



## PARAGUAY: DENGUE OUTBREAK

**DREF Bulletin**  
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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 185 countries.*

### In Brief

This DREF Bulletin is being issued based on the situation described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 50,000 (USD 41,000 or EUR 31,104) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to respond to the needs in this operation, or to replenish disaster preparedness stocks distributed to the affected population. This operation is expected to be implemented over 3 months, and will be completed by 29 April, 2007; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 29 July, 2007). Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

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.

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

- *In Paraguay: Dr. Luis Fernando Díaz de Bedoya, President of the Paraguayan Red Cross, email [crppcia@uninet.com.py](mailto:crppcia@uninet.com.py) phone (595) 2120 8199*
- *In Paraguay: Teresa Gamarra, Project Coordinator Paraguayan Red Cross, e-mail: [tgamarra@highway.com.py](mailto:tgamarra@highway.com.py) / [crpproy@uninet.com.py](mailto:crpproy@uninet.com.py), phone 595-971-271202*
- *In Peru: Susana Arroyo, Acting Head of Lima Regional Delegation; email [susana.arroyo@ifrc.org](mailto:susana.arroyo@ifrc.org) , phone (511) 221-8151, fax (511) 441- 3607*
- *In Panama: Stephen McAndrew, Coordinator, Federation Pan American Disaster Response Unit, Panama; email [stephen.mcandrew@ifrc.org](mailto:stephen.mcandrew@ifrc.org), phone (507) 316-1001, fax (507) 316-1082*
- *In Geneva: Olaug Bergseth, Federation Regional Officer, Americas Department, Geneva; email: [olaug.bergseth@ifrc.org](mailto:olaug.bergseth@ifrc.org) , phone (41 22) 730-4535, fax (41 22) 730-0395*

*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 current situation**

In January Paraguay has faced an epidemiological emergency due to the presence of the *Aedes Aegyptys* mosquito – which carries the virus that causes dengue - across the country. By the end of December 2006, the total number of confirmed cases in the country was 366. Throughout January, the number of cases of people with dengue increased to 1,000 - as confirmed by the Ministry of Public Health on 25 January - indicating that the situation had progressed to an epidemiological emergency. The capital city of Asunción still has the highest number of cases (78 percent of the total); however half of the country's health sector regions are now affected.

In April 2006, a similar situation occurred when cases of dengue were registered in Paraguay and other countries in the South American cone. This year the number of cases is much higher. The World Health Organization (WHO) has classified dengue as one of the greatest sanitation problems in the world.

The Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare declared an epidemiological alert, following the confirmation of 140 cases of dengue during the first weeks of January 2007 and the possibility of an epidemic outbreak of the fatal hemorrhagic strain of the virus. The Ministry declared an epidemiological alert in light of three factors: the rapid circulation of the serotype of the dengue virus, the existence of a large number of people susceptible to contracting the disease for a second time and large numbers of the transmitter mosquito. This has led to strict adherence to the measures outlined in the manual of clinical and diagnostic aspects of dengue fever and hemorrhagic dengue.

To date, three people have died from the fatal hemorrhagic dengue. The Paraguayan Ministry of Public Health confirmed on Wednesday 24 January that two minors, one aged seven and one aged 14, have also contracted the hemorrhagic strain of the virus. Both were since hospitalized at the Mother and Child Centre in San Lorenzo, after showing symptoms of the disease. Hospitals are strained caring for those who have been infected with the virus and those who are suspected of being infected.

In addition to the declaration of the epidemiological alert, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare has formed an inter-institutional technical commission to focus on the fight against the disease and they have also declared a national holiday to facilitate the task of cleaning up and eliminating the *Aedes Aegypti* larvae. To this effect, on Monday 29 January the government plans to mobilize 25,000 public officials, 60,000 teachers, military personnel, members of the police force and members of the Fire Brigade who, along with the Paraguayan Red Cross (PRC) and students, will take to the streets of Paraguay to carry out the clean-up operation and raise awareness through a campaign. In order to reach as many people as possible, brigades will be formed to cover two block areas. Asunción has 5,800 blocks and Central Asunción has 19,450. It is hoped that 2,200,000 people (40 percent of the country's population) will be reached, on clean-up day.

Authorities are also asking the population to participate in the clean-up effort in towns and cities across the country. The population has been advised to clean their houses, workshops and factories and to dispose of all forms of stagnant water where the *Aedes* mosquito reproduces, such as in vases for flowers and buckets.

Argentina has also been on alert and after a meeting between the Health Ministers of Argentina and Paraguay, a decision was made to intensify prevention measures and sanitary control across the shared border.



**The *Aedes Aegyptis* mosquito carries the virus that causes dengue**

## **Red Cross action**

The PRC has initiated a plan to mobilize volunteers to support the clean up day planned by the Ministry of Public Health. The National Society's twelve regional branches have been alerted to this mobilization, with a priority focus on the five regions bordering with neighbouring countries; Itapúa, Concepción, Ñeembucu, Alto Paraná and Amambay.

At the same time, a publicity campaign via mass media is being prepared for the prevention of dengue and for the voluntary donation of blood. A Plan of Action is being prepared for communities in Asunción, Greater Asunción and Central Asunción, under the slogan "safe communities are the healthiest." This Plan will be extended to five high-risk regional branches, and to other branches that wish to take part.

Starting on Monday 29 January, two medical attention centres will be set up at the Mother and Child Hospital, which is run and owned by the Paraguayan Red Cross, to assess and treat both children and adults on a 24-hour basis.

In order to support the PRC's Plan of Action in responding to the emergency, technical and financial support has been requested from the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) and from the Federation's Pan-American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU). On Sunday 28 January, a Disaster Management Delegate from PADRU will be deployed to support the PRC on its Plan of Action. A member of the Regional Intervention Team (RIT) specialized in public health will be mobilized to Paraguay in coming days.

To date, the PRC has identified the need for the following items and support to implement the Plan of Action and respond to the epidemiological emergency:

- Resources to produce promotional materials for radio, television and press, for a campaign on the prevention of dengue and the donation of blood
- Cleaning kits and protective gear for volunteer home visits
- Resources to finance the logistics, mobilization, communication and visibility of volunteers
- Medication and items for medical consultations
- Blood-bags for extraction and transfusion, test-kits and syringes

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