

## DREF operation update

### Viet Nam: Hand, foot and mouth disease

**DREF operation n° MDRVN008**  
**GLIDE n° EP-2011-000103-VNM**  
**Update n°1: 12 September 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.



The Viet Nam Red Cross response to the hand, foot and mouth disease outbreak, mostly affecting southern provinces, aims to reach 2,250 informal day-care centres in five provinces with prevention messages and hygiene materials to protect young children who are at high risk of getting the infection. The four-month operation also includes activities that will involve households and communities. (Photo: Quang Tuan, Viet Nam Red Cross)

**Period covered by this update:** 5 August to 4 September 2011.

**Summary:** CHF 127,221 was allocated from IFRC's DREF on 5 August 2011 to support the Viet Nam Red Cross' response to the unprecedented hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) outbreak.

To support government efforts in addressing the outbreak, VNRC will conduct communication campaigns and distribute hygiene items that will benefit approximately 120,000 families with under six-year-old children, as well as 2,250 informal day-care centres in 75 communes in five most affected provinces,

namely: Ho Chi Minh, Dong Nai, Binh Duong, Quang Ngai and Thanh Hoa.

Working with national and local authorities, and mass organizations, VNRC will carry out the operation through 750 volunteers who will be given refresher training on HFMD prevention and equipped with communication tools.

The final work plan and budget was completed on 30 August after consultation with key stakeholders. This operation is expected to be implemented over four months, and completed by 30 November 2011.

IFRC would like to thank the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO) and Canadian Red Cross/Canadian government for contributing to the replenishment of the DREF under this operation.

## The situation

Hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) is a viral illness characterized by fever, ulcers in the mouth and blisters on the palms of the hands, and soles of the feet. There is no specific prevention and treatment for the disease. It is generally mild and the majority of cases recover without treatment. However, the disease usually affects infants and young children, and certain viral strains (*enterovirus/EV71*) can cause a severe form of the disease and even result in death. In Viet Nam, records of HFMD from 2005 are available, and since 2008, the disease was included in the national infectious disease surveillance system. In the last three years, about 10,000 cases have been reported annually.

Since May 2011, there has been a sudden increase in the reported number of cases in 20 southern provinces of Viet Nam. The disease reached its highest peak in the week of 25-30 July, with more than 2,300 new cases found in that week alone. As of 1 September, according to the ministry of health, more than 38,600 cases, including 86 fatalities, have been reported from 59 provinces. Updates on infections and deaths from selected five provinces are below:

Cases	Ho Chi Minh	Dong Nai	Binh Duong	Quang Ngai	Thanh Hoa
Infections	7,383	3,676	1,662	3,977	1,160
Deaths	22	16	9	5	2

According to the Ho Chi Minh Pasteur Institute, most affected areas are urban communities, where there is a very high concentration of people living in congested housing, where water, hygiene and sanitation facilities, as well as health services are insufficient. In the last two weeks, the increase of cases is reported as slowing down in Ho Chi Minh and its surrounding provinces; however, it is still too early to say that the situation has really stabilized as HFMD in Viet Nam usually experiences a second peak between September to November.

The government of Viet Nam has actively responded to this situation of hand, foot and mouth disease. On 18 August, the Prime Minister and Minister of Health issued a government's telegraph to the people's committee and department of health urging the strengthening of prevention and control of HFMD. Resources from national and provincial levels have been provided for training of health workers, procurement of medical supplies and production of communication materials. Several tonnes of chloramines-B have already been distributed to households and pre-school facilities, while additional supplies are being procured to continue disinfection in schools and preschools in order to mitigate the potential impact of the second peak.

## Coordination and partnerships

Viet Nam Red Cross is the first organization from the civil society sector that is actively engaging in and responding to the HFMD situation. At national level, VNRC is in contact with the ministry of health and the World Health Organization representative office in Viet Nam regularly for situation updates and forecasts on the disease, as well as consulted with them on the VNRC course of action. The headquarters also works with the national centre for health education and the Ho Chi Minh Pasteur Institute around key messages and communication activities. The ministry of health recently has formed its steering committee to manage and supervise HFMD prevention and control in provinces. During implementation, VNRC will collaborate with the committee for effective information sharing and prevention and control plans.

At provincial level, active chapters such as Ho Chi Minh, Dong Nai, Ben Tre and others have worked closely with the provincial authorities and the health sector to disseminate situation updates and prevention

messages at community level. Red Cross members in community are mobilized to disseminate information and key messages to infected households and schools.

As HFMD is seen under control in the health sector, the multi-sector coordination mechanism for infectious disease and pandemics has not been fully activated. Coordination is mostly done among the health and education sectors and state media. In the five target provinces under the operation, this mechanism will be strengthened with involvement at operational level by Viet Nam Red Cross. Intervention planning at community level by VNRC has been finalized in consultation and sharing with both local authorities and the health sector.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Red Cross members and volunteers have been among the first responders to the sudden wave of HFMD in communities. Since May, Viet Nam Red Cross has kept close watch on the HFMD situation. By 21 July, guidance from headquarters was provided to all chapters with updates on the situation, requesting Red Cross staff and volunteers at all levels to disseminate information on the situation and preventive measures in communities as well as to actively participate in local coordination mechanisms in responding to HFMD.



