

DREF operation final report



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Georgia: Reinforcing Response Capacity

DREF operation n° MDRGE001
30 April, 2009

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 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.

Summary: CHF 233,690 (USD 222,562 or EUR 142,930) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 27 August, 2008 to support the National Society in delivering immediate assistance.

Following the conflict which erupted in Georgia in August 2008, causing massive displacement of people, the International Federation launched a DREF operation in order to build the response capacity of the Georgia Red Cross Society. The operation was specifically addressing capacity building within disaster management, psychosocial support and first aid as well as ensuring Movement visibility. The DREF was integrated into a Harmonized Operational Programme (HOP) together with contributions from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).



Photo 1: Zaza and Zezva aged 6 and 9 in collective centre in Rustavi, Georgia. **Gia Chkhatarashvili**

This operation was implemented over five months, from September 2008 to January 2009. Out of the allocation CHF 4,378 will be reimbursed to the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund.

[<click here for the final financial report, or here to view contact details>](#)

The situation

After a period of growing tensions, conflict erupted on 7 August, 2008, in South Ossetia involving Georgian, Russian and South Ossetian forces. The conflict escalated rapidly around the city of Tskhinvali and soon widened with fighting also reported in Abkhazia and air strikes including Gori and Tbilisi. The conflict, which ended approximately a week later following an EU brokered peace agreement, resulted in tens of thousands fleeing their homes at very short notice and with few opportunities to bring any possessions. Based on the number of people registered by the Georgian authorities, approximately 128,700 people were displaced in Georgia out of whom 30,000 within South Ossetia. Before the conflict some 220,000 persons were already displaced from previous conflicts in the country.

Following the peace agreement the operating environment in Georgia improved notably. Apart from significant factors of lingering criminality in the area south of the administrative border of South Ossetia and the widespread presence of explosive remnants of war (ERW), the situation in most areas returned to

normal. Spontaneous and organized returns of displaced persons took place simultaneously, but the security situation in some areas hindered many to return to their residence of origin.

Needs were serious and multiple both among people not able to return and among those who returned. Most of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) resided in and around the capital Tbilisi in collective centres. The situation in terms of numbers, multiple and dispersed locations, non-organized spontaneous return, and the duration of expected displacement for a significant number of people, presented both the government and aid agencies with difficulties in locating, identifying needs, and reaching out with aid.

The main humanitarian concerns were related to proper immediate shelter, clothing, heating, combination of blankets, bedding and sleeping mats, water and sanitation, psychosocial support and basic health care. These needs were becoming even more pressing as winter approached, normally bringing low temperatures and heavy snowfall. Other needs stressed were related to food and irrigation water. A total or partial loss of harvest was expected not only to affect access to food and longer-term food security, but also the ability to sustain the return of displaced populations over the winter and to feed livestock. Shortages of medicine and fuel for winter are also cited as major issues.

Although faced with immense humanitarian challenges, the humanitarian response was well-coordinated between the Georgian government and international agencies present in the country. Response activities were rapidly organized through a Humanitarian Coordination Group which brought together humanitarian actors responding to the needs following the conflict. The group comprised United Nations agencies, international organizations, NGOs, Government and donor representatives. The National Society and the International Federation became members of the group and regularly attended meetings.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The National Society was operational from the early days of the conflict, coordinating its efforts with the government through the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation and the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs. The society established a task force at headquarters level developing emergency work plans, facilitating information sharing between the headquarters and branches, mobilizing volunteers, communicating with partners and the public, organizing fund-raising activities and coordinating and organizing humanitarian aid.

