

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Bolivia: Dengue Outbreak

DREF operation n° MDRBO004
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Update n° 1
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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: 5 March to 13 April 2009.

Summary: CHF 140,437 (USD 119,658 or EUR 95,033) has been allocated from the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Bolivian Red Cross (BRC) in delivering immediate assistance to 9,000 households (approximately 44,000 beneficiaries).

Since October 2008, Bolivia is experiencing a dengue outbreak affecting six of the nine departments in the country. To date, 25 people have died as a result of haemorrhagic dengue fever and there are approximately 56,000 cases of unconfirmed classic dengue.

This update no.1 shows the progress made to date in this DREF operation among the affected population in the departments of Cochabamba, Beni and Santa Cruz. A Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member specialized in public health in emergencies (PHE) has been deployed to Bolivia to assist the National Society.

This operation is expected to be implemented over three months, and will therefore be completed by 12 June 2009; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 12 September 2009).



A Bolivian Red Cross worker performing inspections on possible mosquito breeding grounds. Source: International Federation

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The situation

Since October 2008, Bolivia has been facing a dengue epidemic. The departments of Beni, Santa Cruz and Cochabamba are the most at risk with a total of 279,120 people living in areas which have a high incidence of dengue fever. Due to this situation, the Ministry of Health and Sports declared a national alert due to the dengue epidemic on 12 January 2009.

This year at least 25 people have died because of haemorrhagic dengue fever, approximately 56,000 unconfirmed cases of classic dengue have been reported and 6,516 cases have been confirmed.

The dengue outbreak has surpassed the capacity of the national health system due to the high number of infected people. Although fumigations are constant, unless awareness-raising amongst the population takes place on vector control, the problem will still remain. The increased use of non biodegradable containers and inefficient discarding of solid waste have led to the creation of breeding grounds for the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. In addition, the high demand for medical services is putting pressure on the public health and social security system. The following table shows data as of 9 April 2009:

DEPARTAMENT	UNCONFIRMED	CONFIRMED	DEATHS
BENI	3,304	246	0
CHUQUISACA	1,085	290	1
COCHABAMBA	4,946	639	4
LA PAZ	1,115	504	1
ORURO	109	30	1
PANDO	1,246	42	1
POTOSI	50	20	0
SANTA CRUZ	40,227	3,939	17
TARIJA	4,085	806	0
Total	56,167	6,516	25

Coordination and partnerships



Coordination meeting between the RIT member and volunteers in Cochabamba. Source: International Federation

Since the onset of the emergency the Bolivian Red Cross has been coordinating activities at the national and departmental levels to address the dengue outbreak. The International Federation through its Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation for the Andean Region is also monitoring the emergency. In order to further support the Bolivian Red Cross, a RIT member specialized in public health in emergencies was deployed from the Colombian Red Cross Society.

The Ministry of Health and Sports has strengthened its capacity by procuring new fumigating equipment. An Emergency Committee (Comite de Emergencia, COE) was activated. Its main function is to coordinate and make resources available to respond to the emergency. Additionally, the

Integrated Strategy on Dengue Control and Prevention proposed by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) was adopted by the Ministry of Health; this is made up of six main components: 1) community communication and participation, 2) epidemiological surveillance, 3) vector control, 4) patient services, 5) clean-up of breeding grounds, and 6) laboratory diagnosis.

Several organizations, including PAHO, World Vision, the governments of Cuba and Venezuela are present in the field and have donated fumigation equipment as well as cleaning supplies. PAHO has mobilized health consultants to the department of Santa Cruz to support the activities planned by the Departmental Health Services (Servicios Departamentales de Salud – SEDES). World Vision is working on a proposal to provide assistance to present to its headquarters in La Paz. In addition, the Community Health and Mobilization Unit of World Vision (an NGO working in Bolivia) has completed a manual called “Everyone against Dengue” (Todos Contra el Dengue), that includes information on dengue prevention.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Bolivian Red Cross has been concentrating all its efforts on preventive and awareness-raising activities amongst the population through health brigades in the departments of Santa Cruz, Beni and Cochabamba. The BRC relief, disaster and health units have been monitoring the emergency through the nine local branches (one in each department). 60 volunteers, 20 in each of the three departments, will be mobilized and trained to provide support during the emergency response. Also, the BRC is closely coordinating actions with the COE in the affected departments.

