

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Kazakhstan: Mine blast

DREF operation n° MDRKZ001
GLIDE n° AC-2008-000008-KAZ
Update n° 01
15 May 2008

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: 17 January to 30 April, 2008.

Summary: CHF 43,626 (USD 38,437 or EUR 26,233) was allocated from the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 17 January, 2008 to support the Red Crescent Society of Kazakhstan in delivering assistance to 191 families affected by the mine explosion.

A psychosocial support team was formed of 13 staff and volunteers of the regional Red Crescent branch in Karaganda and trained by specialists from the Russian Red Cross. Following the screening of all 191 affected families (757 people) on the accident site the newly formed team has been prioritizing the longer-term support during the recovery period to the selected 44 families at home and through self-support group activities. The psychosocial support of the National Society helps to reduce tension and distress in the aftermath of the accident and adapt to the changed life circumstances.



The newly formed team provides psychosocial support at home during the recovery period.

Photo: Kazakhstan Red Crescent

[<click here to view contact details>](#)

The situation

An explosion of methane gas in the Abay mine in Kazakhstan's Karaganda region and consequent fires on 11 January, 2008 left thirty miners dead. Out of the 191 people who were in the mine at the time of the explosion 161 were taken to the surface, with 14 taken to the hospital suffering from severe trauma. The mine was later flooded but the bodies of 21 deceased miners still remain in the mine.

Taking a longer term view, the mine will stay inactive and will most probably be closed. The mine management allocated money to buy apartments for the families of 30 deceased miners; on their request all apartments were bought in Karaganda city. By the end of April all affected miners have left the hospitals and

are undergoing registration as disabled because injuries do not allow them to continue working. Of the 161 survivors of the accident 147 have been transferred to other mines of Karaganda region.

Coordination and partnerships

The Red Crescent Society's Karaganda branch attended the interdepartmental coordination meetings convened by the Ministry of Emergencies after the accident. The Ministry of Emergencies further requested the National Society to assist in providing psychological support to the affected families, as this was considered the most urgent need of the affected population. However, the National Society had very limited capacities to respond to the needs for psychological assistance and further support required the involvement of experienced partners.

After the accident in Karaganda, the Russian Red Cross branch in the Siberian Kemerovo region came with a proposal to assist the Kazakhstan Red Crescent in coping with the situation, as it was similar to recent mine blasts in Russia. The Russian Red Cross has gained considerable experience in counseling people affected by mine explosions and has offered to help by providing consultancy, training and methodical support.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Karaganda branch of the Kazakhstan Red Crescent Society responded within hours of the explosion by setting up a post in one of the mine administration's buildings. Within days of the accident, the Red Crescent staff working at the post provided first aid and psychological support to the people who were waiting to hear news about their relatives caught in the mine. In addition, the National Society arranged space and facilities for people to sleep and relax and served snacks. Red Crescent staff and volunteers accompanied the relatives of the deceased and injured miners during funerals and visits to hospitals.

Progress towards objectives

Psychosocial support and counseling

Objective: To minimize the psychological effects in the aftermath of the mine explosion by providing direct individualized psychosocial assistance to 191 families for two to six months.

Progress and impact:

A team of 13 staff and volunteers of the Karaganda regional branch of the Kazakhstan Red Crescent Society was selected at the project site. On 17-20 February the specialists from the Russian Red Cross (Moscow) held an introductory workshop on psychosocial support (PSS) for the team. Between 20 and 26 February psychologists from the centre of psychosocial support in emergencies (Novokuznetsk) arranged a master class and practical training on how to work with families of the affected miners. Two staff from the National Society's headquarters have also been trained so that they can further develop the PSS service after the operation is over. All the participants of the training received certificates of the Russian Red Cross and the Kazakhstan Red Crescent.

