

CAMEROON: FLOODS

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The Disaster

During the first week of August 2000, Douala, the main southern city and primary port of Cameroon, suffered from torrential rainfall, with 200 mm of rain falling during the night of 3 August. With the ground already waterlogged after a week of heavy rains, floodwaters swept through many parts of the city causing considerable damage. Most affected were the suburbs and shanty towns located on the outskirts of the city. Thousands of homes were damaged and more than 300 people were made homeless. To mount an effective response, the authorities created a crisis committee which included the Cameroon Red Cross Society (CRCS), supported by the Federation.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The CRCS responded immediately by evacuating the victims during the disaster and putting in place a plan of action to prevent the risk of epidemics and to improve the capacity of areas affected in managing in case of future floods. The plan was formulated based on the following elements:

- Phase 1: distribution of blankets on 10 August to 100 victims sheltered at the Douala naval base.
- Phase 2: reinforcing the operational capacity of the Wouri departmental committee - from 11-16 November thirty first aid volunteers living in the affected zones participated in an emergency first aid workshop. The training addressed two objectives: community-based first aid training, and hygiene and sanitation activities in the affected area with the participation of the local population. To carry out this work, the following supplies were procured: 30 shovels, 18 wheelbarrows, 30 rakes, 45 pairs of boots, 10 stretchers, 100 Red Cross identification bibs, and 500 litres of chlorine which were distributed and placed at the disposition of the Wouri (Douala) departmental committee.
- Phase 3: sanitation projects which included cleaning of drainage canals and water distribution point, and were stated at the end of September and continued until 6 January, 2001.

Assessment of the Operation

This operation generally had a very positive impact, resulting in:

- delivering the planned assistance to the intended beneficiaries.
- improving the image and visibility of the Wouri (Doula) branch of the CRCS.
- energizing the volunteer base with 800 volunteers playing an active role.
- training 30 volunteers to manage information campaigns, and to organize hygiene and sanitation activities.

The departmental committee responsible for the operation is preparing a follow-up plan of action. The planned procurement of impregnated mosquito nets did not take place, and the lack of transportation also caused constraints in implementing the operation.

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