

Completed by: Cibele Kuss, Fundação Luterana de Diaconia (FLD)

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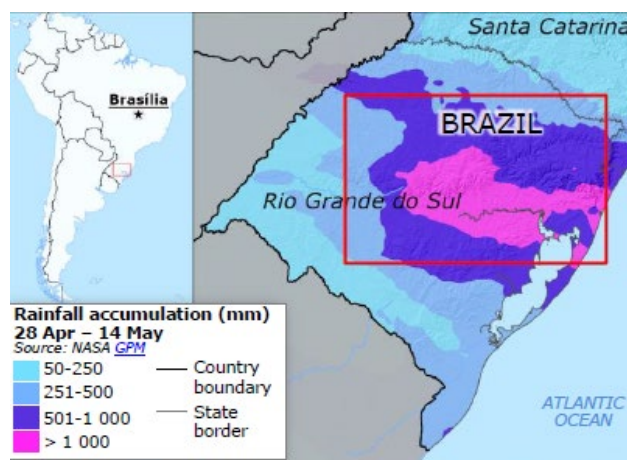
Forum: ACT Forum Brazil (Ecumenical ACT Forum Brazil)

Type of emergency: Floods

Date of emergency (if rapid onset): ongoing since 2nd of May

1. The nature of the emergency

Since April 29, Rio Grande do Sul, in southern Brazil, has experienced heavy rains that flooded 452 municipalities. As of May 15, 2024, these floods have affected more than two million people, with 538,126 displaced, 76,588 in shelters, approximately 806 injured, 149 confirmed deaths, and 108 missing persons (Civil Defense Bulletin of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, issued on May 15, 2024)¹.



Source: Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)²

In Porto Alegre, the Metropolitan Region, and the Vale do Rio Pardo, heavy and constant rains began in early May, prompting public authorities to declare a state of public calamity on 2nd May³. The situation worsened on May 13, with a resurgence of rains and rising river levels, leading to the evacuation of many who had returned to their homes.

Porto Alegre, with 1.3 million inhabitants, has 157,000 affected people. In Rio Grande do Sul, approximately 1.2 million people were left without electricity. Of the 149 deceased, 103 people have been identified, with 37 from the Porto Alegre Metropolitan Region, including 8 children and adolescents up to 17 years old, 39 adults between 18 and 59 years old, and 56 elderly people over 60 years old. The floods have destroyed homes, workplaces, roads, bridges, and essential infrastructure and services such as drinking water and power supply⁴.

This flood is the largest in the history of Rio Grande do Sul. By Monday, May 13, rainfall in Porto Alegre reached 341.7 millimeters for the month, exceeding the average May rainfall of 113 millimeters (National Institute of Meteorology Inmet)^{5,6}.

The anticipation of further rainfall during the first half of May, coupled with a drop in temperatures, particularly in regions already impacted by storms, has prompted a state of heightened vigilance. Civil

¹ <https://estado.rs.gov.br/defesa-civil-atualiza-balanco-das-enchentes-no-rs-15-5-18h>

² <https://reliefweb.int/map/brazil/brazil-severe-weather-floods-and-eu-response-dg-echo-daily-map-15052024>

³ <https://g1.globo.com/rs/rio-grande-do-sul/noticia/2024/05/02/rio-grande-do-sul-decreta-estado-de-calamidade-publica-por-conta-das-cheias.ghtml>

⁴ <https://gauchazh.clicrbs.com.br/porto-alegre/noticia/2024/05/enchente-atingiu-46-bairros-e-afetou-diretamente-157-mil-pessoas-em-porto-alegre-aponta-mapeamento-da-prefeitura-clw6vhmvo0047014e6mmiriam.html>

⁵ <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/nacional/maio-de-2024-e-o-segundo-mais-chuvoso-para-porto-alegre-em-108-anos-diz-inmet/>

⁶ <https://metsul.com/porto-alegre-supera-enchente-de-1941-pela-segunda-vez-em-dez-dias/>

Defense has issued alerts for the majority of the state's river basins, as water levels are projected to exceed flood thresholds⁷.

