

DREF operation update Benin/West Africa: Floods

DREF operation n° MDRBJ008
GLIDE n° FL-2011-000091-BEN
Update n°1 – 24 November, 2011

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: 29 July to 30 September 2011.

Summary: CHF 167,461 was allocated from IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Benin Red Cross (BRCS) in delivering immediate assistance to some 5,000 beneficiaries. Un-earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

The Benin Red Cross Society joined other humanitarian agencies in Benin to assist communities affected by the heavy rains of July 2011 in Lokossa, Athiémé Bopa and Cotonou Littoral. The Red Cross had mobilized its volunteers to collaborate with local authorities to carry out rapid assessment of the situation to determine the needs of vulnerable households.



BRCS volunteers sensitizing beneficiaries on use of tablets for water purification/BRCS

With DREF support from the International Federation, The Red Cross volunteers recruited within the affected communities were taken through rapid orientation on relief distribution, WASH and Red Cross code of conduct. The trained volunteers were subsequently involved in the distribution of non-food items (NFIs) to people of Abomey and Lokossa Calavi. They also sensitized affected persons on the use of Aquatabs (water purification tablets) and water storage using the jerry cans distributed by the Red Cross for good hygiene practices. The operation also distributed mosquito nets to the most vulnerable within the targeted communities.

The Benin Red Cross Society seeks for an extension of one month at no cost to complete the replenishment of prepositioned NFI stock used during the operation. This operation will now be completed by 28 November, 2011. In line with Federation reporting standards, the Final Report (narrative and financial) is due 90 days after the end of the operation (by 28 February, 2012).

The BRCS and IFRC express their appreciation to Netherlands and Canadian Red Cross and governments for their contributions to the DREF in replenishment of the allocation made for this operation. The major donors and partners of DREF include the Red Cross Societies and governments of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the U.S.A., as well as DG-ECHO, the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), the Medtronic and Z Zurich Foundations and other corporate and private donors. The IFRC, on behalf of the National Society, thanks all for their generous contributions.

Details of all contributions to the DREF for 2011 can be found on:
http://www.ifrc.org/docs/appeals/Active/MAA00010_2011.pdf

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The situation

The heavy rains that started the week of June 20, 2011 caused severe flooding in municipalities and communities of Lokossa, Athiémé Bopa and Cotonou Littoral. The continuous rain especially the heavy downpour of first week of July was responsible for the initial heavy flooding in most areas. While flooding has been recurring in this part of the country, many areas typically safe from flooding have been affected this year. Continuous downpours have increased the number of affected households within the inaccessible areas. Despite the efforts with the Mayors in providing tents to the affected communities (see below), schools have been occupied by incoming homeless families. While the Early Warning System (EWS) developed with the support of the BRCS helped in mitigating the impact of the flood in 22 municipalities, other areas where the EWS capacity was not available were seriously impacted due to the continuous heavy rain. The Government, BRCS, volunteers and other partners embarked on a joint assessment in the areas bordering the rivers. The result of the assessment is serving as the basis for intervention by stakeholders.

The earlier assessment by the BRCS of the WASH systems in the affected communities highlighted the vulnerability of the populace to serious waterborne diarrhoeal diseases including cholera. Despite efforts being made in this regard, there have been reports of cholera outbreak in some of the areas. This is attributed to the destruction of water sources, stream with floodwater being used for domestic consumption in some areas. The continuous rain has also compounded the sanitation status of the communities, where open defecation and dumping of garbage is increasingly posing an increase in the risk of epidemic outbreaks. The impacts of the floods on acres of arable land is getting worse, with the increase in flood water level, more arable land is being submerged with more crops and farmlands being lost to the flood.

Coordination and partnerships

The government of Benin provided some NFIs to the affected population. The government is also supporting the local authorities to open trenches to facilitate the flow of water and mitigate floods. Also as part of preparedness actions, the UNDP and other UN agencies including WFP provided technical and financial support to the government for the training of local elected officials, managers of the decentralized structures at the community level and humanitarian structures including officers and volunteers from the Red Cross, on crisis management, disaster and contingency plan development to better prepare for the emergency. As part of the response activities, the Lokossa Athiémé municipality conducted a joint assessment with the local Red Cross to assess the damage and needs. The mayors of Athiémé and Lokossa with the collaboration of Red Cross provided 30 tents to the displaced to help them relocate. These were part of the UNHCR prepositioned stock. Aside working with the central and municipal authorities, the BRCS is also collaborating and working with the local communities of Lokossa, Abomey and Bopa.

The national society is also coordinating with the Togolese Red Cross in monitoring water levels in the Mono River within the framework of the early warning systems of the 2 national societies to enable better and more timely information sharing. Moreover, the BRCS participates actively in Benin's disaster risk management platform as a key actor in the national contingency plan.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Red Cross of Benin mobilized its volunteers through its collaboration with local authorities to carry out a rapid assessment of the situation. Despite the difficulties of access due to water level, the Red Cross carried out a systematic assessment of the affected households. The national society at the initial level

deployed 100 of the prepositioned tents at its headquarters in Porto-Novo to support the efforts of



NFIs and WASH materials prepositioned for distribution to affected persons /BRCS

the City Council in Lokossa, where at least 300 households were displaced and were living in the courtyard of a school.

