

# DREF operation final report



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## RUSSIAN FEDERATION: TOXIC SPILL

DREF operation no. 05ME071  
28 April 2008

The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of national societies to respond to disasters.

**Summary:** CHF 36,000 (USD 27,425 or EUR 23,055) was allocated from the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 20 December 2005 to support the National Society in delivering assistance to some 4,560 beneficiaries during a month and a half.

This operation supported the Russian Red Cross to provide immediate relief to the affected population in the far-eastern part of the country where the main source of water, the river Amur, was polluted as a result of a massive release of chemicals in China on 13 November 2005. Almost 3,000 people received drinking water to survive the period when the toxic spill in the river passed through the populated areas. The distribution of drinking water was carried out over a month and a half, however, the operation was prolonged due to the threat of possible secondary pollution caused by ice-melting. The activities were completed by 28 June 2006.



Russian Red Cross volunteers distribute bottles of drinking water from the water distribution points to homes. Photo: Russian Red Cross

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## The situation

On 13 November 2005 an explosion at the petrochemical plant of Jilin Petroleum in Jilin, China released approximately 100 tons of benzene, nitrobenzene and other potentially cancer-causing chemicals into the river Songhua. This river merges with the river Amur in Russia, known as Heilongjiang river in China, forming a long stretch of the border between Russia and China. The watershed of the river Amur is 1,853 thousand cubic km, the total length of the river is 4,444 km. Water from the river Amur constitutes 95 per cent of the overall water consumption for one million people living in the Jewish Autonomous Region and Khabarovsk Krai in Russia's Far East. As many as 70 Russian towns, the biggest being Khabarovsk and Komsomolsk-na-Amure, and villages were affected by the pollution.

On 25 December 2005, the toxic spill reached Khabarovsk and was flowing through the city of Khabarovsk for five days, and then passed through Komsomolsk-na-Amure between 12 and 16 January 2006. The total length of the toxic spill was 180 km.

State and local authorities took measures to minimize the possible consequences by damming a channel, and by testing, safeguarding and filtering the water. As a result of these measures the pollution level of chemical substances such as benzene, nitrobenzene, chlorophenol and toluol in the river Amur in Khabarovsk and Komsomolsk-na-Amure did not exceed the maximum permissible concentration as had been expected and water supplies to Khabarovsk were maintained.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

During the days of the toxic spill passing through Khabarovsk, the Khabarovsk regional branch of the Russian Red Cross distributed drinking water to the vulnerable population. Around 3,000 vulnerable people of Khabarovsk were supplied with 45,000 litres of drinking water. The beneficiaries were elderly people living alone, disabled people living alone, homeless children, low-income multi-children families, low-income one-parent families and tuberculosis (TB) patients under the patronage of the Khabarovsk regional Red Cross branch.

### Progress towards objectives

#### Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion

**Objective:** To mitigate the impact of water pollution of the river Amur on the most vulnerable communities in the cities of Khabarovsk and Komsomolsk-na-Amure.

**Activities planned:** It had been planned to supply drinking water to six categories of the most vulnerable people (4,460 beneficiaries/2,663 families in Khabarovsk and 100 beneficiaries/40 families in the city of Komsomolsk-na-Amure). However, this objective was significantly reduced in terms of the number of beneficiaries as most of the population in the settlements affected did not in fact need additional drinking water, following good prevention measures for purifying the drinking water conducted by the local authorities.

The Khabarovsk krai branch of the Russian Red Cross therefore distributed 45,000 litres of drinking water (9,000 of 5-litre bottles) to 3,000 beneficiaries. The distribution was calculated according to the Sphere standards and amounted to 15 litres per person- 3 litres per person per day for 5 days. The water was to be used for drinking only.

The following table shows the most vulnerable groups who were reached by the distribution:

Groups of beneficiaries	Number of people received support	
	<i>planned</i>	<i>actual</i>
Elderly people living alone	2,553	975
Disabled people living alone	121	840
Street children	134	352
Low-income multi-children families	783	168
Low-income one-parent families	694	320
TB patients, who are under patronage of the Khabarovsk regional Red Cross branch	275	345
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,560</b>	<b>3,000</b>

As mentioned above, the number of beneficiaries was reduced, because the local authorities provided sufficient volume and appropriate quality of water for all population. Therefore, the

National Society assisted only people from the target groups, who reside in private houses and had difficult access to public water distribution points. According to this concept, the Russian Red Cross covered more people than planned from the following target groups: disabled people living alone, TB patients and street children and less from the others.

The distribution of drinking water started on 14 December 2005 and finished on 24 December, one day before the toxic spill reached Khabarovsk. Drinking water was delivered to 14 distribution points in the town of Khabarovsk, with volunteers then distributing the bottles from these points to the homes of the beneficiaries. Water was also distributed to health care facilities, such as TB dispensary, policlinics and homes for elderly people living alone.

The toxic spill was already diluted when it reached Komsomolsk-na-Amure and no emergency action was required. Due to the fact that no response was necessary in this area, the DREF allocation was not fully spent, with 17,861 Swiss francs left over. The Russian Red Cross was initially planning to use this money for developing, printing and disseminating 30,000 leaflets for the population residing in 70 settlements, located along the river Amur. These leaflets were envisaged as part of a strategy to reduce the consequences of possible "secondary pollution" of the river Amur caused by ice melting by raising the population's awareness.

