

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Paraguay: Drought

DREF operation n° MDRPY005
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Update n° 1
24 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: 16
September 2008 to 26 October 2008.

Summary: CHF 93,000 (USD 84,545 or EUR 57,585) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the National Society in delivering immediate food assistance to 900 indigenous families in the Department of Boquerón.

This DREF update no.1 reports on the activities accomplished by the Paraguayan Red Cross including the distribution of complimentary food parcels to more than 900 families and provision of safe drinking water.

This operation is expected to be implemented over three months, and will therefore be completed by 16 December 2008; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 16 March 2009).

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Paraguayan Red Cross distributing food parcels in Boqueron.

Source: International Federation

The situation

The Central Region of Chaco covers 60 percent of the country and includes the departments of Alto Paraguay, Boqueron and Presidente Hayes. The Region of Chaco has a significant amount of climatic ranges and unique geological characteristics that create a great variety of ecological phenomena including plains, dry savannas that seasonally flood, swamplands and extensive forests and brush land.

One of the major problems this area faces is the extreme cyclical droughts and flooding. According to the Nature Conservancy, the river water levels in the mountain range area during the rainy season reach very high peaks and diminish dramatically during the dry season. The sustainability of agriculture is severely

impacted by these drastic changes as the soil becomes highly impermeable causing floods during the rainy season and during dry season the soil is sandy with poor nutrients.



The region of El Chaco after a wildfire.

Source: International Federation

Additionally, the local population faces severe socio-economic challenges such as poverty, low wages, chronic malnutrition and constant risk of famine, compounded by environmental concerns such as deforestation, general degradation of agriculture and scarcity of water.

Reports from the National Emergency Secretary (Secretaria Nacional de Emergencia – SNE), sanitary conditions indicated many cases of respiratory problems, flu symptoms and diarrhoea, due to the sudden changes in the weather, strong winds and lack of safe drinking water. Many children showed low performance in school due to chronic malnutrition and six have died from complications related to malnutrition.

Consequently, the government declared an emergency situation for a period of 90 days

on 10 September 2008 in the departments of Alto Paraguay, Boqueron and Presidente Hayes. Authorities in Boqueron reported that 6,500 families were affected in 124 communities.

Coordination and partnerships

The Paraguayan Red Cross (PRC) has been working jointly with local government branches in the municipalities of Filadelfia, Loma, Plata and Mariscal Estigarribia carrying out damage and need assessments as well as identification of families affected by the drought.

The local government of Boqueron asked the PRC for their support in coordinating relief and response activities including support from the National Intervention Team (NIT). It also reactivated the Emergency Operation Center (Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia – COE). The SNE elaborated a plan of action to respond to this emergency, titling it “El Chaco needs us” (El Chaco necesita de nosotros) and coordinated the delivery of food items for 18,247 families by different agencies.

The government of Boqueron provided water in some of the affected communities and repaired the damaged water systems. It proposed a preliminary work plan for the emergency which is divided in two phases: a) provide initial assistance to the most vulnerable,) reactivation of all departmental emergency committees including all sectors, amongst which the Armed Forces, XVII Sanitary Region, the National Police, Paraguayan Red Cross and fire departments.

The International Federation, through its Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representative for the Andean Region, has provided support to the PRC since the beginning of the emergency. A Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member specializing in water and sanitation was deployed to Paraguay for one month to provide technical support to the operation.

Moreover, the Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid of the European Commission (DG ECHO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Finnish Red Cross worked in coordination with the PRC in this emergency operation.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

At the onset of the emergency, the Paraguayan Red Cross activated its local and central response teams. A National Intervention Team (NIT) was also deployed along with a volunteer specialized in information and reporting to support the local branch in Boqueron. The team deployed obtained the preliminary information needed from the local authorities and from damage and need assessments performed in the field in order to elaborate a plan of action.

The local branches have been working actively in risk management processes at a departmental level through the Preparation and Risk Reduction Multi-threat Project financed by ECHO (DIPECHO-V). The project is being implemented since the beginning of the year. The branches are currently activating all processes with actors involved as established within the framework of the project.

Progress towards objectives

Relief distributions (food items)

Objective: To assist 900 of the most vulnerable families in the departments of Boqueron with humanitarian aid consisting of supplementary food items.

Activities planned:

- Visits to each beneficiary community.
- Revision of affected communities.
- Elaborate a census and compare data provided by the government.
- Selection of supplier.
- Procurement of food items.
- Packaging of supplementary food parcels.
- Organize teams of volunteers.
- Organize communication with community leaders to notify distributions.
- Distribution of food parcels to each family (each head of family has to sign).

Progress and impact:

A total of 1,261 families (7,566 people) received complementary food parcels (59,267 kgs.) in 27 communities in the department of Boquerón.

All the International Federation procurement processes were followed to acquire the supplementary food items which included rice, flour, noodles, sugar, beans, salt, tea and cooking oil. There was an agreement with the SNE, where they provided transportation (trucks), drivers and gasoline to support the distribution activities. Thanks to this agreement, resources were optimized and an additional 361 families were benefited.

Challenges:

The only challenge identified by the PRC was to maintain a good level of coordination among the different actors assisting in this objective to avoid duplication of actions.

Water and Sanitation

Objective: The risk of waterborne and water related diseases has been reduced through the provision of safe water.

A RIT specialized in water and sanitation will be providing her expertise to determine the best course of action towards the re-establishment of an adequate supply of safe drinking water and irrigation systems for farmers.

Activities planned:

- Visit to the affected municipalities.
- Coordinate between the PADRU water and sanitation expert and PRC technicians.
- Complete a thorough damage assessment in 94 communities.
- Elaborate a report on assessments gathered in the field.
- Deliver a status report to the communities about the repaired water systems.
- Seek funding to implement proposed course of action.



Progress and impact:

Several visits were made to the field to prepare an analysis and propose a plan to rehabilitate the water systems in the department of Boquerón. The proposed plan of action has been presented to the Inter American Bank to support six project proposals in the rehabilitation of water systems.

Challenges:

To maintain close coordination with SNE and other organizations in order to complete the projects.

The RIT specialized in water and sanitation testing the levels of turbidity in the region of El Chaco.
Source: International Federation.

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

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