

# DREF operation update



## Republic of Congo: Population Movement (DREF timeframe and objectives revision)

DREF operation n° MDRCG005  
Update n° 2  
11 February, 2010

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:** 23 November to 20 January, 2010.

**Summary:** CHF 247,375 (USD 244,200 or EUR 163,857) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 23 November, 2009 to support the Congolese Red Cross in delivering assistance to some 10,000 beneficiaries, i.e. the most vulnerable among the over 24,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The total refugee populations have reached over 100,000 people. They are being assisted by Congolese authorities, UNHCR, WFP, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF); Médecins d'Afrique (MDA) and the Agence pour l'Assistance des Réfugiés Congolais (AAREC). However The



Sensitization on hygiene, sanitation, HIV and Water use in Dongou/Photo Pierre Kana, IFRC

assistance provided is not enough to meet the basic needs of the displaced population (protection, health and care, food and nutrition, shelter, restoring family links; education, water and sanitation).

With this DREF allocation, Red Cross volunteers were able to conduct sensitization campaigns in host sites on water, sanitation and hygiene, and have distributed water purifying tablets in coordination with AAREC to prevent outbreak of waterborne diseases such as Cholera. They also started helping the most vulnerable among the refugee with shelter and latrines construction, materials and advice. Furthermore, Red Cross volunteers are being trained in food and non-food items distribution exercises together with WFP, and for shelter construction with UNHCR. The response is complicated in terms of logistics because the refugees are "scattered along a long stretch of 500km on the banks of the Ubangi river" (cf. the UNHCR Briefing Note on Equateur: 15.12.09). Accurate and exhaustive registration of refugees is yet to be done by UNHCR, partly because the Congolese Government has not yet defined the exact status of the displaced persons.

This operation was initially planned to be implemented over three months and completed by 23 February, 2010. But considering the slow implementation rate (logistical constraints), and the increasing needs (ever increasing number of refugees: from 24,000 by the time the operation was launched to close to 100,000 presently), the implementation period will be extended with the Federation most likely launching an emergency appeal to help meet the needs of at least 4,000 families of the most vulnerable refugees, i.e. about 20,000 persons. This update seeks to extend the DREF operation timeframe from 3 months to 6 months. Therefore, the operation will be completed by 23 May 2010. In line with Federation reporting standards, the Final Report (narrative and financial) is due 90 days after the end of the operation (by 23 August, 2010).

The Netherlands Red Cross contributed CHF 29,682.40 (20,000 Euros) to the DREF in replenishment of the allocation made for this operation. The major donors to the DREF are the Irish, Italian, Netherlands and Norwegian governments and ECHO. Details of all donors can be found on <http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/responding/drs/tools/dref/donors.asp>

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## The situation

Since the start of this operation, the number of displaced persons in the Republic of Congo has increased from about 24,000 to close to 100,000 with thousands crossing the Ubangi River every day into the Republic of Congo (RoC). These population movements have affected five districts of Likouala Region of the RoC with Betou hosting more than about 60% of the refugees. The populations have started crossing the river into the RoC in October 2009 when a dispute over a fishing lake between two communities turned into ethnic clashes in the areas of Dongo and Gemena in the Equateur province in DRC. But the number of refugees started to increase drastically following the deployment by the government of DRC of additional police forces to Dongo to pacify the region. Later on, the situation turned into a complex situation as rumours started spreading about a possible rebellion in the Equateur Province. The table below shows the evolution of the number of displaced persons over the last weeks of 2009:

Locality	02 Dec. 09	04 Dec. 09	07 Dec. 09	09 Dec. 09	11 Dec. 09	14 Dec. 09	28 Dec. 09
<b>Bétou</b>	37,114	47,447	49,946	50,669	51,129	54,259	61,199
<b>Dongou</b>	10,434	10,434	10,434	11,189	11,265	11,265	13,822
<b>Enyellé</b>	903	903	903	903	903	903	906
<b>Impfondo</b>	6,673	13,835	13,835	13,835	13,835	13,835	14,079
<b>Liranga</b>	1,563	1,563	2,370	2,370	3,321	3,650	4,077
<b>Total</b>	<b>56,687</b>	<b>74,182</b>	<b>77,488</b>	<b>78,966</b>	<b>80,453</b>	<b>83,912</b>	<b>94,083</b>

Table 1: Refugees from RDC in Likouala Department RoC (source UNHCR & Ministry of Interior RoC).

