


# Operations update

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Pandemic influenza: response and mitigation

Emergency appeal n° MDR00002  
GLIDE n° EP-2009-000084  
Operations update n° 1  
4 May 2009

**Period covered by this Ops Update:** 30 April to 4 May 2009.

**Appeal target (current):** CHF 5,000,000 (USD 4.4m or EUR 3.3m).

**Appeal coverage:** despite initial expressions of interest there has been limited donor response to this appeal (the donor response update will be updated accordingly and made available on the Federations website shortly). A number of partner National Societies are reportedly contributing support on a bilateral basis, and are encouraged to transmit this information, either to Geneva (Secretariat) or the respective Zone offices so that the information can be properly recorded and acknowledged in future Operations Updates.

### Appeal history:

- This Emergency Appeal was initially launched on a preliminary basis on 30 April 2009 for CHF 5,000,000 (USD 4.4m or EUR 3.3m) for 6 months.
- **Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF):** CHF 550,000 was allocated from the Federation's DREF to support the Mexican Red Cross to respond.

**Summary:** As of 4 May, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the number of confirmed cases worldwide has reached 1,000, with a total of 20 countries affected. It has been a challenge to develop and transmit consistent and

accurate information that does not provoke undue alarm while preventing complacency, but communication sharing has been one of the more vital and successful aspects of the global efforts to date. In a similar fashion, the Federation has strived to adopt and project the right tone in its message and response, with a balance between being proactive and timely yet measured and reassuring. The Federation's activities have been broadly focused on the following main areas:

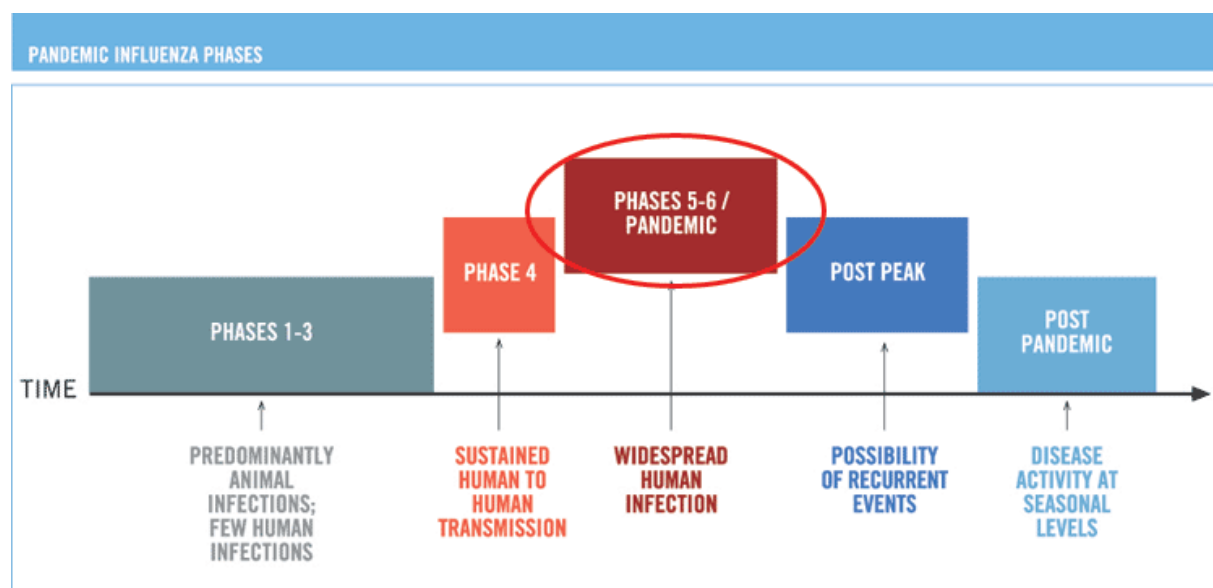
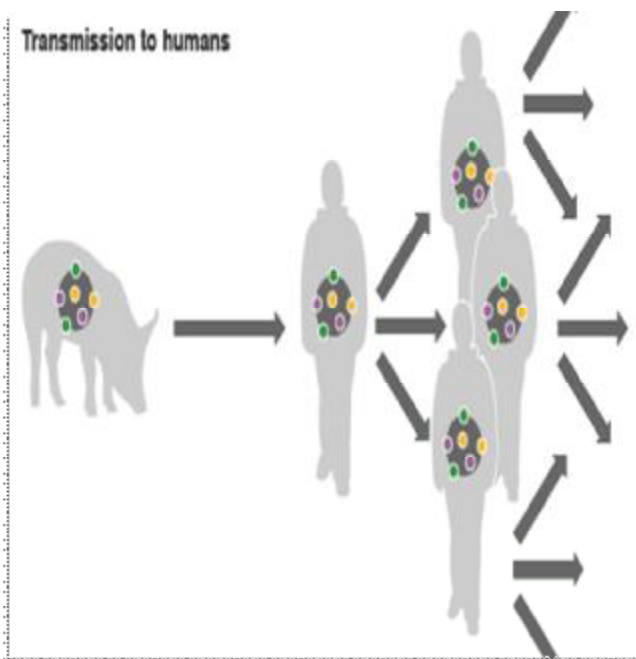
- Launch of a Preliminary Emergency Appeal, with an initial positive response from donors and other external entities.
- Through the Federation's Zonal offices, reinforcing and providing support to National Societies to develop and formulate their own response and preparedness capacities.
- Extensive communications efforts (both internal and external).
- Coordination (both internal and external).



