



CARE's Emergency Response to the Flood Disaster in Bolivia



Andrea, who lost her home during the ongoing floods in Bolivia, lives in a shelter in San Julian. Like many men in the community, her husband has gone away to work. Ideally, men would stay with their families but the harvest season offers a chance to earn some money. Andrea cannot join her husband, but instead must stay to take care of their children. She worries about where the children are and about their safety. She awakes at every noise, and worries about her family's future, where they will live, how they will rebuild after the disaster.

March 24, 2006

Introduction

Flooding, hail, snow and heavy frosts during the first three months of 2006 created a humanitarian emergency in eight of Bolivia's nine departments. The impact on the country has been severe: more than 220,000¹ people have been affected in some way. Families have been displaced, homes, crops, animals and infrastructure lost, and thousands of people now find themselves in a critical situation with regard to basic humanitarian conditions, food and

¹ Figures published by the Bolivian Civil Defense.

livelihood security. Two of the worst affected departments are Santa Cruz in the eastern lowlands and Pando in the northern Amazon basin.

Current Situation



The shaded areas represent two of Bolivia's departments that were badly affected by the recent floods: Pando in the north and Santa Cruz in the east.

In **Santa Cruz** department, an estimated 30,000 people have been affected, including 18,000 who have been displaced by widespread flooding and who are living in temporary camps. The main river, the Rio Grande, has changed its course and in some places moved 19 miles from its original path. Floods currently cover an area approximately 81 miles long and 31 miles wide, and waters have been slow to recede. The flooding is the worst in this area in over 60 years.

The most significant needs in Santa Cruz are in the municipality of **San Julian**, where an estimated 1,200 families (approximately 7,200 people) are staying in camps or with host families. CARE has constructed emergency shelters for approximately 800 families in eight camps. Due to a

lack of resources, CARE has been able to offer only limited assistance to displaced families, and the conditions they are living in are currently well below humanitarian standards, particularly in camps. It will be at least three months before families can return to their communities, although realistically it is likely to be up to eight months. Many families will be unable to return to their original land because of changes in the river's course and land losses. The table shown below summarizes the highest priorities in the community of San Julian.

Summary of Priorities in San Julian

Sector	Key Gaps
Health and Social Services	Very limited, basic health care is available through local clinics. Need for health education and preventative care, disease surveillance, psychosocial programs, sexual health education, protection from abuse and exploitation and prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections.
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	Water and sanitation infrastructure improvements are nearing completion. Access to hygiene products is limited despite a one-time distribution. Need for improved drainage at camps, ongoing maintenance, consumables and hygiene education.
Food Security and Nutrition	World Food Program (WFP) providing limited food rations, food security activities are minimal and there are currently few opportunities for food cultivation or income generation. Vulnerable families have little access to other food sources.

Sector	Key Gaps
Shelter and Other Items	Only two camps have adequate lighting. There is no security, which poses a risk for women and children, especially at night. There are no safe sheltered areas for food preparation, which could lead to fires in tents, and sheltered space for community activities is limited. Coordination and camp management is poor, inhibiting effective delivery of assistance.



Reina, her husband and their four children, pictured, live in the village of Florida in the middle of Pando department. Before the floods, their home was a small hut made from wood and thatch, and they made a living by growing maize, yucca, banana and rice, collecting nuts from the forest, and raising small animals such as chickens and pigs. Their home was flooded, so the family had to take up the floorboards, put them across the beams of the ceiling, and move all their belongings. The family is now living in the roof of their hut above the floodwaters below. They used to drink water from the river, but it is now contaminated. Their farm animals were killed in the flood, and they lost all their crops, which were almost ready to harvest. Reina and her husband will have difficulty feeding their family until they can replant, and the seed they had stored for the next planting was lost as well. Reina hopes that CARE will provide some food and seeds to help them recover from this disaster. This would allow her to replant yucca and harvest another crop in four months, if the rain stops and the waters recede quickly enough.

In the department of **Pando**, rains have caused the major river systems to flood. Pando’s population is small and scattered, but the majority live along the shores of the rivers. Rivers have risen by as much as 26 feet and have flooded communities and farmlands located up to 2.5 miles inland. Approximately 4,500 people are in need of assistance in Pando, yet humanitarian relief is barely present in affected areas.

