

Operations update

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

West & Central Africa: Flood preparedness and response

Emergency appeal no MDR61003

Operations update n° 4

14 April, 2009

Appeal extension

This Emergency Appeal has been extended to the end of May 2009, to enable the response activities engaged for some countries in West Africa to be finalized. There is no need of budget extension to the appeal as all activities can be included in the existing budget.

Period covered by this update:

18 November 2008 to 28 March 2009.

Current appeal target: CHF 1,209,435 (USD 1,052,597 or EUR 797,044).

Appeal coverage: 100%; [<click here to go directly to the updated donor response report>](#)



A distribution point in Congo Brazzaville

Appeal history:

- This Emergency Appeal was initially launched on a preliminary basis on 11 July 2008 for **CHF 750,000** for 2 months to assist 47,500 beneficiaries;
- **CHF 483,047** was allocated from the Federation's DREF to support the national societies and contingency stocks;
- **Operations Update no 1** was issued on 14 August 2008;
- The Appeal was revised and extended on 11 September 2008, bringing the overall appeal budget to **CHF 1,082,233 (USD 983,845 or EUR 670,111)**, and extending the operation through the end of November 2008;
- The Appeal was again revised on 4 December 2008 and on 28 March 2009 bringing the overall appeal budget to CHF 1,209,435 (USD 1,052,597 or EUR 797,044) and extending the operation to 31 May 2009.

Summary: Climate predictions of particularly heavy rains for the 2008 rainy season in West and Central Africa (WCA) were realized, with rainfall reaching 500mm per day and flooding affecting river bank regions in several countries within the WCA Zone.

This appeal was launched to support the national societies to prepare and respond to flooding and related consequences. Some countries were less affected than others. Serious flooding has affected Benin, Togo, Cameroon and Chad. A separate appeal was launched for these two countries in Central Africa.

The appeal enabled the zone to train RDR Team Leader and action were taken for their rapid deployment to provide technical support in contingency planning writing or updating, and pre positioning of emergency stocks in Dakar, Accra and Yaoundé. The stocks of relief items provided by the appeal have been used to support the Red Cross national societies providing humanitarian assistance to 44,875 beneficiaries affected by the floods caused by the torrential rainfall from July to December 2008. National societies have procured non-food items (NFI) such as bars of soap, impregnated mosquito nets, kitchen sets, sleeping mats and blankets, bowls and second hand clothes, corrugated iron sheets for shelter and have mobilized their volunteers and staff for the distribution to the most vulnerable families. To prevent potential outbreak of epidemics, trained volunteers have been carrying out health education and good hygiene practices dissemination in the target communities.

This action by the Red Cross contributed to alleviate the sufferings of targeted beneficiaries. The global strategy prepares communities and local Red cross to respond in a timely and efficient manner to disasters within the very first hours of the disaster and to reduce the number of DREF request and the assistance cost. Most local branches, together with communities, have experience on Early Warning-Early Action (EW/EA) based on climate prediction information and national societies are getting more visibility at country level.

This appeal has been extended to the end of May 2009 to finalize the watsan kit trainings in Togo; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation, by the end of August 2009

[< Click here for contact details;](#)
[here or here to view the seasonal forecasts maps>.](#)

The situation

The African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD) weather seasonal forecasts for July, August, and September 2008 indicated that the northern part of the West Africa region was likely to experience "wet" situations, the middle would experience "very wet" situations, while "near normal" situations would be expected in the south. The forecast for Central Africa for October to December 2008 stated that in general, the sub-region would be characterized by normal to excess rainfall. Extreme events might occur, particularly floods, mainly in the Volta region. These predictions were confirmed by the series of floods that occurred during the year. The following table summarizes the number of affected people per country:

Countries	Number of affected families
Benin	1,548
Burkina	142
Cameroon	5,100
Central African Republic	190
Chad	8,118
Congo Brazzaville	101
Democratic Republic of the Congo	675
Ghana	82
Guinea	840
Guinea Bissau	150
Liberia	68
Mali	200
Niger	860
Senegal	2,936
Togo	7,143

