



URUGUAY: FLOODS

DREF Bulletin
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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

This DREF Bulletin is being issued based on the situation described below reflecting the information available at this time. 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 in this operation, or to replenish disaster preparedness stocks distributed to the affected population.

This operation is expected to be implemented over 3 months, and will be completed by 10 August, 2007; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 10 November, 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.

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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, Río 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. [\(Click here to view the map\).](#)

According to official figures of the National Emergency System around 11,000 people have been evacuated, although latest estimates report the evacuation of at least 12,000 people. These are the worst floods 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). These figures are likely to rise in the coming days when the flood waters reach low-lying areas. The number of deaths caused by the floods currently stands at two.

Displaced people by municipality (source National Emergency System, 9 May 2007):

Municipality	Displaced adults	Displaced minors	Unregistered (estimation)	TOTAL
Durazno	2,951	2,566	500	6,017
Soriano	640	443	1,900	2,983
Treinta y tres	225	225	1,040	1,490
Cerro Largo	41	35	75	151
Florida	55	60	-	115
Rocha	51	41	-	92
Tacuarembó	16	-	-	16
TOTAL	3,979	3,370	3,515	10,864

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 Council shelters and sports clubs. 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. Of particular concern is the water and sanitation situation in the affected areas, as some 30,000 people currently have no access to clean drinking water. Health problems from waterborne diseases and related infections therefore continue to be a threat to vulnerable communities and have to be prioritized. National authorities from the Health Ministry recommended the adoption of extreme hygiene precautions to avoid transmissible diseases such as leptospirosis, typhus, hepatitis A, diarrhoeas, gastrointestinal- and skin infections.

Weather forecasts indicate that adverse conditions will persist in the region for the coming days. The number of people affected by this flooding is expected to increase further, especially as flood waters reach lower-lying areas.

National Response:

Uruguay: DREF Bulletin no MDRUY001

- The Uruguayan Parliament issued a State of Disaster (Estado de Desastre).
- The Government has allocated a total of US\$ 45 millions to assist the affected population. The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) will allocate US\$ 15 million for this emergency.
- Displaced people are being placed in different shelters, such as stadiums and sport institutions, and basic supplies are being delivered to them. However, due to the high number of affected people and the harsh weather conditions, additional assistance is needed.
- The National Hydro-Geographic department is monitoring the water level, to determine the potential risk of additional flooding in the next days. Drinking water is being delivered by trucks and coordinated by the National Water Company and the Army.
- National Electric Company is providing power, on a priority basis, to institutions such as schools, child centres, hospitals and prisons.
- Local governments are fumigating flooded areas to prevent proliferation of the "aedes aegypti" mosquitoes.
- The Police force is doubling efforts to avoid looting of abandoned houses.

Response from other actors:

- UN system is in contact with the national emergency service to identify possible areas to assist.
- The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has made an emergency cash grant of \$30,000 available to support relief efforts and strengthen the capacity of the National Emergency System. The funds will be used for the purchase of relief supplies and to provide logistical support for national and local authorities.
- The Government has requested the deployment of an UNDAC team to support the authorities, UN system and the humanitarian community in Uruguay.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Uruguayan Red Cross (URC) immediately mobilized four Regional Intervention Team (RIT) members to support the emergency operation. In addition, the URC, through its National Disaster Relief department, immediately 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.

The immediate needs determined by the local branches of the URC, are the following:

- Children's shoes.
- Clothing
- Blankets
- Mattresses
- Diapers for children and the elderly
- Hygiene products (towels, soaps, disinfectants)

The URC headquarters remains in close contact with the affected local branches in order to exchange information and provide support. The URC launched a local appeal and private donations were distributed from the National Headquarters amongst the affected local branches. The URC president, General Secretary and volunteers will visit the affected areas within the coming days as soon as roads will be more accessible.

Coordination and communication

The URC is in close coordination with the National System of Emergency in order to exchange information about the emergency situation and coordinate relief activities in order to avoid the duplication of efforts.

Coordination meetings are taking place between the Red Cross Movement and other actors involved such as OCHA, UN agencies and other NGO's in order to exchange information and coordinate humanitarian relief activities.

Uruguay: DREF Bulletin no MDRUY001

From the onset of the emergency the URC has been in close contact with the Federation's Regional Delegation in Lima and the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU). PADRU has deployed a Disaster Management Officer to the affected area to support the National Society in carrying out need assessments, identifying the immediate needs and formulating a Plan of Action.

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, interviews with national media took place in order to increase awareness on the mission of the URC and the activities undertaken by the Red Cross in general.

