

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Chile: Floods

DREF operation n° MDRCL004
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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 and 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 update: 9 June to 9 July, 2008.

Summary: CHF 220,000 (USD 209,523 or EUR 135,218) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 9 June, 2008 to support the Chilean Red Cross in delivering emergency relief assistance to 4,000 beneficiaries.

Due to heavy rains, a yellow alert was issued for seven of Chile's 15 administrative regions by the Ministry of Interior, National Emergency Office (ONEMI) between 19 and 27 May, 2008. In the Maule region, the overflow of the Mataquito and Lontué rivers affected hundreds of families and led the Chilean Red Cross (CRC) to launch a DREF-funded operation for the distribution of emergency relief supplies for 800 families, along with support from PADRU personnel.

A detailed assessment, however, showed that most of the affected population's emergency needs had been met by the government. Therefore, the CRC shifted the focus of its operation towards addressing early recovery needs through the design and implementation of a cash transfer program.

The operation is expected to be implemented over three months, and will therefore be completed by 6 September, 2008; a Final Report will be made available two months after the end of the operation (by 6 November, 2008).

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An overflowed river in Molina.
Source: International Federation

The situation

From 19 May to 27 May, the Chilean government declared a yellow alert between the regions of Valparaiso and Los Lagos due to intense rain. In the Maule region, the overflow of the Mataquito River led to the

temporary displacement of approximately 1,500 families in Lincanten; in addition, the overflow of the Lontue River in the municipality of Molina led to the displacement of approximately 500 families.

On 3 June 2008 the National Emergency Office from the Ministry of the Interior (Oficina Nacional de Emergencia del Ministerio del Interior – ONEMI) established a Preventive Early Alert for the entire area between the regions of Ohiggins and Bio Bio due to the constant rain.

ONEMI distributed relief supplies through the municipal governments in the first two weeks after the flooding, and mobilized cleaning equipment to the affected zones and local firemen cleaned the streets and many of the flooded houses.

The recession of flood waters within the first few days allowed the displaced families to return to their residences and begin their immediate recovery activities. Due to economic factors and the loss of employment within the agricultural sector that offers work on a seasonal basis that coincided with the onset of winter, a large number of families was unable to replace their lost or damaged goods.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

At the onset of the emergency, the local branch in Curicó in the region of Maule had evacuated approximately 50 people. The CRC provided first aid care to the people in common shelters using Urgent



Chilean Red Cross volunteers performing assessments.
Source: International Federation

Medical Attention System ambulances (Sistema de Atención Médica de Urgencia – SAMU), installed a telecommunications system and carried out rapid damage and needs assessments in the affected areas.

Initially the CRC completed a plan of action that would benefit 800 families in the affected areas. The plan of action aimed to provide the affected people with psychosocial support and emergency relief items such as food parcels and hygiene kits.

A detailed household assessment carried out by Regional Intervention Team (RIT) members, and local Red Cross branch volunteers revealed that a significant percentage of low-income families did not have the resources to effectively recover from the floods and go back to their pre-disaster state.

The assessment focused on the two most affected communities of Licantén and Molina, while site visits and interviews in other disaster affected areas, including a 20km stretch of riverside communities within the municipality of Molina, were also conducted. Overall, the temporarily displaced populations were generally able to cope with the immediate effects of the disaster as a result of strong family and community connections, the ability to return to their properties within one to two days, church groups that provided clothing and a government distribution of relief items.

However, the assessment also revealed extreme levels of poverty within certain segments of the population, who would have a harder time recovering from the economic impact of the disaster. These populations were identified as the temporary agricultural workers in Molina who were without work for one to two weeks post-disaster; the residents of Licantén who work in coastal areas in summer months; others who were making the minimum wage (USD 250 per month); single mothers; people with disabilities and the elderly.

The distribution of emergency assistance by the well functioning ONEMI meant that most basic needs had been met. Rather, households identified as their primary needs the replacement of refrigerators, portable gas heaters, lost crops/seeds for small-scale family gardens, clothes, mattresses, money, furniture, and school books.

In some cases, the purchase of basic, prefabricated wood-panel houses (USD 500), provided by the NGO *Techo para Chile* (A roof for Chile) was considered by the residents in order to replace the damaged

properties of various sub-standard construction types, mostly made of adobe which had not eroded to the rushing waters.

