

# DREF operation



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## MALAWI: RETURNEES

DREF operation n° MDRMW003  
16 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.

**CHF 86,007 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support Malawi Red Cross Society in delivering immediate assistance to some 3,000 beneficiaries. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.**

**Summary:** Following the recent urban disturbances in South Africa, xenophobic in nature and characterized by elements of criminality reported from 11 May, 2008, the Government of Malawi has been assisting with the evacuation and repatriation of its citizens. The repatriation exercise started on 24 May 2008. The Malawian government has mandated Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS) to look after the welfare of the returnees at a transitional shelter, which has been established in the southern part of the country.



Some foreigners displaced by urban disturbances in South Africa waiting for registration for relief assistance.

Photo: Terrie Takavarasha, International Federation of Red Cross: Southern Africa Zone

The government is overseeing the actual evacuation and transportation of returnees to the transitional shelter and is also ensuring the provision of food during their stay. As the only auxiliary agency involved in this operation, MRCS is responsible for ensuring the health and welfare of the returnees at the transitional shelter – which currently lacks some essential commodities, including: cooking utensils, hygiene kits, sleeping mats/mattresses and blankets. In addition, there is no appropriate lighting – a concern for security reasons, and current food allocations are not meeting the specific needs of children less than five years of age.

To date 1,320 returnees have arrived in-country. Current estimates put the number of potential returnees at up to 15,000 people. The DREF funds will enable the MRCS to supply up to 3,000 returnees with essential commodities at the transitional shelter, as well as offer basic first aid to any injured individuals.

This operation is expected to be implemented over two months, and will therefore be completed by 31 July, 2008; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (30 October, 2008). [<click here for contact details>](#)

## The situation

Since 24 May, Malawi has been receiving returnees from South Africa – displaced by the disturbances caused by the xenophobic attacks, which have been taking place in South Africa over the past three weeks. According to the Malawian government, the number of potential returnees is estimated at 15,000 people, of which 1,320 have returned to date. Following the attacks, the Government of Malawi has been assisting in the evacuation and repatriation of its citizens, by providing bus transportation and temporary accommodation at a transitional centre set up in the southern region of the country.

Some of the returnees are arriving with wounds sustained from the attacks. Returnees are being kept at the transitional shelter until such time as they can arrange for transportation back to their homes.

MRCS was mandated by the government to take responsibility for the general health and welfare of the returnees at the transitional centre. This includes:

- Preparation of food (provided by the government);
- Ensuring adequate sanitation and lodging for the returnees;
- Providing basic first aid treatment to injured individuals.

MRCS efforts to provide assistance to the returnees at the transitional centre are being hampered by a lack of basic commodities:

- The transitional shelter has rooms, but no sleeping mats or blankets for use by returnees;
- There are no toiletries available in the washrooms, to ensure adequate hygiene – leading to concerns over possible disease outbreaks;
- There is a lack of large pots for the preparation of food – which means that volunteers must spend longer hours at the centre in order to prepare sufficient quantities of food to meet needs, thereby staying late and jeopardizing their own security;
- It has also been noted that the specific nutritional needs of children under the age of five are not being addressed – potentially affecting the health of an already weakened and frightened group.

## Coordination and partnerships

The MRCS is working in close coordination with the relevant governmental authorities, as an auxiliary and the only partner in this instance. The respective roles of the government and the Red Cross have been well defined, to ensure an effective response to the needs of the returnees.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

MRCS has already begun to oversee the health and welfare of returnees at the transitional centre, by welcoming returnees upon their arrival, preparing government-provided food, ensuring that basic hygiene and sanitation requirements are met at the shelter and providing basic first aid to the injured.

## The needs

Despite on-going assistance being provided over the past weeks, there is a great need to ensure that the basic needs of returnees at the transitional shelter are met, so as to ensure their health, welfare and respect for their dignity. As a matter of urgency, MRCS is intent on meeting essential needs in the following areas:

- Provision of lighting (especially given that some buses arrive during the night),
- Distribution of sleeping mats/mattresses, blankets and hygiene kits to the returnees;
- Provision of appropriate cooking equipment (pots, plates and firewood) and food for children under five years of age.

The government budget (still awaiting approval) and it concentrates on covering the costs related to evacuation, transportation and the provision of food to adult returnees. Given its responsibility to ensure the welfare of returnees at the transitional shelter, MRCS is thus concentrating on meeting the needs outlined above. DREF funds of CHF 86,007 have been provided by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent to facilitate the smooth running of the transitional shelter and enhance the welfare of the returnees during their temporary stay.

## The proposed operation

**General Objective:** To improve living conditions of returnees at the transitional shelter in order to ensure their overall health and welfare, by providing them with essential items (namely, mattresses and blankets) and basic commodities (in terms of food, hygiene and lighting) for use during their stay.

### Transitional shelter operations

**Objective:** To improve the health and hygiene conditions at the transitional shelter, thereby improving the welfare of returnees and reducing the possibility of an outbreak of disease due to poor sanitary conditions.

#### Activities planned:

- Regional disaster response team (RDRT) trained staff and volunteers to receive returnees upon arrival and provide counselling as necessary.
- Provide first aid to injured returnees.
- Provide hygiene kits to returnees.
- Provide lighting in the transitional shelter rooms at night.
- Prepare meals appropriate for both under fives and adults
- Provide basic mattresses and blankets in the rooms.

## 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:**

- In Malawi: Lawson Kasamale, Secretary General, Email [mracs@eomw.net](mailto:mracs@eomw.net); Phone: Tel 265.1.775.290; Fax: 265.1.775.590
- In South Africa zonal level for Southern Africa: Françoise Le Goff, Head of Zone Office, Johannesburg; Email [francoise.legoff@ifrc.org](mailto:francoise.legoff@ifrc.org); Phone: Mobile: +27.83.556.6565 Tel: +27.11.303.9700; +27.11.303.9711; Fax: +27.11.884.3809; +27.11.884.0230
- In South Africa Zone: Disaster Management Department: Farid Aiywar; Email [farid.aiywa@ifrc.org](mailto:farid.aiywa@ifrc.org); Phone: Mobile: +27.83.440.0564 Tel: +27.11.303.9700; +27.11.303.9721; Fax: +27.11.884.3809; +27.11.884.0230
- In Geneva: John Roche, Operations Coordinator, Email: [john.roche@ifrc.org](mailto:john.roche@ifrc.org); Phone: +41.22.730.4400; Fax: +41.22.733.03.95

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