

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Egypt: Cairo Rockslides

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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: 10 September to 18 September, 2008.

Summary: CHF 249,198 (USD 221,153 or EUR 156,260) was allocated from the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 10 September 2008 to support the Egyptian Red Crescent (Egyptian RC) in delivering assistance to some 500 families (3,000 beneficiaries).

This update provides information on the emergency operation the Egyptian RC is implementing since 6 September, assisting 3,000 beneficiaries in the affected area. This operation is expected to be implemented in two months, and completed by 10 November, 2008. In line with the International Federation's reporting standards, the final report (narrative and financial) is due 90 days after the end of the operation (by 10 February, 2009).



A temporary camp was erected by the Egyptian Red Crescent in the Duweiqia area to accommodate the families

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The situation

At least eight gigantic boulders, many of the size of small houses, fell onto the impoverished Manshiyet Nasser Shantytown on the outskirts of Cairo on 6 September 2008. The devastating rockslide left 98 dead and 72 injured; and 100 to 150 families lost their houses, in addition to being trapped beneath the rocks. Residents of the area believe that some bodies are yet to be recovered.

Due to the complexity of the disaster and the difficulty for heavy machinery and equipment to access the site, civil defense rescuers had no tools to move the rubble, though they used sniffer-dogs in a desperate bid to find victims. They were supplemented by army units and Arab contractors bringing heavy machinery capable of lifting the rocks. To avoid hampering rescue operations and to be able to cut a railway line in order to gain access to the site with the fear that more rocks might slide down the face of the cliff, families were evacuated

to a tented camp in nearby Al-Fustat district erected by the army, while other families were taken to another camp erected and managed by the Egyptian RC in Manshyet Nasser.

The government announced the end of the rescue operations in Duweiqa on 16 September, ten days after the disaster. Tempers flared as family members began digging themselves to find the loved ones. The government promised to provide housing for those left homeless and compensation for families of the victims. A full review of housing settlements built through the country without construction permits was announced by the prime minister, as well as the creation of a commission to study the area and identify houses most at risk to further landslides. The cause of the rock fall remains unclear and investigations are continuing.

Coordination and partnerships



Volunteers participated in clearing the site

Egyptian RC, as part of the National Emergency Task Force, attended all meetings ensuring a strong coordination for the organization of the emergency operation. A meeting was held within the National Society headquarters under the presidency of Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, President of Egyptian RC, with the following government representatives:

- Minister of Health and Population
- Minister of Housing
- Minister of Local Government
- Minister of Solidarity
- Governor of Cairo

The meeting was attended as well by several Egyptian RC board members and representatives of the youth who participated in all activities related to the emergency

situation. It was agreed to establish a coordinating committee chaired by the vice governor of Cairo governorate and that Dr. Moemena Kamel will represent Egyptian RC in this committee.

Within three days, the government provided water, electricity and other necessary infrastructure to the blocks of new apartments built to accommodate the inhabitants of the slum areas of Makkattam hill. 960 apartments could be made available immediately for lodging.

On 13 September, families were transferred to the new apartments starting by the Al-Fustat camp, which included 135 families that were evacuated to avoid further risk. 111 more families who were later evacuated were also transferred to the same apartments block areas. Families in Manshiet Nasr camp whose homes were destroyed by the rockslides were transferred to another apartments block area on 14 September. These amounted to 144 families, who were originally cared for by Egyptian RC in the Manshyet temporary camp. Since these families lost all their belongings, the National Society provided them with the basic furniture and equipment.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Egyptian RC staff and volunteers have been through rotation teams delivering 24 hours services to the affected families on the different sites of the operation (in the camp, on the site of the disaster, at the morgue and in the hospitals providing first aid, psycho-social support, supporting families in the registration and other administrative matters). The deployed volunteers present on the emergency site have been asked to withdraw from the site when the search and rescue work ended. The tent in the Zeinhom morgue was closed on 14 September and the Manshyet Nasr temporary camp was closed on 16 September. Since the end of the search and rescue work, the relocation of the families and the closing of the temporary camps, the National Society staff and volunteers continue their work, having moved to the areas of the new apartments, where families were accommodated.

On 17 September the National Society, headed by Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, held a meeting to finalize plans to help the devastated families. *"I promised the afflicted families that we will solve their problems within days in cooperation with other [government] agencies"* said Mrs Mubarak, stressing that 2,000 residential units were ready for families and 3,000 more are due to be completed in the last phase of the Suzanne Mubarak Compound.

A special questionnaire was prepared for each family and fully filled by the volunteers indicating the age, profession, situation of each member of the family including school children. The same formats were updated for the 90 families who moved to the new apartments block. The Egyptian RC, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, is currently identifying schools in the area where it is possible to relocate pupils. Schools are to start on 20 September and it is important as part of restoring normal living conditions to ensure that children go back to schools. In addition, Egyptian RC is also looking at the possibility of providing transportation for the school children and procuring school materials (clothes, books, pen, etc.) for them.

Egyptian RC is purchasing extra furniture to cover the needs of the affected population. It will also purchase new materials to replenish all equipments that were distributed from its strategic reserve (tents, pillows, mattresses, bed sheets, kitchen equipments, floor mats, clothes, etc). There is a need to replenish 50 tents since those removed from the camp can not be used further.