The National Society, working both from its headquarters and local branches assisted more than 8,400 people all around the country. The society focused on assessing needs; addressing psychosocial needs; and collecting and distributing food and other items such as second-hand clothes and cooking equipment. Furthermore it developed a plan of action which aimed to increase the society's credibility through training and standardization of disaster preparedness measures. Based on assessments, conducted in cooperation with governmental ministries, the society offered support to displaced people in a UNCHR camp in Gori. The National Society mobilized more than 1,000 volunteers to bring emergency assistance to vulnerable displaced persons. Volunteers in Tbilisi were divided into groups conducting mainly four types of activities including logistics; communication; needs assessments; and fund-raising. Moreover staff and volunteers delivered emergency relief and social assistance, as well as organized blood donations, in affected districts.

Contributions on a bilateral basis from sister National Societies were coordinated through the cooperation meetings. The Italian Red Cross operated a soup kitchen providing hot meals in Gori and serving more than 300,000 meals according to Sphere standards over a six-week period. The Italian Red Cross also offered an ambulance and controlled the quality of water in the camp on a daily basis. The Turkish Red Crescent sent a number of trucks of food and non-food items, and established a logistic hub. The Norwegian Red Cross provided a field hospital within the framework of the ICRC operation, the Kuwait Red Crescent delivered relief items. The humanitarian aid included food parcels and baby food, blankets, beds and linen. Other National Societies responding directly and providing valuable and much needed assistance included the Lithuanian Red Cross, the Latvian Red Cross, the British Red Cross and Magem David Adom.

Movement collaboration and cooperation modalities

The conflict situation and its aftermath demonstrated that the National Society needed to develop its capacities for responding to emergencies. In order to tailor support and identify better cooperation modalities, the head of the Cooperation and Systems Department at the secretariat in Geneva and the regional representative for Southern Caucasus visited Tbilisi. The visit confirmed that Georgia Red Cross would need immediate reinforcement support. Following a request from the National Society, the International Federation thus allocated 233,690 Swiss francs from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund

(DREF) on 27 August 2008. The allocation aimed at bridging the immediate funding gap and assisting the society in reinforcing its operational structure as well strengthening the Federation representation to provide ongoing support. Three specific priority areas were identified and included in the DREF to meet the most urgent needs and build the capacity of the National Society:

- Disaster management including organizational development and capacity building.
- Psychosocial support to IDPs and returning IDPs.
- Ensure visibility of the National Society and its volunteers including communication

In accordance with the Seville Agreement, ICRC was leading the Movement's operations in the country. From the early days constructive Movement cooperation was facilitated through tripartite coordination meetings including the International Federation, ICRC and the Georgia Red Cross Society. The meetings also included partner National Societies (PNS) present in Georgia.

Following the recommendations from a Federation organized rapid assessment a Harmonized Operational Programme (HOP) agreement between the International Federation and ICRC was signed in which the DREF allocation together with a budget extension from ICRC were included. Aligned with the DREF the agreement covered capacity building within disaster management, first aid, psychosocial support as well as increased visibility. Moreover relief to internally displaced persons through distribution of winter clothing and blankets was included in the agreement.¹ In order to integrate the supported components in its work the International Federation revised its 2008-2009 country plan for Georgia.

International Federation representatives from the regional representation for Central Europe and Southern Caucasus, the Europe zone and Geneva made numerous visits to Georgia to meet the National Society and ICRC to support and discuss immediate response measures as well as longer-term strategic directions to meet the needs in the country.

Progress towards objectives

Disaster management capacity building

Objective: The capacity of the National Society to respond effectively to disasters is strengthened

Activities planned:

- Organize three trainings for National Society staff and volunteers on disaster management and capacity building in emergencies to be facilitated by the regional representation and Zone disaster management and organizational development staff along with regional disaster response team (RDRT) members.
- Create a crisis management team at the National Society's headquarters which would comprise branch and headquarters staff and volunteers and to identify roles and responsibilities of different actors in disaster response.
- Organize trainings in first-aid for staff and volunteers

Progress and Impact:

Activities and trainings implemented, and skills gained in the aftermath of the August conflict were vital for the National Society abilities to carry out humanitarian response activities. Furthermore to put in place solid foundations for developing the National Society's disaster management capacities. Though starting at a basic level the society to a large extent succeeded in its disaster management endeavors. Nevertheless, it did not manage to develop a disaster management strategy and conduct contingency planning.

