

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Panama: Floods

DREF operation n° MDRPA004
Glide No. FL-2008-000158-PAN
Update n° 2
26 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: 7
November to 26 November, 2008.

Summary: CHF 120,000 (USD 109,090 or EUR 74,303) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 13 September 2008 to support the Red Cross Society of Panama in delivering emergency assistance to some 2,500 beneficiaries (500 families). A DREF Bulletin update stating the progress on this operation was posted on 7 November 2008.

Since then, during the month of November the province of Chiriqui, Bocas del Toro and Colon were affected by further heavy rains caused by a low pressure system located east of the country. Weather forecasts say rainfall will continue for at least two more days in the entire country.

On 26 November 2008 a DREF extension for the amount of CHF 150,000 (USD 117,142 or EUR 97,056) was approved to deliver immediate assistance to an additional 2,500 beneficiaries (500 families) and to cover operational expenses made by the Red Cross Society of Panama (RCSP). A preliminary emergency appeal will be launched shortly, to seek international support in order to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected people and finance further activities as a more complete picture of the situation emerges. This operation has been extended to be implemented over five months and will therefore be completed by 12 February 2009; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 12 May 2009).

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The roads in the province of Chiriqui were severely damaged by the heavy rainfall. Source: Red Cross Society of Panama.

The situation

On 22 November 2008, the provinces of **Chiriqui**, **Bocas del Toro** and **Colon** were declared in a state of emergency by the National government due to constant rain caused by a low pressure system stationed over

the area. Costa Rica and Nicaragua are also being affected by this weather system with constant rain and flooding.



Overflowed river destroyed a road in Chiriqui.

Source: Red Cross Society of Panama.

The most affected districts in **Chiriqui** are Bugaba, David and Boquete. Landslides, overflowed rivers and floods destroyed houses and communication and electricity towers are down. Main roads, warehouses and bridges also sustained damaged caused by the heavy floods. The Chiriqui Viejo River overflowed flooding several farms and forcing the evacuation of 36 families, including 39 children under the age of 10 and 79 adults. In the district of Boquete, the Caldera River has overflowed destroying a bridge and flooding many hotels.

Current reports indicate 573 people have been affected, 85 houses have been damaged and 15 houses have been destroyed in Chiriquí. The National Civil Protection System (Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil – SINAPROC) branches in David, Cerro Punta and Volcan deployed personnel to the district of Boquete to start

preliminary damage and needs assessments. Boquete, Cerro Punta and Volcan are popular tourist attractions and Boquete is home of one of the best coffees in the world.

Reports indicate that a total of 255 people have lost their homes in Boquete. Currently, four temporary shelters are in place in the district of Bugaba, Boquete and Cerro Punta housing approximately 341 people. Five people were injured and four people died according to SINAPROC.

The Emergency Operations Centre (Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia - COE) informed that rains continue to affect the province of **Bocas del Toro** and the region of Ngöbe Bugle, an indigenous reservation which is hard to access. At least 411 houses and 2,289 people were affected in Bocas del Toro. 18 temporary shelters were opened housing approximately 5,064 people. Several rivers have overflowed, including the Changuinola, Teribe and Sixiaola rivers. In the region of Ngobe Bugle there are 395 houses affected. According to SINAPROC, over 3,000 people have been affected and more than 45 indigenous communities are surrounded by water and isolated.

In the province of **Colon**, reports indicate 40 people have been affected by the floods, nine houses have been damaged and one destroyed.

Rain continues to affect the entire country and forecasts indicate it will continue for two more days.

Coordination and partnerships

The Red Cross Society of Panama has been coordinating relief activities with the International Federation through its Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation Office for Central America and Mexico located in Panama. The RCSP has also been coordinating relief activities with the Civil Protection National System. The Risk Emergency Disaster Working Group for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC) has been in close communication with the Red Cross Society of Panama and the International Federation.



Devastating floods caused by a overflowed river. Source: Red Cross Society of Panama

The PRCS formed alliances with local NGOs present in the area. Several centres were opened by non-profit organizations to collect non-perishable food items as well as clothes and bottled water in the district of David.

The American Red Cross and other Partner National Societies (PNS) have demonstrated interest in providing assistance once all damage and need assessments are completed.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Red Cross Society of Panama local branches deployed 225 volunteers and a search and rescue unit to the affected areas. The National Society is also closely coordinating with the regional COE in charge of performing evaluations and actions in the field.

The Red Cross Society of Panama has deployed National Intervention Team (NIT) members and provided first aid care to the affected people. All local branches are monitoring the situation and have personnel on standby to deploy to the affected areas that have not been reached. In addition, the National Society mobilized family kits for 400 families by ship to the province of Bocas del Toro.

Progress towards revised objectives

The DREF extension will provide emergency non-food assistance to an additional 500 families, emergency food assistance for 1,000 families, operation costs of a water treatment plant and distribution costs as well as preliminary assessments. The National Society has solicited two additional all terrain vehicles to assist in mobilizing volunteers and relief items to the affected areas.

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Objective 1: 1,000 families (5,000 people) will benefit from the provision of relief items to recover from the effects of the floods.

The following items will be distributed to the most affected families:

- 500 kitchen kits (1 per family)
- 500 hygiene kits (1 per family)
- 2,500 blankets (5 per family)
- 1,000 jerry cans (2 per family)
- 1,000 tarpaulins (2 per family)
- 1,000 food parcels (1 per family)

Activities planned:

- Conduct needs assessments, census and beneficiary targeting.
- Procurement of relief supplies according to Federation procedures.
- Distribute relief supplies and control supply movements from point of dispatch to end-user.
- Monitor and evaluate the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distribution.

Progress

A distribution of blankets, hygiene kits, kitchen kits and tarpaulins was completed for 205 families in the district of Tocumen, as part of the first floods experienced in September, 2008. Two vehicles were leased from PADRU to facilitate the distributions of the relief items as mentioned in the DREF update no.1 posted on 7 November.

The number and description of the items that are currently being transported to Bocas del Toro by boat to respond to the most recent floods are as follows:

- 400 jerry cans (2 per family)
- 500 hygiene kits (1 per family)
- 205 kitchen kits (1 per family)
- 1,400 blankets (5 per family)
- 400 tarpaulins (2 per family)

Challenges:

Rain is still falling in many regions of the country and it will be difficult to reach the affected areas, since major roads have been destroyed.

Water and sanitation

Objective: A water and sanitation unit from PADRU will be deployed to Bocas del Toro to provide clean drinking water to the affected population.

Progress:

A water and sanitation unit complemented by 10,000 water purification tablets has been dispatched to the town of Almirante in Bocas del Toro. The water and sanitation unit will be operated by a NIT specialized in water and sanitation from the Red Cross Society of Panama in order to respond to the needs arising from the most recent events.

Challenges:

No challenges have been identified within this objective.

National Society Capacity Building

The capacity of the Red Cross Society of Panama in disaster response and preparedness will have been strengthened.

Two NIT workshops will be held for volunteers in the local branch in David. In addition, two radios will be procured to be used by the communities, for early warning and preparedness activities.

Progress

The two radio equipments have been procured and installed in the vehicles leased by the National Society, allowing constant communication with the local branches in the affected areas. These radios have been crucial for this new emergency since other communication means have been down due to the floods. Volunteers in the field have been able to communicate with the local branch in David thanks to the radio equipment.

Challenges:

No challenges have been identified within this objective.

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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