After the training course each member of the PSS team received a set of materials including a guidance "*Psychological support for communities*", a module "*Psychological follow-up in emergencies*", a CD with the materials of the Russian Red Cross and additional materials like a map of psychological support, check list and debriefing map.

Following the training the new PSS team of the National Society examined the 191 families affected by the accident. Out of them 30 families (143 people) of deceased miners and 14 families (51 people) of injured miners were selected as requiring further psychosocial support during the recovery period. The selection criteria used by the team included the severity of stress and the capacity of people to cope with the psychological problems without medical assistance.

The newly formed team has been providing psychosocial support to the 44 families using various techniques such as individual and family discussions, walking, playing with children and looking through family photographs. While visiting the affected individuals at home a priority is given to involving people in social and voluntary activities. People are helped to understand that they are not alone in their grief and that they are able to support other people who need their help. For instance, women got involved in knitting warm clothing for orphaned children. In addition, the National Society has been following up with eight of the most

vulnerable families- those with many children, older parents, or having lost the principal breadwinner- by arranging extra visits, consultations with medical specialists and assisting with solving social problems.

The PSS team members have also accompanied the affected families as they dealt with the needs or obligations related to the accident. Thus, the team attended 30 memorial dinners, accompanied 6 visits to cemeteries and 13 visits to hospitals, referred 1 person to a medical specialist and rendered assistance in resolving the related issues with the government institutions.

Several self-support groups for people affected by the explosion have been organized. The group titled “*Why live?*” for 68 parents and relatives of the deceased and affected miners aged 43 to 71 aims at mutual help in overcoming the distress; people in this group have common views and are best equipped to give that kind of help to each other. The group titled “*I have myself*” encompasses 22 widows, former wives and other close relatives of the deceased miners aged 30 to 40. The group members work to find the inner resources for self-actualization and return to active social life. The group titled “*New life*” is meant for 15 daughters, sisters and brides of the deceased aged 22 to 35 and addresses the problems related to the loss of loved ones. The last group unites 14 widows and close relatives of the deceased aged 40 to 55. This group’s activities seek to normalize the psychological condition of its members so that they can assist themselves and relatives during the recovery following their loss.

The affected people suffer from such psychological conditions as distress, despair, fear, stupor, hysterics and others. Many were shocked by what happened and could not cope with the shock without external support. Beneficiaries covered by the operation have been receiving assistance in overcoming the situation and adapting to their new living conditions. Direct communication between the Red Crescent psychosocial support workers and the affected individuals and families as well as the involvement in group activities helped to decrease the psychological tension and eliminate many of the above mentioned conditions.

There was a repeat workshop by Russian Red Cross specialists scheduled for April. However, in the course of consultations with Russian colleagues and considering the work plans of both National Societies it was decided to postpone the workshop until June. The rescheduling will allow further analysis of the activities carried out on the project site and defining the strategy for the future development of the PSS programme of the Kazakhstan Red Crescent Society.

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 the Kazakhstan Red Crescent Society: Vadim Kadyrbayev, Vice-President, Almaty, phone: 7727 291 81 51; fax: 7727 291 81 72; email: drvadimrc@mail.ru
- In the Kazakhstan Red Crescent Society: Nurlan Panzabekov, DM Coordinator, Almaty, phone: 7727 291 61 01; fax: 7727 291 81 72; email: panzabekov@rambler.ru
- In the Central Asia Regional Representation: Drina Karahasanovic, Regional Representative, Almaty, phone: 7727 291 41 56; fax: 7727 291 42 67; email: drina.karahasanovic@ifrc.org

- In the Europe Zone Office, Budapest, Slobodanka Curic, Disaster Management Coordinator, phone: + 36 1 248 33 05; fax: + 36 1 248 33 22; email: slobodanka.curic@ifrc.org
- In Geneva: Linda A. Stops, Operations Coordinator, phone: +41 22 730 4300, fax: +41 22 733 0395, email: linda.stops@ifrc.org

[<click here to return to the title page>](#)