To alleviate the sufferings of affected persons, the Red Cross national societies in the affected countries developed and implemented plans of action which have been supported (kind and or in-kind) by the International Federation Zone through an emergency appeal.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The overall West and Central Africa Zone strategy for the 2008 flood season was based on “Early Warning – Early Action”. The prediction received at Zone level from ACMAD and Columbia University IRI was shared with national societies and Disaster Management (DM) focal points in flood prone countries. This information was made understandable for communities and sent to Red Cross and Red Crescent branches, local partners and local authorities. All actions were based on the adapted Early Warning System in place in each country. Trained volunteers in each flood prone country organized awareness campaigns and helped communities to undertake the appropriate community-based actions to reduce the impact of the floods.

Prior to the flooding, and based on the seasonal forecasts, the following preparedness activities were undertaken:

- Organization of a flood preparedness workshop to elaborate plans of action to map risks, development and use early warning systems (EWS), and devising Red Cross branch alert systems;
- Organization of a regional disaster response team leader training organized for 15 regional disaster response team (RDRT) members ready to be deployed within 48 hours after a disaster;
- Administrative arrangements (travel visas and insurance) made for RDRT to be rapidly deployed during floods;
- Development of flood contingency plans with national societies in Senegal, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Gambia, Niger, Mauritania, Nigeria, Ghana and Burkina;
- Launching of an Emergency Appeal for stock pre-positioning in Dakar, Accra and Yaoundé to have the emergency stocks of relief items near affected areas and allow a rapid response;
- Organization of a pilot shelter training workshop in collaboration with the shelter department in Geneva and Mali Red Cross for 20 participants in Bamako;
- Dissemination of the seasonal forecast, through national societies and Movement networks and also through partners and donors networks such as USAID, Participating National Society (PNS's), and local donors;
- Sharing of weekly meteorological predictions for precipitation from ACMAD and IRI with national societies to promote proactive action;
- Development of a pilot EWS with Togolese Red Cross;
- Technical support to national societies affected by floods (for example DREF's for cholera in Benin);
- Contributing to the rehabilitation of houses, distributing non-food items (NFI) to affected people and cleaning gutters in order to prevent the outbreak of waterborne diseases. The Red Cross also planted sward and “Tonkin” as a means of preventing subsequent landslide, with the full participation of local authorities and populations.

Overview

The Senegalese Red Cross Society (SRCS) supported by the Federation carried out an evaluation mission in the most flood affected zones of Dakar (Diamaguène, Pikine, Guédiawaye, Dalifort, Sam Sam and Diacksao). With the support of the Federation, the national society distributed sets of two treated mosquito nets and two sleeping mats to each of the 20 displaced families. More than 3,400 affected persons have been registered. Sensitization activities carried out covered water and sanitation (watsan), prevention of malaria, basic health rules and diseases related to stagnant water. A joint Federation and Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)/USAID field visit resulted in USAID supporting the Federation and the Senegalese Red Cross with USD 50,000 to support non-food items distribution and health and hygiene promotion to prevent epidemics of water-borne diseases.

In Benin, the Red Cross of Benin in collaboration with local government authorities had carried out two preliminary assessments of the situation in the affected areas. Red Cross volunteers have registered 525 most vulnerable affected families of 4,660 persons using the selection criteria of family size, age, pregnant women and nursing mothers. The Red Cross has strengthened the capacity of 30 selected Red Cross volunteers through training in registration, warehouse management and distribution techniques in conformity with Federation standards. The training was facilitated by two Red Cross volunteers who had previously received RDRT training. Through the support from the International Federation, the national society has procured and distributed Insecticide Treated Nets (ITN), blankets, bowls, and plastic plates and spoons to the registered 525 households.