## The situation

This Preliminary Emergency Appeal was launched to respond to the recent outbreak of H1N1 virus (the so-called 'swine flu') that originated in Mexico. The World Health Organization (WHO) raised its pandemic alert to level 5 (characterized by human-to-human spread of the virus into at least two countries in one WHO region). This is considered a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication, and implementation of the planned mitigation measures is short. As of 4 May, the WHO reported that the number of confirmed cases worldwide has reached 1,000, with 20 countries in three continents affected.

The Federation is using its comparative global advantages (network, experience, and preparedness tools) to support scaled-up efforts by its member National Societies to develop and implement successful measures leading to a viable risk-reduction and relevant national and global response capacity. These current ongoing and planned efforts need to be reinforced, and the International Federation seeks support to provide vital assistance to National Societies for an initial period of 6 months. The situation continues to evolve, and the preliminary nature of the Federation's strategy will be adapted according to the evolution of the outbreak.



## Coordination and partnerships

Those partner National Societies that are contributing support on a bilateral basis are encouraged to transmit this information either to Geneva (Secretariat) or the respective Zone offices so that the information can be properly recorded and acknowledged in future Operations Updates.

**ICRC:** meetings have taken place with ICRC colleagues working on their preparedness and response to the influenza situation. Coordination and communication are proceeding smoothly, and the following points are particularly noteworthy:

- Sharing of tools.

- The ICRC acknowledges the Federation's lead in the Influenza situation and would like to extend support where they operate including human resources and working on the ground.
- ICRC coordination delegates have been requested to communicate with Federation Zone and field offices to organize mutual work.
- Regular meeting are taking place at the Geneva level.

