



**Friday, 16 December, 2011**

## **PAHO/WHO EOC SITUATION REPORT**

### **Colombia**

#### **Second rainy season**

The second rainy season in Colombia has already affected 81,247 people, caused 148 deaths, injured 130 people and destroyed 1,138 houses since 1 September. The greatest impacts were caused by landslides and floods. A landslide buried 15 people in the town of Las Cruces in the Nariño Department.

The IDEAM and other international meteorological centers predict that the rains will continue through December and the first quarter of 2012, due to conditions similar to La Niña. This will keep the risk of landslides at moderate to high levels in unstable areas of the Santanderes, Caldas, Antioquia, Tolima, Huila, Cauca, Boyaca, Quindío, Risaralda, Cundinamarca, and Nariño (11 Departments out of 32 in the country).

Capital cities in three departments have problems in drinking water supplies. Cucuta has limited drinking water due to preventive closure of the gate of the aqueduct after the oil spill in the Pamplonita River. Landslides caused damage to water systems in Riohacha and Manizales. In all three cities, the water supply is partially reinforced by tank trucks.

#### **Oil Spill in Pamplonita**

On 12 December, after the oil spill on Iscala creek in the Caño Limon-Coveñas that drains into the river Pamplonita, the aqueduct which supplies water to 70% of the population of Cucuta (612,273 inhabitants) were closed. Four private water systems were also closed in the municipality of Patios, bringing the total population affected to about 700,000 people. The department declared environmental and health emergency; and activated contingency plans involving the departmental institutions.

The oil company Ecopetrol made efforts to collect oil and clean the affected areas at control points. The oil slick has been controlled in the town of Puerto de Santander located 43 miles from the spill source. They have taken water samples in the aqueduct to monitor phenols and fats, which are analyzed in the laboratory of Barranquilla. Results are still pending.

Risks endangering public health include those derived by contamination of water sources by the oil spill, as well as those caused by limited potable water services. Alteration of hygiene and water use such as

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managing stored water can lead to increased diarrhea and vector-borne diseases.

Departmental health authorities have implemented its contingency plan in the network of services to optimize water delivery in the health units, especially in the Meoz Erasmus University Hospital. Water is currently supplied by tank trucks to the hospital, other health units and prisons. A network of 32 water supply points was established to provide water to the population. The quality of water supply is being constantly monitored through surveillance for water supplies and pathologies associated with the event. Communication and outreach activities are being carried out, but resources are needed to intensify the campaign.

The emphasis on emergency management has been given to control the spill and restoration of regular supply by the Ecopetrol oil and Aguas Kapital Cucuta, a local water supply company.

Public health challenges for the local health authorities are to conduct water quality surveillance in the



**Source: CRUE Norte de Santander**

source, wells and delivery points of transportation and disposal. There must also be strengthened epidemiological surveillance, support for hospital emergency plans, implementation of a structured communication plan and education to control outbreaks by promoting hygiene, water use, and proper food preparation.

It requires an integrated plan aimed at maintaining the health of the population that incorporates health sectors of other agencies and NGOs in the midst of the crisis. Preventive measures will be adopted by the community and agencies involved to prevent further damage in the affected watershed, including adequate protective measures for workers involved in cleanup.

PAHO / WHO participated in evaluation of the public health in coordination with health officials in Cucuta. Field team will be sent to Cucuta to support in water, sanitation, environment, coordination and communication.

### **Flooding in Bogotá**

The Bogotá River overflow caused floods with contaminated water from the sewage system in the capital and its neighborhoods of Bosa, Kennedy, Fontibon and Engativá, affecting at least 45,202 people. Authorities declared red alert across the city. Local authorities worked to reduce flood levels which were facilitated by improved weather conditions. Further rain is expected at levels higher than normal for this time of year. In order to prevent shelter formation, local authorities established financial assistance to facilitate the relocation of affected families and began cleanup in areas that are underwater.

Health response will be strengthened to implement immunization against Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Measles,

Rubella and Influenza. Response also includes psychosocial care to the victims, establishment of medical care units operated by Red Cross and ambulances for rapid access. The health authority will control and monitor water and food delivered to community soup kitchens operated by the district administration and the community. Potable water is supplied by tank trucks and plastic bags.

PAHO / WHO and the district health authorities have assessed the affected areas in coordination with the Bureau of Land Management and Emergency and Disaster Management Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

### **Timbiquí displacement, Department of Cauca**

82 families from the Cuerval community in the municipality of Timbiquí (Cauca) were displaced on 8 December as a result of repeated threats from illegal armed groups. The 347 displaced people are housed in the Municipal Coliseum. Ministry of Health and Guapi Cauca municipal authority coordinated to implement health activities and assess sanitation conditions, in coordination with the health insurance companies providing services in Colombia. 9 other people moved to the town of Timbiquí to stay with relatives.

### **Ecuador**

The latest report from the National Seismology and Volcanology reported a decrease in the activity of the Tungurahua volcano since 9 December. Kits that include food, personal hygiene items have been distributed to families affected by ash in the provinces of Tungurahua and Chimborazo.

The Ministry of Health and the Province of Tungurahua and Chimborazo activated medical teams and implemented contingency plans for the event. Health units operated for 24 hours during critical days. The rapid response team from the Provincial Directorate of Health and the Chimborazo Emergency Operations Center toured the areas surrounding the volcano and verified the state of health units which operated normally. There were no casualties due to the event.

Needs were covered by local resources.