

# Annual report

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Disaster response tools

Appeal No. MAA00024

21/04/2009

This report covers the period 01/01/2008 to  
31/12/2008.



A German Red Cross water and sanitation emergency response unit trains local staff in Sudan, April 2008. **International Federation.**

### In brief

**Programme purpose:** Enable National Societies to be proactive and responsive in reducing the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters. Use disaster response strategically to build National Society capacity by providing them with effective early warning, rapid and adequate financial support, and coordinated, timely, quality and flexible international resources to support them.

**Programme(s) summary:** The International Federation continued to mount successful disaster response action by relying on its range of disaster response tools to effectively respond to disasters in 2008. Depending on operational needs and realities, support was flexibly provided by Field Assessment and Coordination Teams (FACT) and/or Regional Disaster Response Teams (RDRT), Emergency Response Units (ERU's), and the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)<sup>1</sup>. These tools rely on the Disaster Management and Information System (DMIS) and the ongoing development of more robust early warning and early action (EW/EA) methods. This programme, in particular, continued to benefit from the formation of close alliances with a number of external meteorological agencies in developing and using early warning systems.

**Financial situation:** The total budget is CHF 1,068,105 (USD 1,017,243 or EUR 712,070), of which 97% per cent covered. Expenditure overall was 95 per cent.

<sup>1</sup> The DREF is reported on separately.

[Click here to go directly to the attached financial report.](#)

**No. of people we help:** The International Federation estimates that vital assistance and relief has been delivered (directly or indirectly) through its disaster preparedness and response activities to over 23 million people in 2008.

**Our partners:** In pursuit of its disaster response strategy and based on its disaster response tools, the International Federation's mission is strengthened by the following key partnerships: formal working groups (FACT/RDRT and ERU), and external agencies such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI), and United Nations operational partners - the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

## Context

Similar to the trend encountered in the first six months of 2008, the latter half of the year was characterized by small to medium-scale weather-related disasters. As a response, the International Federation continued to rely on its range of disaster response tools. Operations support was provided by FACT, DMIS, ERU's, backed up by the DREF, and included the ongoing development of early warning and early action (EW/EA).

Respective operating National Societies continued to provide frontline response action, with support from the International Federation for both small to medium as well as large-scale disasters that required a flexible use of Federation disaster response tools. In the process, the International Federation estimates that over 23 million people have been assisted (either directly or indirectly). The Africa, Americas, and Asia Pacific regions had the highest rate of disasters (178, 185 and 201 respectively). Of these, the majority were hydrometeorologic and human related (56 per cent and 20 per cent respectively). In Africa, National Societies responded 214 times; in the Americas, National Societies responded 209 times; and in Asia Pacific, National Societies responded 218 times. A total of 104 DREF allocations were made in 2008 (see separate DREF 2008 annual report for details), with 31 emergency appeals launched for a total value of CHF 478.7 million. These operations relied on the vital assistance of over 251,000 Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers to back up the use of the tools: six FACT deployments; 22 ERU deployments; and 81 RDRT deployments. In summary, the Federation response to disasters in 2008 continued to adhere to a consistent pattern: flexible in nature, deliberate in use, and well planned in the delivery and implementation of assistance to the intended beneficiaries. The International Federation's disaster response tools have, as a result, consistently performed at a high level, in line with the planned outcomes outlined below.

The International Federation's ongoing restructuring has, in a general sense, created challenges and constraints that have impeded programme and project implementation.

## Progress towards outcomes

### Early Warning and Disaster Information Management

**Outcome(s)/Expected result(s):** The International Federation's ability to access, interpret, analyze, share and act upon early warning is increased.

### Achievements and constraints

- Partnerships with the Climate Centre and cooperation with other scientific and humanitarian organizations such as IRI, NASA, the National Oceanic Atmospheric

Administration (NOAA), and the Dartmouth flood observatory has improved access to information, analysis and prediction of weather and other events leading to disaster occurrences, more specifically, in the increased use of the IRI six-day and three-month precipitation forecasts.

- Development of protocols and standard operating procedures for sharing of information, and for action on early warning from local to global level is ongoing.
- Contacts have been established with OCHA in order to study a Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) workspace for the International Federation to allow a better sharing of information on early warning.
- A first case study for flood sensor (early warning) will take place during the next Zambezi floods to test the system set up by NASA and partners, its workflow, and its technical limitations.

**Outcome(s)/Expected result(s):** Management of disaster information is improved and reinforced; and supports the coherence of action between national, regional and international levels.