#### UN partner agencies:

- **WHO:** Acknowledging that reducing the threat of pandemics requires the international community to work in partnership, the Federation is taking action in close coordination with the World Health Organization at both the global and zonal levels to ensure a complementary approach.
- **WFP:** WFP is encouraging coordination with the Federation at the zone rather than country level. Coordination with Federation zones will facilitate WFP and Red Cross and Red Crescent planning at the regional and country level.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

### Progress towards objectives

The Federation continues to emphasize the rapidly evolving nature of the situation, and therefore the Federation's strategic approach of adapting activities flexibly to actual events and expert technical assessments. This appeal document will be adjusted accordingly. The Preliminary Emergency Appeal established the following three main objectives:

<b>Objective 1: Capacity building -- support National Societies' efforts to increase their capacity, working in partnership with their governments, to tackle influenza at community or local level in affected countries, thereby mitigating the threat of a pandemic and the challenges it may pose and reducing the risk of human cases.</b>	
<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Activities planned</b>
The response capacities of National Societies have been reinforced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved communications.</li> <li>• Developing or updating guidance on staff and volunteer health and protection.</li> <li>• Developing, printing and translating information and education materials and communication messages.</li> <li>• Advocacy for National Societies' role in complementing their government's efforts.</li> <li>• Mapping of National Society actions and identifying support requirements and actual involvement.</li> </ul>

<b>Objective 2: Provide resources and structural support so that countries and communities at risk of influenza can increase their preparations for a possible pandemic and are ready to train their staff and volunteers.</b>	
<b>Expected result</b>	<b>Activities planned</b>
Resources and structural support has been provided resulting in at-risk countries and communities have increased their preparations, including training staff and volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public awareness and education campaigns (hygiene &amp; health promotion).</li> <li>• Community-based First Aid.</li> <li>• Prepare country and community level contingency plans.</li> <li>• Training, establishing and organizing National Society and community's response teams (for example, National Disaster Response Teams, community response teams, etc).</li> <li>• Providing logistical support for procurement and stockpiling of emergency medical and non-medical items (masks, gloves, aprons, pairs of rubber boots, and hygiene supplies such as soap and disinfectants would be necessary to cover the needs of volunteers, staff and the general population for six months).</li> <li>• Increasing partnerships at the local level; and improve performance in community-based surveillance, social mobilization and community outreach activities.</li> </ul>

<b>Objective 3: Plan for and advise on Business Continuity Plan (BCP) initiatives at the global, zonal and National Society levels, thereby ensuring that essential services to communities and coordination of activities are supported or reinforced.</b>	
<b>Expected results</b>	<b>Activities planned</b>
BCP initiatives have reflected progress in supporting or reinforcing essential services to communities and coordination of activities.	Defining roles and responsibilities and identifying capacity needs; and considering organizational and “core business continuity” measures.

## Progress and challenges

**Federation Secretariat (Geneva):** The Federation’s Secretariat Business Continuity Plan (BCP) has been activated. This action is in line with the decision to declare a Phase Yellow within the Federation’s Pandemic Preparedness Phase System (PPPS) for Geneva-based operations. Guidance to explain and provide clear policy related to this decision and the Federations Pandemic Preparedness Phase System has been developed and disseminated. This also reflects a new and temporary addition to the Federation’s Security System to help senior managers in decision making.

Based on the recommendation of the Influenza Pandemic Technical Committee (IPTC) the requirements for protection (personal protection equipment, or PPE) to be made available to each staff member have been identified and communicated. In order to better plan and develop a procurement strategy aimed at ensuring that the required equipment is made available to all staff with the shortest possible time, Zones have been requested to confirm required information (e.g. number of National staff, local availability and capacity to procure items, etc.). Once this information is available, goods will be procured and delivered according to priorities and requirements.

**East Africa Zone:** the East Africa Zone Pandemic Preparedness Task force is meeting regularly to update and allocate roles for action. Contingency plans are being revised and updated. The Zone security delegate is leading in the preparation of contingency plans. Six of the 14 National Societies involved on H2P have been alerted. Meetings are being held with regional partners organised by the WHO pandemic focal person.

