

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

PANAMA: FLOODS

DREF Bulletin
no. MDRPA001 and
no. MDRPA002
Update no. 3
29 November 2006

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: 14 November - 28 November 2006.

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

- CHF 67,922 (USD 53,934 or EUR 42,769) allocated from the Federation's DREF on 20 October 2006 to respond to the needs of this operation.
- CHF 69,509 (USD 55,607 or EUR 43,716) was allocated from the Federation's DREF on 27 November to respond to additional needs due to recent flooding since 12 November.
- This operation is expected to be implemented for 4 months, and will be completed by 20 February 2007; a DREF Bulletin Final Report (narrative and financial) will be made available three months after the end of the operation by 20 May 2007. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

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.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- *In Panama: José Béliz, Director General, Red Cross Society of Panama; e-mail: cruzroja@pa.gbnet.cc; Phone (507) 315 189 or 680 3455; fax (507) 315 1401.*
- *In Panama: Stephen McAndrew, Head, Pan American Disaster Response Unit; e-mail Stephen.McAndrew@ifrc.org, phone (507) 316-1001; fax (507) 316-1082.*
- *In Panama, Rubén Romero, Disaster Management Delegate, Pan American Disaster Response Unit; e-mail; Ruben.Romero@ifrc.org; phone (507) 316-1001; fax (507) 316-1082.*
- *In Geneva: Luis Luna, Federation Regional Officer, Americas Department, Geneva; e-mail Luis.Luna@ifrc.org, phone 41-22-730-4274; fax 41-22-733-0395.*

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 \(NGOs\) 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

As of **12 October** torrential rains have been reported in several areas in Panama. Around 1,900 people have been directly affected by flooding and emergency situations resulting from these rains in the regions of Panama East, Panama West (in the province of Panama) and the province of Chiriquí. Authorities have reported landslides and flooding mainly due to overflowing of the Chiriquí Viejo and Chico rivers.

On **11 November**, further heavy rains reported in the province of Panama caused additional flooding and affected some of the previously targeted areas.

The unstable weather conditions have continued and on **19 November** - worsened by a cold front - brought heavier rains to regions that were already saturated with water, causing even more flooding. On 23 November, a National State of Emergency was declared due to flooding in the province of Colón (Costa Abajo), the Kuna Yala indigenous region, the north of the province of Coclé, and the North, West and East of the province of Panama. Up to now, more than 799 homes have been damaged, at least 247 of these completely destroyed due to the floods and strong winds. According to the initial assessments carried out by the National System of Civil Defence (Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil - SINAPROC) –and the Red Cross Society of Panama (RCSP), 11 people have died and around 5,109 people (approximately 1,022 families) have been affected. It is likely that the total number of affected people will rise once assessments are finalized, given that some communities are still isolated because of landslides, collapsed bridges and damaged communication facilities. At least 300 families have been evacuated to temporary shelters in Rio Indio, Colon.



RCSP provides support in rescue and evacuation

Rescue, evacuation and emergency assessments have been coordinated with governmental institutions that are present in the affected areas, such as SINAPROC, the Panama Fire Brigade (Cuerpo de Bomberos de Panamá), the Housing Ministry (Ministerio de Vivienda), Ministry of Social Development (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social), Ministry of Health (Ministerio de Salud), Ministry of Public Works (Ministerio of Obras Públicas), National Maritime Service (Servicio Marítimo Nacional), National Air Service (Servicio Aéreo Nacional), the Office of the First Lady (Despacho de la Primera Dama).

Red Cross action

The Red Cross Society of Panama provided initial response to the emergency – in the three flooding crises - by supporting activities such as rescue and evacuation, first aid care, needs assessments and the provision of immediate relief items in the form of clothing, dry food and hygiene kits.

After assessing the situation arising from the first set of rains, the RCSP decided to prioritize the provision of kitchen sets, hygiene kits, food, water and blankets to **380 beneficiary families**, among the most affected. During the second spate of floods, **50 additional families** were identified as beneficiaries in Pacora and Chepo. After the assessment following the floods caused by the third onset of rains, local Branches from the affected areas have identified **500 additional families** as being the most affected by the recent floods. In order to respond to the new emergency situation, a new DREF request was made and allocated by the Federation on 27 November.

The Red Cross Society of Panama, with the assistance of the Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit, (PADRU) is working to achieve the following objectives:

Objective 1: 930 of the most affected families (approximately 4,650 persons) benefit from the distribution of food and non food items to assist them to recover from the effects of the floods.

With the initial DREF allocation made on 20 October, the Red Cross Society of Panama, with PADRU's support, provided 380 affected families with hygiene kits, kitchen kits, food parcels, water and blankets. Distributions took place on 28 October and 1 - 2 November. A team of water and sanitation experts from the Federation participated in these activities and took the opportunity to evaluate the environmental health situation within the communities with the aim of preparing an environmental health awareness-raising campaign.