The Community Disaster Response Team (CDRT) members with the assistance of the NDRT are conducting sensitization and awareness on waterborne diseases, good hygiene and sanitation practices. The CDRT teams also carried out targeting of beneficiaries in the affected communities for the distribution of NFIs and WASH items.

A total of 704 families benefitted from the Red Cross assistance during this reporting period. Items distributed included mats, shelter kits, Kitchen sets, tarpaulin, soap, jerry cans and mosquito nets. The most vulnerable were also assisted by the volunteers in the construction of emergency shelter.

Progress towards outcomes

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)	
Outcome 1: Some 1,000 most affected households have received basic non-food items and 350 households received emergency shelter based on the assessment and selection criteria from the Red Cross.	
Output	Activities Planned:
Relief items are procured and distributed to 1,000 to most affected households and selected through established Red Cross selection criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procure and distribute non-food relief distribution items to 1,000 most affected households; • Mobilize and brief 100 Red Cross volunteers on registration and distribution strategies of the Red Cross; • Carry out needs assessment to ensure the availability of a reliable database; • Control supply movements from point of dispatch to end user; • Monitor and evaluate the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distributions

Progress

The distribution of the NFIs has commenced with about 704 households representing about 70% percent benefiting from various NFIs materials including blankets, mats, buckets and kitchen sets. The BRCS with the support of 100 Red Cross volunteers who were trained on registration and distribution strategies carried out an in-depth assessment to determine the extent of basic needs of the affected persons the Red Cross is addressing through this operation. The volunteers effectively carried out the registration of beneficiaries and distribution of NFIs to 704 households of the registered beneficiaries during this reporting period. Procured items had been prepositioned well ahead of the distribution dates and the IFRC continued to receive regular update on the stock movement.

Challenges

Due to poor accessibility, distribution of relief items was difficult. However, the Red Cross adopted a strategy of engaging the community members who are now helping in using their local methods of transportation (canoes) to transport the materials. They are also assisting in loading and offloading of materials with supervision from the BRCS and its volunteers.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion	
Outcome 2: The risks of waterborne diseases are reduced through hygiene promotion, health education and availability of safe drinking water in target communities in the affected districts.	
Output	Activities Planned:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,000 most affected households and target communities have improved knowledge on WASH and malaria prevention. • 1,000 households have access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the capacity of 100 volunteers from the Red Cross of Benin on water treatment and use of products for the domestic water treatment and hygiene promotion; • Provide voluntary protective equipment (boots, raincoats) to the Red Cross volunteers to be deployed; • Distribute Aquatabs to 1,000 affected households including host communities and educate the community on usage; • Raise awareness on good hygiene and sanitation practices; • Procure and distribute 1,000 mosquito nets to 500 most affected households; • Disseminate key messages concerning LLIN use (targeting pregnant women and caretakers of children under 5.

Progress

100 volunteers were given rapid orientation on WASH. These volunteers are sensitizing the community members to improve sanitation and water treatment. Aquatabs were distributed for water purification purposes. Soap and jerry cans were distributed to encourage hand-washing and proper water storage respectively. The Red Cross identified 682 households as most vulnerable and assisted them with relief items. The most vulnerable including pregnant women and lactating mother also received mosquito nets and were sensitized on the use of the bed nets.

Challenges

The awareness on WASH was very low in the targeted communities, as such, it took a longer time for the volunteers to effectively disseminate and sensitize them in this regards. The effect of the WASH awareness is not as effective due to lack of latrines around the areas where emergency shelters were constructed, therefore promoting open defecation. The BRCS is however, consulting with other actors to address these problems.

Preparedness Plan of Action

Prepositioning of contingency supplies (Emergency shelter, WASH and non-food items)

Outcome 3: More effective and timely response to imminent floods through procurement and stocking of non-food items, WASH and health materials for 1,000 most affected households.

Output	Activities planned:
NFIs and WASH items for 500 households are procured for prepositioning for response in the event of flood disasters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop CBAs and other procurement process based on Federations guidelines;Procure non-food items (blankets, mats, buckets, Kitchen sets etc) and WASH items.

Progress

80 percent of the materials earmarked for prepositioning to procured locally have been procured, stored and planned for distribution based on the assessment report of emerging cases. These material comprise :

Items	Quantity
Blankets	1,000
Mats	1,000
Jerry cans	500
Soaps	2,000
Buckets/basins	500

Capacity building (Sensitization, awareness and campaigns)

Outcome 4: NS is better prepared to respond to imminent floods

Output	Activities planned:
The national society staff and volunteers are informed about the nature and trend of floods based on early warning and they have update on contingency plan implementation and DRR sensitization and awareness campaign strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rapid orientation on implementation of contingency plansRapid orientation and refresher on:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Emergency response,First Aid,Emergency shelter construction,Emergency health, water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion;Sensitization on information dissemination and communication with local branches for early warning and during emergencies.

Progress

50 Red Cross volunteers from Lokossa and Abomey Calavi were trained on emergency health and basic first aid and actively involved in the sensitisation campaign in the affected areas and their neighbourhoods.

Logistics

The BRCS do not have vehicles for transporting the items, as such, the materials were transported from Porto Novo to affected areas using hired trucks. The Red Cross volunteers apart from those residing within the affected communities also encountered transportation challenges.

Communications – Advocacy and Public information

The BRCS has continued to collaborate with local media and with the local communities, using indigenous methods in disseminating information with regards to the intervention.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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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 (NGOs) 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.

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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.