### **Achievements and constraints**

- The International Federation's new DMIS has been developed with an emphasis on disaster tracking, data collection, and taking into account the needs and wishes of National Societies.
- National Societies apparently remain reluctant to open DMIS access to selected donors and partners. The International Federation is exploring the option of sharing limited information and open access to certain parts of DMIS when the new common platform for the three websites is implemented (see also the partnership section above).
- Maps have been provided to relevant standard emergency-related products (information bulletins, DREF operations, and emergency appeals).
- Statistics on Red Cross and Red Crescent response to disasters for 2008 has been compiled. An analysis of figures and trends will be published soon to key stakeholders. The use of GLobal IDentifier (GLIDE) numbers is now a standard practice.
- The "Disaster Category Classification for Operational Databases" established by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) is now the standard for DMIS, the public website, statistics and publications.
- Cooperation with Reliefweb and Alertnet is established and functioning effectively.

### **FACT and RDRT**

**Outcome(s)/Expected result(s):** FACT and RDRT are used whenever requested in a timely and seamless way in coordination with other response tools and mechanisms. They bring valued and focused support to National Societies in disaster response.

### **Achievements and constraints**

- Five FACT deployments took place during the reporting period, providing vital and effective surge capacity to operations in response to floods, cyclones and storms in Southern Africa, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, Hurricane Hanna in Haiti, floods in Yemen, and population movements in Nigeria.
- Regionally, RDRTs responded to a number of disasters. Twenty-eight teams were deployed from the Americas. The final 2008 RDRT deployment figures have not yet been finalized, since information still needs to be received from the zonal offices and National Societies. RDRTs were integrated into all five FACT missions.
- Seven telecommunications (FACT communication) kits were pre-positioned in all of the zones for use by RDRTs, and kits were sent with two FACT teams. Stocks have been

replenished, and five kits are currently being pre-positioned in Southern Africa, Southeast Asia (Asia Pacific), and the Americas.

**Outcome(s)/Expected result(s):** Regional and international disaster response capacity is increased and diversified.

### **Achievements and constraints**

- In order to meet the operational challenges and deployments, the FACT and RDRT programme aimed to increase the numbers, diversity and capacity of persons trained to respond to both sudden and slow onset disasters. The training was revised, integrating new initiatives in shelter and recovery into the FACT training, in consultation with a FACT working group which included representatives from National Societies. During subsequent deployments, FACT provided the platform for meeting shelter and recovery needs on the ground.
- Ninety-five (95) additional persons were FACT trained during the programme period using the revised modules. Two FACT trainings have been carried out during the period, bringing to over 100, the number of National Societies now represented on the FACT roster. A total of six shelter specialists and six recovery specialists have been trained, adding this skill set to FACT for future deployments. Eight participants from non-traditional FACT countries such as Venezuela, Malta, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Sierra Leone, received funding support to facilitate their attendance.
- In terms of constraints, the ongoing consolidation project has had an impact on the FACT/RDRT programme. At the zonal level, changes in both roles and staff made it challenging for the consistent planning and implementing of RDRT trainings, and there was a reduction in the number of trainings held globally. The target of at least 150 persons trained was however met.
- An evaluation of the FACT system was conducted in May 2008 in an effort to ensure that both the FACT and RDRT systems remain relevant within the changing Red Cross environment, and in an increasingly complicated disaster environment. The FACT working group met in August of 2008, and used the evaluation as a platform to develop a strategy to strengthen both the FACT and RDRT system, as well as to improve coordination and effectiveness. These recommendations included clearer triggering for earlier response, greater dissemination and understanding of the tools globally, development of an information management system, and a more flexible (staggered) deployment method.
- RDRT managers from five of the zones met in Oslo in August to discuss the RDRT system. They looked at the content for both general and specific technical RDRT training with the relevant technical departments. It was agreed that the harmonized RDRT training was ready to be rolled out through a comprehensive Trainer of Trainers (ToT). The ToT also acted as a refresher for the target groups. A series of three ToTs has been conducted from October to November 2008 in South East Asia, Europe and Africa, with RDRT practitioners from a total of 25 countries including West Africa, East Africa, the Americas, Asia Pacific, South East Asia, and Central Asia. A total of 29 persons have now been certified as RDRT trainers. One general RDRT induction has subsequently been successfully carried out in Singapore, by newly trained trainers using the harmonized training package.
- A total of 47 people have been trained in the bi-annual Federation team leader courses, allowing for an improved understanding of roles and responsibilities for team leaders from FACT, ERU and RDRT. The training provided potential team leaders from 17 National Societies and the secretariat with the understanding and skills to coordinate and work together with a large number of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and external partners in major disaster response operations.
- To contribute to better inter-agency coordination:

- ✓ Two FACT members have been trained in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Shelter Cluster Coordination.
- ✓ One FACT member has been trained in the IASC Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster Training.
- ✓ One FACT member has been trained in the IASC Logistics Cluster Training.