Given the varying scope of the affected population's losses, the relatively small scale of an assistance programme (the assessment established that approximately 225 families met the CRC's criteria for vulnerability and assistance), it was determined that a cash transfer program would be the best way to meet their needs.



Chilean Red Cross volunteer performing assessments.
Source: International Federation

A study of the capacity of the marketplace to absorb a potential cash or voucher-based early recovery program was conducted with the local CRC volunteers. Interviews with community members and local officials, in conjunction with observations and participation in local markets revealed that these were well-developed and functioning normally two weeks after the disaster, with the only noted inflation being a 10-20 percent rise in the price of charcoal being used to dry the interiors of previously flooded homes.

A government programme to compensate merchants in Licantén who had suffered damage as a result of the floods was completed at the end of June and the markets of Molina had not been disrupted at all by the event. The markets in

both communities have the capacity to absorb extra purchasing power; Licantén, a community of around 30,000 inhabitants, counted 200 beneficiary families, and Molina, with approximately 7,000 inhabitants, counted the remaining 25 families. Given the small scale of the program and the relative strength of the local economy, risks of disruption were deemed to be minimal.

A well functioning banking system offered the possibility of implementing a cheque distribution, thus avoiding security risks related to transfer of cash. After consideration of the different alternatives, it was therefore determined that a one off distribution of cheques for the total value of the assistance, corresponding roughly to a monthly minimal wage, would be the way to proceed with the program.

On 29 June, a first pilot distribution of cheques to 22 families of Molina was carried out, with the remaining 200 scheduled to take place the following weekend. Constraints related to banking transfer procedures and mobilization of volunteers led to the establishment of this schedule.

58 percent (130 of 225 families) of the cheques will be written to the name of the women of the households, in an effort to ensure their participation in the allocation and use of the funds.

A household per household follow-up visit on the use of the cash transfer will be conducted by the HNS Bank and a PADRU Regional Intervention Team member/Disaster Management delegate at the end of July, to evaluate the impact of the programme. This will be done based on a pre-designed questionnaire evaluating the needs as identified by the beneficiaries and the subsequent purchases that were made with the Red Cross support.

A Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) will be conducted between 11 and 14 July by specially trained volunteers to establish further potential involvement of the Red Cross in the recovery of the communities, with particular attention being given to the educational sector. The results of the VCA will lead to the final plan of action for the DREF within one week of its completion.

Coordination and partnerships

The CRC staff, volunteers and International Federation delegates have been coordinating all relief actions with the government (ONEMI), state institutions, the Civil Protection System and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) present in the field.

State community social and health services, when informed of the program, even assisted the Red Cross in the identification of beneficiaries by leading them to the houses of people particularly affected by the disaster.

The CRC's communications and risk management plan was designed with the support of PADRU's information officer, while the overall plan of action was designed in close consultation with the Federation's Regional Representation in Lima to ensure its alignment with the Country Strategy. Input on beneficiary selection and targeting of the most vulnerable was also provided by the Humanitarian Principles and Values Programme officer in Lima.

Progress towards objectives

Cash distribution program

Objective: To support the rehabilitation process and to contribute to early recovery activities by supplying monetary resources to 225 of the most vulnerable families affected by the flooding in the municipalities of Lincantén and Molina.

Specific objectives

- Reinforce the economic security of the household;
- Contribute to safe living conditions through drying and repair of houses;
- Prevent the selling of assets to face the situation;
- Avoid health related issues through improvement of sanitary conditions;
- Allow for the restart of family-sized agricultural plots;
- Alleviate the effects of lost wages combined with material losses;
- Boosting of local economy.

Activities planned:

- Conduct surveys among the communities to learn what their immediate needs are for early recovery;
- Training of volunteers from the local branches to participate in the cash distribution program;
- Selection of the most vulnerable beneficiaries;
- Distribution of funds (in the form of checks) to the beneficiaries;
- Monitoring on the usage of funds by the beneficiaries.

With the cash distribution the affected families will be able to acquire the articles most important for their recovery. Each family has different needs since not all of them sustained the same kind of damages, therefore the cash will be used as each family deems necessary; either to repair homes, buy household items or to obtain sufficient resources to maintain their family.

Progress:

An initial pilot distribution of 22 checks was carried out on 28 June, and helped determine the best mechanisms (related to for example the logistics of the operation and the mobilization of volunteers) for the larger distribution to be carried out between 11 and 14 July. Progress towards further community recovery oriented activities will be based on the results of the VCA.

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

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.

Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

- 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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