The regional disaster management coordinator for central Europe and southern Caucasus paid three working visits to support the National Society and build its capacities. With the active involvement of the society's disaster management coordinator recruited in September, supported by the regional coordinator, three trainings on basic disaster management knowledge was organized in local branches in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Akhmeta in September and October. In total 55 Red Cross staff members and volunteers attended the trainings which covered disaster preparedness and response; needs assessment; development of a plan of action; communication and coordination; relief; warehousing; logistics; and reporting.

¹ Subsequently, as the DREF allocation entered into a wider framework of support to the Georgia Red Cross, references are at certain occasions made to efforts funded by the ICRC budget extension to convey a more comprehensive picture of the National Society's endeavors and achievements which the DREF allocation contributed to.

In the end of October a leadership meeting for branch secretaries from Tbilisi, Gori, Rustavi, Batumi and Kutaisi branches was organized. The International Federation, ICRC and the National Society informed about the HOP agreement as well as organizational development and volunteer management. The concept of Red Cross Action Teams (RCAT) was presented and agreed upon. The teams, which were to be established in the five branches, were to consist of three components including trained personnel in disaster management, psychosocial support and first-aid. In establishing the teams an intensive training was conducted for 20 staff and volunteers from the branches in October and November covering global Federation response tools, capacity building in emergencies, emergency rules, principles roles and responsibilities, security and safe access. The training also included personnel covered by the trainings in September and October.

As a part of the DREF operation the National Society organized training of trainers for volunteers from Tbilisi, Rustavi, Gori, Kutaisi, Senaki and Batumi. First-aid teams were established in the branches. The trainings included both theoretical and practical work for 38 participants and 10 team leaders. A draft for a first-aid manual, funded and supported by ICRC, was developed and distributed among the team members. Besides training materials, the National Society equipped branches with 29 manikins and 17 first-aid kits.

In order to boost capacity building the International Federation deployed a disaster management delegate and a RDRT member to Georgia to assist in the winterization activities implemented by the National Society. These expatriates were, however, funded by ICRC contributions and not through the DREF allocation. Nevertheless, their presence contributed to the society's capacity building efforts and achievements in disaster management. Also funded by ICRC through the HOP agreement was the winterization programme. Although not funded by the DREF allocation the programme contributed to enhancing the society's response capacities. Furthermore, during his last visit the regional disaster management coordinator contributed mainly to the programme. As a result of winterization activities, from December 2008 to February 2009 the society provided winter clothing and blankets to almost 4,100 IDPs from 1,410 families residing in collective centres in Bolnisi, Gardabani, Rustavi, Tbilisi and Kaspi. Items distributed included warm jackets, shoes, boots, sweaters, socks and warm blankets.



Photo 2: A boy with a blanket from the Red Cross. Rustavi, January 2009. **Gia Chkhatarashvili**

The implementation of disaster management activities and the winterization programme focused both on theoretical as well as practical capacity building. Enhanced capacity was thus achieved through learning and training activities targeting more than 100 staff and volunteers from Tbilisi, Gori, Rustavi, Batumi, Bolnisi, Kutaisi, Gardabani and Akhmeta branches. Valuable learning effects and experiences were generated which benefitted the National Society's capacity building efforts in disaster management. Training activities were particularly effective as they offered trained volunteers the opportunity to deploy newly acquired knowledge into practice instantly.

Drawing on the experiences from implementing the winterization programme as well as experiences from disaster management, psychosocial support and first aid, volunteer workshops were held in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Batumi in February. The main goal of the workshops was to share experiences and lessons learned following the August conflict and the work of the National Society. Presentations covering needs assessment during emergencies; communication and coordination; development of plan of action; logistic; warehousing; distribution; and psychosocial support in emergencies were held by Federation delegates and the regional disaster management coordinator.

