

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Honduras: Dengue Outbreak

DREF operation n° MDRHN004
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The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) 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 emergency response. 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: From 3 July to 3 August 2010.

34,505 Swiss francs (32,298 US dollars or 26,126 euro) has been allocated from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Honduran Red Cross (HRC) in delivering immediate assistance to some 7,000 families.

Summary: Since the beginning of 2010, Honduras is experiencing a dengue outbreak particularly affecting the cities of Tegucigalpa (Francisco Morazán department) and San Pedro Sula (Cortes department). The Honduran government issued a nation-wide state of National Emergency as a response to this situation. Up to 26 July 2010, 31 people have died due to dengue hemorrhagic fever and 27,000 cases of classic dengue have been confirmed. The DREF funds are supporting the dengue control and prevention activities benefiting 10 communities in the Quebrada El Sapo area of the city of Tegucigalpa. The National Society has started to conduct household visits and it is also training volunteers on epidemic control methods.

This operation is being implemented over a three-month period, and will therefore be completed by 2 October 2010; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 2 January 2011).

ECHO (the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission) has contributed 20,900 euro (approximately 27,603 Swiss francs), replenishing funds designated for this DREF operation. The main donors of the Emergency Fund for Disaster Relief are the governments of Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway and the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO). The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), on behalf of the Honduran Red Cross, would like to thank all donors for their generous contributions. A detail of all donors is available at: <http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/responding/drs/tools/dref/donors.asp>

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The Situation

In Honduras, dengue fever is an endemic disease that occurs every year during the rainy season (from May to November). However, this year the number of cases of dengue has risen significantly. Up to 26 July 31 deaths have occurred caused by dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF). The number of reported cases in 2010 has increased nine times compared to last year, from 3,169 to 27,000 cases. The Ministry of Health states that this is an alarming situation since the incidence of dengue fever which constitutes an alert has been well exceeded.

During the epidemiological week No. 28 (18 July to 24 July) 825 cases were reported, of which 3.1 per cent correspond to DHF. The Central District of Tegucigalpa has been particularly affected, concentrating 80 per cent of all the identified cases of classic dengue and 50 per cent of the DHF cases. Nonetheless, the population in the following areas have also been affected: San Pedro Sula, El Progreso, La Ceiba, Olanchito, Yoro, Juticalpa, Catacamas, Choluteca, Danli and El Paraiso.

In order to meet the demand for treatment, the two state hospitals used for referral cases, which are located in the capital city of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, the second largest city in the country, have also made available additional beds. The Standing Contingency Commission (Comisión Permanente de Contingencias – COPECO) has deployed mobile health centres to support the health authorities. At present, the disease continues to show an upwards trend. The epidemic is expected to increase between the peak time of the epidemiological weeks 33 and 34, corresponding to the period from 8 to 15 August.

Coordination and partnerships

The Honduran government –after declaring a national emergency on 23 June – created the Interagency Emergency Commission for Dengue Prevention and Control. Members of this Commission include the Ministry of Health - as the coordinating institution -, the Ministries of Finance, Interior and Justice, Education, Public Works, Transportation and Housing, Defence, Security, the Permanent Contingency Commission (COPECO), a representative of the municipalities and a representative of civil society. The Honduran Red Cross regularly attends these meetings. The Commission focuses its efforts on household fumigation, elimination of mosquito larvae through the use of “abate” in water containers and public land.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Honduran Red Cross drew up an Anti Dengue Plan of Action, which was presented in a meeting to all programme coordinators of the HRC and delegates of the Partner National Societies (PNS) present in the country. The PNS present included the Swiss Red Cross, the Netherlands Red Cross and the Spanish Red Cross. Through this meeting, 50 volunteers were involved in supporting all the activities and campaigns included under the Plan of Action. These volunteers were previously trained through the project “Expanding Youth Opportunities” funded by the Italian Red Cross and Swiss Red Cross; as well as the “Regional Principles and Values Strategy on Citizenship” project funded by the Spanish Red Cross.

