

UNDAC Field Situation Report #3
May 16, 2006

I. SITUATION

Rainfall is expected to continue in the southern region. In the Marowijne River region, water is still rising (but less rapidly). The water level is stable in Djumu, Langatabiki, and Botopasi, and in the Commewijne area. A small number of diarrhea and respiratory disease cases have been recorded. The situation on the French side of the eastern region is good; most displaced have been absorbed within the community.

Helicopter Survey: Eastern Region

On May 13, UNDAC Team Member Geert Gijs participated in a helicopter survey of the area along the Marowijne River in the Stoelmanseiland region. The region is reachable only by helicopter or small local boats. Some small rivers in this area that are normally about two meters wide are now five or six meters. Large areas in the forests are flooded. Several islands in the river were totally flooded - people went with their boats to the river banks and are living temporarily on higher ground - several families together in improvised houses. Requests from the villagers were for sheeting, tarpaulin, food, fuel – in that order of priority. Tents would not be suitable in this area. The general health situation appeared good – there were a few cases of diarrhea, but not prolonged. Medical Mission (MM) is functioning but medicines are beginning to run short. No antibiotics were available in the local medical clinic. MM centers are located on higher ground, and therefore are also serving as evacuation centers in some cases. Crops have been destroyed, and therefore people are relying on food distributions – villagers were asking for baby's milk. Food distributions had started the day before (Friday), according to villagers. The only available water is rainwater and river water. No latrines, water purification systems, or water purification tablets were available.

Surface Survey: Eastern Region

On May 13 and 14, UNDAC Team Member Dr Argo Parts and ECHO staff member Daniel Urena Cot participated in a joint survey of Langatabiki, Loka-Loka, islands in the Marowijne River, and nearby areas. An automobile was used to get to the bank of the river near Langatabiki, and then boats to Langatabiki and Loka-Loka. The primary road from Paramaribo to Mungo is in good condition (three hours of driving), as is the secondary road from Mungo to Langatabiki (about 100km). The bridges can be used by medium-sized trucks. It took approximately three hours to travel from Langatabiki to Loka-Loka by boat (upstream), and one hour to return (downstream). In all the villages in the region there is a shortage of boats and fuel. The priority needs reported by the villagers were logistics support, including fuel, food, medicines, and drinking water.

In Langatabiki there was a medical center with three medical workers. There is a shortage of basic drugs. There are no reports of diarrhea or malaria. The medical center

in Nason is flooded and not functioning. Between five and ten percent of the houses in Langatabiki were damaged. Villagers report a need for plastic sheeting. The community leaders are proposing to build a temporary shelter (two barracks) on higher ground. Most of the houses in Nason, Tabiki Ede, and Skintabiki are flooded. All houses in Loka-Loka were flooded, and two were washed away.

A large proportion of crops were damaged in the whole area. Fishing has been an important source of food, but this also has been disrupted. Food is therefore one of the priorities, especially for the small proportion of inhabitants who have left their villages for higher ground or the forest. Delivery and distribution of food and bottled water is well organized. However, because families tend to be between five and ten people, the food packages are not enough for one week (packages are based on a family-size of five).

The main source of drinking water has been rainwater and river water. The amount of rain water is insufficient, and the river water is not usable. There are no latrines.

The school in Langatabiki is flooded and not functional. The local community is rehabilitating the school in an alternate location.

Surface Survey: Upper Suriname River Region

On May 13 and 14, UNDAC Team Member Sander van Dijk participated in an assessment of the Upper Suriname river up to Djumu. Life is getting back to normal, as the river is receding. The most urgent needs of food, water, and shelter are generally met. Reported needs include replacement of damaged foodstocks, school materials, repair of generators, fuel, medicines, and repairs or replacement of hand tools for woodworking and reconstruction of houses.

In Djumu, all of the school material is damaged. 75% of houses are uninhabited because of wet floors. All of the agricultural plots are damaged. 70% of stored food is destroyed. The water purification plant for the whole area is functioning well, and electricity supply is working. There is not an acute food shortage. However, medicine stocks do need to be replenished.

In Semoissie, 150 of the 300 houses are flooded. The medical center is functioning well. The electrical supply system is damaged, and requires a technician for repairs. The normal source of drinking water is the river. People are reluctant to return to use river water as drinking water due to fears of pollution from the flooding. 50% of agricultural grounds are damaged, and all school materials are destroyed.

In Botopasie, the medical center is not functioning well due to a lack of personnel and stocks. The electrical supply system is damaged, and requires a technician for repairs. There is a lack of fuel for boats to distribute goods. As in Semoisse, people are reluctant to use river water as drinking water. 100% of agricultural grounds are damaged, and all school materials are destroyed.

II. NATIONAL RESPONSE

Nothing new to report.

III. INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The Cougar helicopter from Brazil has arrived. It has capacity for 14 passengers and 300 Kg of cargo. Its first relief assistance and assessment mission (to the east) was conducted today (including one UNDAC Team Member). Food and water were delivered via the helicopter to Stoelmanseiland.

One Dutch Navy frigate is en route to Suriname. They contain four helicopters and surgical facilities. Arrival is expected Friday.

The Resident Coordinator has submitted a request for CERF funding, based on two proposals from PAHO and one from UNICEF. The PAHO proposals are for malaria control (\$442,000) and emergency water supply (\$225,000). The UNICEF proposal (\$52,000) is for the rehabilitation of education in the affected region, targeting 15 damaged school systems. An additional proposal from UNDP is pending.

The IFRC has issued an appeal for \$706,309, for water and sanitation capacity building and emergency relief commodity distributions for 20,000 people.

At the request of UNDAC, IFRC has agreed to facilitate coordination of the shelter sector.

IV. ASSISTANCE NEEDS

Malaria

Historically, flooding in these areas of Suriname have been followed by malaria outbreaks. According to PAHO, malaria transmission in these areas are typically higher than other parts of the country and Latin America. In 2005, there were 8,000 cases of malaria in the interior of Suriname. PAHO reports a window of opportunity over the next four to six weeks to prevent a malaria outbreak. The UN Resident Coordinator has submitted a request for CERF funding for malaria prevention on behalf of PAHO.

Water / Sanitation

According to PAHO, the main source of water for the majority of the population in the affected region is collected rainwater. One exception is Djumu in the Upper Suriname River region, which has a water treatment plant serving 6,000 people. River water is typically only used for drinking water in the dry season (when rainwater tanks and smaller creeks have dried up); the rivers are primarily used for transport, washing, bathing, and defecation. More than 70% of people in the affected area do not use any

sanitary means of excreta disposal. The UN Resident Coordinator has submitted a request for CERF funding for water and sanitation on behalf of PAHO.

Education

UNICEF reports that 15 schools in the affected region have been damaged by the flooding. Most schools were closed during the week of May 8 to 12. While many children have gone back to school in the Upper Suriname River region, most children in the eastern region have not. Much school furniture, which tends to be made of plywood (which swells upon contact with water) was destroyed. In some cases, school buildings are being used as temporary shelters. The UN Resident Coordinator has submitted a request for CERF funding for education rehabilitation on behalf of UNICEF.

V. LOGISTICS

There are three private organizations providing air assets. One has two helicopters, the other two are equipped with airplanes. An in-depth assessment of air assets is required. As noted above, the Brazilian helicopter has arrived and has been put into use.

There have been disruptions in the repairs to the road to Atjoni, which is jeopardizing relief operations.