Psychosocial support

Objective 2: The beneficiaries, through established psychosocial programme (PSP), will better cope with the situation and will take an active participation in the relief and recovery efforts.

Activities planned:

- Create a National Society psychosocial team which would consist of experts and Red Cross staff and volunteers with knowledge and experience in psychosocial support in-field.
- Organize training of trainers (ToT) for volunteers and staff in psychosocial support.

- Visit the most vulnerable beneficiaries regularly and encourage and offer them support throughout three months period.

Progress and Impact:

Before August 2008 the National Society did not implement psychosocial support activities. With the conflict the need for such support was evident though. A psychosocial assessment was carried out by the International Federation Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support recommending that psychosocial activities should focus on basic psychosocial support and include assessments of psychosocial conditions among IDPs; psychosocial support through trained volunteers and teachers; and psychosocial rehabilitation and post-stress trauma among children and their mothers. Based on the recommendations the society started providing basic psychosocial support to people traumatized by the conflict.

In mid-November the International Federation deployed a psychosocial delegate from the Australian Red Cross. The delegate was funded by ICRC contributions as part of the HOP agreement together with the DREF allocation. Nonetheless the delegate contributed to the National Society's overall capacity building efforts and achievements in psychosocial support mainly addressed by the DREF operation. Building upon the recommendations following the assessment focus was on establishing the very foundations for an effective programme and ensuring its sustainability. Thus initial strategic programme directions were developed along with a plan of action and logical framework and risk matrices. Special attention was put on promoting a basic understanding of the conceptual psychosocial framework, developing guidelines and establishing a programme management infrastructure. Hence, intentionally direct service delivery was to a lesser degree considered as critical emphasis was put upon creating a solid framework, and recruiting appropriate volunteers for future projects; thus achieving the necessary resource capacity and sustainability. To build the human resource base for the programme various activities were undertaken.

- One training workshop for two National Society part-time psychologists and one external psychologist in staff care and debriefing techniques in order to rapidly deliver much needed support services to staff and volunteers directly involved in the response to the conflict.
- Volunteers were trained and several field trips undertaken in order to debrief volunteers involved in assisting internally displaced people during and after the conflict. Totally 85 volunteers in Gori, Rustavi and Tbilisi were debriefed.
- In addition resource materials were translated and shared extensively with National Society staff and volunteers.



Photo 3: Volunteers in psychosocial training.
Georgia Red Cross

In order to recruit specific “psychosocial volunteers” for the programme, a recruitment package was developed. A training workshop for selected volunteers was held in Tbilisi, Rustavi, Batumi Kutaisi and Gori and targeted 26 volunteers including 8 psychologists and social workers. Training materials were translated for the workshop. All branch committees, local NGOs and local authorities responsible for IDPs were addressed with information on the programme. Thus volunteers involved in psychosocial work received information about stress, coping mechanisms, loss and grief, helping vulnerable people, self-care and how to provide general, frontline services for psychosocial rehabilitation.

Data mapping exercises were initiated in the same five branches to map psychosocial activities implemented across agencies and available community resources to ensure the most efficient use of local resources, avoid duplication, and achieve better integration of IDPs in communities by taking the focus away from collective centres. Additionally the mapping exercise enhanced the profile of the National Society in communities. As a result of meetings a potential and promising partnership in Kutaisi and Batumi with the local NGO the Georgian Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture (GCRT) was explored. Moreover, contacts were made with all agency members of the UN-coordinated Health Psychosocial Sub-Cluster Interagency Group in Georgia to further advance the society's capacity building efforts and promote its role in community-based service delivery.

Visibility

Objective 3: Promotion of the activities of the Georgia Red Cross Society and strengthening of their image.

Activities planned:

- Maximize the visibility of the National Society through relief distributions, visits to the beneficiaries, monitoring and evaluation by volunteers of Red Cross branches.
- Procure Red Cross T-shirts, vests, caps, ID-cards for volunteers and staff of the Georgia Red Cross Society.

