

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Colombia: Volcano

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The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of national societies to respond to disasters.

Period covered by this update: 19 April to 14 July, 2008.

Summary: CHF 103,000 (USD 105,060 or EUR 65,438) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 18 April, 2008 to support the National Society in delivering assistance to over 2,250 families (11,250 people).

On 29 March, 2008 the Colombian Institute of Geology and Mining (Instituto Colombiano de Geología y Minería

– INGEOMINAS) emitted an orange alert (II) due to the volcanic activity of the Nevado del Huila volcano. Currently, the level of volcanic activity has been scaled down to yellow (III), meaning that there is still a moderate level of activity, but that the risks of eruption are not as imminent.

This DREF operation is focused on delivering humanitarian aid to the most affected by the volcanic eruption and on strengthening the local Red Cross' capacity to respond to a potential worsening of the situation.

This operation is expected to be implemented in three months, and will therefore be completed by 18 July, 2008; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 18 October, 2008).

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The Nevado del Huila volcano emitting gases. Source: Reuters

The situation

Since the year 1550, the Nevado del Huila volcano in the department of Huila has shown constant and moderate volcanic activity. There was an eruptive phase between 1550-1560, affecting the departments of Valle del Cauca, Tolima, Cauca and Huila, and in 1994 an avalanche came down the Paez river, killing 1,000 people. The volcano's crater is approximately 5,400 to 5,700 meters above sea level, and for that reason the surrounding area is not habitable.

At the beginning of the year 2008, the Colombian Institute of Geology and Mining (INGEOMINAS) reported that the Nevado del Huila volcano had doubled its volcanic activity compared to the year of 2007, putting at risk approximately 30,000 people. The volcano, located along the Andean mountain range, started an eruptive process on 29 March, 2008, threatening the surrounding communities with mud flows. On 14 April, 2008, authorities began to evacuate people with disabilities and those with chronic illnesses in the municipality of Belalcázar. Common shelters were opened for the displaced people. There were no reports of injuries due to the emergency, but insufficient and inadequate common shelters to house the affected



CRCS volunteers setting up tents provided by the IFRC. Source: International Federation

people were reported, as well as insufficient medical supplies and drinking water to attend the evacuated in Belalcázar. The evacuation routes were also affected due to heavy rain, as landslides partially blocked them.

Consequently, local authorities have authorized the procurement of construction materials in order to build shelters and provide adequate signs or billboards which show the safest evacuation routes. This activity will be coordinated by the different presidents of the local communities with local authorities. In addition, authorities will coordinate, together with the state owned company "Local Hospital" the exact locations where the medical tents in the affected areas will be established.

Reports indicate there is lack of ambulatory care, personnel to perform evacuation activities and an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of the primary response municipal unit.

Moreover, the common shelters and the secure areas do not have potable drinking water, there is no system to treat residual water and there are insufficient non perishable food items to provide to the people during the emergency.

A yellow alert was declared when minor tremors were felt between 7 to 13 May. According to INGEOMINAS, the volcano's main threat is the potential flow of mud towards the Páez and Simbola rivers. The eruption that occurred on 19 February saw mud flow heading towards the Páez river bed.

The chart below shows the areas affected and the number of people evacuated:

URBAN AREAS

AREA	PEOPLE
Barrio los Guadales	139
Barrio el Jardín	679
Barrio Bello Horizonte	285
Barrio Las Américas	200
Barrio Avenida Santander	278
Barrio El Centro	89
Barrio San Fernando	319
Barrio La Primavera	174
Barrio Panamericano	360
Barrio Villa del Norte	427
Barrio El Salado	573
TOTAL	3.523 people

RURAL AREAS

AREAS	PEOPLE
Huila	1634
Tóez	378

Tálaga	501
Avirama	1590
Belalcázar	2711
Togoima	997
Cohetando	1100
Ricaurte	1562
Pickwe Tha Fiw	188
TOTAL	10.678 people

Source: Local Committee for the Prevention and Attention for Disaster in the Cauca Department.

Coordination and partnerships

To date, the Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) and the National System of Prevention and Attention for Disasters (Sistema Nacional de Prevención y Atención de Desastres – SNPAD) have held four coordination meetings in order to organize the placement of the evacuated residents. In coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the CRCS has evacuated high risk zones where the country's ongoing armed conflict compounded the security risks for residents. In coordination with SNPAD, the CRCS through its local branches will participate in the application of existing early alert mechanisms. The contingency plan project implemented by DIPECHO, CRCS and the French Red Cross, which contemplates disaster preparedness, early alert systems, institutional strengthening and school emergency plans, will also be considered in the emergency response. This project estimates that by the end of 2008, the communities of Nataga, Paicol, Tesalia, La Plata, Inza and Belalcázar will have increased disaster risk awareness, increased capacity of disaster response and implementation of an early alert system in VHF.

The CRCS requested a Regional Intervention Team member (RIT) specializing in water and sanitation to support its operation in coordination with the Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU).

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) has constantly been monitoring the evolution of the situation with their seismograph, VHF network in Belalcázar and community transmitter. Since the beginning of the emergency, the CRCS mobilized a water and sanitation team from the city of Pasto to the affected areas and provided 15 tents, 1,000 bed sheets and 1,000 blankets to the affected people. The local branch in Bogota deployed a Telecom response unit in order to support the relief activities.



