



Situation Report 2 – URUGUAY FLOODS – 18 MAY 2007

SITUATION OVERVIEW

1. The damage caused by this year's unusually heavy rains and the resulting flooding have affected nine departments. Heavy precipitation has caused the Rio Negro and Rio Yi to overflow their banks flooded many municipalities of the Department of Treinta y Tres. Over 110,000 people have been affected, most of them children, women and elderly living in poor communities. The short term weather forecast is favorable, with no significant amount of rain in the affected zone.

2. More than 12,000 people have been evacuated to Council shelters, sports clubs, and schools. Most of the evacuations took place in poor and populated districts. The Departments of Durazno, Soriano and Treinta y Tres have been the most affected with approximately 9,000 people displaced. However, river levels have gone down significantly, especially in Treinta y Tres and Durazno, allowing the displaced persons to return home. In the City of Mercedes, Soriano Department, flood waters have been slower to recede. According to the National Emergency System, the total number of displaced persons stands at 6,113 as compared to 7,214 on the 15th of May.

3. Thousands of houses have been totally or partially damaged. Damage assessments are still being carried out and detailed household surveys are being conducted by the Ministry of Housing teams. Evacuees returning home, face a very difficult situation as many have lost their few household goods, their micro businesses assets and income for family business, not to mention that many houses are contaminated.

4. The authorities have been able to re-establish basic public services in all of the affected areas including water supply, electricity, telecommunications, and in most cases the sewage systems. Damage to infrastructure is still

being assessed; in the Department of Treinta y Tres, rural and secondary roads and bridges will need repair.

5. Based on an assessment of the National Public Education Administration, forty schools were affected. In Durazno, children have returned to classes although there is a need for school supplies and materials. In the urban areas of Treinta y Tres, classes have also resumed, while four rural schools are still closed.

7. In all of the flooded communities, waste and dead animals – particularly rats - represent a health risk. Though there has been little or no reported increase in health problems, contamination means that waterborne diseases and related infections continue to be a threat to vulnerable communities. The Health Ministry recommended the adoption of hygiene precautions to avoid communicable diseases such as typhoid, hepatitis A, diarrhea and skin infections.

8. In the department of Treinta y Tres, large parts of agricultural land were flooded, but crop losses are not extensive as a large percentage of the rice and sorghum harvests in Treinta y Tres and Soya in Soriano and Durazno had been completed. In areas where crop losses have occurred, the farms are generally large scale and able to absorb the effect. While there has also been little loss of livestock, there is concern for livestock feeding in the medium term due to damage to pastures.

NATIONAL RESPONSE

9. On May 9th, the Parliament declared a State of Disaster and applied legal measures including the possible use of 1% of the national budget (up to \$45 million), the use of the International Development Bank funds for cooperation with departmental governments (\$15 million) and the acceptance of international assistance.

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10. On May 10th, the government requested assistance from the United Nations including the deployment of a UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) mission. The Government requested the assistance to support the coordination and information efforts and further strengthen the National Emergency System capacities.

11. Many national organizations are involved in the response: the Uruguayan Red Cross, the Scouts, YMCA, churches, the Universidad de la Republica (UDELAR), Federacion de Estudiantes Universitarios y Partido Independiente de los Trabajadores, DHL. The Direccion General Impositiva and some institutions such as the Banco de Prevencion Social are working to extend payment deadlines for loans in support of small businesses.

12. The Administracion de Ferrocarriles del Estado (rail administration) has shipped 200 tones of relief items to the affected areas. No damage has been reported to rail lines. The Uruguayan Armed Forces provided evacuation, transport of relief items -including water- and are continuing to prepare 4,000 meals in Durazno. The food is provided by the Instituto Nacional de Alimentacion (INDA-National Food Institute).

13. The Sanitation State Department has helped communities in the collection of garbage and the control of infectious vectors as the water recedes. There is still however a need for decontamination of houses and disposal of vectors and garbage. Local governments and committees are also involved, including disposal of dead animals, in particular rodents. Public health and sanitation awareness campaigns are ongoing.

14. The National Hydro-Geographic department continues to monitor the water levels to determine the potential risk of additional flooding in the next days. The National Electric Company has restored power supply and is concluding assessments and repairs.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

15. The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies mobilized a Disaster Management Officer and Regional Intervention Team members. An emergency donation of \$100,000 has been allocated to support the Uruguayan Red Cross, as well as the provision of kitchen kits, fuel, and psychosocial support. Psycho-social support will be provided in coordination with the Universidad Catolica.