In response to the further rains as of 11 November, a team consisting of PADRU's Water and Sanitation officer, PADRU's IT and Telecommunications officer, a Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member and other PADRU staff assisted the RCSP during the needs assessment in Pacora and Chepo. Based on the findings of the assessment it was decided to provide humanitarian assistance to 50 additional families. On 16 November hygiene kits, kitchen sets and blankets were distributed to these families.

As the situation worsened due to continuous heavy rainfall, local Branches identified 500 additional families in the provinces of Colón, Coclé and Panama West. On 26 November - in response to the immediate needs - 250 of these families received a distribution of blankets and food parcels to assist them to cope with the situation. These families, together with the remaining 250 will be receiving additional family food parcels to complement the initial distribution as well as hygiene kits. Distributions will take place in the beginning of December.

Assistance is planned, as follows:

<i>DREF no.</i>	<i>Emergency started on:</i>	<i>Affected provinces</i>	<i>Affected districts</i>	<i>Beneficiary families</i>	<i>Relief items</i>
MDRPA001	12 October	Chiriquí	Rural	234	Hygiene kits, kitchen sets, food parcels, water tanks, blankets
		Panama East	Pacora	50	
		Panama West	Chorrera	96	
Subtotal				380	
MDRPA002	11 November	Panama East	Pacora/ Chepo	50	Hygiene kits, kitchen sets, blankets
	19 November	Colón	Donoso/ Chagres	200	Hygiene kits, food parcels, water tanks, blankets.
		Coclé	Coclé del Norte	150	
		Panama West	Capira	150	
Subtotal				550	
TOTAL				930	

[Click here to go to a map of the affected areas](#)

Objective 2: 380 families benefit from raised awareness in environmental health topics as a result of talks given by Red Cross volunteers during the operation.

During distributions of relief items to the initial 380 families in Chiriquí, Panama East and Panama West, the RCSP was able to assess more accurately the situation and needs of the population. A team made up of a Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member and the water and sanitation officer in PADRU gathered data through interviews and meetings with the population and assessment visits to communities in order to determine the conditions of latrines and water systems. The situation is extremely vulnerable, especially in the affected zones of Chiriquí and Panama East, and an intervention in the form of awareness-raising talks within the population is required. The talks will involve correct handling of water and use of latrines in order to improve the health situation and prevent disease.

With this purpose, an initial training workshop was carried out on 17 – 19 November for a selected group of Red Cross volunteers who will disseminate this knowledge within the communities. The different RCSP departments (health, training, communication and relief) have worked together to develop appropriate material for these workshops. Subjects addressed are: emergency assessment, hygiene promotion at community level, vector control, SPHERE standards and basic concepts in water and sanitation.

Educational and information materials that will be used for awareness-raising talks are now being developed by the RCSP and will be distributed amongst beneficiaries to support and enhance the planned talks.

IT and Telecommunications support

The need for IT and Telecommunications support was assessed in several remote areas of the Colón province. In order to provide the areas with communication resources as quickly as possible the Red Cross Society of Panama and PADRU established an operational telecommunications centre in the Río Indio community in Colón. With the installation of this centre, communication was restored between the provinces of Colón and northern Coclé, and isolated communities have been reached. A telecommunications kit which includes a VHF system and repeaters, an HF system, generators, a laptop, a GPS and satellite phones was sent to the field for this purpose. The Federation's IT and Telecommunications team - supported by ten Red Cross volunteers - have also carried out the following activities:

- In the community of Icacal a VHF repeater was installed to connect the National Society headquarters with 60% of the affected communities.
- Telecommunications assistance has been provided to the health centre in Icacal, which enables the centre to communicate with the ambulance.
- Communication has been established between Río Indio and 13 other riverside communities.
- RCSP is working on an agreement with the government's communications department in the hope of using the government network as well as a radio frequency that connects all provinces on the northern coast of Panama (from Bocas del Toro to Darién).
- It is planned to establish three HF stations in the communities of Río Indio, Miguel de la Borda, and the north of the province of Coclé for the duration of the operation.