In addition, psycho-social support to be provided to the families affected during the re-settlement phase is one of the most important activities and requires support from the volunteers.

Progress towards objectives

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: The specific quantity and quality of goods are distributed to the beneficiaries, according to the assessment and selection criteria that identified actual needs and vulnerable groups.

Activities planned:

- Re-evaluate the needs assessment conducted by the volunteers based on the latest developments.
- Re-locate the families based on the registration of the families in the temporary camp and distribute the food on the basis of the lists provided by the authorities.
- Replenish the National Society stocks as the tents, blankets, ground mats and mattress provided are not sufficient to host the new families.
- Distribute meals once a day during the Ramadan period.
- Start the relocation settlement and distribute basic items to the families (as mentioned in the DREF operation report, the support provided for the temporary camps was planned maximum for seven to 10 days in agreement with the local authorities).

Progress and impact:

Egyptian RC volunteers are involved in registering the donations provided to the families. Questionnaires were prepared for the families to list their needs. National Society volunteers were trained for supporting the families in filling the form, collecting the data, registering other donors' contributions and in analyzing the data. Based on this information, the basic relief package has been determined. These packages were assembled by the National Society volunteers and distributions were organized at the temporary warehouse for the families.

The basic relief package per family includes four mattresses; four pillows, four bed sheets and blankets; one dining table and four chairs; kitchen kits; waist disposal containers; clothes; two floor mats; and hygiene kits including towels, soaps and detergents. In the meantime, the Egyptian RC volunteers continued to provide ready-made meals and water to the families.

Conclusions and recommendations of the needs assessment conducted by the Egyptian RC volunteers were presented and discussed at the National Society and National Task Force meeting. Key players' plans and activities were adjusted through a governmental coordinated approach.

The government provided a temporary storage to support the Egyptian RC in their distribution of basic relief items, furniture and equipments on the new areas of re-settlement. The National Society could move and store some relief items from its own preparedness stocks. Basic living facilities have been provided to the 144 families in their new apartments.

Thanks to the quick release of DREF funds, Egyptian RC could start procuring additional relief items to cover the needs identified for the re-settlement phase of affected families. Replenishment of Egyptian RC stocks is also planned.

Challenges:

The volunteers are operating in a difficult and emotional environment, with some families reluctant to be re-settled as they lost relatives, contesting the decision made to end the search and rescue work and

expressing their sadness and anger towards local authorities. The role of the volunteers is crucial as they are accompanying the families while they are settling in the new houses, helping them to restore normal living conditions, and providing several kinds of support services.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion

Objective: Safe water and adequate sanitation is provided for two weeks to the beneficiaries in the temporary camps.

Activities planned:

- With the support of local authorities and the army, provide safe water to 300 families during the period the systems are insufficient in the temporary camp.
- Provide potable water, appropriate sanitation and hygiene promotion (basic hygiene kits) to 300 families.
- Reconstitute relief stocks of Egyptian RC.

Progress and impact:

During the emergency phase, the Egyptian RC was supporting the Ministry of Health and the local population in urging residents of the area to head to the nearest health clinic to receive vaccinations in order to prevent infectious diseases. The governorate sprayed pesticides on the site due to the infestation of insects attracted by the decaying bodies beneath the rubble.

The National Society volunteers, entering and exiting the site, were wearing face masks as preventive measures. Hygiene kits were distributed to the affected families in the temporary camps in the Manshyet shantytown. New hygiene sets were distributed at the time of the relocation of the families in the new apartments.

Psycho-social support

Objective: Psycho-social support is provided to affected families.

Activities planned:

- Establish a psycho-social support cell in the temporary camp in order to provide the necessary support to the affected people, to their families and to help them recover from the tragedy.
- Reinforce a restoring family links (RFL) unit on the site to support families looking for missing relatives or friends or to inform families living in other provinces and governorates.

Progress and impact:

The main work of the volunteers during the emergency phase was to provide psycho-social support to the affected people on the site, within the psycho-social support cell established in the temporary camp and the central morgue. The support was directed to the people directly affected by the disaster but also to the families and neighbors who arrived on the site looking for their relatives and friends.

With the closure of the temporary camp and the end of the rescue work, the volunteers left the camp and the morgue. They continue to visit injured people in the hospital and concentrate their efforts to help the families to settle in their new apartments.

The National Society is very soon planning a session gathering all volunteers and staff involved in this operation. An emotional debriefing will be organized to support the volunteers and to acknowledge the remarkable 24 hours job accomplished by them in this tragic environment. The climate on the site in which the staff and volunteers were operating was very tense, with residents of the shantytown being in shock, disbelief and emotions running high against authorities, accusing officials for being slow in their rescue work.

Regarding the RFL activities, the volunteers have supported the affected people to get into contact with their families living in different governorates as well as to respond to queries on registered people who lost their lives. As an example, one of the injured victims was a six years old orphan child who lost his parents under the rockslides. Egyptian RC volunteers succeeded in reaching his relatives who accepted to take care of him. The National Society is planning to support his relatives through an income generating project. There are two other similar cases being investigated.

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:

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