16. The World Society for the Protection of Animals has deployed a technical advisor and is conducting field evaluations of the impact of the disaster on animal husbandry. It has identified medium term needs for animal feeding.

17. The United Nations System has provided local teams and international teams of experts, as well as immediate support through the provision of cash and items, including:

- \$100,000 for response and recovery from UNDP and an early recovery expert;
- \$50,000 from the UN Fund for Population;
- UNICEF is providing blankets, diapers, hygiene products, mattresses, school supplies, and psycho social support;
- Technical support for agricultural assessment from FAO;
- Support to the Ministry of Health in monitoring and response from PAHO;
- Expert field visits by UNICEF, UNFPA, FAO;
- Support of the OCHA Regional Disaster Response Advisor as well as a Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team and an OCHA emergency grant of \$30,000 for the local purchase of immediate relief needs;
- WFP has provided a logistics expert as part of the UNDAC team to assist in evaluation of the humanitarian assistance supply chain.

18. Other international donations include:

- USAID provided \$50,000 in immediate assistance;
- The government of Japan provided \$90,000 worth of in-kind donations;
- The government China has also provided bilateral assistance and;
- The Inter American Development Bank has made \$15 million available.

19. The Cascos Blancos (White Helmets) deployed a team of three people accompanying a donation of 1,000 blankets from the government of Argentina. They are providing training in LSS SUMA and coordinating with OPS and FundaSUMA. They are working in Durazno and Montevideo and have trained twelve people so far.

COORDINATION

20. The National Emergency System (SNE) is in charge of the operational coordination at the national level under the leadership of the Secretary of the Presidency. At departmental level, the office of the *Intendencia* (governor) assumes the principal coordination role. Sectoral working groups have been identified and will be activated by the National Emergency System (SNE) with the support of the UN System and other actors in order to further strengthen coordination.

21. The UN Country Team has been working to ensure inter-agency coordination through updates and regular meetings, and is providing ongoing contact and coordination with relevant ministries, national and departmental authorities, and national emergency services. Coordination is proceeding well. The UNDAC team has established a Coordination Centre in the offices of UNDP. The IFRC and the Uruguayan Red Cross have been actively engaged in assessments and coordination with the UN and national actors.

ASSISTANCE REQUESTED

22. The majority of immediate emergency needs have been addressed through the national and departmental emergency structures and also from the large amount of national solidarity and international donations.

23. In the housing sector, approximately 200 homes will need to be rebuilt. Temporary housing is a critical need, in addition to decontamination, the replacement of basic household goods, and furniture for up to 3,000 homes, particularly mattresses and bedding.

24. In the water and sanitation sector, control and disposal of vectors, public awareness and education campaigns should be continued and strengthened. In the health sector, constant monitoring is required. The primary needs identified are for psychosocial support for affected families and in particular children.

25. In the education sector, didactic materials for approximately forty schools and educational supplies for children of affected families are needed. In Durazno, Unicef indicated that 2,500 school kits are required. Estimates for Soriano and Treinta y Tres will increase these needs.

26. In the livelihood and recovery sector, losses of tools for micro businesses are reported in all affected areas

and support with cash grants or credits to reestablish economic activities is required. Initial estimates suggest that approximately 100 small businesses in Treinta y Tres and Durazno require assistance. Assessments in Mercedes are ongoing.

27. On the infrastructure front, secondary road repairs will be required. Estimates will be finalized once the water has receded in all areas. At present, it appears that secondary roads, primarily in Treinta y Tres but also to a more limited extent in the other areas, will require cleaning and rehabilitation.

28. In the agricultural sector, assessments are ongoing. Treinta y Tres will require provision of feeding for cattle within 1-2 months and possibly for some small scale replacement of animals and seeds.

29. Recovery planning should include efforts to address risks, reducing vulnerabilities and increasing capacities. Actions needed include the establishment (or completion) of Departmental Coordination Centers, creation of a greater national coordination capacity, the mapping of risks, overall strengthening of coordination, contingency planning and building of response capacity within the departmental and national structures. OCHA continues to closely monitor the situation.