Moreover, the Swiss Red Cross has collaborated with the printing of dengue information materials, increasing the number of brochures and posters available for distribution throughout the country.

The Honduran Red Cross coordinates activities at the national and departmental levels to address the dengue outbreak. The IFRC, through its Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation for Central America and Mexico, is also monitoring the emergency and is in constant communication with the National Society.

Progress towards objectives

Emergency health

Outcome: The risk of dengue fever and hemorrhagic dengue fever has been reduced through the killing of larvae and elimination of breeding grounds in Tegucigalpa.

Output 1: Vector control measures are implemented at community level for 7,000 families for a period of three months in the city of Tegucigalpa.

Activities planned:

- Conduct rapid emergency needs and capacity assessments.
- Develop beneficiary targeting strategy and registration system to deliver intended assistance.
- Develop cleaning strategy for households in the city of Tegucigalpa.
- Identify and organize National Intervention Team members to conduct the cleaning campaign.
- Coordinate with the HRC branches of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula.
- Distribution of abate to identified families.
- Conduct cleaning campaign of mosquito-breeding grounds.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Progress

All rapid community assessments were completed jointly by the Honduran Red Cross' Office for Disaster and Emergency Management and the Ministry of Health. The National Society has also conducted the following activities:

- a) The Office for Disaster and Emergency Management and the National Health Coordinator have jointly attended meetings organized by COPECO.
- b) The Office for Disaster and Emergency Management has monitored and collected the information gathered by the branches during the emergency needs and capacity assessments. This information was then shared with the National Health Coordinator.
- c) Within the city of Tegucigalpa, the Quebrada El Sapo region was prioritized to carry out the dengue control activities. This region was chosen because of its high vulnerability as it is a flood prone zone with waste management problems that contribute to mosquito breeding. The Office for Disaster and Emergency Management has the required knowledge and technical skills to address the outbreak after building its capacities through a risk reduction project implemented in the area in previous years.

Ten high risk communities were identified after the completion of the damage and needs assessments. The selected communities are: 3 de mayo, Independencia, Ayestas, Campo Cielo, Flor N°1, Flor N°2, Fuerzas Armadas, Zapote Norte, Zapote Centro and San Martín. The number of households identified –6,713– falls slightly below the objective –7,000 families. Nonetheless, the total number of targeted inhabitants in the area surpasses the average number of members (five) per family, indicating that approximately 38,705 people will benefit through the Honduran Red Cross' actions, instead of the initially 35,000 planned. The number of families and people in the area of action of the Honduran Red Cross and their place of residence are:

Community	Number of households	Number of habitants
3 de mayo	1,882	12,030
Independencia	905	4,859
Ayestas	811	6,753
Campo Cielo	834	4,008
Flor N°1	780	3,489
Flor N°2	278	1,710
Fuerzas Armadas	200	1,204
Zapote Norte	365	2,029
Zapote Centro	394	1,634
San Martín	264	989
TOTAL	6,713 households	38,705 people

The community intervention strategy to deliver the intended assistance has been developed based on promotion of healthy behaviours that seek the elimination of breeding grounds for the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito in the targeted households.. The first actions began on 28 July with an awareness and educational campaign for the population. Following this, in the Zapote Centro community, the HRC volunteers completed the first 300 household visits along with staff from the 3 de Mayo Health Centre. Volunteers provided orientation to family members. In addition, “abate” was provided and applied in the homes where mosquito larvae were identified in ponds or water containers. The household visits will continue during the following six weeks.

The Honduran Ministry of Health confirmed that it has sufficient “abate” to supply to the affected areas. The Ministry has been conducting fumigation activities inside houses and in communities' public spaces since the beginning of the epidemic in mid June. Therefore, the Honduran Red Cross is coordinating its visits to the affected communities with the Ministry.