According to the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFGRS), the main concern at the moment is the further rise in levels due to rainfall and wind effects. All scenarios projected by the Institute of Hydraulic Research (IPH-UFGRS) for the next week indicate a prolonged rise in the Guaíba's water levels, with a subsequent peak expected to exceed 5 meters⁸.

2. The impact and scale of the emergency

Most affected territories in the state of Rio Grande do Sul are concentrated in the Guaíba Lake watershed region, where the Jacuí, Caí, dos Sinos, and Gravataí rivers are located. The Jacuí River contributes 86.3% of the inflow to Lake Guaíba followed by 5.3% from the Caí River, 4.7% from the dos Sinos River, and 1.6% from the Gravataí River. According to experts from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Porto Alegre, for example, the state capital, is located in a flat territory with an average altitude of 10 meters above sea level, making this region more susceptible to floods. The main factor for this condition is the inflow of the Jacuí, Taquari, and Caí rivers. These three rivers originate and flow through higher regions, in mountainous terrain, with basaltic formation, where the slope is greater (Zanandrea et al, 2023). These regions are more susceptible to landslides and mass movements, which carry sediments into the water and increase turbidity. The water, which flows rapidly, loses speed when overflowing into these plains⁹.

The economic impact is significant, characterized by substantial damage to critical infrastructure and disruptions to food and water distribution systems. Over a million households are currently experiencing water shortages, and the isolation of Porto Alegre poses a threat to agriculture, which is vital to the state's economy. Authorities have issued warnings of imminent food shortages and price increase that could have ripple effects across the nation¹⁰. Please see the infographic of this disaster on <https://reliefweb.int/report/brazil/maior-catastrofe-climatica-do-rs-abril-maio-de-2024-pt>

Communities are devastated. The affected population has lost their homes, belongings, and livelihoods. Among the most affected populations are women from solidarity economic enterprises and their families, the majority of whom are women who already lived communities deeply affected by economic and social inequalities and in high-risk areas. Two thousand five hundred informal recyclable waste collectors, including women, lost their livelihood due to the floods in the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre and the Vale do Rio dos Sinos¹¹. Many of them had their homes, which are also their workspaces, completely flooded and left in a hurry, leaving everything behind.

Households dependent on family and agroecological farming have had their properties flooded, losing production, many animals, and machinery, mainly in the Vale do Rio Pardo region. In quilombola communities¹², the situation is serious. Many are still stranded, without access to water, energy, and food. The losses are considered "ancestral" by quilombola leaders and are not new when they affect black and poor people, a result of centuries of neglect. In the Machado Quilombo and the Quilombola Front of Rio Grande do Sul, a quilombola leader categorically stated that "97% of the area is a total loss"^{13,14}.

⁷ <https://www.ifrc.org/emergency/brazil-rio-grande-do-sul-floods>

⁸ <https://g1.globo.com/rs/rio-grande-do-sul/noticia/2024/05/12/nivel-do-guaiba-pode-superar-marca-historica-e-chegar-a-550-metros-aponta-ufrgs.ghtml>

⁹ <https://www.ufrgs.br/iph/nota-tecnica-a-cheia-de-2024-no-estado-do-rio-grande-do-sul-e-as-linhas-de-acao-para-a-resiliencia-contra-eventos-extremos/>

¹⁰ <https://energynews.pro/en/disaster-in-brazil-call-for-a-marshall-plan-after-the-floods/>

¹¹ <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2024/05/10/2-5-mil-catadores-perderam-seu-trabalho-e-19-cooperativas-estao-debaixo-d-agua-no-rs>

¹² Refers to members of quilombos, which are communities of descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves who escaped from slavery in colonial Brazil and formed their own settlements. These communities have historical and cultural significance and are recognized for their struggle for land rights and social recognition.

¹³ <https://iclnoticias.com.br/o-sul-e-seus-quilombos-ancestrais-submersos/>

¹⁴ <https://noticias.uol.com.br/cotidiano/ultimas-noticias/2024/05/07/porto-alegre-nao-investiu-um-centavo-em-prevencao-contra-enchentes-em-2023.htm>

Most families are currently in shelters or living with relatives. Those living near rivers had their homes swept away by the force of the waters and lost everything. Many had to be rescued as the rivers rose rapidly. The lack of access to basic food for family subsistence has been the main concern of these populations. It is estimated that the coming months will see a sharp decline in income, worsening food insecurity conditions, and hindering the purchase of hygiene and cleaning materials, and gas for meal preparation.