The Bolivian Red Cross and the Swiss Red Cross have also been coordinating relief activities under the project known as “Plan 3000”. Plan 3000 is an urban settlement located in the department of Santa Cruz, where people were affected by floods during 1985. The area is characterized by high levels of poverty and its inhabitants are therefore extremely vulnerable to the dengue outbreak.



Bolivian Red Cross workers fumigating a home. Source: International Federation

Progress towards objectives

The plan of action prepared by the BRC, with support from the International Federation, includes the fumigation of 9,000 houses, to benefit approximately 44,000 people over three months. In addition, the BRC plans to distribute 1,200 insecticide-treated mosquito nets to vulnerable families. An awareness-raising campaign will also be implemented presenting key messages on how to prevent dengue amongst the affected families in the departments of Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, and Beni.

Relief distributions

Objective: The most vulnerable families with small children in the departments of Beni and Cochabamba will receive essential relief items.

Activities planned:

- Coordination meetings with local authorities to identify beneficiaries.
- Conduct rapid emergency needs and capacity assessments.
- Distribute insecticide-treated mosquito nets and jerry cans to families at high risk.
- Monitor and evaluate the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distributions.
- Develop an exit strategy.

Progress and impact:

On 12 March 2009, PADRU's Regional Logistics Unit in Panama dispatched 1,200 insecticide-treated mosquito nets and the Bolivian Red Cross stored them in its warehouse. In addition, the National Society has procured 1,500 jerry cans.

Originally, the BRC had planned to distribute the mosquito nets through the three local branches in the affected municipalities (within the provinces of Beni, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz). Since the government later provided information that the municipalities in Santa Cruz which were included in the BRC plan for distributions had already received relief items, the distribution plans had to be modified. Relief support is now focused on the departments of Beni and Cochabamba (the municipality of Chimore) to avoid duplication of efforts, since these have not received support from the government and other organizations are concentrating in different areas. Nevertheless, the same criteria for distribution will be ensured, giving priority to families with children and people who are ill.

The jerry cans will be distributed in the same locations as the mosquito nets.

Emergency health

Objective: 9,000 houses in the municipalities of 1 de mayo, Guayamerin and Chimore will be fumigated once a month during three months.

Activities planned:

- Bidding and procurement of equipment to fumigate houses.
- Training of volunteers on the proper use of the fumigating equipment.
- Coordination with local authorities in the three benefiting municipalities.
- Coordination of fumigation rounds with the Ministry of Health
- Fumigation of houses in the three selected municipalities.

Progress and impact:

Currently, the Bolivian Red Cross is in the procurement process of the fumigation equipment. In the meantime, the BRC is supporting the Ministry of Health fumigation rounds, as shown in the photo above.

Hygiene promotion

Objective: Increased awareness and prevention of dengue through the description of the symptoms to the most vulnerable through an awareness-raising campaign.

Activities planned:

- Identify three community coordinators, one for each department.
- Develop an Emergency Health training workshop focused on outbreak control.
- Identify and train 60 BRC volunteers and 45 Ministry of Health workers in the prevention of dengue.
- Deployment of a RIT member specialized in public health in emergencies.
- The BRC will coordinate with local authorities the design and implementation of the awareness-raising campaign.
- Agreements with private companies and radio media to promote the awareness-raising campaign.
- Launching of a national advertising campaign, including brochures with relevant information.
- Appointing of a health consultant to train BRC volunteers in the prevention of dengue.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Progress and impact:

Four workshops on dengue outbreak control have been conducted in Santa Cruz, Beni (29 participants) and Cochabamba (25 participants).

The local BRC branch in Cochabamba is organizing further workshops in Chimore.

BRC personnel specialized in dengue outbreak control will present a timeline of activities and a local assessment on how to prioritize training on epidemic profiling. The Bolivian Red Cross wishes to see if there is interest to support a study on the dengue outbreak to be conducted by local health authorities.

The affected communities have programmed coordination meetings including neighbourhood committees and provincial authorities (Chimore) for vector control activities. In addition, the BRC implemented an awareness-raising campaign called Together Against Dengue (Unidos Contra el Dengue) that includes brochures, stickers, notebooks and a new radio spot. Last year's television spot, elaborated with the support of the International Federation will also be used this year.

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

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