**Americas Zone:** National Society preparedness, capacity and response mapping efforts continue. A sample National Society contingency plan (based on the one from El Salvador) was distributed to all regional representations. Respective National Societies have been providing information of contact persons and coordination initiatives with governmental authorities and Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) representatives. Other actions have involved:

- Information to National Societies: messages were sent to National Societies about the developments of the swine flu and the work of the Americas Zone. All information available was shared with the ICRC cooperation coordinator, and Federation regional representations were instructed to establish contact with ICRC offices.
- Communications with ICRC: All the information available was shared with the ICRC cooperation coordinator and regional representations were requested to establish contact with ICRC offices.
- Communications with Geneva: Effective and timely information flow has occurred with Geneva-based colleagues.
- Communications and information: Press releases and key messages were prepared and sent to National Society communication and media officers and regional representations. A press release was posted on the Federation’s website [www.cruzroja.org](http://www.cruzroja.org) and sections were opened for information on Swine Flu. Information was provided to OCHA for the interagency info bulletin.
- Security: The Critical Incident Management document was adapted to the current situation, and reviews were conducted for medical evacuation procedures in countries lacking adequate hospital services. Staff and family information was updated. A security officer was identified for every Secretariat office in the Americas.
- Finance and admin: Staff support was designated to assist the Pandemic Preparedness planning.
- A National Society preparedness, capacity and response mapping template has been developed.

### **Americas Zone National Society action:**

- **Mexico Red Cross:** All volunteers and staff in the country’s 486 branches are in full alert with

specific recommendations for preparedness, prevention and response to cases. Mexican Red Cross closely coordinates with health authorities. The Red Cross runs 45 hospitals which operate normally. The Red Cross is also handling transport of patients in ambulances. Special attention is given to protect volunteers as well to avoid them being infected by the virus, which would prevent efficient emergency response should the situation further deteriorate. Another crucial activity is to inform communities about the danger and how best they can avoid being infected. 200,000 posters and 2 million leaflets are being printed with the support of the DREF for the Mexican Red Cross.

- **Costa Rica Red Cross:** The Red Cross is involved in providing care and transporting patients. Hygiene measures are being stepped up in all branches.
- **Colombian Red Cross:** The Red Cross has activated its contingency plan which is part of the anti-pandemic national plan of the social protection ministry. A permanent committee has been created. Activities include promotion and prevention, coordination with epidemiological surveillance committee throughout the country, information dissemination and development of internal capacities for staff and volunteers, adoption and enhancement of security standards in all activities, preparation and distribution of educational materials within communities.
- **American Red Cross:** The Red Cross has developed special web pages and documents to educate the public and disseminate information from appropriate government sources that includes preparedness measures and practical advice.
- **Canadian Red Cross:** The Red Cross is having regular teleconferences with all parts of the country and is ready to activate its pandemic contingency plan any time.

**Europe Zone:** a task force is meeting regularly to follow the Swine Flu situation, provide advice and technical support to National Societies and Federation field representations; coordination with UN agencies with an accent on WHO and UNPIC, and supporting the creation of preparedness plans in Federation offices. The Europe Zone has maintained touch with relevant organisations and is also attending key meetings. Daily Bulletins with information on the global and European contexts and highlights from National Societies are shared with all 52 European National Societies.

