



COLOMBIA: 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: 17 August to 15 October 2007.

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

- CHF 172,000 was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 17 August, 2007 to respond to the needs of this operation.
- This operation is expected to be implemented for 3 months, and will be completed by 17 November, 2007; a DREF Bulletin Final Report (narrative and financial) will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 17 February, 2008).

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

Since March 2007, the annual rainy season has caused major floods and landslides affecting 28 of the 32 departments in Colombia, the most affected areas being the departments of Córdoba, Chocó, Bolívar, Sucre and Magdalena.

The Colombian Government has informed that the current rainy season is one of the strongest that has affected the country in the last decade. According to official figures, the severe rains have affected 443,000 people, left 57 dead, 102 persons missing and also resulted in at least 11,000 significantly damaged houses.

In department of Cordoba on the north Atlantic coast, the overflow of the San Jose and Sinu rivers and their tributaries has led to the flooding of 19 municipalities. The government, through the local authorities, declared a Red Alert (Decree 423 from 11 July 2007) to evacuate people from the riverside areas along the Sinú and San Jorge rivers.

Figures of affected families in the Cordoba department at 30 September, Colombian Red Cross:

Affected municipalities	Number of families affected	Number of people affected
Montería	1,175	5,875
Cereté	730	3,650
Chimá	1,140	5,700
San Pelayo	1,290	6,450
Cotorra	1,993	9,965
Lorica	5,174	25,870
Momil	871	4,355
Buena vista	839	4,195
La Apartada	300	1,500
Canalete	595	2,975
Purísima	363	1,815
Ayapel	239	1,195
San Bernardo del Viento	1,599	7,995
Puerto Libertador	595	2,975
Valencia	141	705
Ciénaga de Oro	595	2,975
Tierra Alta	178	890
Puerto Libertador	350	1,750
Total	18,167	90,835

A number of those gravely affected have relocated to temporary shelters which have been set up in schools and warehouses; others have sought shelter at friends and relatives' homes. A total of 113 temporary shelters in the department of Cordoba are currently housing 1,075 families (5,375 people). The prevalence of illnesses, such as

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acute diarrhoea, respiratory infections and dengue, has increased, all related to contaminated water as a result of the floods.

Roads in rural areas were damaged which has made it difficult to access affected areas and for medical attention to get through to those who need it. Thousands of crops and livestock have been destroyed or lost with the floods, thereby considerably affecting people's livelihoods.

According to local authorities, the restoration of the livelihoods of thousands of families whose land has been damaged by the floods and the provision of healthcare and sanitation in preventing the spread of waterborne diseases are the most urgent needs. The Colombian government is acting on a number of levels to respond to the situation:

- The National Agency for Disaster Prevention and Response (Dirección de Prevención y Atención de Desastres – DPAD) delivered food and non-food items to approximately 16,000 families in coordination with the institutions joined under the National System for Disasters' Prevention and Response (Sistema Nacional de Prevención y Atención de Desastres, SNPAD). These agencies have so far carried out water and sanitation activities and provided transportation for relief goods. In addition, an allocation of USD 17 million was made in order to carry out medical assistance.
- The Ministry of Agriculture is coordinating a survey on affected agricultural sectors and will in turn provide assistance to agricultural producers through subsidies and by granting low interest loans through an agricultural bank.
- In coordination with the Ministry of Environment and Housing, the autonomous authorities of Sinú and San Jorge Valley (Corporación Autónoma Regional de los Valles del Sinú y del San Jorge) have started recovery activities in affected areas and are also subsidizing housing leases for a three month period to families who have lost everything. After this period the Ministry will provide these families with construction materials so they can rebuild their homes. The Ministry of Environment and Housing assigned 3,000 million pesos (USD 1.5 million) to reconstruct damaged houses in the departments of Antioquia and Bolívar.
- The Colombian Institute for Family Care (Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar - ICBF) provided psychosocial support to children of five years or younger, pregnant and nursing women in temporary shelters.
- The police and the Colombian Armed Forces supported aerial supervision of the affected regions, food distributions and initial recovery efforts in the most affected areas along the rivers.

