the local branch of the VRC.

The VRC headquarters is awaiting the results of surveys being conducted by all branches in order to readjust the plan of action and effectively attend to the needs of the most vulnerable.

### Immediate needs:

Humanitarian aid in the form of food and non-food items, including hygiene kits, cleaning kits, kitchen kits, mattresses, sheets and mosquito nets, is required for beneficiaries who are housed in temporary shelters in the

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following states: Carabobo, Distrito Federal, Miranda, Vargas and Yaracuy. An increase in illnesses is envisaged as a result of poor water and sanitation conditions; therefore, work in primary health care will need to be carried out. Criteria for beneficiary selection, in accordance with the branch surveys, will be: degree of affectation, community context, aid received to date, vulnerability. Selection will take place in coordination with the Civil Protection.

### Longer-term needs:

Given the tragedy in Vargas in 1999, which killed more than 10,000 people, citizens are still afraid when such heavy rains batter the region. A psychosocial support programme is therefore a necessary component of the VRC plan of action to assist beneficiary families.

### Coordination

The operation will be coordinated by the National Society's Relief Directorate, in conjunction with the Civil Protection, the Fire Brigade and the public health system at national and state levels.

## The proposed operation

The following plan of action has been proposed, to be carried out with DREF funding and other funds generated by the Venezuelan Red Cross. An increase in the coverage of beneficiaries due to the increase in the number of affected States will be considered and revised according to surveys received from VRC branches. DREF-funded activities are currently being coordinated; meanwhile several activities included in the original plan of action are being carried out with the VRC's own resources.

### Objectives and activities planned

#### Emergency relief (food and non-food)

**Objective 1: 1,000 families (5,000 beneficiaries) have benefited from the provision of food items for a one month period, in two deliveries.**

#### Activities planned to reach this objective:

- Surveys to identify beneficiaries to receive DREF food packages are being carried out by the eleven branches.
- VRC is delivering food collected through the national campaign "Baby Food Operation" and donated by private citizens to people housed in the government managed temporary shelters.
- At the government's request, the National Society has implemented the SUMA supply management programme in seven of the government's humanitarian goods warehouses in the Distrito Federal.

**Objective 2: 1,000 families (5,000 beneficiaries) have benefited from the provision of non-food items for a period of one month.**

#### Activities planned to reach this objective:

- Surveys to identify beneficiaries to receive DREF-funded non-food packages are being carried out by the eleven branches.
- VRC is delivering non-food humanitarian goods from its warehouses in the Distrito Federal and Tachira, as well as water and medicines donated by private citizens and public and private organizations.
- The following relief items were mobilized from Distrito Federal to the States of Merida, Tachira and Vargas:

Item	Quantity
Blankets	3,600
Cleaning kits	300

Hygiene kits	600
20 litre water drums	900
100 litre water drums	200
Clothes	5,300
Mosquito nets	700
Water purification tablets	7,000

## Health

The National Water and Sanitation Directorate is finalizing the data collection phase in order to establish the appropriate response; however, it is important to mention that the capacity of the VRC to respond to water and sanitation problems is diminished by the fact that its three water purification plants are not functioning. In the affected areas, the VRC had available some water tanks, water containers and water purification tablets, all of which have already been distributed. One proposed solution to address the water and sanitation needs of the population given the National Society's limited resources could be the development of manual water treatment centers. In addition, the VRC is open to any government requests for technical support in the water and sanitation area, as the Civil Protection does have the appropriate resources needed to carry out a successful operation in this regard: 15 water purification plants and 10 desalinization plants.

**Objective 1: Medical needs arising from the flooding of 1,000 families (5,000 beneficiaries) have been attended to.**

### Activities planned to reach this objective:

- Provision of medical consultation, diagnosis and treatment for illnesses related to floods.
- Establishment of an epidemics surveillance system to avoid the outbreak of illnesses due to poor sanitary conditions.
- Home visits to carry out counseling on common illnesses in emergency situations.
- Referral of patients to public health centres, as appropriate.
- Establishment of vaccination centres.

**Objective 2: 1,000 families (5,000 beneficiaries) have benefited from a psychosocial support programme.**

### Activities planned to reach this objective:

- Individual and group psychological interventions for the affected population.
- Referral of patients to health public centres.
- Emotional support for volunteers working in the operation.

**Objective 3: A healthy environment for 1,000 families (5,000 beneficiaries) has been re-established.**

### Activities planned to reach this objective:

- Implementation of campaigns to disseminate information on how to treat water for human consumption.
- Implementation of campaigns to explain precautions at home to avoid common illnesses.
- Implementation of a campaign on solid waste disposal.
- Provision of technical support to re-establish collapsed drainage systems.
- Provision of mosquito nets and water containers to families most exposed to illnesses.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement – Principles and priorities

The Federation is working to support the Venezuelan Red Cross to assist the most vulnerable. The planned operation is based upon the principle of humanity; beneficiary selection criteria focus on the level of vulnerability of those affected and ensure gender sensitivity.

Activities planned for this minor emergency operation are based on the SPHERE project humanitarian charter and the code of conduct for disaster relief. All objectives put forward in the plan of action are in line with Strategy 2010, as well as the Strategy for the Movement and the Principles and Rules of the Movement.

### **Communications – Advocacy and Public information**

The provision of accurate information to the public regarding the impact of Red Cross operations is a key activity. From this point of view, relations with the media are particularly important in order to convey the message of the Red Cross Movement. At present, the situation in Venezuela is receiving the coverage of the international media, particularly the Vargas State, since images of the tragedy in 1999 are still alive in the public's memory.

The VRC continues to promote its national solidarity campaign "Baby Food Operation" in coordination with the television network, channel 33, to collect food for children under ten years old, which is the most affected group.

### **Capacity of the National Society**

The VRC was founded in 1895 and today has 24 branches and seven subcommittees, and is thus present in most areas of the country. The National Society has more than 6,000 members of whom 90% are active volunteers.

The main activity of the National Society centres on health services, with its infrastructure of ten hospitals and 33 health stations making it the largest private hospital network in the country. Since the floods in December 1999, health care activities have been developed through HIV/AIDS, psychological support and recruitment of voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors. The National Society also carries out activities related with disaster management, tracing, recruitment, dissemination and communication. The VRC does not receive financial support from the government and the main funding source of the National Society is the medical assistance system.

### **Capacity of the Federation**

The Federation benefits from the presence of a Regional Delegation in Lima with a staff of delegates and local personnel working in disaster management, health, organizational development, information, reporting and finance. The Sub Regional Office for the Southern Cone and Brazil is located in Buenos Aires, in the premises of the Argentine Red Cross, with staff working in organizational development, gender and humanitarian values, and finance.

The Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) is based in Panama, with delegates working in the areas of disaster management, logistics, telecommunications, information, reporting and water and sanitation.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring with regard to the implementation of activities outlined in this small-scale emergency operation and the objectives set out in the plan of action will be carried out by the National Society with support from the Federation. Standard Federation narrative and financial reporting will be ensured on a regular basis as a means of monitoring the progress and developments in the area. The Relief Directorate of the VRC will send a weekly report from the field.

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