The disaster has primarily affected the health and food security of the affected communities in Pando, due to crop and food source losses, flooding of water and sanitation facilities, poor drainage, consumption of contaminated water and insect breeding sites. The need for assistance in Pando is compounded by the relative absence of other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working there. Logistics in Pando are extremely challenging; boats are the only viable means of transportation. The key humanitarian priorities in Pando are outlined in the table below.

Summary of Priorities in Pando

Sector	Key Gaps
Food Supply	Severe crop losses have left families with a food gap until the next crop can be cultivated. With assistance, a new crop of yucca could be ready in four months. Families will cope by eating what rice is available, fishing once waters recede and finding forest foods. Supplementary food rations are needed.

Sector	Key Gaps
Food and Livelihood Security	In addition to the crop losses outlined above, seeds and other livelihood assets, including small animals, were also lost. Families need help to re-establish basic crops.
Water and Sanitation	Water and sanitation infrastructure is either non-existent or has been damaged in the floods. Communities are drinking contaminated river water and using this for sanitation. Wells, latrines and other water systems must be cleaned and repaired.
Health	There is high potential for an increase in waterborne and insect borne diseases, due to consumption of contaminated river water and large quantities of standing water. NGO Medicos Cubanos is providing medical visits but disease monitoring systems are needed.
Shelter	Many homes were damaged in the flood and need to be repaired. Some families have been able to stay in their homes, living in the upper levels above flood waters.

Looking past these urgent humanitarian needs, the long-term impact of the disaster in both San Julian and Pando will be severe, affecting families' ability to produce or purchase food for their families, and reach an acceptable level of household security. Significant effort will be required to rehabilitate land, crops and infrastructure before communities can begin to recover. The disaster will likely increase the already high levels of poverty in these vulnerable communities.

CARE's Response



Life is even harder for women living alone. Asunta is a widow, and must rely on the assistance of organizations such as CARE. She is unable to go away to find work, and there is little employment available in the town. Asunta is pictured here with the blankets and tent she received from CARE.

CARE's overall goal in responding to this emergency is to offer humanitarian assistance to approximately 7,400 people in San Julian municipality and Pando department that meets minimum international standards. This will include providing adequate shelter, safe water, food and sanitation, household items and food and livelihood security – for approximately 800 families in San Julian and 400 families in Pando. In addition, CARE will continue to assist 2,700 families in the Potosi region with funding provided by the UK's Department for International Development and the United States Agency for International Development. The duration of the response in both locations is expected to be six months.

In San Julian, CARE's response will focus on the following:

- Providing technical advice and assistance to local authorities in camp management and coordination;
- Facilitating community management, with the goal of enabling families to return to their communities, or identifying longer-term solutions for shelter and economic recovery as quickly as possible;

- Improving camp infrastructure and access to household items to meet international standards;
- Implementing measures to prevent sexual and labor exploitation of women and children;
- Improving water and sanitation conditions; and,
- Re-establishing basic food security options.

In Pando, CARE’s response will focus on the following:

- Providing supplementary food rations for two months to fill the gap between current food needs and the next harvest;
- Offering emergency food security assistance to re-establish food production;
- Supplying jerry cans and chlorine; and,
- Cleaning and repairing wells, water systems and latrines.

Budget

To support the emergency response activities outlined in this proposal, CARE needs a total of \$494,505. Funds will be used as detailed in the budget summary below.

Item	Amount
Salaries and Benefits	\$109,187
Travel and Transportation	\$29,802
Program Costs ²	\$285,530
Materials, Services and Consumables	\$15,120
Rent and Utilities	\$10,361
Administrative and Technical Support	\$44,505
Total	\$494,505

Conclusion

Multiple natural disasters have hit the poorest and most vulnerable areas of Bolivia, which is one of the poorest and least developed countries in Latin American. Families are trying not only to survive, but also to find ways to recover from the havoc that this disaster has wreaked on their lives, homes and livelihoods. Media attention and public interest in this situation has been very minimal, yet thousands of families remain homeless and are looking to the international community for help. CARE is struggling to raise awareness of this situation, and is confident that the plans outlined in this proposal will make a difference for thousands of families. Your gift will help CARE respond in San Julian and Pando would be put to good use immediately. Thank you for your consideration of support for these efforts.

March 24, 2006

² Program costs include food and non-food items, water and sanitation supplies, psychosocial activities, protection, livelihood recovery, labor and transportation in Pando and San Julian.