

OCHA Situation Report No.1- Uruguay Floods

This situation report is based on information received from UN Agencies and Government in Uruguay.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

1. Uruguay is suffering one of its worst floods since 1959. The damage caused by this year's unusually prolonged floods is very extensive. Over 110,000 people have been affected, mostly poor and vulnerable groups (children, women and elderly). Some 12,000 people have been evacuated. These figures are likely to rise in the coming hours when the flood waters reach low-lying areas (the number of dead currently stands at two). Thousands of people abandoned their homes as torrential downpours virtually paralysed the country. Floods blocked roads and caused traffic chaos.

2. The Government has officially requested the assistance of the United Nations to support the relief efforts and further strengthen the National Emergency System capacities. The President is visiting the affected areas tomorrow.

3. The floods caused severe damage to public infrastructure including roads, water supply, sewerage, drainage, power and telephone lines, housing, agriculture and municipal buildings, particularly schools and health care facilities. A damage assessment is currently underway. Emergency needs are being addressed and public services slowly restored. Hepatitis and gastrointestinal infection cases may appear in zones with no access to safe drinking water. 30,000 people have currently no access to safe water.

4. 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.

5. In Durazno, the Yi River has flooded the greatest part of the provincial capital. The river is currently 14 meters above its average level. The city is facing a serious shortage of running water as the supply pumps, which belong to the state company OSE, have also been flooded.

6. Thousands of houses have been totally or partially damaged, with a large number of them totally destroyed, as well as rural roads and bridges. 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.

7. Health problems from waterborne diseases and related infections continue to be a threat to vulnerable communities and have to be prioritised. National authorities from the Health Ministry recommended the adoption of extreme hygiene precautions to avoid transmissible diseases such as typhus, hepatitis A, and diarrhoeas and skin infections.

8. Highway Police reported that many national highways were cut off and many local roads remain closed because of river stream levels.

9. Power and communication lines have also been severely affected and this, in turn, has disrupted road transport and communications, seriously hampering relief efforts.

10. The estimation about the losses on agriculture production and livestock amount to millions of dollars.

11. Weather forecasts indicate that adverse climate conditions will persist in the region for the next few days. This situation is of great concern rendering the situation even more difficult for the people in distress.

Displaced people by municipality (souse National Emergency System)

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

NATIONAL RESPONSE

12. The Parliament issued a State of Disaster (Estado de Desastre).

13. The Government has allocated a total of US\$ 45 millions to assist the population affected. The Inter- American Development Bank (IADB) will allocate US\$ 15 millions for this emergency.

14. Displaced people are being placed in different shelters, such as stadiums and sport institutions. Basic supplies are being delivered to them, although due to the high number of affected people and the harsh weather conditions, additional assistance is needed.

15. 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.

16. National Electric Company is providing power, on a priority basis, to institutions such as schools, child centers, hospitals and prisons.

17. Local governments are fumigating flooded areas to prevent proliferation of the "aedes aegypti" mosquitoes.

18. The Police force is doubling efforts to avoid looting of abandoned houses.

COORDINATION

19. UN system is in contact with the national emergency service to identify possible areas to assist. 20. OCHA has approved an emergency cash grant for US\$ 30.000 for the local purchase of relief supplies

21. The IFCR is mobilizing a disaster management delegate to evaluate the situation.

22. The Government has requested the deployment of an UNDAC team to support the authorities, UN system and the humanitarian community in Uruguay.

NEED FOR ASSISTANCE

23. Based on preliminary estimations, and depending on the official needs assessment made by the authorities, the UN has identified the following priorities:

- Provision of humanitarian relief to the poorest and most vulnerable people displaced by the flooding (food, basic relief items such as blankets, mattresses, etc)
- Provision of sanitary products to avoid disease proliferation (chlorine, soap, brooms and cleaning equipment)
- Transportation of relief items to affected localities

This situation report, together with additional information on the current crisis is also available on <http://www.reliefweb.int>