The Togolese Red Cross Society (TRCS) has conducted an assessment of the flood situation in the affected communities in collaboration with local authorities and community leaders. The national society mobilized and conducted refresher training on how to complete a registration card that enabled the collection of reliable statistical information. The Togolese Red Cross Society assisted affected persons in evacuating some of their belongings and the communities left their homes for safer places because of the early warning campaigns carried out by members of the mothers' clubs. The Federation played a coordination role, and established a coordination mechanism. The Federation and RDRT members facilitated the coordination process and the work of other partners to assist the most vulnerable. With support from the International Federation, the TRCS procured and distributed ITN, kitchen sets, sleeping mats and blankets bowls and second hand clothes.

In Gambia, the Zone supported the Gambia Red Cross Society to assist 50 displaced families through the provision of NFI. The WCA Zone provided funds, technical support and relief items through the revised emergency appeal. These included buckets, soap, water tabs and jerry cans (see below watsan section for distribution details). Additional Financial support of CHF 10,000 was provided for local procurement of additional relief supplies (corrugated iron sheets) and to cover the cost of distribution and community sensitizations.

In Central African Republic, stock of relief items were locally procured and distributed to 159 families. They included: 200 blankets; 200 sleeping mats; 2,100 bars of soap, and 10 buckets. An RDRT was deployed to support the national society to distribute NFI, and to support the implementation of a distribution plan. Both the NFI and operational costs for distribution are covered by the appeal.

Ghana Red Cross Society (GRCS) carried out community awareness raising activities in flood prone communities, mainly in the area often affected when dams in Burkina Faso are opened. The GRCS district branches conducted an intensive education campaign to sensitize communities on prevention measures. Farmers were being educated on the risks of farming close to river banks, and those living on low lying lands are being advised to move upland and farm in areas not prone to floods. Communities were also advised to reinforce their roofs, and build embankments along their walls to strengthen them. It is encouraged that each family devises an evacuation plan in readiness for any emergency. In Accra the emergency response teams encouraged communities in flood prone areas not to dump refuse into the gutters and develop evacuation plans. Sensitization activities probably reduced the potential effect of floods and the effects related to the opening of the dam in Burkina Faso.

In Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Guinea, and Liberia national societies responded to the floods and provided assistance to affected persons. Additional assistance from the Federation was considered not necessary because of the strong capacity of the national societies in disaster management. National societies' actions included: assessment, provision of locally procured non-food items, first aid, sanitation, sensitization, monitoring, shelter, and assisting affected populations to move their belongings from damaged houses. The Red Cross Society of Niger received USD 50,000 from the US Embassy in Niamey to assist the most affected populations in three communes. An appeal was launched for Chad and Cameroon to address additional needs for affected populations. The Burkina Faso Red Cross reported 30 deaths in the North region due to landslides. After heavy rains in the capital Ouagadougou, the local Red Cross carried out an assessment. They identified 112 affected families and provided with first aid, and food and non-food items. The Burkinabe Red Cross Society's capacity was sufficient to respond to this disaster.

In Mali (Gao), 200 families were affected in Camara, Lambidou and Fatao. Over 500 houses collapsed and 86 granaries were destroyed. The zone worked with ICRC to support the plan of action to cover the needs of affected people with basic non-food relief items.

In Chad, Government authorities conducted an initial assessment of the situation. Médecins sans frontières (MSF) and the Red Cross also assessed the situation and implemented assistance through Chad and Cameroon appeal. Red Cross volunteers distributed 1,667 blankets, 1,660 buckets and 915 tarpaulins to 1,660 families. The distribution of these relief items contributed to preventing the outbreak of respiratory and other flood-related diseases in the affected localities. The zone deployed a RDRT to support mainly the national society's recovery plan of action through the present appeal and local funds. The operation also contributed to polishing the image of the Red Cross of Chad.

In Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), with the support received from WCAZ, the Congolese Red Cross (CRC) mobilized 41 teams composed of 35 Red Cross volunteers to provide assistance to flood-affected people in Brazzaville. These teams distributed non-food items, including 450 blankets, 230 cooking kits, 450 impregnated mosquito nets, 25 buckets and 1,475 bars of soap. All the items purchased were not distributed. Fifty (50

blankets, 50 impregnated mosquito nets, five buckets and 125 bars of soap were left and pre-positioned in the warehouse of the Congolese Red Cross for subsequent interventions. In the area of water and sanitation, the volunteers of the Congolese Red Cross planted over 100 m² of sward and “Tonkin” as a means of stabilizing the soil and preventing subsequent landslide, with the full participation of local authorities and the populations. They cleaned gutters in four councils, namely Yorro, Mpila, Mougali and Talangai. The Red Cross also carried out advocacy activities which resulted in urbanization work by the government in the affected localities. Red Cross volunteers conducted seven sensitization sessions, reaching 3,678 people with hygiene and sanitation messages. Congolese Red Cross also participated, alongside with Government agents, in the exhumation and burial of over 200 corpses that had been excavated by flood and landslide.

Progress towards objectives

Relief distributions (basic non-food items)	
Objective: To contribute to improving the living conditions of 8,975 families (over 44,875 people) through the distribution of basic need items.	
Expected results	Activities planned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most affected households are identified, selected and registered; • Volunteers and NS staff are retrained on registration of beneficiaries based on international standards/best practices; • Distribution activities are handled in conformity with the Federation standards; • Distribution activities are monitored, assessed and well reported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting new evaluations of the situation; • Updating the list of the most vulnerable people; • Updating the needs; • Purchasing the items to be distributed; • Organising Red Cross volunteers ahead of the distribution sessions; • Following up the distribution and reporting on the distribution; • Assisting the populations in putting in place a community-based flood-oriented Early Warning/Early Action; • Advocating before administrative authorities and partners for sustainable action to be taken against floods and landslide which have become recurrent in the zone.

Impact: All the activities planned in this sector have been carried out, and this contributed to improving the living conditions of the beneficiaries. The victims of floods were at the risk of getting infected with respiratory diseases as they had been made homeless. The beneficiaries appreciated the efforts of the Red Cross and pledged its cooperation in the implementation of activities intended to alleviate their suffering. Red Cross volunteers contributed to setting up a flood early alert system monitored by the populations themselves, volunteers and local authorities. The strategy prepares communities and local Red Cross to respond in a timely and efficient manner to disasters within the very first hours and to reduce the number of DREF request and the assistance cost related to floods impacts or consequences. Most of local branches of Red Cross together with communities are experienced on Early Warning - Early Action (EW/EA) based on climate prediction information and the national societies are getting more visibility at the country level.

Challenges

- The bad state of roads leading to the target communities and the limited capacity of local market in non food items supplying often delayed distribution;
- Although a lot is being done by national societies in the area of disaster management, increased efforts need to be made in the sector of reporting, which is a serious problem likely to affect subsequent operations.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion

Objective: Prevent the outbreak of water borne diseases and other epidemics in the affected neighbourhoods.

Expected results	Activities planned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watsan supplies to the most affected households have been procured and distributed; • Wareness campaigns on good hygiene practices, water and sanitation among the target communities in collaboration with local NGOs have been carried out ; • The affected populations have been assisted to purify their drinking water; • The capacity of Red Cross volunteers in water treatment and sanitation has been strengthened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying new water points and wells, as well as latrines to be disinfected; • Organising Red Cross volunteers into groups prior to the sensitization campaigns. Focusing on the hygiene rules to be respected, especially in the neighbourhoods surrounding the cemeteries where corpses are exhumed and buried. Brazzaville volunteers have already been trained to that effect within the framework of the cholera operation which is ongoing; • Acquiring hygiene and sanitation materials; • Treating water wells and points, disinfecting latrines, in collaboration with the populations.

Impact:

The activities carried out in this sector contributed to meeting the objectives of the assistance, i.e. to prevent the outbreak of water borne diseases and other epidemics in the affected neighbourhoods. Volunteers of the Red Cross national societies cleaned gutters treated contaminated water sources and rehabilitated the latrines that had been damaged by floods. People in the areas of this operation now have access to potable water and appropriate latrines. Populations have learned how to manage subsequent floods and therefore prevent the outbreak of flood-related diseases. However, it was realized that there is a serious water and sanitation problem in many Red Cross Branches, which needs to be tackled if the lives of thousands of people must be protected. Long term plans of action are currently being prepared in collaboration with local authorities and Government to propose an adequate solution to the problem. If these plans of action are implemented, it will get a long way to solving the floods problem which has become recurrent within the zone as a whole and in west cost in particular.

