

DREF operation final report



Lao PDR: Floods

DREF operation n° MDRLA001
GLIDE n° **FL-2008-000131-LAO**
28 February 2009

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.

Period covered by this report:
29 August – 30 November 2008

Summary: CHF 200,000 was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 29 August 2008 to support the national society in delivering assistance to some 8,000 beneficiaries.

The Mekong River reached its highest peak in a hundred years during August 2008, causing damage to houses, infrastructure, and agricultural land. The DREF allocation has been used to support 1,656 households in the worst affected areas with relief food and hygiene kits. This operation was completed by the end of November 2008.



A DREF beneficiary gives a thumb print as proof of receiving rice at a distribution point in Ban Tha Xang, Pak Ngum district. (Photo by IFRC)

Total expenditure is CHF 174,056 and the remaining balance of CHF 25,944 will be returned to the DREF. Support for this DREF operation has been received from the Netherlands Red Cross and the Danish Red Cross, while the French Red Cross has pledged to replenish DREF.

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The situation

Tropical storm Kammuri lingered over northern Lao PDR for several days in August, causing the Mekong River to exceed historically high levels on 15 August, reported to be the worst in 100 years. The government of Lao PDR appealed for international assistance on 25 August. The worst affected areas were the provinces of Luang Prabang, Luang Namtha, Bokeo, Khammuane, Vientiane and Borikhamxai, and the capital city of Vientiane. It is estimated that a total of some 204,000 people in 866 villages of 53 districts across the country were affected by the floods. The flood-affected areas are among Lao PDR's most productive, normally supplying rice to the rest of the country. Damages to agricultural infrastructure, assets, and crops were severe. Food production was compromised, affecting availability and access to food during the ensuing season. Fortunately the fear of a second major flooding, as historical records have proven to be common, never materialized. Such an event would probably have severely hampered the DREF operation to a greater extent.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Early on in its assessments, the Lao Red Cross (LRC) identified food security as a major issue and decided to focus its efforts on relief food distributions, which was in line with the findings of the joint UN/government rapid assessment. As LRC focused its operation on food aid, it participated from the very beginning in the food security task force (an interagency working group). The task force worked on determining common standards for food rations and the coordination of operational areas to prevent overlapping of response activities.

The operation provided relief items (30 kilogrammes of rice per person, and one hygiene kit of two kilogrammes of washing powder and 10 soaps per family) to two of the five most severely affected provinces in Lao PDR. It achieved its objectives by distributing relief items to all identified households well within the operation's timeframe. The items were precisely in line with local needs, which have been confirmed by the beneficiaries themselves through beneficiary evaluation.

There is a clear need for improvement regarding establishing selection criteria and the process of identifying and selecting beneficiaries. In this instant, identification and selection was mainly done by local authorities and the process proved inadequate, resulting in the re-distribution of relief goods in some of the selected villages. In order to improve the Lao national society's management, it is necessary to find ways in which to facilitate the branches and make necessary resources available from the very beginning of a relief operation. This process should allow staff and volunteers to actively participate throughout the whole assessment, identification and selection process.

Progress towards objectives

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: To support families with rice and hygiene kits in three districts in Vientiane province and the capital city of Vientiane. The aim was to reach a total of 8,000 beneficiaries.

Activities

The following relief distributions took place between 11 and 21 October:

Province	District	Number of villages	Households	Beneficiaries	Rice (kg)	Hygiene kits
Vientiane capital	Pak Ngum	15	495	2,000	60,000	495
Vientiane capital	Sangthong	7	409	2,000	60,000	409
Vientiane province	Toulakhom	11	752	4,000	120,000	752
TOTAL		33	1,656	8,000	240,000	1,656

In order to learn as much as possible from this operation, all branches involved and headquarters reflected on what lessons could be learned from the implementation. Furthermore, a beneficiary survey was conducted based on interviews with individual beneficiary households and village leaders to ensure that all beneficiaries had received what they were entitled to, and that the identification, selection and distribution process had been transparent and efficient.

Impact

All 1,656 selected households were reached and received their relief entitlements of 30 kilogrammes of rice per person, and one hygiene kit per household. This means that 8,000 beneficiaries, about 20 per cent of all the 40,000 people identified by the rapid assessment as being in need of relief food, have received rice through DREF support.

From the beneficiary evaluation, there are clear indications that the operation had a positive impact on their lives. Many changed from being in a state of food deficit and exercising coping mechanisms, including reducing food intake before the distributions, to one where almost all had enough rice to see them through to their next harvest while at the same time, improving their diets. Beneficiaries were able to spend their limited financial resources on things other than rice which meant that they could supplement their diets or buy other

necessities. It safeguarded them from having to borrow money or sell off productive or household assets in order to buy food, which could have sent families deeper into poverty and impeded their recovery process.

