



**DREF Bulletin**  
**no. MDRPA003**  
**Final Report**  
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**23 July 2007**

## PANAMA: FIRES

*The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in 185 countries.*

### In Brief

**Period covered by this Final Report: 22 March to 21 April 2007.**

**History of this Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)-funded operation:**

- CHF 7,500 (USD 6,097 or EUR 4,526) was allocated from the Federation's DREF on 22 March 2007 to respond to the needs of this operation
- This operation was implemented in 1 month, and was completed by 21 April 2007. In line with Federation reporting standards, the DREF Bulletin Final Report (narrative and financial) is due 90 days after the end of the operation (by 21 July 2007).

*Interim Financial Report below, Final Financial report to be attached in due course*

The International Federation undertakes activities that 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.

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*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.*

*For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support*

*to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>*

## Background and Summary

At approximately 4:30 a.m. on Wednesday 21 March 2007, a fire occurred in sector C of the Curundú neighbourhood, located in Panama City, Panama. Authorities cordoned off the area to facilitate the assessments, after which it was determined that the fire devastated more than 137 houses, left about 725 people affected and killed three minors.

In response to the fire, the Office of the First Lady activated its stock centre located in the city's Omar Park. In addition, the Ministries of Housing and Social Development, the Mayor's Office and the Community Council among others, organized the implementation of surveys in the area. The Ministry of Health assigned a mobile clinic with medical staff to provide first aid care to the affected population.

During the emergency the Red Cross Society of Panama (RCSP) dispatched rescue, health and first aid staff – as well as ambulances - to provide assistance to the beneficiaries of the operation. The National Society helped with transferring patients to medical centres and provided direct health assistance such as psycho-social support and attention to skin burns and superficial skin cuts. On the first day, more than 30 NS volunteers carried out first aid care, medical transportation and psychological support activities to the affected population in Curundú.

The Ministry of Housing, the Curundú Community Council and the National System of Civil Protection (Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil- SINAPROC), Ministry of Social Development (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social – MIDES), Ministry of Housing (Ministerio de Vivienda – MIVI), Ministry of Health (Ministerio de Salud – MINSA) and other organisations worked in close coordination in order to address the main needs of the affected population.

The Ministry of Housing has started with the construction of 50 houses for families that voluntarily decided to move to another location. The remaining population will be situated in apartments that will be re-habilitated in the next months. MIVI already started with the rehabilitation of existing buildings to assure apartments for the affected population.



**Houses levelled by the fires in Curundú.  
Source: International Federation.**

## Coordination

The Red Cross Society of Panama worked closely with the Ministries of Housing, Social Development and Health, SINAPROC, the Mayor's office, community leaders and other governmental institutions present in the area, in carrying out the damage and needs assessments, health assistance, psychosocial support and the distribution of the relief items. There was true teamwork during distributions, as each institution complemented the other. In addition, the Ministry of Health and the RCSP carried out the beneficiary survey and worked together to coordinate health and care activities.

From the onset of the disaster the National Society has been in close contact and coordination with the Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and received support in developing activities such as the Plan of Action. Furthermore, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Risk, Emergency and Disaster Task Force (REDLAC) members were informed about the actions taken by RCSP during this disaster.

## Analysis of the operation – achievements and impact

### Beneficiaries

The operation assisted 150 families that were affected by the fire as selected by the Local Committee of the RCSP and in line with the needs that were identified during the surveys. These families were selected according to needs based on the following criteria:

- Families whose houses were destroyed by the fire.
- Priority was given to large families and those with children, persons with disabilities and the elderly.
- Single mothers were also prioritised.

### Relief

The Red Cross Society of Panama, with the assistance of PADRU, achieved the following:

**Objective: 150 families affected by the fire (approximately 750 beneficiaries) see their immediate needs met through the distribution of 150 kitchen kits and 300 blankets (2 per family) to help them recover from the emergency.**

### *Achievements and impact*

After the damage and need assessments, the RCSP with the support of the Federation, designed a Plan of Action in order to meet the main needs of the affected population. Relief supplies were ready and available at the Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) warehouses in Panama. While the Ministry of Housing (MIVI) carried out the registration of the affected population census, supported by Red Cross volunteers, other governmental and non-governmental organisations coordinated and organized the purchase of relief items and future distributions.

On the afternoon after the fire took place, SINAPROC provided the affected population with an immediate distribution of food, water and non-food items such as mattresses. On 22 March (one day after the emergency) a joint distribution between SINAPROC and RCSP took place, covering the main needs of the 150 families (725 beneficiaries) with kitchen sets, blankets, water, hygiene kits, mattresses, food items and clothes.

The relief items distributed by RCSP - a total of 150 kitchen sets and 300 blankets - as well as the transportation and distribution costs were covered by DREF funding.