The RIT member showing CRCS volunteers how to analyze the water using chemicals. Source: International Federation

The local branch in Belalcázar has 17 volunteers, a warehouse as well as a crisis room and has already operated in over 13 emergencies. The monitoring system is installed in the CRCS operational headquarters in Belalcázar and volunteers have been mobilized to attend the needs of those affected by the disaster.

As defined in its plan of action, the CRCS will provide technical advice and support to government authorities in water and sanitation, contribute to the mapping and rehabilitation of evacuation points and routes in risk areas, provide emergency humanitarian response with pre-positioned non-food items, set up new common shelters as necessary and carry out

disaster risk awareness and reduction activities. The CRCS also plans to support the affected communities in water and sanitation activities to speed up the rehabilitation process. Two National Intervention Teams (NIT), specializing in relief and common shelters were sent to Belalcázar for a period of three months to support the operation.

Progress towards objectives

The CRCS Plan of Action (PoA) aims to respond to the needs of 2,250 affected families and increase the capacity of the National Society in disaster response. If the situation worsens, assessments will be re-evaluated and the objectives will be adapted accordingly.

As mentioned earlier, the CRCS supported by this DREF operation sent two National Intervention Teams specializing in disaster relief and common shelter support to Belalcázar for a period of three months. In addition, the DREF funds also supported the CRCS to jump start their relief activities and mobilization of resources.

Risk Reduction and Preparedness

Objective: 2,250 families affected by the volcano will benefit from the disaster risk reduction activities.

Activities planned:

- Evacuation processes will be supported in the high risk areas;
- The SNPAD and the CRCS will apply early existing alerts in case of a volcanic event;
- The communities will receive educational information on basic first aid care and planning in case disaster strikes.

Progress

The CRC elaborated an evaluation plan together with the Municipal Administration and Communal Action in the Belalcázar municipality to be applied in response to early alerts. In this emergency, this plan was applied and people who presented health problems were evacuated from their homes and were given First Aid. In addition, planned activities were carried out (in part together with the DIPECHO project undertaken in Nevada del Huile): training and capacity building activities on First Aid were carried out, evacuation routes were established and the CRC rehabilitated a helicopter evacuation landing point in the *Colegio Minutos de Dios* to be able to support the affected families.

Activity	Number of Activities	Number of Volunteers	Number of beneficiaries
Rehabilitation of evacuation routes	20	68	3,523
Provision of First Aid	6	11	12
Disaster Preparedness community meetings	24	68	n/a

In addition, in coordination with local community radios, 18 volunteers monitored the volcano's activities and were kept on stand by to alert the local population in case of a need for evacuation. Community based educational activities were implemented, with the objective of socializing the risk reduction activities with the communities affected by the disaster.

To be able to articulate a contingency plan together with the community, institutional and governmental actors, over 100 volunteers from the departments of Cauca, Huila, Narino, Quindio, Tolima and Valle del Cauca were provided with capacity building activities and trainings in disaster response. The volunteers were consequently incorporated into the contingency plan and are capable of implementing first response activities in their communities, together with the governmental and institutional actors present. In short, the following has been achieved thus far:

- 11 Community Emergency teams were formed, with some 55 community members trained;
- 60 Community leaders have been trained;
- 100 volunteers were integrated into six Local Committees for Prevention and Attention for Disasters and two Regional Committees for Prevention and Attention for Disasters were trained.

Water and sanitation

Objective: A water and sanitation unit from PADRU will be deployed to the CRCS branch in Belalcázar.

The branch of Belalcázar will be provided with a water sanitation unit in order to provide safe water for the affected people.

Progress

The Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) sent a water purifier unit and six water bladders tanks by sea to the CRCS and arrived in Colombia on 2 May, 2008. 16 CRCS volunteers are currently trained in deploying and setting up a water and sanitation unit; in identifying the best water sources and in undertaking chemical and microbiological analyses.

Emergency shelter

Objective: The CRCS will pre-position and distribute 100 tents to families according to needs and preventive evacuations.

During the evacuation phase that started on 14 April, the CRCS assisted in the evacuation and temporary accommodation of 600 families. Since then, no further evacuations have been necessary. The tents, provided by PADRU, are now ready and available for use of in-country redeployment.

Progress

PADRU dispatched 100 tents by sea to the CRCS which arrived in Colombia on 2 May, 2008, to be used in the affected areas of Popayán, Neiva, Belalcázar and Inza. The 100 tents were distributed in the affected areas, and were used by the evacuated families until the families returned home; the tents are now ready for re-distribution or re-deployment for the next emergency.

14 tents modules were set up for hospital care in Belalcázar; mobilization and transport costs were provided by the DREF.

Strengthening of Capacity

Objective: Two 4 x 4 vehicles will be made available to the CRCS by PADRU for the transport of volunteers and goods for the duration of the emergency.

The Regional Fleet Base located in Panama will arrange and dispatch the two vehicles needed for this operation.

Progress

The Regional Fleet Base in Panama dispatched two Nissan double cabin 4 x 4 vehicles on 21 May, 2008 (on loan for three months). On Monday 16 June the vehicles were released from Colombian customs. Currently, the vehicles are being used for the transport of the volunteers and relief items, which facilitates the relief operation.

How we work

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.

The International Federation's activities 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.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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