In August, staff of Dong Nai chapter disseminated preventive messages on hand, foot and mouth disease to pre-school teachers in Bien Hoa City. Picture: Quang Tuan, Viet Nam Red Cross

Building on experiences in response to avian and human influenza, VNRC's members and volunteers have rapidly disseminated information on the situation and key messages as guided by the ministry of health. Red Cross youth at commune levels have been mobilized to work along the health and education sectors, and other mass organizations in public campaigns and house-to-house education.

Over the last month, VNRC has carried out the following interventions:

- **VNRC headquarters:** In July and August, VNRC provided guidelines to all staff, members and volunteers on information of HFMD and prevention measures in communities. Collaboration with the ministry of health and WHO for HFMD has started through sharing information on the situation and messages on preventive measures.
- **Ho Chi Minh provincial chapter:** During July and August, dissemination activities focusing on the prevention of infection, early detection and referral to hospitals were started in 322 communes.
- **Thanh Hoa chapter:** In August, Red Cross members who are active in the local steering committee for HFMD were mobilized to give information to families who were suspected of and/or having infected children. Activities are focused in areas with high cases including Trieu Son, Thanh Hoa city, Nong Cong and Quang Son district.
- **Quang Ngai chapter:** in July, Red Cross members and volunteers were mobilized to join the health sector in distributing 60,000 leaflets to families with children under five years old.

- **Ben Tre chapter:** Implementing VNRC's guideline, the chapter formed two groups of community educators in each commune to disseminate information on the situation as well as on risks and preventive measures.

## Progress towards outcomes

Emergency health
<p><b>Outcome:</b> Targeted population in 75 communes in five severely affected provinces have improved knowledge and practices in the prevention and control of hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD).</p>
<p><b>Outputs</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IEC materials on HFMD are adapted and distributed in to 120,000 families and 2,250 informal day-care centres in 75 selected communes.</li> <li>2. 30 trainers and 750 volunteers are trained and active in HFMD prevention</li> </ol>
<p><b>Activities planned</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activate VNRC national and provincial emergency health teams</li> <li>• Conduct rapid needs assessment</li> <li>• Develop and circulate HFMD updates and guidelines on community-based responses, centred on non-pharmaceutical interventions to HFMD to Red Cross branches and priority communities</li> <li>• Train/update VNRC trainers and volunteers on HFMD, epidemic control and first aid</li> <li>• Disseminate HFMD prevention and control messages via mass media</li> <li>• Conduct HFMD prevention and control awareness-raising activities, including hand-washing demonstrations, in selected communities, preschool and day care centres,</li> <li>• Provide hygiene items along with HFMD prevention activities to selected preschools and households in outbreak areas</li> <li>• Monitor and evaluate operation (including beneficiary satisfaction surveys and lessons learned for volunteers and National Society staff)</li> </ul>

Building on from experience and capacity in pandemic preparedness, VNRC uses the existing mechanism and trainer team for HFMD response. The emergency health team at national, provincial and district level is activated to lead the operation. Two persons from the Humanitarian Pandemic Preparedness (H2P) programme have been assigned to project management at headquarters while the overall implementation is directed by the vice-president who is in charge of healthcare. The management team has guided and set the criteria for the selection of communes, districts and volunteers for the target provinces.

A rapid assessment and consultation with various stakeholders in the provinces of Dong Nai and Ho Chi Minh were conducted from 23 to 25 August in order to finalize the operational plan. VNRC deployed members of its national disaster response team to implement the assessment. The assessment team also received technical assistance from the Federation's emergency health zone coordinator and the country office team. From consultation with various partners, the target beneficiaries of the operation are identified as children under six years of age - especially under three-year-olds and those in households or in informal day-care centres; care givers and parents.

Geographical focus highlights areas with presence of the disease; a high concentration of factory workers and lacking information and communication regarding prevention. At present, VNRC is prepared to carry out interventions in communities from September to mid-October in order to help enhance reduction and limit the disease spreading. Removal of the disinfectants and chloramines from the original plan is made due to high coverage of the health sector's plan.

In the operation, VNRC emphasizes strengthening communication and visibility of the Red Cross. Specifically, findings from the assessment were presented at the launch meeting while VNRC's operation on HFMD helped sensitize about 80 participants from 32 chapters, as well as partners. Information of the assessment and launch meeting was also disseminated via national TV and the three largest print newspapers in the country. Communication of HFMD facts and preventive messages, existing video clips and posters from the pandemic preparedness programme and the national programme are being adapted for HFMD materials. In addition, VNRC is in coordination with the ministry of health, the WHO Viet Nam representative office, the Ho

Chi Minh Pasteur Institute and the national TV station to identify messages and set up a broadcasting schedule.

In preparation for training activities, the translation of epidemic control training and action tools has been completed. VNRC has identified qualified trainers from the H2P and Ho Chi Minh Pasteur Institute to carry out training for instructors while participants from five provinces are selected to attend.

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## Contact information

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## DREF history:

- 5 August 2011: CHF 127, 221 was allocated for four months to assist 113,625 beneficiaries.
- This is the first DREF operation update issued since its launch.

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