

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

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CHOLERA

Information Bulletin N° 3/2002

Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: CHF 10,000

This Bulletin no. 3 is based on the latest update and details received from the field. Should the situation deteriorate further, the Federation may consider issuing an international appeal. Unearmarked funds are needed to replenish the DREF.

The Disaster

The cholera epidemic which struck the Kasai Oriental Province in mid-September 2002 continues to affect more people. According to the cholera “Crisis Committee” (referred to as “STOP CHOLERA”), by 19 November a total of 1,156 had been reported to be affected, while over 80 people are reported dead (the total number of cholera victims is unknown due to communications and access constraints, and ignorance and insufficient or lack of information on the epidemic. The epidemic also continues to spread to other areas such as the village of Luamuella located 30 kilometres away from Mbuji-Mayi, where 24 persons have been contaminated and 3 people have died.

Government, humanitarian and Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Ministry of Health, MSF-B and the Red Cross Movement (the national society, the Federation and the ICRC) appear to be the only agencies involved in the fight against the epidemic. MSF-B helps with basic drugs and the transport of bodies for burials. To cope with the patient overload, a centre has just been opened in the commune of Bipemba in Mbuji-Mayi where many contaminated persons have been placed. To date eight centres are receiving patients: Dipumba, Muya and Bipemba in Mbuji-Mayi and Tshilunde, Kabengele, Tshibile, Kabamba and Kamaleka.

The local DRC Red Cross branch trained 60 volunteers in preventive health, community health and first-aid both in Mbuji-Mayi and in the outlying villages. MSF-B has trained 50 volunteers in preventive health to fight the epidemic. With a total of at least 110 Red Cross volunteers, the local branch is significantly involved in sensitisation campaigns, burying corpses, disinfecting contaminated persons’ houses and in administering Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS). With the Federation’s financial and material support, the local branch is now to a certain extent able to deal and cope with the patient overload in Mbuji-Mayi as well in the outlying villages. With the outburst of cholera in Luamuella, Red Cross volunteers are intensifying sensitisation campaigns to mitigate the epidemic effects. Lack of logistic and communication materials remains a problem for the epidemic to be brought under control.

The Needs

With the funds released from the DREF the following materials have been procured or activities started:

- medical supplies and equipment for Cholera Treatment Centres (CTC's) where the contamination rate is high and where they are in such short supply.
- information, sensitisation and education campaigns in order to mitigate the epidemic.
- supplies for CTCs, including: communication materials, buckets, disinfectant, spraying machines (1 for each CTC), volunteers to reinforce staffing at CTCs.

There is an urgent need to continue:

- providing medical supplies and equipment for CTCs where materials are in short supply.
- purchasing additional sanitation materials such as buckets, bottles for ORS, cotton blankets, disinfectant, spraying machines (at least 1 for each CTC) and body bags.
- communications, information and education campaigns.
- providing means of transport (additional bicycles to add to the 6 already donated by the Federation for volunteers and either provide the means to rent a 4 WD vehicle, lease a vehicle, or purchase one for the local Red Cross).
- support volunteers with allowances for food and local transport.

The Federation has an open position for a health delegate to be based in Mbuji Mayi according to NAM recommendations. This will also reinforce the Red Cross capacity for disaster (especially epidemics) preparedness and response.

For further details please contact:

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>. For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

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