

# DREF operation update



## Benin: Fire

**DREF operation n° MDRBJ002**  
**GLIDE n° FRR-2008-000055-BEN**  
**Update n° 2**  
**14 July, 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:** 1 June to 10 July, 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 fire has made many families homeless**

The Red Cross of Benin continues to assist the victims of the fire in Donaten, a fishing settlement in Cotonou. With completion of identification and registration of the target beneficiaries and the procurement of some non-food relief items, trained volunteers started assisting some of the affected people in rebuilding their houses as the hygiene education exercise continues. However, the procurement and distribution of relief items have been delayed due to some logistical and cultural reasons. Some of these reasons necessitated the revision of activities planned for the operation. As affected population begin to understand the importance of good hygiene, they are also grateful to the Red Cross for assisting them in rehabilitation.

This operation expected to be implemented in two months will now be completed by 30 July, 2008 because of logistical and cultural reasons. In line with Federation reporting standards, the Final Report (narrative and financial) is by 2 September, 2008.

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## 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 unknown. According to the Red Cross of Benin, the disaster has claimed five lives, with 32 injured and about 996 people made homeless.

The Ministry of Family Affairs deployed its staff to assess the situation, and the government and authorities of the Cotonou municipality 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 cultural belief.

According to the Red Cross of Benin officials, NGOs such as IRAD-ONG (Institut de Recherche et Actions pour le Développement), CADEG-ONG (Centre d'Action pour le Développement), Alternatives Citoyennes and an international organization called GORREE-FRANCE have provided assistance to the affected populations.

Seasonal rains have started in Benin, and the situation of those affected by the fire is a source of concern. While some people are sheltered by their relatives, the majority of the affected persons are living in temporary shelter made with palm leaves.

The Red Cross of Benin has mobilized and deployed its volunteers in the affected area. They 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 basic non-food items to the affected families and assisting some of them in rebuilding their homes.

## 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 people affected by the disaster. A team from the West Coast regional representation was on a mission to the Red Cross of Benin to assess the progress made 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. In collaboration with local authorities, traditional chiefs and the entire community, the Red Cross has also been assisting some of the affected victims in rebuilding their houses. The participatory approach of the Red Cross has led to the selection of the 45 target beneficiary families.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

### Progress towards objectives

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

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

| 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 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>• Monitor and evaluate the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distribution.</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 people.</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 completed. Items such as jerry cans, kitchen sets and hygiene packs are now available for distribution to the target beneficiaries.

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 technique 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 people. Assessment carried out has shown that the community people understand now the importance of good hygiene practice.

### Recovery and Rehabilitation

**Objective: To reduce the vulnerability of the people mostly affected by the disaster by assisting them in rebuilding their houses.**

| Activities planned   | Expected outcomes  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Procure and distribute some building materials to rebuild 45 most affected houses;</li><li>Train 25 Red Cross volunteers on building techniques;</li><li>Assist 45 households in the reconstruction of their houses.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reconstruction materials are procured and distributed to beneficiaries;</li><li>Red Cross volunteers have enhanced their knowledge in shelter;</li><li>45 houses have been reconstructed and handed over to beneficiaries.</li></ul> |

### Progress and impact:

The short-listed suppliers of construction materials have supplied roofing iron sheets, nails and wood for the reconstruction of 45 houses. With the support of a volunteer who had benefited from a Federation organized shelter workshop in 2007, 25 other volunteers were trained on the techniques of construction and deployed in the affected community to assist the community in the reconstruction exercise. Five volunteers assisted in reconstructing one plank house per day leading to the completion of five houses per day.

The collaboration between the community and the Red Cross volunteers has facilitated the reconstruction process. The strategy adopted has led to the completion of the 45 houses and the beneficiary households have started occupying their reconstructed houses. The community and government authorities appreciated the support from the Red Cross as the only organization that fulfilled its promise to assist the victims. The community appreciated the participatory approach adopted by the Red Cross during this phase. In appreciating the support of the Red Cross, the Ministry of Health has sent a thank you message to the board and management of the national society.

### Challenge:

One of the major challenges faced during this period was the high cost of building materials. This has limited the reconstruction assistance to only 45 houses.

### 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

#### Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact

vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

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 Benin:** Hubert Chabi, Executive Secretary, Red Cross Society of Benin, Porto-Novo; phone: +229 97277975; email: [chabihubert@yahoo.fr](mailto:chabihubert@yahoo.fr)
- **In Nigeria:** Chinyere Emeka-Anuna, Acting Head of Federation West Coast Regional Office, Lagos; phone: +234 12. 695. 228; Fax: +234. 12. 695.229; email: [chinyere.emekaanuna@ifrc.org](mailto:chinyere.emekaanuna@ifrc.org)
- **In Dakar:** Alasan Senghore, Head of Zone, West and Central Africa Zone, phone: +221 33 869 3640, Fax:+221 33 820 25 34, email: [alasan.senghore@ifrc.org](mailto:alasan.senghore@ifrc.org); Norbert Allale, Disaster Response Delegate, West and Central Africa Zone, email: [norbert.allale@ifrc.org](mailto:norbert.allale@ifrc.org)
- **In Geneva:** Niels Scott, Operations Coordinator for West Africa; phone: +41.22.730.4400; email: [niels.scott@ifrc.org](mailto:niels.scott@ifrc.org) or Tunay Firat, Officer, Management Support Team, email: [tunay.firat@ifrc.org](mailto:tunay.firat@ifrc.org); phone: +41.22.730.4415

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