

Bolivia's worst floods in decades displace families and disrupt children's lives



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To escape floods, thousands of families from the Bolivian departments of Santa Cruz and Beni are living in tents by the roadside.

By Sabine Dolan 12 March 2007 – Much of Bolivia's department of Beni today lies underwater. Since December, heavy rains have caused major rivers to overflow in the area, destroying crops, drowning cattle and isolating communities.

Across the country, as many as 400,000 people have been affected by the worst floods in 25 years.

The humanitarian situation remains critical in Beni, which lies in Bolivia's Amazon plain. In the municipality of Trinidad, 40 per cent of flood victims are children now living with their parents in provisional shelters set up in public schools or in tents.

"Overnight, our patio was filled with water," said Lucien Sanchez, 8, whose family had to abandon their home. "When we went to sleep at night, there was nothing, and then when we got up we were surrounded by water and we had to leave our house because it was completely flooded."



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Due to poor water and sanitation conditions, children in the Bolivian flood zone are vulnerable to diarrhoea and respiratory diseases.

Medical attention for children

Health authorities in the affected communities are concerned over the potential for water- and sanitation-related diseases. Getting medical attention to children has become a priority.

Dr. Castedo noted that digestive and diarrhoeal illnesses were becoming common among children. “The worst has yet to come when the waters return and infections break out again,” he added.

For more photos of the floods in Bolivia go to:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_pictures/6390249.stm

During the summer of 2007 parts of England have experienced similar extreme flooding. How similar has been the experience for those effected in Bolivia and in England? Go to ‘Coping with the worst floods for years’ activity