However, the situation assessment conducted during March-May 2006 by the Khabarovsk regional Red Cross branch showed that further pollution had already occurred as a result of the ice-melting on the river Amur. The water supply for households was effectively secured from the tributaries of the river Amur and from underground wells. Therefore, the Russian Red Cross decided not to print and distribute the leaflets. Instead, some of the unspent money was used to increase the disaster response capacity of the seven far eastern regional Red Cross branches: Amur oblast, Kamchatka oblast, Magadan oblast, Sakhalin oblast, Khabarovsk Krai, Primorsk Krai, and Jewish Autonomous Oblast. For this purpose a seminar was organized between 24 and 28 June 2006 in Vladivostok on various topics regarding disaster response.

#### **Impact:**

Before the start of the distribution of drinking water, the Russian Red Cross had put effort into preparing for the operation. Trainings for Red Cross volunteers were organized, and some 210 volunteers were trained during 7 trainings. The recruited volunteers came from various walks of life, such as students and social workers. Among the topics were the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, objectives of humanitarian action, prophylaxis of food and water poisoning, and writing reports in standard formats. As a result of these trainings, information about the possible food poisoning caused by contaminated water was disseminated among the beneficiaries. All beneficiaries were informed about rules for using water at the time of the toxic spill affecting the water supply.

The Russian Red Cross improved its cooperation with the local authorities, including the ministries of health, social security and disaster. The Khabarovsk branch of the Russian Red Cross has gained new experience in emergency response in disaster situations and the volunteers have improved their skills in post disaster assessment, response and reporting. The branch's image among the population has also been enhanced.

A press release in Russian with information on the activities in Khabarovsk krai was prepared and posted on the federal, regional and Red Cross web-sites. Information about the programme activities and the distribution of drinking water were broadcast on regional TV five times.

## **Conclusion**

The local branch of the Russian Red Cross was able to respond successfully to the disaster. The mobilization of volunteers, the commitment of staff and volunteers all managed to ensure a high quality relief intervention despite the fact that the programme implementation was rendered more difficult by the climate conditions; the temperature being around minus 20-25 degrees Celsius, and the lack of vehicles. However, confirming information reported from the field and the implementation of the operation was slow partly due to the eight-hour time zone difference

between the region and Moscow. Coordination between the branch and the headquarters of the Russian Red Cross therefore needs to be improved in the future.

## How we work

*All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*

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

### For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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**International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

M05ME071 - Russia: Spill Of Toxic Waste

Final Financial Report

Selected Parameters	
Reporting Timeframe	2005/12-2006/9
Budget Timeframe	2005/12-2006/12
Appeal	M05ME071
Budget	APPEAL

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

**I. Consolidated Response to Appeal**

	Health & Care	Disaster Management	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Coordination & Implementation	TOTAL
<b>A. Budget</b>		36,000				36,000
<b>B. Opening Balance</b>		0				0
<b>Income</b>						
<u>Cash contributions</u>						
<i>DREF</i>		28,642				28,642
<b>C1. Cash contributions</b>		28,642				28,642
<b>C. Total Income = SUM(C1..C5)</b>		28,642				28,642
<b>D. Total Funding = B + C</b>		28,642				28,642
<b>Appeal Coverage</b>		80%				80%

**II. Balance of Funds**

	Health & Care	Disaster Management	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Coordination & Implementation	TOTAL
<b>B. Opening Balance</b>		0				0
<b>C. Income</b>		28,642				28,642
<b>E. Expenditure</b>		-28,642				-28,642
<b>F. Closing Balance = (B + C + E)</b>		0				0

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### III. Budget Analysis / Breakdown of Expenditure

Account Groups	Budget	Expenditure					TOTAL	Variance
		Health & Care	Disaster Management	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Coordination & Implementation		
A							B	A - B
<b>BUDGET (C)</b>		<b>36,000</b>					<b>36,000</b>	
<b>Supplies</b>								
Water & Sanitation	9,546		9,546				9,546	-0
Other Supplies & Services			161				161	-161
<b>Total Supplies</b>	<b>9,546</b>		<b>9,707</b>				<b>9,707</b>	<b>-161</b>
<b>Transport &amp; Storage</b>								
Storage	1,008		1,008				1,008	-0
Distribution & Monitoring	762		706				706	56
Transport & Vehicle Costs			89				89	-89
<b>Total Transport &amp; Storage</b>	<b>1,770</b>		<b>1,803</b>				<b>1,803</b>	<b>-33</b>
<b>Personnel</b>								
National Staff	793		314				314	479
National Society Staff			479				479	-479
<b>Total Personnel</b>	<b>793</b>		<b>793</b>				<b>793</b>	<b>-0</b>
<b>Workshops &amp; Training</b>								
Workshops & Training	14,450		9,569				9,569	4,881
<b>Total Workshops &amp; Training</b>	<b>14,450</b>		<b>9,569</b>				<b>9,569</b>	<b>4,881</b>
<b>General Expenditure</b>								
Travel	2,606		4,355				4,355	-1,749
Information & Public Relation	3,600							3,600
Office Costs	86		577				577	-491
Communications	618		623				623	-5
Financial Charges	191		-646				-646	837
<b>Total General Expenditure</b>	<b>7,101</b>		<b>4,909</b>				<b>4,909</b>	<b>2,192</b>
<b>Programme Support</b>								
Program Support	2,340		1,862				1,862	478
<b>Total Programme Support</b>	<b>2,340</b>		<b>1,862</b>				<b>1,862</b>	<b>478</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE (D)</b>	<b>36,000</b>		<b>28,642</b>				<b>28,642</b>	<b>7,358</b>
<b>VARIANCE (C - D)</b>			<b>7,358</b>				<b>7,358</b>	