

OPERATIONS UPDATE



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

BOLIVIA: FLOODS

DREF Bulletin no. MDRBO001
24 February 2006

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

Operations Update no. 01; Period covered: 02 February to 22 February, 2006

This DREF Bulletin Update no. 1 is being issued based on the situation described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 108,000 (USD 83,837 or EUR 69,462) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to respond to the needs in this operation. This operation is expected to be completed by 4 May 2006, and a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (4 August, 2006). Replenishment of DREF by unearmarked contributions is welcome and needed.

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>

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- In Bolivia: Dr. Abel Peña y Lillo, President, Bolivian Red Cross, email cruzrobo@caoba.entelnet.bo, phone (5912) 220 2934 / 212 9225 fax (5912) 235 9102
- In Peru: Giorgio Ferrario, Head of Regional Delegation, Lima; email giorgio.ferrario@ifrc.org, phone (511) 221-8151, fax (511) 441-3607
- In Panama: Stephen McAndrew, Coordinator of Federation Pan American Disaster Response Unit, Panama; email stephen.mcandrew@ifrc.org, phone (507) 316-1001, fax (507) 316-1082
- In Geneva: Olaug Bergseth, Federation Regional Officer, Americas Department, Geneva; email olaug.bergseth@ifrc.org, phone (41 22) 730-4535, fax (41 22) 730-0395

Background and current situation

Torrential rains have fallen during January and February over several areas of Bolivia regions, causing mudslides and flooding. According to the National Meteorological Service, the heavy rains are expected to continue until March. In one day alone, on February 14, 98 millimetres of water were recorded in La Paz. Many rivers, such as the Rio Grande, Guanay, Tipuani, Mapiri, Mamoré, Desaguadero and Challana, among others, have overflowed, causing flooding in many cities and rural communities across the country.

As the rains have continued to fall and are affecting additional areas of the country, it has been difficult to obtain accurate figures, and numbers of families reported affected have varied significantly. The Bolivian Red Cross (BRC) has therefore been cautious to publish only reliable data provided by official sources. According to the latest figures available from the Bolivian Civil Defence, the floods have caused 23 deaths and left 21 people injured and 2 people missing. In total, some 25,215 families have been affected. The following departments have the highest number of affected families: Potosí, La Paz, Beni, Santa Cruz, Tarija, Cochabamba, Pando, Oruro and Chuquisaca. There have also been significant damages to agriculture, livestock, houses, roads and infrastructure.

Bolivia: Floods; DREF no. MDDRBO001; Operations Update no. 01

Authorities say it is difficult to obtain an accurate picture of the extent of the damages as they have not yet been able to reach many remote areas.

The Bolivian government declared a national emergency on 27 January. The newly-elected Bolivian government was at that time undergoing the handover of administrative duties and asked the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to coordinate the relief effort. After programmed damage assessments, it is foreseen Civil Defence Vice-Ministry and the Department for Integrated Development Cooperation will produce a rehabilitation plan focused on rebuilding infrastructure and farmland, and recovering livestock loss. The Bolivian government has invited local physicians and health professionals to join the hygiene promotion and prevention campaign. Sanitation networks for disease prevention have been activated to prevent epidemics such as malaria, yellow fever, dengue and respiratory infections among other diseases. The Bolivian president has also appealed for international aid, of which USD 2 million has been pledged so far.



With DREF funding, the BRC was able to distribute food packages to 2,000 affected families in the department of Beni.

Red Cross action

The Bolivian Red Cross (BRC) has been actively involved in the Bolivian government's National Plan. The BRC has been meeting regularly with the UNDP, the World Food Programme (WFP), World Vision, Medecins du Monde (MdM), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), UNICEF, Cáritas, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Bolivian Civil Defence, among others, to share updates, define roles and coordinate joint actions. Each organization was assigned to cover a different geographical area in order to avoid duplication of efforts when carrying out assessments. The BRC was assigned to coordinate the assessment in the department of Beni. The BRC, through its branches located throughout the country, also supported in the evaluation in other areas. In addition, the BRC coordinated the collection of food and clothing donations from the Bolivian public at the national level. These goods were distributed by local BRC branches to the affected population.

All actions carried out by the BRC around the country have had the active participation of about 600 volunteers, among them four members of the National Intervention team (NIT), which are highly qualified and experienced in rescue and assessment operations. Two members of the BRC relief department are also members of the Regional Intervention Team (RIT) and were able to bring their regional experience and expertise to this operation. All branches are continuing to monitor the situation and are stand by and ready to respond.