**Europe Zone National Society action:**

- **Italian Red Cross:** The Italian Red Cross is working closely with the relevant authorities and has already become operational in medical control of passengers and crews returning to Italy, thus establishing and maintaining the first isolation barrier against possible infection. The Italian Red Cross has activated its 2 taskforces specialized in the triage of passengers arriving in Italian airports from countries potentially at risk. The task forces, established two years ago in cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Health, are composed of staff and volunteers of the Italian Red Cross, who received specific training. The task forces are in charge of medical surveillance of passengers and crews in inbound flights, in order to guarantee a first isolation barrier, the screening of suspect cases, a very first sanitary isolation and the triage of the passengers to be taken to hospital.
- **Norwegian Red Cross:** The National Pandemic Preparedness Plan specifies several possible roles for the Norwegian Red Cross, which is basing its recommendations and information on advice from the central government Directorate of Health.
- **British Red Cross:** The British Red Cross has announced it is ready to respond if there is a large-scale outbreak of swine flu. The National Society works closely with the statutory emergency response services and health and social care providers. This includes providing a wide range of services to people at home, as well as first aid and support to the ambulance service.
- **Belgian Red Cross – Flemish Section:** In co-operation with the health authorities, Belgian Red Cross – Flemish Section -distributed flyers to all passengers arriving at the international airports from Mexico, USA and Cuba. The passengers are urged to contact a doctor immediately when they have any of the symptoms indicated on the flyer. A free-phone service has been established to enable visitors to contact the authorities should they need to.
- **German Red Cross:** The German Red Cross is working in close coordination with respective authorities at national and federal state level. It is encouraging people to maintain calm, pointing out that so far no cases have been detected in Germany. GRC advises individuals who have recently arrived from Mexico and have the flu symptoms to seek medical attention. The GRC is also conducting regular risk communication for all staff, volunteers and federal state branches; regular coordination meetings at HQ level; updating human resources planning to be prepared for potential staff shortages; and preparation to respond to media inquiries and to the public.

- **Bulgarian Red Cross:** A working group has been established internally with the participation of the Health, Disaster preparedness, Public Relations and the International Cooperation departments. BRC has established contact with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Emergency Situations to ensure regular information sharing. BRC also participates in the newly established crisis working group. Information on the swine flu outbreak has been distributed to Regional Councils. A leaflet in Bulgarian on the prevention measures is about to be issued and it will be distributed through regional branches to the population.
- **Cyprus Red Cross:** Cyprus Red Cross is in close contact with the Ministry of Health, and is preparing to distribute a leaflet to the general public.
- **Icelandic Red Cross:** A press release was issued. The Red Cross is part of the national response committee. All branches are on alert and are informed of their role in case a pandemic outbreak. A task force has been created at the national office to monitor the situation and take action as necessary. In case of a pandemic alert, the Red Cross will be responsible for running 24-hour information hotline and organize food distributions to families who confined to contamination wards.
- **Spanish Red Cross:** A press release was issued highlighting the coordination between the Spanish Ministry of Health and the Spanish Red Cross. SRC is also responding to numerous media requests for Spanish-speaking delegates in Mexico.
- **Finnish Red Cross:** A case of suspected Swine Flu was found in Finland (a person arriving from Mexico). The National Society website carries daily updated news stories about the situation in Finland and worldwide, as well as stories about Mexico Red Cross volunteers, link to IFRC website and information on "What to do" accompanied by photos. A hotline number is being created for the general public, with support from the Ministry of Social and Health.
- **Danish Red Cross:** Danish Red Cross ran an interview with their head of the disaster department who are disseminating a message to the effect that "that they have sufficient medical treatment and doctors, so there is no reason to panic and stay at home behind closed doors. Live your life normally and see a doctor if you feel ill."
- **French Red Cross:** Volunteers are helping to answer calls at the hotline set up by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They have also been asked to welcome passengers at airports coming from affected countries.
- **Serbian Red Cross:** Red Cross is a member of the Governmental body, Plan to send today first information to local branches and ask them to be members of local crises centers.
- **Romanian Red Cross:** The Red Cross has informed the branches on the influenza and is in touch with the Ministry of Health to provide extra support.

**Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Zone:** the following action have been taken: a committee of four was established at the zone office in Amman, composed of the zone health and care coordinator, the DM coordinator, health program coordinator in Jordan, and an advisor from the Jordan University. Two communications were sent to all National Societies of the region and all Federation delegations in the field, with the information received from Geneva as well as the updates from WHO. Contacts were also established with MDA in order to check the reported cases in Israel. Contact as established with the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) to provide any needed support for coordinating the work. The Federation has considered the establishment of a Task Force from some National Societies in order to look at cross-border coordination, and a meeting of the informal IASC MENA group on preparedness as well as with WHO regional office in Cairo is under consideration.

