

# DREF operation update



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Benin: Fire

**DREF operation n° MDRBJ002**  
**GLIDE n° FRR-2008-000055-BEN**  
**Update n° 1**  
**10 June, 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:** 5 May to 30 May, 2008.

**Summary:** CHF 63,000 (USD 56,350 or EUR 38,181) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 5 May, 2008 to support the national society in delivering immediate assistance to some 1,000 beneficiaries.

The Red Cross of Benin has been given assistance to the victims of the fire in Donaten, a fishing settlement in Cotonou. In addition to the first aid service, the trained volunteers of the Red Cross have been delivering messages of good hygiene practices to the affected community. While registration of target beneficiaries was in progress, the national society has embarked on the procurement of non-food relief items for distribution in the first week of June. The impact of the Red Cross action has shown that people are now beginning to understand the essence of good hygiene practice.

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The fire has made many families homeless and vulnerable to epidemics

## The situation

During the night of 22 to 23 April 2008, a fire broke out in the densely populated fishing village of Donaten within the capital city of Cotonou. The fire caused extensive material damage and destroyed many houses. The cause of the fire is still unknown. According to the Red Cross of Benin, the disaster has claimed five lives, with 32 injured persons (hospitalized), and about 996 people made homeless.

The Ministry of Family Affairs deployed a team to assess the situation, and the government and authorities of the Cotonou municipality have provided limited food item supplies to affected families. The government has also decided to temporarily relocate the inhabitants of the settlements to a more suitable environment, but community members are reluctant to accept this decision because of their fishing occupation.

According to the Red Cross of Benin officials, the following non-government organizations have provided assistance to affected populations: IRAD-ONG (Institut de Recherche et Actions pour le Développement), CADEG-ONG (Centre d'Action pour le Développement), Alternatives Citoyennes, as well as GORREE-FRANCE that is an international organization.

Seasonal rains have started in Benin, and the situation of people affected by the fire is worrying. While some are sheltered by their relatives, the majority of the affected persons are living in temporary shelters made with palm leaves. Their main source of water has been spoiled, rendering populations vulnerable to water borne diseases and epidemics.

The Red Cross of Benin has mobilized and deployed its volunteers in the affected area. Volunteers have assessed the situation and have been providing first aid, psychological support and good health and hygiene education to the victims. With support from the Federation's DREF, the Red Cross is providing some basic non-food items to the affected families.

## Coordination and partnerships

With support from the West Coast regional office of the Federation, the Red Cross Society of Benin has been working in collaboration with the ministries of Health and Family Affairs to improve the situation of affected people. A team from the West Coast regional office has undertaken a mission to the Red Cross of Benin to assess the progress made so far and offered technical assistance in health and reporting related issues. The national society has also been collaborating with government agencies in sensitizing the community on how to prevent such disaster in the future.

# Red Cross and Red Crescent action

## Progress towards objectives

### Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

**Objective:** To reduce the vulnerability of the 996 people homeless (200 families affected by the disaster) by providing them with basic relief needs based on the assessment carried out and Federation approved distribution strategy.

#### Activities planned:

Activities planned	Expected outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase and distribute immediate non-food relief items to 200 families at the ratio of one tent and three blankets per household, one jerry can, one kitchen set and one hygiene pack per household;</li> <li>• Train and retrain 30 Red Cross volunteers to convey health and good hygiene messages to the affected community;</li> <li>• Carry out awareness campaign on the risks of diseases associated with the disaster in the affected community;</li> <li>• Sensitize the community on fire preventive measures;</li> <li>• Monitor and evaluate the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distributions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affected populations have received necessary immediate non-food relief items to sustain them during the rainy season;</li> <li>• The target populations have been sensitized on the risks of diseases associated with the disaster, and have acquired knowledge on good hygiene practices and preventive measures;</li> <li>• All necessary support is provided to the government agencies involved in the sensitization of the affected community;</li> <li>• The community is sensitized on the prevention of possible fire.</li> </ul>

### Progress and impact:

The Red Cross of Benin has commenced the process of procuring the non-food relief items. Interested suppliers have been asked to forward their bids to the national society. The final selection process is almost completed. Items such as tents, blankets, jerry cans, kitchen set and hygiene pack shall be available for distribution to the target beneficiaries in the first week of June.

The national society has conducted training for 25 volunteers (21 male and four female) in preparation for the distribution phase of the operation. They were trained in relief item distribution techniques and registration of beneficiaries. The training also focused on the good hygiene messages and preventive measures to avoid epidemics.

The trained volunteers have commenced sensitizing the affected settlement on good hygiene practices using the local languages to deliver their messages. The volunteers are employing the door-to-door and group discussion approaches to reach the population. Assessment carried out has shown that the community people are beginning to understand the importance of good hygiene practice.

## 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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