The districts where the refugees have settled are known to be host to refugees from DRC in the recent past and this could help reactivating coping mechanisms and some “know how” of refugee operation management at the beginning of this new influx of refugees. UNHCR, MSF, MDA and AAREC have introduced response capacities in the area. Unfortunately the traditional epidemiological surveillance systems have been overwhelmed and serious gaps are being noticed in the identification and notification of cases. Due to the fact that part of the refugee populations fetches drinking water mainly from the river, cholera outbreaks are likely to occur. As most of the refugees do not have access to adequate shelter and warm clothing, Acute Respiratory Infections prevail in large sections of the refugees.

In the coming days, UNHCR and the Government of RoC could take the decision to establish camps and relocate the displaced populations. This will greatly facilitate the operation.

Field assessments conducted by the Congolese Red Cross with the support of the Federation offices in Yaoundé and Kinshasa, the ICRC, and the French Red Cross have revealed that there are new and/or unmet needs that are yet to be satisfied. This includes the need for increased Red Cross capacities in the area, especially in the affected localities in the district of Bétou where no Red Cross structure exists.

## Coordination and partnerships

The Government of the Republic of Congo has put in place a task force that supervises the entire operation. The Congolese Red Cross is part of this task force along with members of a Federation Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) from West and Central Africa Zone. Several humanitarian actors are also part of the task force and adequately coordinate their response, sharing resources wherever necessary.

While MSF and MDA are active in the health sector, UNICEF, AAREC and the Congolese Red Cross are mainly focusing on water and sanitation, shelter and relief distribution. WFP and UNHCR provide food and non-food items respectively.

The NS and the Federation coordinate their actions with ICRC and PNS present in both countries. Joint assessments and joint planning of Movement Response at both sides of the border evolve very well with ICRC taking the lead in DRC and the Federation in the Republic of Congo.

While it is expected that the Red Cross of the Republic of Congo will play a greater role in shelter, water and sanitation and relief distribution, the Movement is yet to define its response strategy in DRC.

To help reduce the negative impact of logistical constraints, UNHCR, WFP and ECHO have enhanced their respective warehouse and air transports facilities in DRC to support the operation in the Republic of Congo. These facilities have also been extended to humanitarian organizations other than the UN agencies.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

### Progress towards objectives

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)
<p><b>Objective: To improve the living conditions of 4,000 families (20,000 people) of refugees identified as the most vulnerable in Betou, Dongou and Impfondo localities through non-food items distribution.</b></p>
<p><b>Activities planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the most vulnerable refugees ;</li> <li>• Purchase and transport materials to the targeted localities;</li> <li>• Organize training for Red Cross volunteers on food distribution and other relief activities techniques;</li> <li>• Distribute food and non-food items to the targeted beneficiaries;</li> <li>• Produce reports on distribution activities.</li> </ul>

### Progress:

The identification of the most vulnerable has started in most of the sites and is it is ongoing. This is being done by 60 newly recruited and trained Red Cross volunteers. Additional 73 volunteers will be trained in the coming months. This will help increase the capacity of the existing 37 volunteers. In total the National Society has mobilized, trained and deployed 170 volunteers for the operation. About 2,800 vulnerable people have been already identified. The UNHCR has distributed blankets and cooking utensils to some 1,923 families during the last week of December 2009.

Three vehicles (Land Cruisers) have been deployed in support of the operation by the Federation offices in Kinshasa and Yaoundé and by the Congolese Red Cross' headquarters. Protective clothing and sanitation tools and equipments have been deployed to be used by the Red Cross and the community volunteers.

The capacity of the Congolese Red Cross National Disaster Response Teams (NDRT) has been enhanced with the deployment of 3 RDRT members for one month.

### Challenges:

The Government of the RoC is yet to decide upon the exact status of the displaced persons and has offered pieces of land for the relocation/grouping of the refugees. Most of the items that are needed for the operation are not available in the local market. They must be brought from Brazzaville (about 2,000 km away) or from the nearest big city – Bangui (250 km), if not from more remote places.

### Emergency health

**Objective: To improve the living conditions of 4,000 families (20,000 people) of refugees identified as the most vulnerable in Betou, Dongou and Impfondo localities through community-based health activities.**

**Activities planned:**

- Sensitize on the dangers of malaria and HIV/AIDS;
- Provide first aid assistance to injured persons;
- Offer treatment and support to old people.