Members of SINAPROC and RCSP using the telecommunication system

Communications and coordination

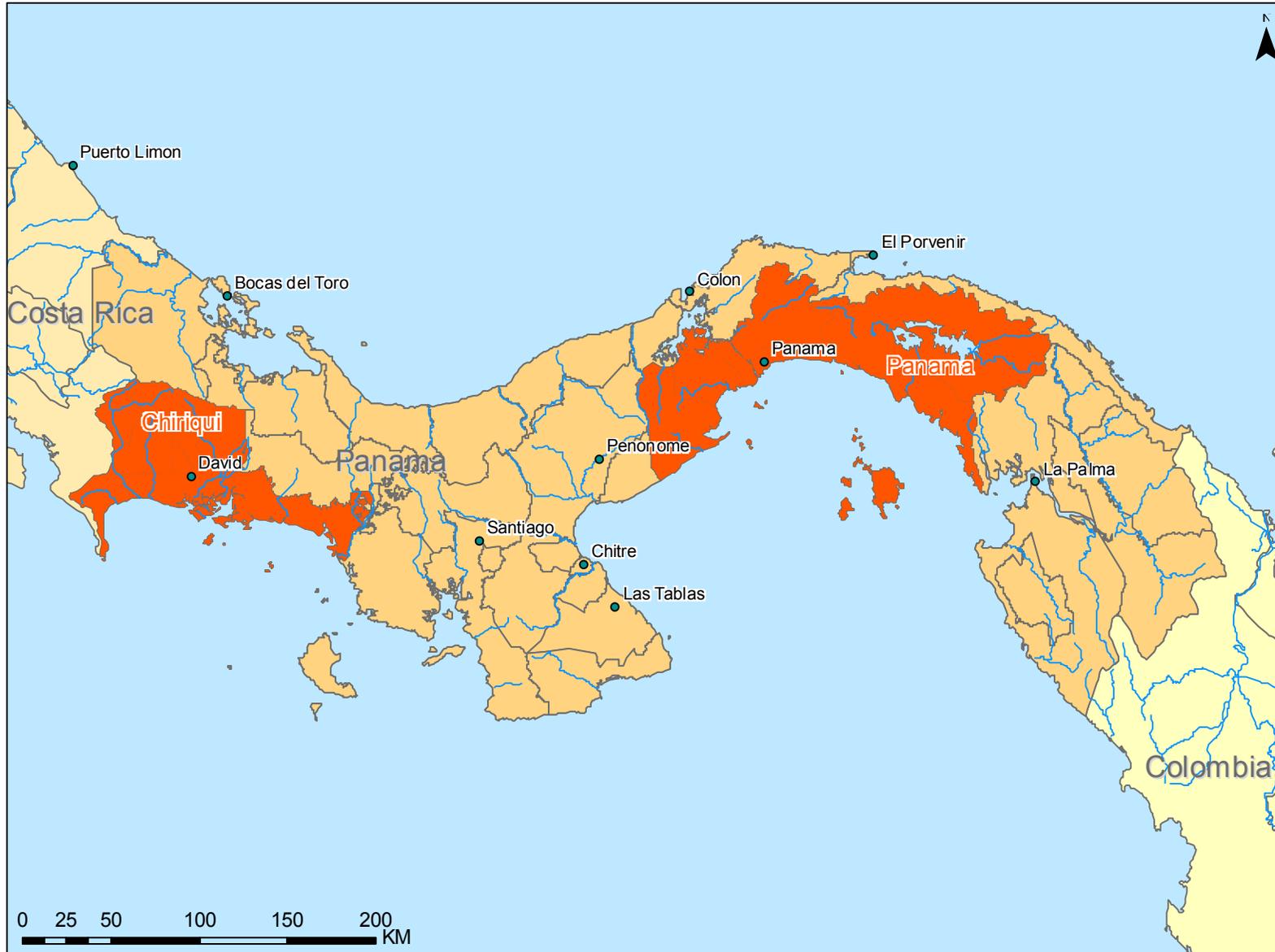
As mentioned above, search, rescue and evacuation activities were coordinated with SINAPROC and the Panama Fire Brigade. Institutions such as the Housing Ministry and the Social Development Ministry, as well as other local authorities were present in the affected areas conducting needs assessments and relocating families to safer areas.

Three reports have been issued through the Disaster Management Information System (DMIS) on the global Federation website. The communications plan has been revised to support the additional activities in response to the flooding and has five main target audiences: the media, the Red Cross Movement, beneficiaries, local authorities and donors. The different channels of communication include national media and the RCSP, the Federation regional and global websites. Special sections were created on the Federation regional website – www.cruzroja.org – as well as on the RCSP website. An additional press release has been issued and distributed to national and local media, and published on the various Red Cross websites. Furthermore, t-shirts and caps with the Red Cross logo have been designed and disseminated among Red Cross volunteers in order to increase visibility.

[Click here to return to the title page or contact information](#)



Panama: Floods



Torrential rains have been reported in several areas in Panama since 12 October. It is estimated that 1,900 people have been directly affected in the regions of Panama East, Panama West and Chiriqui.

 Most affected areas

The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.

Map data sources: ESRI, SALB, Unysis, Federation