## Emergency Response Units (ERUs)

**Outcome(s)/Expected result(s):** Partner National Societies are participating in effective, timely, and appropriate disaster response through coordinated ERU deployments.

### Achievements and constraints

- A total of 22 ERUs were requested by, and deployed to, a total of six operations through the ERU desk at the secretariat.
- These 22 ERUs were deployed to operations in Africa, Asia Pacific, the Americas and Africa, and offered assistance in Information Technology (IT) and Telecoms, relief, logistics, health and water and sanitation.



An Austrian water and sanitation ERU in Pakistan. January 2008. **International Federation.**

- A base camp was also deployed to cater to local and international Red Cross and Crescent staff. The ERU desk actively participated in reviews of the Bangladesh and Myanmar operations, and commissioned one review itself: a water and sanitation ERU review which was completed in 2008. The recommendations from this review will be used for the adaptation and further development of the existing units.

**Outcome(s)/Expected result(s):** The ERU group is strengthened by increasing the resources, capacity and diversity of participating National Societies and incorporating new National Societies to the group.

### Achievements and constraints

- During 2008, the ERU group welcomed the New Zealand Red Cross Society, who joined the IT and Telecom group, saw the Finnish Red Cross Society developing a Logistics ERU, and concluded talks with the Italian Red Cross Society on the establishment of an ERU base camp to support and facilitate the inclusion of new ERU National Societies into the joint deployment pool.
- In addition, joint deployments of two or more National Societies continued to increase.
- The ERU desk circulated a draft revised ERU Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). A modified 2008 version was finalized based on the Participating National Societies' input. The majority of the ERU National Societies signed off on these new SOPs, and confirmed adherence to them.
- The ERU desk participated in, and co-facilitated 18 ERU training courses, two team leader courses, and one FACT training.
- The ERU desk participated in all technical ERU meetings between the secretariat and Partner National Societies on health, logistics, relief, IT and Telecom and water and sanitation issues. Feedback from operations regarding technical adaptation has been shared with the relevant technical departments.

- The ERU desk chaired the annual ERU working group meeting, and ensured recommendations were presented to the Disaster Management Working Group (DMWG).
- Good cooperation was achieved with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) counterparts of the Rapid Deployment unit in Geneva on the need for/use of ERUs.

**Outcome(s)/Expected result(s):** ERUs are continuously reviewed and adapted according to needs in a changing disaster environment.

### **Achievements and constraints**

- In cooperation with the secretariat's technical department and the ERU National Societies, and based upon reviews and other recommendations, the health, water and sanitation, and relief ERUs, in particular, are adapted to the changing nature of many operations in which ERUs are being used (more floods operation, often leading to a dispersed population that needs to be served).
- Discussions with the Italian Red Cross Society have led to the establishment of a second ERU base camp.

## Working in partnership

The International Federation's disaster response tools have been developed by working in close partnership with member National Societies to achieve a coordinated approach to international disaster response, and a global and regional support to the national and local response. To improve preparedness and early action, the International Federation's efforts are bearing fruit in developing strategic cooperation with the Climate Centre and organizations active in monitoring, early warning, and information management. These partnerships have resulted in the promotion of improved disaster management which has had a measurable impact on reducing vulnerability, and strengthening relief and recovery from disasters.

The integration of the International Federation's diverse disaster management components (disaster mitigation, disaster response and recovery, health and care, and water and sanitation) provides the International Federation with a formidable, yet flexible disaster management capability.

## Contributing to longer-term impact and looking ahead

The International Federation's disaster management policy and strategy is designed to promote an integrated approach to disaster management, and in the process, improve and reinforce impact. Underlying the Red Cross and Red Crescent Global Agenda is a commitment to address the causes of vulnerability, and to provide more effective assistance, from disaster relief, to recovery, including risk reduction. Building on work already underway, future priorities are focused on providing support to innovation and adaptation of the existing systems and tools used to deliver effective response.

Since the majority of disasters, especially weather-related, are predictable and can be forecasted, the Red Cross and Red Crescent, through partnerships with actors such as the Climate Centre, and with other scientific and humanitarian organizations, is actively reducing the effects of disasters on vulnerable people through a greater ability to access, interpret, analyze, share and act on early warning from a local to a global level.

## How we work

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

### Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

## Contact information

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