The operation had an evident positive impact on the visibility of the National Society. It strongly reinforced its profile and community perception of the work conducted by the society. To this end various public relations materials with Red Cross emblems were used and National Society staff and volunteers wore flags, vests and identification cards during field work.

Challenges

The main challenge for the Georgia Red Cross before and during the operation was lack of experience in implementing disaster management, psychosocial support and first aid activities. Lack of skilled personnel and staff with limited management skills, and lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities, among others caused by the absence of proper disaster management plans, contributed to weak communication between the headquarters and local branches and affected the latter's abilities to quickly and comprehensively assess the situation.

In December the disaster management coordinator recruited in September resigned causing the society to once again search for a coordinator. The society managed to find a replacement quite quickly, although the shift of personnel affected among others the National Societies work towards developing a disaster management strategy and conduct contingency planning. The new coordinator was a RDRT trained member. In order to further build a stronger and more reliable human resource capacity in disaster management, three participants from the National Society participated in RDRT training in Macedonia in February 2009.

The substantial time and resources required for the winterization relief efforts through which the society successfully managed to meet serious humanitarian needs meant the strategy development and contingency planning was not done. Also, as the operation period spanned over five months, achieving these objectives not explicitly stated in the DREF, was somehow ambitious.

In psychosocial support some concerns were raised by Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) actors regarding the possible negative impact short-term or suspended projects can have on the mental health of people reached. Thus the long-term perspective within which psychosocial support has to be implemented was emphasised and underpinned the choice of working towards establishing the very programme foundations before starting up with service delivery targeting beneficiaries. This also benchmarks the core features of sustainability for such programmes, and was a best practice goal that the National Society was aiming towards.

In terms of longer-term development and increased capacities within priority areas the National Society is vulnerable to support not coming. The solid achievements within disaster management, psychosocial support and first-aid during the period covered by the report may come to a halt if sufficient support is not assembled.

Conclusion

Following the August conflict and the International Federation DREF allocation which was part of the wider HOP agreement, the National Society received extensive attention and support, and by itself demonstrated a notable ability to work intensively and in a focused manner towards identified areas in need of capacity building, while simultaneously addressing needs among the many thousands displaced by the conflict.

The DREF allocation enabled the National Society to strengthen its disaster response capacity and put in place sound foundations for developing Red Cross Action Teams (RCAT) consisting of Red Cross personnel with competencies in disaster management, first aid and psychosocial support. The teams offered a unique model for integrating different programme components in areas in which the National Society works and will be further developed in 2009 by including a fourth component covering restoring family links. This will be supported by ICRC. The psychosocial support component in the team model is a key to enhanced disaster

management capacity and should therefore become an integral part of the society's disaster management activities as well as be developed on its own. The National Society has submitted a project proposal for partners to further build the foundations of psychosocial support activities and optimise the momentum already achieved in a short space of time.

More than 100 staff and volunteers received valuable and much needed basic training in disaster response, psychosocial support and first aid through the operation. These capacity building measures need to be followed up by more long-term training plan though.

In terms of Movement cooperation, working modalities and priority areas the National Society went through an intensive period. The society proved very successful though in both addressing humanitarian needs and building its own capacities, and thus reaching its objectives. Increased external interest was raised and materialized in support throughout the period covered by the DREF and its aftermath. Hence the prospects for longer-term development of the society at present looks promising, building upon the momentum gained during the last months of work and enhanced capacity. This however, depends to a large extent on support from both Movement partners and other actors be it governments, humanitarian organizations or the corporate sector.

In this connection a great achievement was that the National Society is now included as an active partner within three areas out of seventeen in the Georgian National Disaster Response Plan approved by the Georgian government. It is therefore essential to assist the society to develop and strengthen its capacity to respond to emergency situations in an effective and efficient manner, and thus prove itself as a credible partner within disaster management.