The Federation released CHF 108,000 to the Bolivian Red Cross from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) at the onset of this emergency. With these funds, the BRC has coordinated activities in the municipalities of San Borja, Reyes and Rurrenabaque in the department of Beni, as specified in the National Society's plan of action. The BRC national relief director and volunteers from the headquarters went to Beni and carried out an assessment in coordination with the Civil Defence, local authorities and leaders of local unions to identify the most affected families. On Friday 17 February the BRC held a press conference to inform the public of the upcoming food distributions and promote the work carried out by the BRC. The Bolivian Red Cross carried out the relief distributions on 18 and 19 February for 2,000 families in Rurrenabaque, San Borja and Reyes, with a particular focus on the indigenous communities of Chimanes and Mosetenes. The 45-kg food packages that were distributed contained sugar, pasta, oil, salt, lentils and flour. Hygiene kits were also distributed at this time.

Bolivia: Floods; DREF no. MDDRBO001; Operations Update no. 01

Some of the communities that received food packages had had previous contact with the BRC through other relief operations. BRC plans to continue working with these communities through the rehabilitation phase to decrease their vulnerability to future disasters.



Organized distributions were carried out by Red Cross volunteers, in constant coordination with local authorities

In addition to the above activities, a team of 10 volunteers provided psychosocial support to more than 23 children in 15 families in the community of Achocalla, which is located just outside of the city of La Paz. Psychosocial support was provided through games and storytelling to alleviate the tensions, pain and trauma caused by the disaster. Also in this community, the BRC distributed food packages, kitchen kits and hygiene kits to 78 families with funding from the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECI). These activities were carried out with support from local authorities and neighbourhood organizations.

In another community near La Paz, Cotahuma, a project entitled “Towards a safe and healthy community” is being carried out with support from DFID. This project has contributed to diminishing the impact of the floods on this community. As a result of this project, the BRC is increasing its capacity to respond to disasters through training, capacity building and awareness campaigns.

The BRC and the Federation is working in coordination with several PNSs that are present in the region, as follows:

- The German Red Cross (GRC) presented a proposal to the German and Belgian governments for EUR 225,000 to finance kitchen kits, tools, water and food. The German government has pledged EUR 100,000 for rehabilitation of 1,100 families in the Maniqui River area in San Borja. A delegate from the GRC will be arriving in Bolivia on 26 February to oversee this project. According to the proposal, another 1,100 families in Moxeño in the department of Beni will receive relief items with EUR 125,000 from the Belgian government; the Bolivian Red Cross is awaiting confirmation from the Belgian government for these funds.
- The Spanish Red Cross (SRC) donated USD 8,000 to the relief effort and also provided support to families in Achocalla through AECI, as detailed above. The SRC, with support from the Federation’s Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) disaster management delegate, drew up a proposal for ECHO to assist 2,820 families in the community of Reyes, focusing on water and sanitation.
- The Swiss Red Cross pledged USD 30,000 to the BRC to provide food aid and hygiene kits for 400 families in the department of Potosí. In the coming week, an evaluation will be carried out to select the beneficiary families.

Coordination

The BRC has been working closely with the Federation, who is providing technical support through PADRU and the Lima Regional Delegation. The BRC is also coordinating activities with the German, Spanish and Swiss Red Cross Societies, as detailed above.

Bolivia: Floods; DREF no. MDDRBO001; Operations Update no. 01

The BRC is part of the National Civil Defence System (SENADECI) and is working in coordination with the Bolivian government. Many foreign countries with representation in Bolivia are supporting the relief effort through donations, as follows:

- Argentina: Purifying tablets for water, Tents, Blankets
- Belgium: Food, kitchen accessories, toilet sets, sheets
- Chile: Food, medicines, mattresses, blankets, nappies
- Cuba: Medicines, doctors
- Japan: Water tanks, tents, mattresses and blankets
- Peru: Tents, blankets, clothes
- Venezuela: Water, food, blankets, mattresses, boots, construction materials, cleaning products and medicines

In addition, the Spanish government through the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECI) has also announced a donation of EUR 210,000 to the Bolivian government to address shelter needs.

A United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team is in the country and has established an On-site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) within the local Emergency Operations Centre. Six thematic working groups (health, food, shelter, education, rehabilitation and infrastructure/re-channelling of the river) have been established in order to determine the needs and coordinate the response. Several other relief organizations are also active in the country, including Cáritas, OXFAM, Medicos del Mundo, Medecins sans Frontiere, OFDA, CARE, and others. It was announced that the World Bank has confirmed USD 2 million to support the rehabilitation process, as well as a 2 million USD loan from USAID.

Further Needs

Relief authorities say that there is a need for tents, food and medicine, and that many people have become sick after drinking stagnant water. Families are also still in need of kitchen kits and health care. Once the rainy season is over, long-term rehabilitation will be an urgent need, including safe water, education and appropriate housing. The Federation and the Bolivian Red Cross are continuing to monitor the situation and will consider launching an international appeal should the need arise.

[Click here to return to the title page or contact information](#)