



DREF Bulletin
no. MDRAR002
GLIDE no.
FL-2007-000044-ARG
12 April 2007

ARGENTINA: FLOODS

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 185 countries.

In Brief

- This DREF Bulletin is being issued based on the situation described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 178,400 (USD 146,711 or EUR 110,123) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 7 April 2007 to respond to the most urgent needs of the affected population.
- This operation is expected to be implemented over 3 months, and will be completed by 7 July, 2007;
- A Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 7 October, 2007). Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

This operation is aligned with the International Federation's Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet 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 Argentina: Pablo Bruno, Executive Advisor for Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Response, Argentine Red Cross, email pbruno@cruzroja.org.ar, phone (54) (11) 4952-7200, fax (54) (11) 4952-7715
- In Peru: Giorgio Ferrario, Head of Lima Regional Delegation; email giorgio.ferrario@ifrc.org, phone (511) 221-8151, fax (511) 441-3607
- In Panama: Stephen McAndrew, Coordinator, 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

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>

Background and current situation

Since February 2007 heavy rainfall and storms have caused severe flooding, affecting mainly the provinces of Entre Rios and Santa Fe, situated on the South Coast of Río Paraná. In the last week of March 500 mm of rain was registered, almost duplicating the normal average for the whole month of March. In addition, the annual swelling of the Parana river and of the Salado River, reaching between four to five metres in different coastal localities was exacerbated due to abundant rains in the south of Brazil surpassing Alert and Evacuation levels (five to seven metres). This phenomenon, combined with the strong rainfall has provoked internal draining canals to overflow, causing even greater damage.

Almost four million hectares and complete neighbourhoods were affected by the floods, several bridges are severely damaged and main roads are obstructed and inaccessible. The flooding has caused major losses in the harvest of soybean and alfalfa in the affected area. Several services such as gas and electricity were closed preventively and school classes were suspended in the cities of Santa Fe, Rosario and Gualaguay. A state of emergency has been declared in the province of Santa Fe.

Within the two coastal provinces of Santa Fe and Entre Rios 65 localities have been affected, of which 59 localities are based in the province of Santa Fe. Most of the people have been evacuated from the cities of Santa Fe, Rosario, Esperanza and Gualaguay.



Although there is no official governmental information on the impact of the emergency at this moment, it is estimated that more than 80,000 people have been affected. Some 56,000 people have been evacuated from the flooded areas to more than 200 temporary shelters in different provinces.

Left: Argentine Red Cross Volunteers assisting in the evacuation of communities affected by the floods.

The Government has established a Provincial Crisis Committee in the city of Santa Fe as well as Local Emergency Committees in order to improve coordination on local, provincial and national levels. At present, the main actions coordinated through this body are focused on evacuations, administrations of shelters, distribution of Humanitarian Aid, medical assistance in shelters (and monitoring the epidemiological situation) and re-establishment of basic services.

The Ministry of Social Development has sent 70 trucks and three Hercules flights carrying relief items to the affected areas. The Ministry of Health is focusing on the reinforcement of the sanitary control in the temporary shelters and the local Centres of Primary Health Attention (CAPS). Vaccination campaigns against Hepatitis A and tetanus and diseases like leptospirosis are being implemented. The Ministry of Health has sent more than 15 tons of powdered milk, 60,000 water-treatment tablets and 3,000 doses of vaccines, serums and medication to the affected areas.

To accompany the humanitarian aid sent to Santa Fe by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a special logistics team of the White Helmets "Casco Blancos" commission was summoned by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In addition,

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another team of volunteers specialized in emergency shelter will travel to the province to provide psychosocial support to the affected population.

Social unrest has emerged as a result of the situation and some looting has taken place on provisions of humanitarian aid. As a result of this insecurity the Provincial Police and the Naval Prefecture have increased their controls and patrolling actions.

Although some families are returning to their homes since the rains have stopped and the situation is improving, around 5,000 families (some 25,000 people) still remain in temporary shelters. There are still places where the draining of rain water continues to be slow and the weather remains unstable. Authorities are insisting that in many locations the situation is still critical; they expect that the situation will stabilise within one month.

A special United Nations (UN) mission was carried out by representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to assess the needs in the affected areas. This assessment showed that although the emergency is of the same nature in both provinces, the impact has been different due to the magnitude of the event, the immediate antecedents, the previous vulnerability to the floods and different organizational systems. Although needs vary between both provinces the main common needs identified for communities to return home are:

1. Necessary products to assure the possibility to return home with good sanitary and personal conditions. Providing cleaning kits, personal hygiene kits and bed clothing kits.
2. Basic construction material to fix any damage.
3. Support to the evacuated families with psychosocial activities and recreation kits for children.

Red Cross action

The local branches of the Argentine Red Cross (ARC) were activated at the start of the emergency, providing initial response to the emergency situations through activities in rescue and evacuation, first aid care, needs assessments and the provision of immediate relief items.