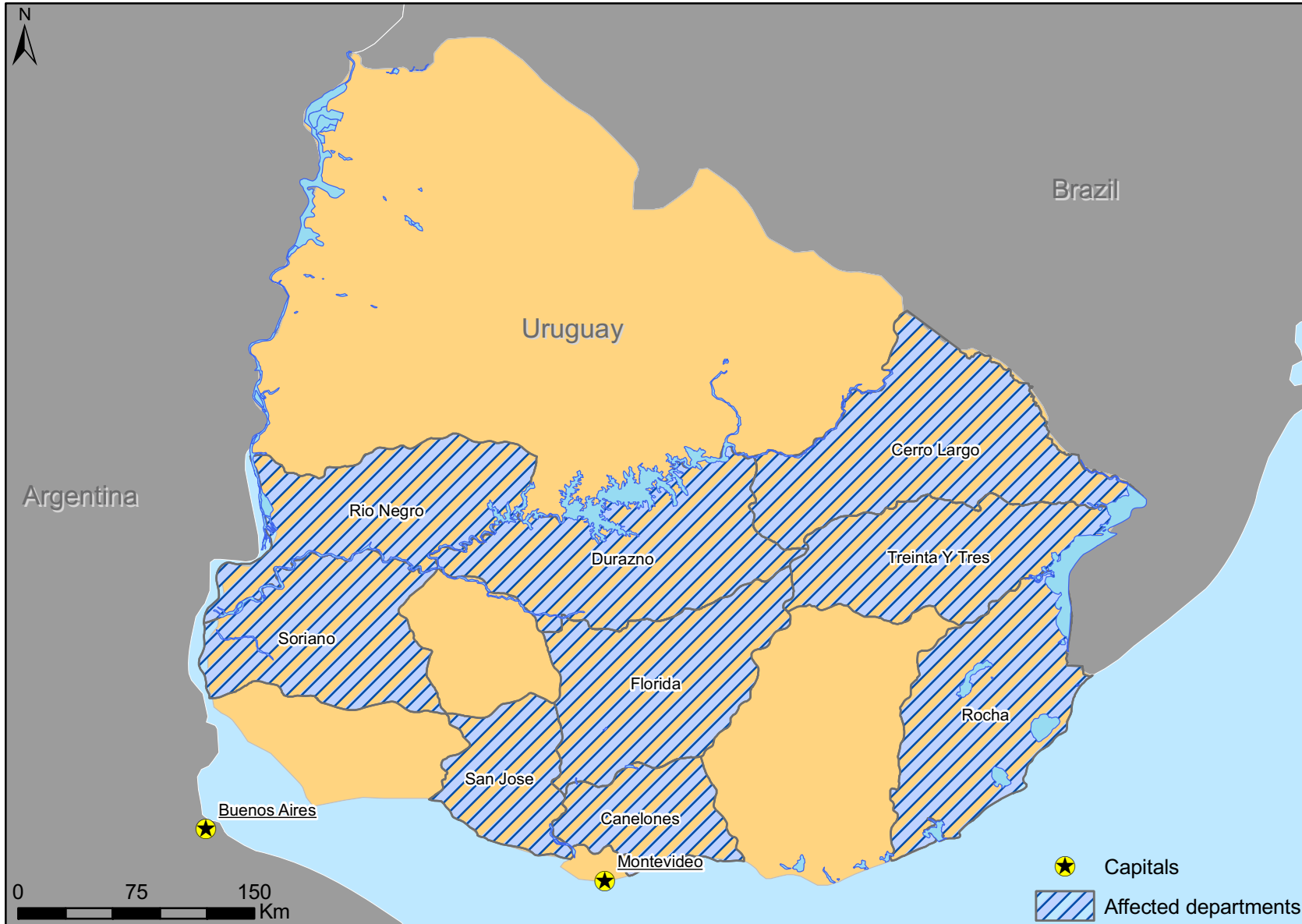
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Appendix:

Map of affected areas in Uruguay



Uruguay: Floods



Uruguay has been hit with the worst flooding to affect it in many years. Currently, the government is reporting that close to 110,000 persons are affected, with approximately 12,000 evacuated. Nine states (departamentos) are affected by heavy flooding in the country.

The Uruguay Red Cross (URC) has requested assistance from the Federation for the flooding response. The Uruguay has mobilized the 4 RIT members of the URC. Others RIT members are on stand-by. PADRU has responded by deploying a disaster manager. He will work to finalize a plan of action, and also serve to provide technical support to the URC in the area of assessment and plan development

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

Map data sources: ESRI, GEOCOMM, Federation