Challenges

- There is a real hygiene and sanitation problem in the affected localities and intensified sensitization efforts are required to enable the populations to adhere to and get involved in community-based sanitation activities;
- The awareness of the communities needs to be raised regarding the risks surrounding them, as well as the need for them to get involved in mitigation activities.

Lessons learned:

- Based on the lessons learned from the 2007 floods in West Africa, the Zone has been able to mobilize resources to respond to floods;
- Climate information is a good tool to improve and adapt response strategy in terms of disaster management.

Regional Issues

- A portion of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) stock in Dakar, labelled with Spanish Red Cross stickers, has been distributed in Gambia and Senegal in response to floods (see earlier appeal documents for details);
- The Danish Red Cross provided financial contribution and also replenished a portion of sub-regional contingency stocks: 7,200 jerry cans, 2,500 tarpaulins, and 8,000 blankets;
- The British, Canadian, German, Japanese, and Netherlands Red Cross Societies provided generous financial support through this Federation Emergency Appeal;
- The Finnish Red Cross provided funds and stock of relief items;
- USAID Senegal also provided financial contribution to the operation in Senegal through the Federation; funding of 50,000 USD was provided to complete assistance provision to flood affected communities in terms of health training and NFI stock transport and distribution costs.

Conclusion

The actions and activities implemented through this appeal, helped to increase national societies response capacity to conduct effective assessments that support appropriate response and implementation in collaboration with Government and local embassies, PNS and other humanitarian partners. The zone's support, enhanced the visibility of the national societies by demonstrating their preparedness and relief capacity.

Beyond these technical responses, the Appeal flood 2008 enabled the WCA Zone and the whole Federation to position itself in the area of EW/EA and the use of climate information to improve and adapt response strategy.

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

Global Agenda Goals:

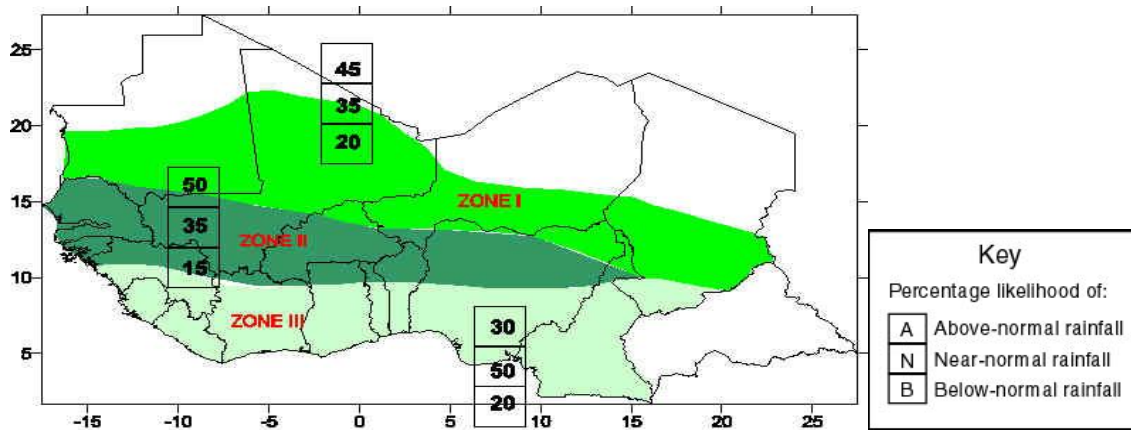
- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- 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:

