

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

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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

This Bulletin (no. 03/2006) is being issued for information only, and reflects the status of the situation and information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- In Guyana: Guyana Red Cross Society, Dorothy Fraser, General Director, Georgetown; email redcross@sdnp.org.gy, phone (592) 227-5190, fax (592) 225-2525
- In Trinidad & Tobago: Thomas Doyle, Disaster Management Delegate, Pan American Disaster Response Unit, Port of Spain; email: thomas.doyle@ifrc.org; phone (1 868) 627 2665; Fax (1 868) 627 9627
- In Trinidad & Tobago: Julia Brothwell, Sub Regional Office Coordinator, Port of Spain; e-mail: julia.brothwell@ifrc.org; phone (1 868) 735 0858; Fax (1 868) 627 9627
- 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

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The Situation

Since November 2005 Guyana has been experiencing regular, high-intensity rainfall along coastal areas as well as inland. This rainfall has continued into 2006 and has gradually led to the overflow of many rivers as well as rising levels in the water reservoirs, resulting in flooding of communities near rivers and in low-lying coastal areas. In addition, to control levels of the water reservoirs and to avoid overflowing which would result in flooding of the East Coast Demerara and Georgetown, a decision was made to release water into the Mahaica River resulting in increased flood levels in Region 5.

On 27 January 2006 the Guyana government stated that up to 12,000 families (35,000 persons) were affected by the floods but they did not deem it as a national emergency. On Saturday 28 January, the Guyana government officially declared Region 2 and Region 5 disaster areas and called on the United Nations and the donor community for support for rehabilitation of drainage infrastructure and restoration of livelihoods. The worst affected regions are:

- Region 1 - Barima, Waini
- Region 2 - Pomeroon - Supenaam
- Region 3 - Essequibo Islands - West Demerara
- Region 5 - Mahaica, Mahaicony, Berbice

- Region 6 - East Berbice, Corentyne
- Region 9 - Rupununi, which is in the South of the country on the border with Brazil, also reported flooding due to heavy rainfall

Displaced people	5,000 persons
Cattle/Livestock lost	5,000 head
Rice paddies and other crops lost	12,964 acres (4,900 hectares)
Loss in rice exports	USD 4 million
Infrastructure damages	USD 165,000,000

On 27 January 2006 the Ministry of Health met with various NGOs and international organizations to discuss the distribution of antibiotics for the treatment of leptospirosis, a bacterial illness that is transmitted to humans from the urine of infected animals in flood waters or wet ground and vegetation. At the same time it was reported in the media that 9 deaths had occurred due to leptospirosis, but these had been in non-flood areas. Stocks of the antibiotic, ‘Doxycycline’, are available in Guyana.

An estimated 95 percent (or around 1,400 acres or 560 hectares) of the crops including plantains, cassava, ginger, pepper and vegetables have been lost in Region 1. Exact data on the number of crops lost in Region 2 is not yet available; however, it is expected to be significant as this region is an important supplier of cash crops and fruits. In Region 5, 9,000 acres (or approximately 3,600 hectares) of rice in addition to 5,000 livestock and cash crops have been lost. Meanwhile, 65,000 head of cattle remained at risk of disease or drowning as a result of the floods and efforts were being made move them and find sufficient feed.

Even though it was not declared as a national emergency the government of Guyana decided to give a flat cash sum to up to 5,000 affected households. Cattle farmers would get GYD 50,000 (USD 263), rice farmers would get GYD 20,000 (USD 105) per acre up to a maximum of 20 acres, and the sum for householders is not yet determined.

Housing and shelters

While most families have so far remained in their houses despite their yards and houses being flooded, approximately 400 have relocated to the five shelters that have been set up in the affected areas. Of this number, two thirds are children. The shelters, which are managed by the Civil Defence Commission (CDC), are in primary school buildings and the conditions are generally good. An additional 150 people depend on hot food delivery from shelters due to old age or disability.



Water and sanitation

In the flood affected areas of Region 5 there is no regular water supply, and communities principally rely on creek and rainwater. Due to overflowing and damaged latrines, as well as the death of animals, the quality of that water has deteriorated. A preliminary assessment done by Ministry of Health with support from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) indicates faecal contamination of the Mahaicony River.

Health

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with PAHO/WHO, is conducting health surveillance. Medical teams from the Ministry of Health are working closely with the Civil Defence Commission and have been going into the flooded areas on a daily basis to deliver health care. To date, there has been no evidence any untoward cases of diarrhoea in the flooded areas. However, there have been an increasing number of admissions of persons with a suspected diagnosis of leptospirosis to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation. On a daily basis, usually four to five persons are in the ward with this preliminary diagnosis. A number of deaths have occurred; however, PAHO is working with the Ministry of Health to conduct investigations and confirm the numbers of these deaths, which can be attributed to leptospirosis. Prophylactic doxycycline is being administered in the flooded areas and in other areas where cases have been detected.

Education

Seven schools in Region 2 were temporarily closed because of flooding. In Region 5 a total of 25 schools were affected but did not close. Currently 5 schools are being used as shelters.

From meetings with government officials, the organizations present in the country recognized that there was a need for more in-depth assessments. This will also ensure a common approach by all external organizations. Most organizations, including the Guyana Red Cross Society (GRCS), have agreed that a longer term approach is required particularly related to first aid training, psychosocial support assistance, community based disaster preparedness awareness programmes and possibly targeted food distributions. The GRCS, together with a disaster management delegate from the Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), is currently re-assessing the situation and identifying needs for further action.