In addition, RCSP carried out a solidarity campaign amongst the Panamanian population, which made it possible to distribute additional relief items such as water (water tanks for all 150 families), clothing (new and used), mattresses (80 units) cots (field beds) and special items for students (back packs and uniforms). The distribution of school uniforms and materials was directly coordinated with the Ministry of Education.

SINAPROC, with the assistance of other non-governmental organisations, distributed food items, mattresses, stoves (with a gas tank) and cots, as well as food and non food items especially for children that stayed in temporary shelter.



**A family affected by the fires benefits from the humanitarian aid distributed by the Red Cross Society of Panama and SINAPROC**  
**Source: International Federation.**

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The rapid assessment and coordination among different actors involved in the operation facilitated a strong impact in terms of tending to the main needs of the affected population in a short time. Search and rescue, as well as health care and psychosocial activities also contributed to the reduction of the vulnerability and suffering of the population in the immediate aftermath of the disaster.

**Constraints**

The main constraint within this emergency was the low water pressure in the area, which made it difficult to control the fire; this explains the devastation caused by the event.

The strong commitment and motivation of RCSP volunteer was crucial for the successful completion of the emergency operation. However, the volunteers' performance was somewhat hampered by a lack of suitable means of transportation during the distributions and suitable RCSP equipment such as helmets, etc. Further improvement in these areas could strengthen the Red Cross Society of Panama in case of future actions.

**Lessons learned**

During the recent flooding emergency operations in Panama, efforts were made to improve the overall coordination between the main emergency responders in Panama. The excellent coordination amongst all actors during this operation certainly assured timely, effective and efficient search and rescue activities, needs assessments and distribution of humanitarian aid. Therefore, in the future it is hoped to continue to build relationships with the important and strategic actors, so aforementioned activities and distributions will be carried out to ensure efficiency and timeliness.

**[Interim financial report below;](#)**  
**[click here to return to the title page or contact information](#)**

**International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

MDRPA003 - PANAMA - FIRES

Interim Financial Report

Selected Parameters	
Reporting Timeframe	2006/12-2007/6
Budget Timeframe	2006/12-2007/6
Appeal	MDRPA003
Budget	APPEAL

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

**I. Consolidated Response to Appeal**

	Health & Care	Disaster Management	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Coordination & Implementation	TOTAL
<b>A. Budget</b>		7,501				7,501
<b>B. Opening Balance</b>		0				0
<b>Income</b>						
<u>Other Income</u>						
<i>DREF Allocations</i>		7,500				7,500
<b>C6. Other Income</b>		7,500				7,500
<b>C. Total Income = SUM(C1..C6)</b>		7,500				7,500
<b>D. Total Funding = B + C</b>		7,500				7,500

**II. Balance of Funds**

	Health & Care	Disaster Management	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Coordination & Implementation	TOTAL
<b>B. Opening Balance</b>		0				0
<b>C. Income</b>		7,500				7,500
<b>E. Expenditure</b>		-5,532				-5,532
<b>F. Closing Balance = (B + C + E)</b>		1,968				1,968

**III. Budget Analysis / Breakdown of Expenditure**

Account Groups	Budget	Expenditure					TOTAL	Variance
		Health & Care	Disaster Management	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Coordination & Implementation		
A		B					A - B	
<b>BUDGET (C)</b>		7,501					7,501	
<b>Supplies</b>								
Clothing & textiles	1,293							1,293
Food			118			118		-118
Utensils & Tools	3,305		3,332			3,332		-28
<b>Total Supplies</b>	<b>4,598</b>		<b>3,450</b>			<b>3,450</b>		<b>1,147</b>
<b>Transport &amp; Storage</b>								
Storage	1,806							1,806
Transport & Vehicle Costs	610		215			215		395
<b>Total Transport &amp; Storage</b>	<b>2,416</b>		<b>215</b>			<b>215</b>		<b>2,201</b>
<b>Personnel Expenditures</b>								
International Staff Payroll Benefits			495			495		-495
National Staff			583			583		-583
National Society Staff			199			199		-199
<b>Total Personnel Expenditures</b>			<b>1,277</b>			<b>1,277</b>		<b>-1,277</b>
<b>General Expenditure</b>								
Communications			108			108		-108
Professional Fees			122			122		-122
<b>Total General Expenditure</b>			<b>230</b>			<b>230</b>		<b>-230</b>
<b>Program Support</b>								
Program Support	488		360			360		128
<b>Total Program Support</b>	<b>488</b>		<b>360</b>			<b>360</b>		<b>128</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE (D)</b>	<b>7,501</b>		<b>5,532</b>			<b>5,532</b>		<b>1,969</b>
<b>VARIANCE (C - D)</b>			<b>1,969</b>			<b>1,969</b>		