Preparation for the next rainy season, which is expected in a few months time, is also a priority and authorities have dredged (deepened and widened) the Sinú River in the department of Córdoba.

The Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) and the Civil Defence supported the initial evacuation activities as well as the management of temporary shelters. Nearly 113 temporary shelters were installed in seven of the affected municipalities (some of them were also damaged by floods). According to ICBF, shelters lack adequate sanitary conditions.

Floods in the northern department of Córdoba have damaged homes, land and affected thousands of people.

Source: International Federation



The United Nations (UN) response mechanisms were activated in order to mobilize resources and support national relief efforts. With the UN Central Emergency Response Funds (CERF) funds, the World Food Programme (WFP) will provide emergency food assistance for 90 days to some 30,000 people in La Mojana and 25,000 people in the department of Córdoba. This assistance will ensure food security through the provision of rice, pulses, vegetable oil and sugar. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has set up a water and sanitation programme supporting

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over 27,000 people in villages in the department of Córdoba. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has installed 33 shelter modules to assist 68,700 people from the flooded areas in La Mojana region.

The European Commission through the Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) has allocated EUR 1 million to provide assistance to those affected by the floods, by addressing immediate needs of up to 45,000 people of the population in the northwest of the country.

Several other international organizations such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Action Against Hunger (AAH), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and Oxfam, have been working and supporting national and local authorities in various relief activities such as food security, water and sanitation and shelter.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

From the onset of the emergency the CRCS has responded to assist thousands of families affected by the floods across the country. This has been possible with support of the Colombian community, the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation, and private companies such as Quala SA and Kellogs Colombia.

Thanks to these donations the CRCS was able to initially assist 6,000 families (approximately 30,000 people) with the provision of food and non food items: food packages, family hygiene kits, kitchen kits and a set of dishes. The families also received sets with three of each of the following items: sheets, mattresses, hammocks, mosquito nets and blankets for warm and cold weather. UNICEF further supported with water and sanitation activities which have been coordinated by the CRCS.

Since the onset of the emergency the Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) has carried out the following activities to assist families affected by the floods:

- Activation of the contingency plans and setting up crisis rooms in the national disaster office.
- Evaluations of affected areas have been carried out.
- Provision of technical assistance in administrating temporary shelters to local committees in the affected areas.
- Provision of 59,818 people in shelters with drinking water, with funds from Oxfam.
- Provision of warehouses to store relief items in several municipalities.
- Provision of psychosocial support and promotion of preventive health and sanitation measures in the department of Sucre through the use of Mobile Medical Units (with the support of American Red Cross) assisting 1,463 people.
- Three immediate response teams performed water and sanitation activities and distributed a total of 607,100 litres of water (with the support of the Ministry of Social Protection, French Red Cross and Netherlands Red Cross) reaching communities in the department of Sucre.
- Installed HF and VHF communication in most affected zones to facilitate communication and coordination.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is providing telecommunication and logistical support, by supplying a boat and an all terrain vehicle to attend the emergency.

A complementary CRCS Plan of Action (PoA) was set up to provide another 4,000 affected families from several communities in the department of Cordoba with relief support for a period of three months. The allocated Disaster Relief Emergency Funding (DREF) is covering 1,000 of these families needs (approximately 5,000 people) and is focusing on three main specific activities: logistical support, healthcare and the distribution of food and non-food items.

Thanks to CERF funds, water and sanitation activities are being implemented parallel with the CRCS in coordination with Oxfam to provide safe drinking water and sanitation and health preventive measures for 2,100 affected families in four municipalities of the department of Cordoba.

All activities to date have been carried out with the active participation of volunteers and staff from the CRCS branches; the logistics and telecommunications network and with managerial and technical support from the CRCS

national headquarters. A Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member from Bolivia was sent to support the CRCS with coordination and relief activities.