Challenges

LRC faced its main challenges during the initial phase of the operation while identifying and selecting beneficiaries. Due to the lack of field presence of staff and volunteers, the Lao national society could not support district officers and village leaders to the extent needed. This was mainly due to lack of financial means available from headquarters during this phase.

Conclusion

Overall, the DREF operation has been successful, especially when considering that this was the first time LRC has executed a relief operation of this magnitude. LRC achieved all the objectives within the timeframe of the plan of action. Through well organized and managed distributions that put the beneficiaries at the centre of all activity, LRC succeeded in delivering relief items to all selected households in a way that earned the high praise of beneficiaries. Furthermore the whole operation was seen from the beginning as an exercise in *learning by doing*, and LRC have improved both knowledge and skills through this operation. These issues are further covered by a DREF *lessons learned* brief and an evaluation of LRC's relief distributions.

Lessons learned:

- LRC should continue in its efforts to improve the communication between headquarters and branches as well as between branches and district offices and villages. Any verbal communication and instructions should preferably also be put in writing to ensure that the message can be received and relayed without misunderstanding.
- There need to be clearer directions/instructions from the LRC coordination team to all involved about both the criteria (which must be very clear) and the process itself of how identification and selection of beneficiaries should be done.
- Village leaders especially need to be given support from LRC during beneficiary identification and selection so they can avoid conflicts within their communities, which might lead to re-distributions and possible hard feelings.
- There is a clear need for LRC to increase its field presence of staff and volunteers during beneficiary identification and selection in order to give such support to district officials and village leaders.
- To be able to increase their field presence during the early stages of a relief operation, the LRC branches must be facilitated with clear guidance and enough resources to be able to leave their offices and go for meetings and field trips (i.e. money, fuel), and have the possibility to have effective communications with district officials and village leaders (i.e. money for phone calls)
- The LRC leadership should look into the possibilities of how such financial preparedness to quickly release funds to branches can be made possible through special procedures or emergency funds or any other possible way to ensure that branches can actively participate in assessment and selection without having to wait for external funds to reach LRC. This can be part of LRC's contingency planning process.
- In order to ensure full ownership of a relief operation, LRC must become less dependent on local authorities. Here there is a clear scope for increasing the volunteer base of LRC which could be a great asset when required to participate during assessments and beneficiary selection.

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 (NGOs) 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

MDRLA001 - Laos - Floods

Final Financial Report

Selected Parameters	
Reporting Timeframe	2008/8-2009/3
Budget Timeframe	2008/8-2008/11
Appeal	MDRLA001
Budget	APPEAL

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

I. Consolidated Response to Appeal

	Goal 1: Disaster Management	Goal 2: Health and Care	Goal 3: Capacity Building	Goal 4: Principles and Values	Coordination	TOTAL
A. Budget	200,000					200,000
B. Opening Balance	0					0
Income						
<u>Other Income</u>						
<i>Voluntary Income</i>	200,000					200,000
C5. Other Income	200,000					200,000
C. Total Income = SUM(C1..C5)	200,000					200,000
D. Total Funding = B + C	200,000					200,000
Appeal Coverage	100%					100%

II. Balance of Funds

	Goal 1: Disaster Management	Goal 2: Health and Care	Goal 3: Capacity Building	Goal 4: Principles and Values	Coordination	TOTAL
B. Opening Balance	0					0
C. Income	200,000					200,000
E. Expenditure	-174,056					-174,056
F. Closing Balance = (B + C + E)	25,944					25,944

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III. Budget Analysis / Breakdown of Expenditure

Account Groups	Budget	Expenditure					TOTAL	Variance
		Goal 1: Disaster Management	Goal 2: Health and Care	Goal 3: Capacity Building	Goal 4: Principles and Values	Coordination		
A							B	A - B
BUDGET (C)		200,000					200,000	
Supplies								
Food	150,000	139,703				139,703	10,297	
Other Supplies & Services	15,000	11,681				11,681	3,319	
Total Supplies	165,000	151,384				151,384	13,616	
Transport & Storage								
Distribution & Monitoring	10,000						10,000	
Transport & Vehicle Costs		1,737				1,737	-1,737	
Total Transport & Storage	10,000	1,737				1,737	8,263	
Personnel								
National Society Staff	3,500	6,197				6,197	-2,697	
Total Personnel	3,500	6,197				6,197	-2,697	
Workshops & Training								
Workshops & Training	500						500	
Total Workshops & Training	500						500	
General Expenditure								
Information & Public Relation	1,500	946				946	554	
Office Costs	2,500	1,814				1,814	686	
Communications		439				439	-439	
Professional Fees	4,000						4,000	
Financial Charges		199				199	-199	
Other General Expenses		28				28	-28	
Total General Expenditure	8,000	3,425				3,425	4,575	
Programme Support								
Program Support	13,000	11,314				11,314	1,686	
Total Programme Support	13,000	11,314				11,314	1,686	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (D)	200,000	174,056				174,056	25,944	
VARIANCE (C - D)		25,944				25,944		