At present, the ARC is working in the localities of Santa Fe, Rosario, Esperanza, Casilda, Paraná, Gualaguay, San Nicolás and San Pedro carrying out the following actions:

- Providing support in the administration of temporary shelters.
- Providing psychosocial support in the form of youth recreation in temporary shelters. To date more than 200 volunteers have been mobilised.

Right: Volunteers of the Argentine Red Cross are providing assistance in the temporary shelters.

The ARC Plan of Action is based on the main needs of the affected communities which are not covered by the humanitarian relief being provided by governmental or non-governmental organizations. It has been decided that ARC will focus on improving health conditions of 350 affected families (approximately 2,000 people) in the communities of the province of Santa Fe and Entre Ríos, as shown below.



Province	Communities	Number of families
Province of Santa Fe	Santa Fe	150
	Esperanza	50

	Rosario	50
	Gualequay	50
Province of Entre Ríos	Paraná	50
TOTAL		350

Furthermore, psychosocial support will be provided to 300 people staying in the temporary shelters. This selection will be based on the criteria of those who are most vulnerable (who have suffered any of the following: great material loss, loss of relatives, loss of crops and/or animals or other means of living, been hospitalized, or experiences family ruptures).

In the second stage of the operation the ARC will assist the evacuated families in returning to their homes and daily lives. In order to achieve this, the 350 affected families from the five different communities will benefit from the distribution of non food items to assist them in recovering from the effects of the floods. These relief items include:

- Personal hygiene kit
- Bed clothing kit
- Cleaning kit

Health

In order to prevent or diminish the incidences related to climatic emergencies, in relation to the handling of water, foods, personal hygiene and first aid, the ARC has planned several simultaneous activities such as workshops, training and the provision of kits.

Objective 1: Affected communities will benefit from first aid activities based in the community.

Planned activities:

- Identification of beneficiaries
- 2 workshops (to be held in community centres, schools, CAPS, houses) on first aid care
- Distribution of first aid care guides

Objective 2: 350 families will benefit from actions in the safe handling of food and hygiene promotion.

Health conditions of the 350 identified families will be improved through the promotion of preventative measures related to safe handling of food and water, prevention of diseases and the provision of hygiene kits, cleaning kit and diaper kit.

Planned activities:

- 1 community workshop about safe handling of food and water:
- 2 community workshops (community centres, schools, CAPS) on the following topics: preventive measures, supply sources, storage, purification, safe water, personal hygiene, handling of garbage, ventilation and illumination, water and sanitation, etc.
- Distribution of educational material
- Purchase of kit items
- Preparation of kits
- Identification of beneficiaries
- Distribution of kits accompanied by awareness-raising talks

The following kits will be distributed to 350 families:

Hygiene kit for 1 family (5 people) for 1 month for 350 families	
Items	Units
Soap (125g)	5
Personal hygiene sponge	2

Tooth brushes	5
Toothpaste (145g)	2
Sanitary napkins	4
Toilet paper	12
Shampoo (1 litre)	2
Comb	2
Small towels	5
Large towels	2
Razor	4

Diaper kit for 1 baby (between 0-2 years) for 1 month) for 350 families	
Items	Units
Diapers	100

Cleaning kit for 1 family (5 people) for 1 month for 350 families	
Items	Units
Broom	1
Mop	1
Hand brush	1
Concentrated detergent	2 (litres)
Rubbish bags	25
pair of latex gloves	2
Bleach	5 (litres)
Floor rags	2
Bucket (10-20 litre)	1
Sponge multi-use	1
Kitchen cloth	1
White soap (250 gr)	2
Rubbish bin (15 litre)	1
Box of mosquito spiral (x 5 units)	1
Insect repellent	2

Objective 3: Affected communities will benefit from actions carried out in the prevention of diseases.

Planned activities:

- Community workshops (to be held in community centres, schools, CAPS, houses). The agenda of the two workshops will address different topics concerning the prevention of diseases such as: Acute Respiratory Infections, diarrhoea, dengue, HIV and AIDS and hepatitis.
- Distribution of educational material

Community based Psychosocial Support

In order to strengthen capacities of the affected families to cope with the floods and mitigate traumatic stress the ARC will provide psychosocial support to families who have been evacuated and will eventually return to changed circumstances. Again, the selection of families and individuals will be based on the criteria of those who are most vulnerable (who have suffered any of the following: great material loss, loss of relatives, loss of crops and/or animals or other means of livelihood, have been hospitalized, or families that have been separated).

Objective 1: The resilience of people staying in temporary shelters is strengthened through community-based psychosocial support and recreation activities.

