



SOUTH AFRICA: EARTHQUAKE ***INTERIM FINAL REPORT***

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 183 countries.

In Brief

Period covered by this Interim Final Report: 10 March to 31 December 2005.

History of this Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)-funded operation:

- CHF 70,000 was allocated from the Federation's DREF on 10 March 2005 to respond to the needs of this operation.
- This operation was expected to be completed by 31 December 2005.

This operation is aligned with the International Federation's 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.

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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.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

Background and summary

On 9 March 2005, an earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale occurred at a mining area in Stilfontein as well as two surrounding towns of Klerksdorp and Orkney, some 200 km from Johannesburg, South Africa. Some 3,200 gold miners working in the mine in Stilfontein— who were initially trapped— were evacuated by the disaster management (DM) teams of the mining company and the local municipality. The South African Red Cross Society¹ (SARCS) was in close contact with the DM authorities of the mining area and mobilized a team of trained first aid staff and volunteers. The team was put on standby, in case its services were required.

In response to the disaster, the International Federation extended financial support through an allocation of CHF 70,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). This support aimed at supporting the SARCS to conduct an assessment of the consequences of the earthquake as well as to enhance disaster response capacities in the region. A plan of action was formulated with three main objectives:

- Conducting refresher training for new members of the RDRT;
- Procurement of regional telecommunication equipment;
- Reviewing and assessing the consequences of the earthquake in South Africa.

The southern Africa region rarely experiences earthquakes and this small-scale disaster highlighted the need to be alert. The Red Cross in the region realized the need to reinforce its Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) as a top priority. The second priority was to improve communications systems that weakened communication between national societies and the Federation regional delegation. Other issues included establishing a contingency plan for response, should such a phenomenon reoccur, as well as undertaking a risk analysis of the southern Africa region. The SARCS also realized the need to continuously obtain technical information from the Department of Geosciences (in Pretoria) and other local sources, in order to plan better for disaster situations.

Coordination

The RDRT training brought a number of stakeholders together to work together in reducing the impact of disasters on vulnerable people. Stakeholders in the training included the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), government officials, partner national societies (PNS), the Federation and the national societies.

Analysis of the operation - objectives, achievements and impact

Objective 1: Reviewing and assessing the consequences of the earthquake in South Africa.

South African Red Cross Society's national standing committee for disaster management developed a draft disaster management (DM) policy, with the cooperation of the University of Cape Town. The new policy was to be adopted at the February 2006 Annual General Meeting.

Objective 2: Procurement of regional telecommunication equipment.

The Federation regional delegation in Harare set out to improve communication networks at the regional delegation office by purchasing information technology (IT) equipment such as laptops, cell phones, desktops and memory sticks. This was to ensure effective communication with national societies in the region while at the same time strengthening disaster monitoring mechanism and effective information dissemination.

Objective 3: Conducting refresher training for new members of the Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT).

The Federation regional delegation conducted RDRT training in Windhoek, Namibia, from 18 to 30 September 2005. A total of 37 participants attended the training. They included staff and volunteers from the ten national societies (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe), the Federation regional delegation in Harare, government of Namibia employees and a disaster management officer from the West Africa region. The aim of the workshop was to increase the number of people

¹ South African Red Cross Society-<http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=158>

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trained in disaster response in the region, thus expanding and strengthening the RDRT. This was necessary as the region continues to lose trained members through turnover and death. The objectives of the training were:

- To strengthen participants' skills and abilities in disaster response in different disaster scenarios;
- To develop basic knowledge of disaster response protocols;
- To enhance participants' skills in coordinating and harmonizing with different stakeholders during disasters situations;
- To improve practical skills in assessments, developing plans of action, reporting, managing relief operations, logistics, media, finances and security;
- To enhance leadership and teamwork in delivering quality disaster response services.

The RDRT training took over two weeks, covering theory during the first week and practical field exercises in the remaining period. The training curriculum covered all the disaster response phases, as well as sharing lessons learnt from other countries. The theme of the 2005 RDRT training was "Managing disease outbreaks emergencies", focusing on disease outbreaks that are complicated by food insecurity as well as HIV and AIDS, which are the major disasters in the region.

Impact

The DREF funds enabled the South African Red Cross Society to develop its disaster management policy. The policy gives guidance and procedures for DM activities. SARCS also managed to send three officers to the RDRT training, thus improving its disaster response human resources capacity. The officers in turn shared their experiences and information with the other members of the NS disaster management team.

The RDRT training was of great benefit to the region as a whole, particularly in improving the disaster response skills of the RDRT members.

The purchase of IT equipment improved communication channels and networking between the regional delegation and national societies in the region.

Constraints

Lack of infrastructure and DM human resources at national level, as well as a weak national structure, made it difficult for the South African Red Cross Society to implement programmes. The national society does not have a DM coordinator to synchronize planned activities. Plans are in place to recruit a coordinator to assist the DM officers in the provinces.

Lessons learnt

The Federation southern Africa regional delegation continues to strengthen the national societies' disaster response capacities through RDRT training. The initiative came after the realization that there were serious constraints in responding promptly and effectively to larger-scale disasters in the region due to a lack of adequate competencies and capacities in the national societies. RDRT is a regional multi-sectoral team of trained members with competencies in water and sanitation (WatSan), health, relief, assessments, logistics, telecommunications, reporting, finance and administration. When a national society requests for regional assistance in a sudden or slow-onset disaster, the regional delegation alerts RDRT members, and based on availability and competencies, composes a team and coordinates its deployment to the affected country within the first 24 hours.

<p>Special note: This Interim Final Report is being issued without the financial statement. The Final Report, comprising of the financial statement and this narrative report, will be issued in due course.</p>

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