The proposed operation

Relief

Objective 1: 1,000 families (approximately 5,000 persons) affected by floods will benefit from the provision of food and non-food relief items during the emergency phase as part of the CRCS overall activities targeting 4,000 families.

Evaluations of the affected areas were carried out in the initial phase, and censuses were carried out amongst affected communities in the municipalities of San Bernardo and Lorico in the department of Cordoba to identify families who were to receive relief items. These families were selected on the basis of those most affected by the floods, the community and social context they live in, taking into account the particular vulnerability of those displaced by the armed conflict, respect for the culture of the beneficiaries, and ensuring gender sensitivity. This selection was coordinated with SNPAD.

Distributions of food and non-food items including food packages, family hygiene kits, kitchen kits, sets of dishes, sheets, mattresses, hammocks and mosquito nets were distributed on 21, 22 and 23 September, as follows:

Municipality of San Bernardo	Number of families	Food parcels	Plastic Sheeting	Mattresses
Caño Grande	174	174	174	174
Las Vegas	130	130	130	130
Caño Loco	14	14	14	14
Bonanza	39	39	39	39
Las Cañas	56	56	56	56
Isla Queso	35	35	35	35
Río Ciego	52	52	52	52
Total	500 families	500	500	500

Municipality of Lorico	Number of families	Food parcels	Plastic Sheeting	Mattresses
Garavito	26	26	26	26
Remolino	9	9	9	9
Palo de Agua	215	215	215	215
Recula	125	125	125	125
Rodeito	125	125	125	125

Total	500 families	500	500	500
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Some areas were reached by boat, as the flood waters remained high. The content of the distributed food parcel and relief items were based on Sphere Standards. The Federation's logistics procedures and Code of Conduct in disaster relief were also taken into consideration.



Left: CRCS volunteers loading relief items onto boats to reach communities who were severely affected by the floods. **Right:** Distributions being carried out in San Bernardo, department of Cordoba.
Source: International Federation

Health

Objective 1: 1,000 families (5,000 beneficiaries) will benefit from medical care provided by the Mobile Health Unit, in order to improve health conditions within the affected communities.

To date, CRCS volunteers with support from the Ministry of Health and the Municipality of San Bernardo provided 254 families with medical assistance.

More medical assistance has been provided to the department of Cordoba during the month of October through the CRCS Mobile Health Units as follows:

- 6, 7, 8 October: San Bernardo del Viento Municipality
- 9, 10, 11 October: Lorica Municipality
- 13 and 14 October: Ciénega de Oro Municipality

CRSC volunteers with experience in healthcare will continue to provide first aid and medical care to the affected communities.

Objective 2: 1,000 families (5,000 beneficiaries) will benefit from community-based psychosocial support.

CRCS volunteers are providing the most affected people, especially women and children with psychosocial support through specially designed workshops.

Coordination

The CRCS headquarters and the National Society's National Relief department are in constant contact with CRCS branches in the affected areas, consolidating information from Red Cross, national and departmental authorities and other humanitarian actors.

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The CRCS is closely coordinating with the National Directorate for Disasters Prevention and Response (DPAD) and SNPAD on a national, departmental and local level, in order to coordinate humanitarian relief and avoid the duplication of efforts.

In addition, the CRCS is in close coordination with the UN System, which maintains permanent contact through UNETE and the CRCS National Directorate in order to monitor the situation.

In terms of Partner National Societies (PNS), the CRCS is working closely together with the American Red Cross, French Red Cross and Netherlands Red Cross representatives in Colombia.

Through the mobilisation of a RIT member, the Federation has been providing support to the National Society in coordination activities and through technical advice.

The Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), the Regional Representation Office for South America and the Federation Representative in Colombia are constantly monitoring the evolution of the emergency and are providing ongoing support to the CRCS.

Communication

The CRCS has launched a mass media campaign throughout the country to raise awareness about the situation, promote the actions being carried out by the CRCS and also to continue to raise funds to assist those affected. Within the campaign a number of press releases have been issued and the CRCS, coordinated with the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the organisation of a concert that was held in August 2007.

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