

DREF Bulletin 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

URUGUAY: 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 185 countries.

In Brief

Period covered by this update: 12 May to 16 May 2007.

History of this Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)-funded operation:

- CHF 15,000 (USD 12,397 or EUR 9,146) was allocated on 10 May 2007 from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to respond to the needs of this operation.
- An additional CHF 125,000 (USD 103,306 or EUR 76,220) was allocated on 14 May 2007 to expand the operation.
- This operation is expected to be implemented over 4 months, and will be completed by 10 September 2007; a DREF Bulletin Final Report (narrative and financial) will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 10 December 2007).

The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its 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.

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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

Intense and unusually prolonged rains, since the end of March this year, have caused serious flooding and widespread damage in the Departments of Durazno, Treinta y Tres, Soriano, Cerro Largo, Florida, San José, Rocha, Rio Negro and Canelones. The Departments of Durazno, Soriano and Treinta y Tres have been the most affected. Triggered by one week of torrential rains, the overflow of rivers has caused flash floods followed by landslides.

These floods are the worst recorded over the last 50 years and it is estimated that over 110,000 people have been affected, mostly poor and vulnerable groups (children, women and elderly). Early assessments showed that over 12,500 people were evacuated during the peak of the floods; according to the latest official figures of the National Emergency System (Sistema Nacional de Emergencia - SNE) 7,214 people remain evacuated. The number of deaths caused by the floods currently stands at two.

Table showing numbers of people evacuated in some of the affected Departments (source: National Emergency System, 16 May 2007):

Department	Adults	Minors	Self-evacuated	TOTAL
Durazno	2,785	1,215	-	4,000
Mercedes	82	92	1,246	1,420
Villa Soriano	19	10	-	29
Tacuarembó	-	-	-	16
Paso de los Toros	60	30	-	90
Canelones	34	18	-	52
Treinta y Tres	40	57	400	497
Rio Negro	4	5		9
TOTAL	3,024	1,427	1,646	6,113

Note: Although there are no details available regarding the extent to which people were affected in the Tacuarembó Department, the overall number of affected people is 16.

The floods caused severe damage to public infrastructure including rural roads, bridges, water supply, sewerage, drainage, power and telephone lines, housing, agriculture and municipal buildings - particularly schools and health care facilities. Thousands of houses have been damaged, with a large number of them totally destroyed. Most of the evacuations took place in poor and populated districts, with thousands of people being evacuated to temporary shelters, such as sports clubs, schools, and private homes. Most schools have closed down.

The following preliminary needs have been identified:

1. Food, blankets and mattresses for those displaced by the flooding
2. Chlorine, soap and other cleaning equipment to prevent the spread of waterborne disease
3. Transportation of these goods to affected areas.

Emergency needs are being addressed and public services slowly restored. The Uruguayan Red Cross (URC) has developed a Plan of Action to respond to the needs of 750 families affected by the floods (for full details see below). In addition, the URC together with Channel 4 organized a Telethon in which emergency relief goods were collected: clothing, hygiene items and food.



Above: Flooded areas in Uruguay

Furthermore, local authorities are interested in obtaining information on the economic damages and reconstruction plan, and to start looking at risk reduction and management possibilities in order to enhance emergency preparedness and response in future events.

Water levels have decreased slightly in some areas. However, a comprehensive assessment of damage to housing and infrastructure is still impeded by the floods.

Of particular concern is the water and sanitation situation in the affected areas, as some 30,000 people currently have no access to drinking water. The Uruguayan Air Force has deployed two helicopters to the city of Treinta y Tres in order to evacuate people from isolated areas and transport food to those who remain in their homes.

Due to the presence of stagnant waters, health problems from waterborne diseases and related infections continue to be a threat to vulnerable communities and are considered a priority to address. National authorities from the Ministry of Health recommended the adoption of extreme hygiene precautions to avoid the proliferation of transmissible diseases such as leptospirosis, typhus, hepatitis A, diarrhoeas, gastrointestinal- and skin infections.

Red Cross action

The URC has requested the mobilisation of four Regional Intervention Team (RIT) members from The Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), to support the emergency operation. In addition, the URC, through its National Disaster Relief department, organized meetings with the representatives of the affected local branches in order to prepare local contingency plans and disseminated community educational brochures on disasters and prevention of dengue and avian influenza.

PADRU is supporting the URC by the deployment of a Disaster Management officer and will provide RIT members.

The proposed operation

Relief

Objective 1: 750 of the most affected families (approximately 3,750 persons) benefit from the distribution of non food items to assist their recovery from the effects of the floods.

In order to respond to the immediate needs of 750 families (400 families in Durazno and 350 families in Mercedes) the following relief items will be distributed:

- 1 kitchen kit
- 1 stove with fuel
- 1 jerry can for fuel transportation

Contents of the kitchen kits for 1 family of 5 people:

Product	Units
Cooking pot with lid, 7l	1
Frying pan with lid 2.5l	1
Cooking pot with lid 5l	1
Bowl 0.75 l	5
Cups 0.3 l	5
Plates 0.75 l	5
Table spoon 15 ml	5
Table fork 20 cm	5
Table knife 17 cm	5
Kitchen Knife (15 cm blade)	1
Wooden spoon 30 cm	1

Psycho-social Support

Objective 2: Affected communities benefit from psycho-social support.

Psycho-social support will be provided to the affected families through talks that will be organized for the affected families. It is expected that this will help speed up the physical and emotional recovery process.

National Society Capacity Building

Objective 3: The capacity of the Uruguayan Red Cross in needs assessment and humanitarian response is increased.



Capacity building will be carried out through a training course for National Intervention Team (NIT) members, which will be implemented by the deployed RIT member alongside relief personnel of the URC, with support from PADRU and the Community Risk Reduction programme at the Lima Regional Delegation.

Left: URC volunteers distributing relief items

Coordination and communications

The URC closely coordinates with the National System of Emergency in order to exchange information about the emergency situation, coordinate relief activities and avoid duplication of efforts. Coordination meetings are taking place between the Red Cross Movement and other actors involved such United Nations agencies (OCHA, UNDAC

and others), SNE and NGOs. In addition, the URC is carrying out fieldtrips to the affected areas, together with the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC).

From the onset of the emergency the URC has been in close contact with the Federation's Regional Delegation in Lima and PADRU. The latter is currently in the process of deploying one general Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member and one RIT member specialized in logistics. A Disaster Management Officer from PADRU is already present in Uruguay to identify the immediate and long term needs and support the URC in the successful completion of the operation. The possibility of deploying a Disaster Management Delegate - in addition to the Disaster Management Officer currently in place – to further assist the URC operation is being considered.

The National Society carried out local communications activities in order to support activities. An initial DMIS report was posted on 9 May 2007. Press releases were issued and distributed to national and local media. Furthermore, the Disaster Management Officer from PADRU was interviewed by the Al Jazeera channel and by local channels 4 and 5, which helped increased awareness on the mission of the URC and the activities undertaken by the Red Cross in general.

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