

# DREF operation update



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Costa Rica: Floods

**DREF operation n° MDRCR003**  
**Glide No. TC-2008-000147-CRI**  
**Update n° 1**  
**7 November 2008**

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:** 17 September to 7 November 2008.

**Summary:** CHF 81,000 (USD 73,636 or EUR 50,155) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 17 September, 2008 to support the National Society in delivering assistance to some 5,000 beneficiaries.

Due to the indirect influence of several tropical storms affecting the region, on 2 September 2008, the Costa Rican government declared a red alert throughout the country. This DREF operation includes activities in water and sanitation and rehabilitation of water wells. Due to the constant rain caused by tropical depression number 16, the clean up activities have been delayed and are planned to start on 15 November 2008. Nevertheless, this DREF operation update will inform on further activities accomplished by the National Society.

This operation is expected to be implemented over three months, and will therefore be completed by 17 December 2008. A Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 17 March 2009). The timeframe of this operation may be extended due to delays encountered at the beginning of the emergency.

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The Regional Intervention Team specialist is conducting a workshop on water and sanitation in Liberia, Costa Rica.  
Source: International Federation

## The situation

Central America has been deeply affected by tropical storms during the second semester of 2008. Indirect influence of tropical storm Hanna brought heavy rain and caused rivers to overflow in Costa Rica. Infrastructure sustained serious damages, especially water wells in the province of Guanacaste. The most affected regions in Guanacaste were Santa Cruz, Liberia, Bagaces and Cañas. More than 4,500 people



Costa Rica Red Cross volunteers evacuating affected families. Source: International Federation

were affected in these regions. The National Emergency Committee in coordination with the Costa Rican Red Cross (CRRC) distributed food parcels to approximately 2,529 people in 21 temporary shelters.

Several main roads were blocked by landslides isolating 12 communities and damaging homes in six communities. Currently, the main concern is the rehabilitation of water wells, since there is a risk of contamination and water borne diseases. The effects of tropical depression number 16 caused additional burden to the affected people in Costa Rica, delaying clean up activities. However, these activities will reassume shortly. To date, a total of 11,316 people were affected by the

rainy season in Costa Rica.

## Coordination and partnerships

The Costa Rican government through the National Emergency Committee (Comision Nacional de Emergencias - CNE) declared a red alert in several communities throughout the country. The CNE was constantly monitoring the emergency. The government also activated all regional and local emergency committees. Distributions of relief supplies including blankets, mattresses and basic food items were carried out by the government to the most affected areas.

The Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation Office for Central America and Mexico located in Panama have been in constant communication and providing support to the National Society. A Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member specializing in water and sanitation was deployed to Costa Rica. This specialist conducted a water and sanitation workshop to instruct on the proper usage of the equipment, and provided general support to the National Society.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Since the onset of the emergency the Costa Rica Red Cross (CRRC) activated the Emergency Operations Committee, led by the National Society's president and the relief director. CRRC's main actions were focused on search and rescue activities, as well as providing medical care. The CRRC opened and is managing the emergency shelters. The CRRC also delivered basic relief items including water, food items, blankets and mattresses.



A Water and Sanitation kit provided to the CRRC to process water. Source: International Federation

Seven Red Cross auxiliary committees were active during the emergency. In the region of Chorotega, six relief workers as part of a National Intervention Team (NIT) were responding to the emergency with the support of more than 100 volunteers. A logistics team was on standby with a Unimog vehicle (all terrain) in order to respond rapidly.

The CRRC Emergency Operations Centre (Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia – COE) was activated for the first 24 hours of the emergency in the Headquarters in San Jose. All information provided by the local branches was channelled through this office to be processed. Moreover, CRRC personnel were deployed to the affected areas. The CRRC elaborated a Plan of Action that includes continued monitoring of possible

outbreaks, contaminated water wells, needs, and additional distributions.

## Progress towards objectives

### Water and sanitation

**Objective: To ensure safe water supply by cleaning the water wells and promote good hygiene practices among 1,000 affected families.**

A RIT specialized in water and sanitation will provide training to a team of CRRC water and sanitation volunteers to undertake the cleaning and rehabilitation of contaminated water wells.

#### Activities planned:

- Conducting a workshop for Red Cross volunteers focusing on the training of water well restoration after a flood emergency and dealing with safe water.
- Cleaning and rehabilitating of 1,000 family wells, conducted by two CRC teams. Each team consists of five people specialized in water and sanitation and will use a vehicle equipped with a special water pump, mobile laboratory and chemical products.
- Delivering potable water to the affected families using cisterns.
- Conducting information sessions on best hygiene practices to beneficiary families.

#### Progress and impact:

The cleaning and rehabilitating of 1,000 family water wells have been delayed due to the effects of tropical depression number 16. These activities have been re-scheduled to start on 15 November 2008. It is likely that a three month extension will be requested to complete these activities along with a revised budget.

20 Costa Rican Red Cross volunteers participated in the water and sanitation workshop that was successfully conducted by the RIT member. The volunteers were from different local branches, but mostly came from the affected regions. The workshop included the areas of cleaning of wells, hygiene and health promotion. During the practice training, six families benefited from the cleaning of wells. Two International Federation vehicles (rented) were sent to the CRRC, along with two water wells cleaning equipments to assist the National Society in completing the pending activities.

Thus far, the expectations of the operation have been met given that the National Society's capacity has been strengthened with the provision of equipment and training.

#### Challenges:

There were some minor delays during the customs procedures involving the vehicles. To avoid further delays in this and future operations, it would be helpful to investigate in due time the custom's laws in Central America as they constantly change.

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

The International Federation's activities 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.

## Contact information

**For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:**

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