As the National Society did not manage to develop a disaster management strategy and conduct contingency planning within the reporting period these are main priorities in the future. It thus aims to revise its disaster preparedness and response action plan; develop a disaster management strategy and a contingency plan for specific scenarios; develop the concept of National Society action teams further through updates of existing training materials, train new volunteers and establish appropriate teams.

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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International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

MDRGE001 - Georgia - Reinforcing Response Capacity

Final Financial Report

Selected Parameters	
Reporting Timeframe	2008/08-2009/03
Budget Timeframe	2008/08-2009/03
Appeal	MDRGE001
Budget	APPEAL

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

I. Consolidated Response to Appeal

	Goal 1: Disaster Management	Goal 2: Health and Care	Goal 3: Capacity Building	Goal 4: Principles and Values	Coordination	TOTAL
A. Budget	233,690					233,690
B. Opening Balance	0					0
Income						
<u>Other Income</u>						
<i>Voluntary Income</i>	233,690					233,690
C5. Other Income	233,690					233,690
C. Total Income = SUM(C1..C5)	233,690					233,690
D. Total Funding = B + C	233,690					233,690
Appeal Coverage	100%					100%

II. Balance of Funds

	Goal 1: Disaster Management	Goal 2: Health and Care	Goal 3: Capacity Building	Goal 4: Principles and Values	Coordination	TOTAL
B. Opening Balance	0					0
C. Income	233,690					233,690
E. Expenditure	-229,312					-229,312
F. Closing Balance = (B + C + E)	4,378					4,378

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Reporting Timeframe	2008/08-2009/03
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III. Budget Analysis / Breakdown of Expenditure

Account Groups	Budget	Expenditure					TOTAL	Variance
		Goal 1: Disaster Management	Goal 2: Health and Care	Goal 3: Capacity Building	Goal 4: Principles and Values	Coordination		
A							B	A - B
BUDGET (C)		233,690					233,690	
Supplies								
Clothing & textiles	7,500	7,169					7,169	331
Medical & First Aid	20,000	21,178					21,178	-1,178
Teaching Materials	5,000	4,570					4,570	430
Other Supplies & Services	15,000							15,000
Total Supplies	47,500	32,916					32,916	14,584
Land, vehicles & equipment								
Computers & Telecom		1,598					1,598	-1,598
Total Land, vehicles & equipment		1,598					1,598	-1,598
Transport & Storage								
Storage		1,027					1,027	-1,027
Distribution & Monitoring		4,142					4,142	-4,142
Transport & Vehicle Costs	21,000	19,688					19,688	1,312
Total Transport & Storage	21,000	24,856					24,856	-3,856
Personnel								
International Staff		12,726					12,726	-12,726
Regionally Deployed Staff	12,000	1,235					1,235	10,765
National Staff	8,000	3,231					3,231	4,769
National Society Staff	30,000	24,857					24,857	5,143
Consultants	15,000	17,198					17,198	-2,198
Total Personnel	65,000	59,246					59,246	5,754
Workshops & Training								
Workshops & Training	35,000	30,908					30,908	4,092
Total Workshops & Training	35,000	30,908					30,908	4,092
General Expenditure								
Travel	10,000	27,902					27,902	-17,902
Information & Public Relation	13,495	9,180					9,180	4,315
Office Costs	21,355	9,361					9,361	11,994
Communications	3,676	4,357					4,357	-681
Professional Fees		236					236	-236
Financial Charges	1,174	12,152					12,152	-10,978
Other General Expenses	300	378					378	-78
Total General Expenditure	50,000	63,566					63,566	-13,566
Programme Support								
Program Support	15,190	14,840					14,840	350
Total Programme Support	15,190	14,840					14,840	350
Services								
Services & Recoveries		1,006					1,006	-1,006
Shared Services		375					375	-375
Total Services		1,381					1,381	-1,381
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (D)	233,690	229,312					229,312	4,378
VARIANCE (C - D)		4,378					4,378	