

## **GUYANA : FLOODS**

### **Rehabilitation Programme in favour of Flood Victims in the Demerara, Berbice and Rupununi area**

#### **1. Background**

Since the end of June heavy rains falling at a rate of 2.5 times above the normal levels registered in this period of the year have caused floods both along the highly populated coastal area and the interior of Guyana. The insistent rains and flooding affecting seven of the country's ten regions have led to the Government declaring a state of national emergency and to launch an international appeal on 12 July. National authorities estimated the number of affected people between 28,000 and 33,000 (approximately 4.4% of the country's total population). The areas along the Mahaica, Mahaicony, and Abry Creeks in the south-eastern Demerara/Berbice District, the Linden area and the Rupununi are the most affected. Although there is no detailed information provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, preliminary assessments show that rice cultivations, cash crops and live stock have suffered severe losses temporarily depriving many families of their livelihood.

By now, the initial number of flood victims has been revised to some 2,500 families. Information made available reveals that there is little need for emergency relief in the difficult to access and scarcely populated Southern part of the country. Contrary to initial reports, there are very few displaced people in the flooded areas.

The National Disaster relief Unit (NDRU) has been assisted by UNDP/DHA and CDERA. OFDA accomplished a short-term assessment during 17-20 July. MSF France has sent a water-team on 16 July working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health.

The Government of Guyana has provided NDRU with funds to provide immediate food and medical support to the flood victims. The Ministry of Health has sent out medical teams to the affected areas and, with assistance of PAHO, is monitoring the medical situation. Based on the results of Red Cross assessments and information provided by UNDP/DHA no need for an immediate Red Cross action could be identified. There are very few displaced people, emergency relief has already been provided through the Government and scattered private groups, communities are not isolated due to the floods, and markets are accessible and functional.

## 2. Programme Objectives

Many of the small rice farmers have lost their crops and will not be able to return to their fields before December in order to respect the natural harvest cycle determined by the rainy season. Furthermore, cash crop farmers and labourers at rice farm estates along the Mahaica, Mahaicony, and Abary Creeks will soon require supplementary food rations before they can resume their economic activities. Diarrhoeal and broncho-respiratory as well as skin problems are expected to increase during the following weeks. Large stretches of stagnant water left behind as soon as the rivers will return to their normal size will encourage the proliferation of vectors. Therefore, epidemic controls and health education activities will have to be intensified to avoid the spread of cholera, gastrointestinal diseases, dengue fever and malaria. Finally, distributions of seeds, fertilizers and even selective farming tools will be necessary to help many of the poor farmers to return to their normal life. These activities will have to be based on a neutral census and targeted on the vulnerable population according to their needs.

The Guyana Red Cross Society proposes a rehabilitation programme for the Demerara, Berbice, and Rupununi District to the Government, composed of the following activities:

- To provide supplementary food assistance to an estimated target group of 2,000 vulnerable families over a period of up to 3 months;
- To offer first aid courses and health education as well as community based rehabilitation activities (e.g. to remove debris and clean stagnant water stretches. These activities would be linked to the flood distribution) over a period of up to 3 months;
- To assist small farmers in reactivating their economic activities through a single distribution of seeds, fertilizers and farming tools at the end of the supplementary food assistance.

The proposed programme will be financed by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The programme will be closely co-ordinated with NDRU, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. The programme will also provide personnel, material and financial resources to strengthen the administrative and logistic infrastructure of the Guyana Red Cross Society.

## 3. Plan of Action

### **Programme set up and management**

On 13 and 14 July the Guyana Red Cross Society realised a first damage assessment along the Mahaica Creek. The Federation's Caribbean Regional Delegation sent a Delegate to Guyana on 17 July to assist the National Society. During the following days independent information about the situation in the reportedly affected regions was collected and a

second damage assessment conducted. The National Society has put in place a relief Co-ordination

Committee with assigned responsibilities for logistics, personnel, information, and operations. The Red Cross warehouse located at the National Headquarters' compound is being prepared to be used in the frame of the rehabilitation programme. Warehouse space will be rented in

Linden, the Mahaica / Mahaicongy area and Lethen. A radio-communication network will be set up and run by Red Cross volunteers responsible for the operation in the programme areas.

The latter is a project targeted to strengthen the disaster response capability of the National Society. Furthermore, it is part of the National Society's Development Plan for the establishment of new Red Cross branches in the affected areas

The project is part of the National Society's effort to address the necessity of a National Disaster Plan to the Office of the National Disaster Co-ordinator and to present itself as a reliable auxiliary to the Government of Guyana.

#### **4. Conclusions:**

Based on the results of the census, the preliminary budget will have to be adjusted to the existing needs. By the end of August 1996, at least three quotes for each item will have been obtained, offers selected and, finally, orders placed.

The supplies provided through the programmes are meant to be supplementary rations taking into account the restricted economic power of the selected beneficiaries during the rehabilitation phase following the floods.

The food assistance shall secure a minimum of 2,200 Kcal per person per day to ever beneficiary over a period of up to 3 months. Only traditional and culturally accepted foods will be provided. To increase the nutritional value of a ration, rice will be combined with lentils. Given the cultural and dietary habits of many of the beneficiaries, a ration will also contain sugar, salt and tea. In order to decrease transport and storage costs and time for delivery, only supplies available locally will be purchased. This will also help to increase support agricultural development.

Rations will also include hygiene articles and every family will be provided with a supplementary mosquito net. Finally small farmers within the beneficiary group will also receive seeds for crops. Amerindian communities will be provided with 60 cassava pans to produce farina which will allow them to conserve their crops long after the operation is finished.

The amount of supplementary seeds for small rice and cash crop farmers will be calculated according to their cultivated lands and suffered losses due to the floods. This will have to be done in close co-ordination with the Ministry of Agriculture taking into account the efforts of the Government to provide these farmers with starting capital and other incentives like tax reduction and mortgages on loans.

An expert in agriculture will be contracted to provide his expertise in the procurement process. He will also provide assistance in determining the amount of seeds and fertilisers needed by the selected farmers.

**5. Budget**

(Attached)

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