3. Local and national capacity

As an immediate action, the Federal Government, through the Brazilian Navy and Air Force, engaged in the rescue of people using air and water transportation, contributing to victim assistance. Subsequently, it announced economic and social measures to address the floods, which are still insufficient. The state government, mainly through the Civil Defense, and local authorities worked on rescuing people, but provided significantly inadequate shelter, water, and food given the number of affected individuals, communities, and cities. The unpreparedness of the state to immediately address situations like this is evident. According to a report, funding for flooding prevention in Porto Alegre has decreased over the last three years, with no allocation for it in 2023¹⁵.

Civil society, through community associations and organizations, has been active in providing institutional shelters and in welcoming rescued individuals into their shelters, as well as significantly contributing to community kitchens with meal preparation. Last week, at the initiative of national organizations promoting human rights, the "Climate Calamity Aid" campaign (<https://www.auxiliocalamidade.org/>) was launched to mobilize the public sphere to provide emergency financial aid to affected families. FLD is part of this collective, contributing to proposal development and social mobilization.

To ensure that the humanitarian response is well-coordinated and complementary, the ACT Forum Brazil, mainly through FLD, participates in meetings with relevant stakeholders in the Civil Protection System and establishes an open line of communication with individuals and communities affected by the crisis to ensure a participatory-based humanitarian response.

4. Key needs and gaps

The communities and individuals impacted by the floods are currently facing a range of unmet vital humanitarian needs related to the following sectors:

- Food/nutrition: Adequate food supply (including animal protein)
- WASH: Essential non-food items, such as cleaning and hygiene products
- Psychosocial support

Most of the affected population have had their livelihoods destroyed, particularly the most vulnerable groups, affected by environmental racism and social injustice, especially black women, indigenous peoples, traditional communities, and agroecological producer families.

Please indicate whether you are considering:

	Indicate your intention with an X below
Rapid Response Fund (<i>intended for small and medium scale emergencies</i>)	X
Appeal (<i>intended for large scale emergencies</i>)	

If you indicate an intention to launch an appeal, the secretariat will activate an Emergency Steering Committee meeting within two working days on receipt of this alert.

5. Forum Capacity and members intention to respond

¹⁵ <https://nacla.org/brazil-floods-rio-grande-sul>

ACT Member	Geographical focus	Sectors of expertise and experience
Fundação Luterana de Diaconia - FLD	Southern Region (Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and Paraná)	Food security WASH Community-based Psychosocial Support (CBPS)

6. Potential responses

The Lutheran Foundation for Diaconia (FLD) has led humanitarian efforts, supported by the ACT Forum Brazil and the ACT Rapid Response Fund, focusing on indigenous communities in Santa Catarina and Acre during floods in the past. FLD's expertise includes community-based psychosocial support and advocacy. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, FLD provided food security assistance, distributing over 2,000 food and hygiene kits to indigenous groups, quilombola communities, and families involved in agriculture, solidarity economy, and recyclable waste collection. Additionally, FLD facilitated cash transfers to grassroots organizations, aiming to strengthen them and address families' needs effectively. With a track record in monitoring grassroots initiatives, FLD ensures resources reach the most vulnerable communities transparently and efficiently.

For this emergency, FLD is seeking, jointly with community associations, to provide direct emergency response to 500 families (over 2,500 people) in the sectors of food security (delivery of food items), WASH (delivery of cleaning and hygiene products), and Community-based Psychosocial Support (CBPS). As a context, a humanitarian corridor has been established in the city to transport essential items such as food, water, and medicine. Access to the humanitarian corridor for transporting food and essential items is granted to community associations, in coordination with the municipality. This enables the identification of the most needed items and ensures their delivery to the affected population, including the most vulnerable. The estimated budget for this emergency response is USD 150,000.00.