Planned activities:

- Identification of beneficiaries
- Domestic visits
- Distribution of pamphlets about the handling of stress
- Establishment of contacts and agreements with Centres of Mental Health of derivation (CAPS, hospitals etc)

Objective 2: Affected communities will benefit from recreational activities

The ARC will organize periodic recreation activities such as games and songs for children who have been evacuated to temporary shelters. These will take place either inside, or outside and can be based on educational themes such as health.



Left: ARC volunteers organising recreational activities for the children evacuated to temporary shelters.

Replacement of basic necessities

Objective 1: 350 families will be provided with bed clothing kits in order to assist them in recovering from the effects of the floods.

Planned activities:

- Purchase of kit products
- Preparation of the kits
- Identification of beneficiaries
- Distribution of 350 kits

The bed clothing kits contain the following items:

Bed clothing kit for 1 family (5 people)	
Item	Units
Set of 2 sheets and 1 pillow cover	5
Blankets	5
Pillows	5

Community development

In order to strengthen communities affected by the floods the ARC, supported by the local branches, will identify sustainable lines of community work.

Objective 1: The affected families will benefit from actions to promote community development, based on their needs.

In order to identify possible lines of community work that promotes the sustainable development within the affected communities the ARC will organize five two-day meetings for volunteers and personnel of the ARC (one meeting at each of the local branches involved). Based on the experiences of local branches and the previous work carried out within the affected communities the ARC will formulate a plan of action for community work in some of the affected communities. Depending on different levels of articulation and involvement of different social actors, the possibility of including at least 3 focal points per community will be considered.

Timeline of planned activities:

	1 st Month		2 nd Month		3 rd Month	
	Week 2	Week 4	Week 6	Week 8	Week 10	Week 12
Selection of personnel	X					
Identification of beneficiaries	X	X				
Purchase of humanitarian aid	X					
First aid workshops		X				
Water and sanitation workshop			X			
Prevention of diseases workshop			X			
Psychosocial support workshop		X				
Psychosocial support		X	X	X	X	X
Distribution of hygiene kits			X			
Distribution of cleaning kits			X			
Distribution of bed clothing kits				X		
Meeting to identify community activities					X	
Local monitoring visits		X		X		X
Evaluations and reporting						X

Coordination

The ARC is part of the Governmental Provincial Crisis Committee and actively participates in local crisis committees. Furthermore, the ARC is closely coordinating with the local and provincial Civil Defence, Government Ministries, UN agencies and other humanitarian organizations present in the affected areas in order to identify and prioritize humanitarian assistance and avoid the duplication of efforts. The ARC is also in close contact with the Ministry of Health and PAHO (Pan-American Organization of the Health) in order to monitor the epidemic situation in the affected areas.

The ARC is part of an inter-institutional Network that has among its members White Helmets, Save the Children, Caritas, UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Action against Hunger and the Scout Movement with whom they has shared information and evaluations.

Moreover, the ARC is in constant communication with the representatives of the Prevention, Preparation and Attention in Disasters (PPAD) of the local branches. From the onset of the emergency, the ARC has also been in contact with the Federation’s Regional Delegation in Lima and the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) through the Disaster Management Delegate based in Lima. During the operation the mobilisation of a Regional

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Intervention Team member from the region will be considered to support the ARC in reporting, monitoring and evaluation activities.

Capacity of the National Society

The ARC has experience in carrying out flood relief operations, as the operation in Santa Fe in 2003 and the operation in Salta in 2006 have demonstrated.

The viability of the Plan of Action is based on the following capacities and institutional resources:

- All the local branches involved in the emergency are part of local emergency operations centres and coordinate with Governmental institutions.
- The local branch of Santa Fe represents the ARC in the provincial emergency operations centre.
- The number of volunteers in each of the involved local branches surpasses at least 15 people, and the local branch of Santa Fe has at least 30 volunteers working actively in the operation.
- The involved local branches have volunteers specialized in health. The local branches of Santa Fe, Esperanza, Rosario, Paraná and Gualeguay even has qualified health personnel, and the local Branches of Santa Fe and Rosario have volunteers specialized in psychosocial support (educated in regional education centres of psychosocial support).
- The involved local branches need a minimum administrative structure to guarantee the successful management of the proposed actions. The local branches of Santa Fe, Esperanza y Rosario have gained experience in administration and finance based on Red Cross standards through the participation in regional community health projects.
- Previous to the floods, the local branches of Santa Fe, Esperanza and Rosario implemented health projects in strategic communities as part of the approach to integrated community work.
- The local branches of Santa Fe, Esperanza, Rosario, Paraná and Gualeguay already implemented humanitarian activities in the temporary shelters.

The capacity of the ARC consists of 10 trained National Intervention Team (NIT) members and 10 trained RIT members. At national level, the management structure of the National Society supports the structure of the local branches through departments such as logistics, general services, communication and mobilization of resources, administration, finance and human resources. Through these departments the National Society will provide the local branches in the affected areas with the necessary capacity and resources to successfully complete the operation.

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