

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

HAITI: 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 183 countries.

In Brief

This Bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the situation and the information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to achieve the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- *In Haiti: Haitian Red Cross, Marc Régis, Head of Disaster Preparedness, email: croroha@hainet.net, Tel: (509) 222-5554, fax: (509) 221-2838; International Federation Office in Haiti, Jean-Pierre Givel, Head of Delegation, email: jp.givel@ifrc.org, Tel: (509) 510-2629*
- *In Panama: Dario Alvarez, Disaster Management Delegate, Pan-American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), email: dario.alvarez@ifrc.org, Tel: (507) 316-1001, fax: (507) 316-1082; Leon Prop, Head of Panama Regional Delegation; email leon.prop@ifrc.org, phone (507) 317-1300, (507) 317-1304*
- *In Geneva: Luis Luna, Federation Regional Officer, Americas Department, e-mail 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 for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

Two days of intense rain on 30-31 July 2006 led to extensive flooding in the Bas Artibonite area of Saint-Marc Commune, affecting some 938 families. The rain was part of a broader band of bad weather, associated with Tropical Storm Chris, which had the region on alert, as it moved through the Leeward Islands and north of Puerto Rico, on a projected path towards Hispaniola and Cuba.

There were initial concerns that Tropical Storm Chris could gain hurricane force status, as it progressed towards the northern regions of Hispaniola Island, on a track very similar to that of Hurricane Jeanne, which had seriously affected the area in 2004. However, by 8AM EDT on 3 August, maximum sustained winds had dropped to 66 kph (40 mph) as the system moved west-north-west, away from Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands – although a tropical storm watch remained in effect for some hours along the northern coast of the Dominican Republic, to the border with Haiti. By the end of 3 August, it became clear that the storm had dissipated and all alerts were discontinued.

Nevertheless, many areas in Haiti, where even minor storms can send water gushing down denuded hills, are particularly prone to flooding. This is indeed the case for the ‘Bassin Versant de Saint-Marc/Arcahaie’ - situated in the basin between the Grande and Petite Saint-Marc rivers, surrounded by deforested hills – which has been subject to flooding and mud slides on a regular basis over the past three years.

As a result of the rains of 30-31 July, extensive flooding occurred one again in the Saint-Marc neighbourhoods of Cité Verna, Pont Tambour, Fleuranceau and Rue Louverture, with waters rising to 1.5 metres, and remaining at over 1 metre for over 6 hours. There have been no reports of deaths, and only slight injuries, which were treated locally. Many families were forced to evacuate at the height of the flooding, to stay with friends and family, subsequently returning to their homes within 24 hours. Although no houses were destroyed, there has been some damage to property (in some cases, due to people breaking through the walls in order to let the water through), and to basic household goods.

The town's water system is reported to be unaffected, however there remain concerns regarding water-borne diseases, linked to the stagnant water and the overflow of latrine systems in certain areas. As of 7 August, clean-up activities were underway, to clear roads and canals, and save household belongings damaged by the water and mud.

Red Cross and action

The French Red Cross Programme Coordinator in Saint-Marc alerted the Haitian Red Cross on 1 August, providing a first-hand report on the local situation. Based on this, and given that there were no immediate needs for search and rescue or first aid interventions, the National Society initially focused its efforts on disaster preparedness activities linked to tropical storm Chris, which was predicted to make landfall in Haiti as a hurricane on 4 August. Regional committees were mobilised and the communications system activated, under the overall coordination of the HRC's Disaster Management Department¹. On 3 August, with the down-grading of the storm, all mobilisations were discontinued.

On 4 August, a preliminary needs assessment undertaken by the Regional Branch of Bas-Artibonite estimated that 938 families had been affected by the flooding. A subsequent assessment undertaken by the Haitian Red Cross on 7 August confirmed the need for non-food relief assistance to 1,000 families, as well as capacity-building activities and basic equipment for the local Branch. The latter are aimed at reinforcing skills in needs assessment and response planning, as well as equipping the local branch with basic items such as rubber boots, shovels, picks and wheelbarrows, for more effective search and rescue operations. Capacity building is considered to be particularly important, given the region's propensity to flooding and the consequent need to strengthen the branch and the local community, so that they are better prepared for such disasters in the future.

¹ Direction de gestion des catastrophes.

A need for following non-food relief items to assist 1,000 families has been identified:

Items	Quantity
Kitchen Sets	600
Hygiene Kits	1000
Wool blankets	2000
Mosquito nets	2000
Soap (for clothes washing)	2000
Mattresses	600

The Haitian Red Cross is currently assessing goods still in stock from previous operations, as well as options in-country for fulfilling these requirements. DREF funding from the Federation may be sought, if needs cannot be met. A decision is expected to be taken over the coming days.

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