### **Southern Africa Zone:**

#### **Information Sharing**

- All information received from Geneva has been shared with Senior Management and Programme Management.
- The zone HR manager is prepared to notify all staff on the pandemic and to attach key messages that staff are encouraged to read, become familiar with and share with family and friends.
- Activation of DM Task Force (Pandemic Influenza) to meet initially 1-2 times per week or more as situation dictates.
- Posters on key precautionary measures to be put up in communal areas such as kitchen, bathrooms and photocopy areas.

#### **Contingency Planning / Security**

- The zone H2P coordinator, administration and human resources staff are revising the influenza pandemic contingency plan.
- Logistics to investigate and plan for local purchase of personal protective equipment as per Federation specifications.

#### **National Society Communication**

- The head of zone communicates directly with all Secretary Generals about the development of the situation and the support they can expect from the Zone.
- The Zone health and care programme is drawing up a plan to visit each National Society within the next 2 weeks to communicate messages and to have one focal person in each National Society designated.
- The Zone health and care programme will plan translations of key health messages in various national / indigenous languages.

#### **Strategic Alliances / External Relationships:**

- The zone H2P coordinator will participate in a South Africa Ministry of Health meeting on pandemic influenza on Monday 4 May.
- The zone health and care coordinator, in communication with OCHA, informed of our activities to-date and launch of appeal, and is ready to discuss the Federation's involvement in any regional coordination mechanisms that may evolve.

**West and Central Africa Zone:** While reports of cases in Africa remain minimal, the following actions have been taken:

- Reactivated the former AHI taskforce for the zone and produced a list of immediate actions to be taken.
- The zone office established a BCP last year and a working group of DM colleagues and H2P coordinator is currently updating the plan.
- Arranged for an all staff meeting for the zone office in Dakar.
- Equally communicated to regional representations and country delegations which were asked respectively to communicate this further to the National Societies.

**Asia and Pacific Zone:** regional and country delegations and National Societies have been provided with regular advisories/updates that highlight global developments, Federation Secretariat plans and suggested actions focusing on staff protection and prevention messages (the latter using tools developed through the H2P programme). Technical assistance was provided to the Federation's Bangkok and Beijing regional offices on preparedness actions, particularly protective supplies, Tamiflu and prevention efforts. Activities have also focused on liaising with National Societies in Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam to convey technical advice on preparedness. Current efforts include convening heads of zone units to agree on priority actions for service continuity and preparedness, communicating with field offices and National Societies, the designation of focal points, follow up preparedness and coordination activities done so far, as well as priorities and needs of National Societies.

#### **Asia and Pacific Zone National Society action:**

- **Australian Red Cross:** Australian Red Cross (ARC) set up a Swine Flu Task Force made up of key emergencies, health and communications staff. The ARC website and intranet have been updated with mainly health information. ARC is also monitoring the situation from both a domestic and international perspective. ARC is ready to provide a range of emergency services, including the National Registration and Inquiry System, and personal support if requested by States and Territories. A Swine Flu Q&A has also been prepared.
- **Japanese Red Cross (JRC):** A Swine Flu preparedness meeting took place in the JRC National Headquarters on 28 April for information management, monitoring and coordination. The Japanese Red Cross has activated the operational guideline to all 91 Red Cross hospitals in Japan. This guideline refers to medical checks and care for the flu patients, storage of medicines, prevention of infection within the hospital, health control of the personnel. Narita Red Cross Hospital, the closest hospital to the Narita International Airport, set up a consultation room for arrivals. Awareness and prevention pamphlets have been distributed to the public through the website. At 141 Red Cross blood collection centers, special instruction was given to collect blood from those who are suspected of carrying the virus.

## 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:** Flemming Nielsen, Head, Operations Coordination Team; phone: +41.22.730.42.33; email: [flemming.nielsen@ifrc.org](mailto:flemming.nielsen@ifrc.org)

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