- **In Dakar:** Alasan Senghore, Head of West and Central Africa Zone, phone: +221.33.869.36 40, Fax:+221.33.820.25.34, email: alasan.senghore@ifrc.org, Fax: +221.22.860.20.02; Youcef Ait-Chellouche, Disaster Management Coordinator, email: youcef.aitchellouche@ifrc.org Phone: +221 33.869.36.44
- **In Geneva:** David Lynch, Operations Coordinator, email: david.lynch@ifrc.org; phone: +41.227.30 46.75.
- **In Dubai:** Sera Coelho, Mobilisation Officer, Regional Logistics Unit Dubai, email: sera.coelho@ifrc.org , Phone: +971.4.88.33 887, Fax: +971.4.88.32.212; Mobile: +971.50.81.84.254

The figure below shows the rainfall forecast for the period in the sub-region (West Africa).



Map 1: Probabilistic forecast map of precipitation for the July-August-September season, 2008 (Conditions predicted: Zone 1-Wet; Zone 2-Very Wet; Zone 3-Normal). Source: ACMAD

The figure below shows the rainfall forecast for the period in the sub-region (central Africa).

- **Zone I** covering the coast of Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo will be characterized by normal to excess rainfall.
- **Zone II** covering the centre of southern Cameroon, north-east Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, through the centre of the Congo and southern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) will be characterized by normal rainfall.
- **Zone III** covering the north and east of Cameroon, the far north of the Congo, CAR, central and eastern DRC will be characterized by normal to excess rainfall.

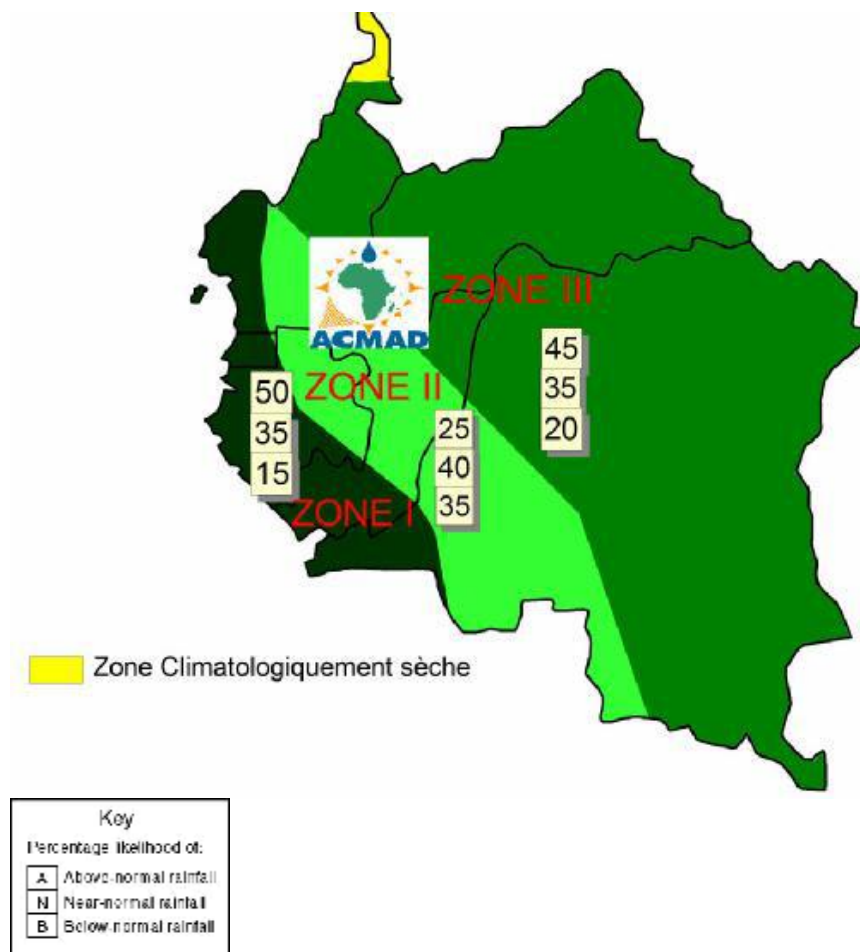


Figure: Precipitation Forecast for the period October, November, December 2008 in Central Africa. ACMAD