Hygiene promotion

Outcome: Increased awareness and prevention of dengue is achieved through the description of the symptoms to the most vulnerable through an awareness raising campaign in Tegucigalpa.

Output 1: A dengue awareness information campaign is implemented in targeted communities.
Output 2: IEC material for health promotion is disseminated in targeted communities.
Output 3: At least 42 NITs and 80 HRC volunteers have been trained in dengue control to promote community awareness and social mobilization.

Activities planned:

- Deploy a RIT member specialized in public health in emergencies.
- Conduct a refresher training on dengue control and prevention measures for NITs and volunteers.
- Identify and train 25 emergency health technicians (técnicos en urgencias medicas – TUM) in the treatment of patients with dengue fever and hemorrhagic dengue fever.
- The HRC will coordinate with local authorities the design and implementation of the awareness raising campaign.
- Distribute communications and educational materials.
- Conduct the awareness raising campaign at the community level.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Progress

A RIT member specialized in health in emergencies was deployed from Bolivia to Honduras in order to support the HRC in its response efforts. The RIT member arrived on 16 July and will remain in-country until the end of the operation.

On 28 July, 33 volunteers from the "Extending Youth Opportunities" project were trained on dengue prevention and community-based education techniques. These volunteers are participating in the household visits (Emergency health objective). In addition, they will support the health promotion objective with the painting of murals in communities presenting key messages and other community mobilization activities, in order to promote preventive measures against dengue.

The Honduran Red Cross has coordinated with the educational sector to increase the reach of its dengue awareness information campaign. Two local schools –Luis Alfonso Santos and Rafael Antonio Castillo–have created community brigades with high school students. These community brigades will support the household visits jointly with volunteers of the Honduran Red Cross.

In coordination with the Office for Disaster and Emergency Management and the Centre of Reference for Disaster Preparedness in El Salvador, the RIT member will facilitate the Epidemic Control training course for volunteers. The training will take place from 5 to 7 August to strengthen response capacities in the event of epidemic outbreaks. Nineteen National Intervention Team members, 4 volunteers from the Tegucigalpa branch, 3 youth volunteers, 2 relief technicians and 3 health technicians will participate in the training. In the long term these individuals will contribute to the HRC Health Department and give continuity to the work through the monitoring of the dengue control measures. The HRC is coordinating with the Ministry of Health and the regional health staff of the Tegucigalpa branch with regard to another specialized course for pre-hospital management of patients with hemorrhagic dengue fever symptoms. Participants from the HRC that will be trained in this area are Emergency Medical Technicians (Tums) who run the Pre-Hospital Programme in the National Society. Moreover, they will work on the referral and transportation of dengue cases to health centres and hospitals.

At the start of the operation there was a lack of information materials on dengue available to be shared with the population. Following the coordination efforts of the Honduras Red Cross, communication materials to promote hygiene and education on dengue prevention were validated for distribution during the campaign. A total of 50,000 brochures and 500 posters have been printed, and the radio spots are almost finalized. The printing of communication materials is being covered outside of DREF funds thanks to the support of the Swiss Red Cross.

The dengue awareness information campaign is being implemented alongside the household visits under the emergency health objective. The community brigades on dengue prevention are visiting families in the targeted communities, promoting good hygiene practices and providing information on dengue prevention and the elimination of mosquito breeding grounds. The brigades are in addition encouraging the search for medical care in case of suspicion of the disease so the person can receive appropriate treatment.

Challenges:

- The Honduran Red Cross has identified the need to improve its coordination with governmental agencies in order to have common approaches and make the best use of economic and human resources.
- Quebrada El Sapo presents high levels of delinquency and a high incidence of dengue, two factors that pose a challenge for the operational team.
- Another big challenge for the HRC has been to maintain volunteer motivation during the implementation of this project. Nonetheless, the National Society has developed a plan which includes training, visibility and participation certificates for volunteers supporting the operation.

How we work

All IFRC 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 IFRC'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 IFRC'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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