

# Alert

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## Brazil – 03/2011

### Floods mudslides and heavy rains, Brazil

Geneva, January 17, 2011

#### 1. Brief description of the emergency

Brazil is facing its worst climatic catastrophe in decades, after nonstop heavy rain in the southeast caused floods and mudslides in many cities, especially the state of Rio de Janeiro in the Serrana region. Millions of people are affected. A total of 630 people have died, mainly from Rio de Janeiro, Teresopolis, Petropolis, Sumidouro and Nova Friburgo the worst affected towns. Authorities fear the death toll could climb as rescue workers retrieve more victims buried under collapsed homes and buildings.

#### 2. Impact

The National Institute of Meteorology says more rain is expected over the next few days. This is the fourth consecutive year Brazil has endured torrential rains and devastating landslides. According to the Rio State Civil Defense Department on January 14, there were 13,380 evacuated people and 6050 people homeless due to the rivers of mud huge swaths of towns burying buildings.

A lieutenant fireman of Nova Friburgo said on January 14 that it was hard to reach affected villages because roads and bridges were destroyed. The risk of further mudslides remains high as rain continues falling on the waterlogged region, making the soil more unstable. He confirmed that the number of dead will rise and that a number of people remained buried.

#### 3. National and international response

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff has pledged swift measures by her government to deal with the situation. This is Rousseff's first crisis only two weeks after assuming power. On Wednesday, she signed a decree authorising US\$ 467 million in emergency aid.

The National Security Force, composed of military, firemen and specialists, is rescuing victims and maintaining order. Today, the government is assessing the scale of the catastrophe.

#### 4. ACT Alliance response

ACT member organisations in Brazil - Koinonia, Lutheran Foundation of Diaconia (FLD), Ecumenical Coordinator of Services (CESE), Diaconia and Christian Aid - Brazil will act together in supporting the affected population. Community-based churches in the cities have already deployed emergency response and offered solidarity with the victims.

In general, the local population has been very supportive. Likewise, different regions of the country are raising funds to support the affected regions. The national churches have already opened bank accounts for the benefit of communities hardest hit.

**5. Planned activities**

In the coming days, an ecumenical emergency response will be more fully structured. Following this, a rehabilitation project, under the coordination of Koinonia and the accompaniment of other ACT member organizations in Brazil, will be drawn up. The solidarity of ACT Alliance members is expected.

**Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to ACT Chief Finance Officer Jean Daniel Birmele ([Jean.Daniel.Birmele@actalliance.org](mailto:Jean.Daniel.Birmele@actalliance.org)).**

**Thank you for your attention.**

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