A team from the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) arrived in Guyana on 3 February to assess the current flood situation.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

From the beginning of the emergency the Guyana Red Cross Society was on stand-by alert for any mobilization requests from the government. A Federation/GRCS assessment trip to Region 2 (North Coast) was carried out on 2



February; the assessment team comprised one Federation delegate, one GRCS staff member and representatives of two NGOs. The assessment focused on households along the Pomeroon River, which are mostly coconut and citrus fruits farms. Although there was significant damage to houses and crops, the farmers in Region 2 are already in the recovery phase as the waters have started to recede, thus allowing the harvesting of those crops that can still be salvaged. Additionally some farmers have alternative income activities as a fall-back source of income, such as lumber and light engineering. Further back from the river the rice fields were not affected by flooding and the harvest is at quite an advanced stage.

Region 5 (East Coast) is the area that is most in need and also the priority emergency area of the Guyana Red Cross Society. On 3 February a GRCS volunteer submitted the household assessment results for the four most affected areas in Region 5 (Esau & Jacob, Wash Clothes, Mortice and New Providence). The survey covered 126 households and, based on the analysis, the GRCS is now preparing the distribution plan of first aid kits, blankets, rubber boots for children, clothes and food parcels, some of which has already begun.

Thus far, the GRCS has distributed 80 food hampers, from unsolicited donations, to shelters, as well as treated mosquito nets to Region 1. They have also distributed infant, child and family hygiene kits to shelters in Region 5. In addition, the GRCS began preparations and training for the distribution of antibiotics for the treatment of leptospirosis. To date, the following relief items have been distributed by the GRCS:

	Food	Mosquito Nets	Tarpaulins	Family hygiene kit	Infant hygiene kit	Child hygiene kit	Individual first aid kit	Family first aid kit
31 Jan	80	100	2	32	4	6		
1 Feb				11			2	13
2 Feb				13	2		1	10
Total	80	100	2	56	6	6	3	23

Infant and family hygiene kits contain the following items:

Infant Hygiene Kits		
Quantity	Item	Description
1 bottle	Petroleum Jelly	113 gms
1 bottle	Baby Oil	120 ml
1	Towel	
2	Face Cloth	
2	Baby Vests	
2	Baby Chemise	
1	Baby Blanket	
1 bar	Baby Soap	
1 pkt	Pampers	newborn size
1 pkt	Pampers	Medium size
1 dozen	Cloth Diapers	pkt of 12
4	Diaper Pins	pkt of 4
1	Baby Wipes	pkt of 80
1 pkt	Garbage Bags	pkt of 10 small

Family Hygiene Kits		
Quantity	Item	Description
2 ea	Towels	
2 125 g	Bath Soap	Antibacterial
1 pkt	Soap Powder	737 g
5 ea	Toothbrush	
1 tube	Toothpaste	78 g
5 ea	Razors	Disposable
2 pkt 10	Sanitary Napkins	
2 ea	Shampoo	8 fl. oz
4 ea	Toilet Paper	Individual wrapped
1 pkt 5	Garbage Bags	

The GRCS has stated from the outset of the flood emergency that, with the resources available through the Red Cross, UN agencies and various international and local NGOs, the immediate needs are being targeted and addressed. However, the GRCS has also highlighted the longer term need for food assistance, particularly if the heavy rainfalls continued. Therefore, the GRCS has requested quotations for the local purchase of food items, which are currently being compared and analyzed. When this process is finalized, the GRCS may consider a DREF request for the local purchase of food parcels. Currently this is not an immediate need but, due to the continued rains and high water levels, it is now acknowledged that the provision of supplementary food will likely be necessary. Should the need arise, the GRCS will distribute 2,000 foods kits, which will contain the following items:

Quantity	Item	Description
2 gal	Rice	Quality grade white, double bagged in 1 gal measure
4 tins	Sardines/Mackerel	425 g
4 tins	Corned Beef	340 g
4 pints	Peas	split or Channa- (specify) bagged in plastic and tied
4 pints	Peas	Black eye bagged in plastic and tied
1 L	Vegetable Oil	sealed plastic bottle
1 pkt of 100	Tea Bags	
1/2 lbs)	Curry Powder	
1 lbs	Brown Sugar	In sealed plastic bags
1 lbs	Salt	DEC salt preferred

3 lbs	Salt Biscuits	In box
2 lbs	Oatmeal	Sealed plastic bag
1 lbs	Sago	Sealed plastic bag
1 pkt of 5	Garbage Bags	
2 125 g	Antibacterial Soap	In sealed plastic bags

The GRCS is also considering the purchase of 2,000 clean up kits, which will contain the following:

Quantity	Item	Description
1 ea	Yard Brush/Stick	hard brush
1 bottle	Bleach	gallon
1 bottle	Disinfectant	1000ml
1 ea	Bucket	plastic with handle without lid
1 ea	Soap Powder	737 gms
1 ea	Mop/Stick	
5 pair	Gloves	Sanitary Latex
1 pkt of 5	Garbage Bags	large
1 bottle	Shoo repellent	120 ml
2 ea	Masks	Disposable

Future activities of the Guyana Red Cross Society

- the GRCS will continue distributions to the people remaining in the 4 shelters in Region 5
- based on the new household assessment data from Region 5, the GRCS will commence distributions of first aid kits, blankets, clothes, rubber boots for children and clean-up kits to households
- while food is not a critical issue at the moment, the GRCS will finalize the local procurement process for items to be included in food parcels
- the GRCS will continue to work with PAHO on health awareness activities,

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