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The following news concerns Guyana.

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http://biblesociety.org/latestnews/index_latestnews.html

Floods create long-term challenges for Bible work in Guyana

GUYANA — The victims of the devastating floods that hit this troubled nation in January are now leaving emergency shelters and returning to their homes, schools and places of work. As their lives begin to return to normal, however, they will continue to bear the psychological burden of their experiences for a long time to come. Similarly, the floods will have a long-term impact on Bible work in Guyana, according to Alexei Singh, who represents the Suriname Bible Society there.

As record rainfall brought floods to low-lying coastal areas near Georgetown, Guyana's capital, thousands of people had to be evacuated from their homes (*see Latest News #304*). The floods also entered Georgetown itself, forcing many businesses and offices to close. Among them was the Suriname Bible Society, which is responsible for Bible work in Guyana. Despite the yard being swamped with sewage-ridden water, its premises did not suffer any lasting damage, but stock worth almost US\$5,000 was lost.

When the waters receded, the scale of the devastation became clear: in total, 34 people died and more than 300,000 lost their possessions. Everywhere people were in shock at the loss of loved ones and property. One pastor came across a group of men as he drove along the coast:

“As I stopped my car to observe what was happening, a group of men came up to us. They asked us for something to eat. We had nothing. They asked us for something to drink. I told them that all we had was a bottle of water. They said they just wanted anything we had. We had never seen such desperation. That moved us. These were people who were accustomed to providing for their families, but now they were just standing there on the road with their animals, who were also seeking higher ground.”

Despite its own difficulties, the Bible Society wanted to respond quickly to such acute human need. And thanks to support from the United Bible Societies fellowship, it was able to distribute, in collaboration with local churches, 10,000 New Testaments and

14,000 copies of the Scripture Portions *The Lord Keeps You Safe, The Lord is Near to the Broken-Hearted* and *Words of Comfort and Hope from the Bible*.

For the foreseeable future, Bible work in Guyana is likely to bring significant challenges, however. Even before the floods, Guyana was one of the poorest countries in the Americas and had only the most basic infrastructure. Now, with buildings damaged and crops and livestock destroyed, many of its 768,000 people are struggling simply to feed themselves. This means that the Bible Society's income will fall, as few people can afford to buy Scriptures, according to Mr Singh.

"It is estimated that the cost to the nation as a result of the flood is in billions," he says. "Apart from the economic losses, the loss of loved ones and property has brought psychological effects that will be there for a long time." (518 words – GUYANA.24.10.05)

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