### Progress:

Red Cross volunteers conducted thirty two (32) sensitization campaigns on basic sanitation and malaria control targeting heads of families and people in public gatherings. A total of 1,673 households have so far been reached. Red Cross volunteers conducted cleaning campaigns in public places.

Very few first-aid interventions have been conducted by Red Cross volunteers. This is mainly due to the fact that the overall health condition of refugees is satisfactory for the time being. Injured refugees are receiving treatment from MSF and MDA.

So far, 66 old and very vulnerable people have received assistance from Red Cross volunteers in the form of drinking water and relief items.

### Challenges:

Recruiting and training adequate number of Red Cross and community volunteers to carry out awareness raising activities is a big challenge as very little people understand how does the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement operates. Getting real time feedback from the field is a real challenge too as internet facilities are almost inexistent in the area.

### Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion

**Objective: To reduce the risks of water borne diseases and improve the sanitation system for the displaced population for the next 6 months.**

**Activities planned:**

- Train Red Cross volunteers on basic water and sanitation techniques;
- Sensitize refugees to hygiene rules and the dangers of not washing their hands;
- Support the distribution of potable water;
- Sensitize the refugees to the conservation and use of potable water;
- Support the treatment of targeted water points;
- Support the disinfection of existing latrines, and the creation of emergency latrines;
- Participate in environmental sanitation activities.

### Progress:

Sixty volunteers have been trained on water and sanitation, on the basis of 20 in Bétou, 35 in Impfondo, 20 in Dongou and five in Boyele. In Eboko and Landza, volunteers' training is scheduled for the coming week provided the River is navigable. However, given the difficult access to these sites, the trainers will benefit from a mission of MSF and MDA, which will visit these localities for the mobile clinic.

So far Red Cross volunteers have constructed two temporary latrines and protected/improved two water points in Falco and Bétou sites. They have also conducted 32 sensitization events reaching out to 8,365 people in two sites and three zones. Due to the fact that the Red Cross volunteers are newly recruited and trained and therefore lack IEC skills, sensitization activities in Bétou especially are now focused on improving personal, household and environmental hygiene and sanitation. Information on HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases will be included into the IEC package at a later stage.

Working in close coordination with AAREC, Red Cross volunteers have so far distributed 3,346 water purification tablets to 1,673 households in five sites and zones. They have also treated a total of two water points and 16,730 liters of drinking water.

Red Cross volunteers are currently conducting a survey in the sites to know the exact type of latrines that will be built for the displaced persons. The volunteers have organized the beneficiaries for daily cleanup of the places they occupy. They have also planned weekly cleanup campaigns and have so far conducted 40 campaigns in Bétou and eight general cleanup campaigns.

### Emergency shelter, social and community-based activities

**Objective: To improve the living conditions of 4,000 families (20,000 people) of homeless refugees in Betou through the provision of emergency materials for shelter construction.**

<p><b>Expected result:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 4,000 families live peacefully under well constructed shelters.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Activities planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute tarpaulins, blankets and sleeping bags;</li> <li>Sensitize the beneficiaries to the culture of peace and non-violence.</li> </ul>
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### Progress:

After the joint decision by the Congolese Government and UNHCR to relocate the displaced persons that had invaded Falco and a school, a joint team comprising representatives of UNHCR, Sub Prefecture, Services de l'Economie Forestière and AAREC selected a site that is appropriate to accommodate 6,000 refugees, with the possibility of extension. The International Federation's RDRT member deployed in the field for this operation, who is a specialist of shelter and camp management, provided technical support for this selection.

A local company called Likouala Timber promised to clean up and prepare the site during the first week of January 2010. It is expected that a Memorandum of Understanding is signed between UNHCR and the International Federation in the days ahead for the involvement of the Red Cross in the delivery of other services in this site.

The Red Cross has identified the need for at least 100 shelters for the communities living outside the site, i.e. for the most vulnerable families. There is also the need to carry out sensitization and prevention activities on violence as a whole, and on gender-based violence and sexual abuse specifically. STIs and HIV/AIDS prevention and sensitization to the culture of peace among the beneficiaries themselves, and among the latter and the local populations should be worked out.

## 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 the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The International Federation's work is guided by [Strategy 2020](#) which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

## Contact information

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