DREF operation update

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Argentina: Landslide

DREF operation n° MDRAR004
Glide no. MS-2009-000041-ARG
17 April 2009

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: 18 February to 24 March 2009.

A women affected by the landslide receiving relief items in Tartagal. Source: Argentine Red Cross

Summary: CHF 164,000 (USD 141,205 or EUR 109,808) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 18 February 2009 to support the Argentine Red Cross in delivering immediate assistance to 1,000 families (5,000 beneficiaries).

On 9 February, heavy rainfall led to a major landslide in the city of Tartagal, in the province of Salta. Various families were displaced by the event which destroyed homes and infrastructure. The Argentine Red Cross (ARC) will provide the most affected people with essential relief items, basic medical care and psychological support (PSP), among other activities.

This DREF operation update reflects the progress of activities as well as the addition of a new objective for dengue prevention in light of the current outbreak experienced in the affected province, as well as the increase of target beneficiaries to 1,000 families. The new objective does not result in an increase in the budget given that the Argentine Red Cross has received discounts on relief items from local suppliers

and has also received many bilateral contributions from partners in-country.

This operation is expected to be implemented over three months, and will therefore be completed by 13 May 2009; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 13 August 2009).

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The situation

On Monday, 9 February 2009, heavy rainfall in the northern Argentine province of Salta caused a landslide of mud, water and wood remains. The landslide swept through the western mountains next to the Tartagal river bank into Tartagal city. The city is located in the north-eastern region of the province of Salta, approximately 369 km from the capital city of Salta in the north-western region of Argentina.

Washed away by the landslide, a 50 metre long railroad bridge fell onto a second bridge, creating a dike in the Tartagal River. The event caused the river to overflow, affecting several surrounding neighbourhoods.

Tartagal has an approximate population of 60,000 inhabitants, of which 20,000 people have been affected according to official reports. During the onset of the emergency, figures from Argentine authorities indicated that 742 people were evacuated and placed in four temporary shelters. The most heavily impacted neighbourhoods were Santa Maria and a settlement located west of the railroad bridge, known as Barrio Punta Saavedra. In addition, a major part of the urban area of the city was covered by mud, reaching in places a depth of up to 1.5 metres. Preliminary information on infrastructural damage indicates that 30 houses were destroyed and 300 more damaged, along with other reported loss of personal and commercial property.

Initial efforts from the national government focused on cleaning and sanitizing affected homes and other mud-covered areas and coordinating the return of the displaced to their homes. The national government also dispatched food items, drinking water, diapers, mattresses, blankets, clothes, footwear and rain-proof boots.

To date the Provincial Institute of Housing (Instituto de la Vivienda de la Provincia) is leading the reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged houses. The families that lost their homes and were sheltered in schools have received cash vouchers from the Municipality of Tartagal. In addition, local authorities have been working on the cleaning up of rubble in the affected neighbourhoods, in coordination with the armed and security forces. Several organizations from civil society provided technical assistance after the emergency, but many have by now withdrawn from the affected area (Comisión Cascos Blancos and evangelical organizations). The families who were sheltered in three of the city's public schools have been relocated due to the start of the academic calendar.

No rains were recorded until 6 March, which facilitated the cleaning of affected zones and the removal of the railroad bridge that collapsed. Cleaning activities continue to take place in the Tartagal River to eliminate branches and debris in order to avoid further flooding. Tartagal is also experiencing a social crisis as many access routes are being blocked by protesters during strikes concerning the lack of job opportunities. In addition, there is currently a health emergency created by an increase in dengue cases. The general population is still worried about future severe rains and children have not overcome the psychological shock experienced during the emergency. The landslide not only affected people with low income or the unemployed, but also affected several local businesses.

Coordination and partnerships

Coordination meetings were held among the ARC, provincial and national authorities including the Ministries of Health, the Interior and Social Development and other non-governmental organizations. In order to complete damage and need assessments, the national government provided the ARC with logistical and administrative resources.

The Argentine Red Cross has also shared information on activities and targeted families with the Civil Defence of the municipality of Tartagal, the Commissary of the Regional Unit 4 of Tartagal and the disaster

technician from the Municipality of Embarcación. The ARC coordinated security measures with the 911 System in view of the fact that lootings were reported during distributions carried out by other organizations.

Several government and private institutions have provided assistance and support to the Argentine Red Cross in its response efforts. For example, the Argentine Army provided a warehouse to the Argentine Red Cross in order to store relief kits. Also, the provincial government of Salta provided the ARC with a van for the transportation of personnel to the field. The company Cloro has also donated 60 m3 of bleach that will be transported to Tartagal.

Since the beginning of the emergency, the ARC has been sharing information with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Caritas, UNICEF, Save the Children and other local NGOs including Comision Cascos Blancos, Red Solidaria and La Casa de la Provincia de Salta (The House in the Province of Salta).

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

During the beginning of the emergency, the Argentine Red Cross (ARC) implemented emergency relief activities including evacuation activities, damage and need assessments, the design of intervention strategies and deployment of resources in the affected area of Tartagal. For these actions the ARC mobilized a Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member, a local technician from the ARC Salta branch and four ARC volunteers. Moreover, the bank account established to receive donations from the public to assist relief efforts remains open and donations contnue to be sought through the short message service (SMS).

University students from Tartagal city have become ARC volunteers, increasing the number of ARC volunteers working in the area to 13.

In the process of completing the selection of beneficiaries, the ARC visited an average of 120 people per day. A team composed of ARC volunteers, two local technicians and 17 students from the Sanitary Educator (Educador Sanitario) course of the National University of Salta (Universidad Nacional de Salta) carried out the visits in the targeted neighbourhoods. In addition, ARC volunteers have provided psychosocial support, hygiene and health promotion in the temporary shelters.

The Argentine Red Cross has increased its emergency response capacities through the efforts carried out during previous emergency operations such as the floods in 2008 in Salta, and the floods in the provinces of Santa Fé and Entre Ríos during 2007.

The International Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU and the Regional Representation Office for the Southern Cone continue to be in close communication with the ARC to monitor the situation.

Progress towards objectives

Many of the suppliers that provided items for the relief kits have given discounts and delivered the items to Salta city, reducing the cost of the kits and transportation. In addition, some companies have donated items in the kits, for example the litres of bleach and diapers. In light of the DREF funds saved, the inclusion of a new objective for this DREF operation has been approved. The new objective responds to the dengue outbreak that Argentina is experiencing at the moment. Activities under this new objective are focused on the prevention of new dengue cases in Tartagal by providing 1,000 families with dengue prevention kits.

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: 600 families will benefit from the provision of hygiene, kitchen, and cleaning kits to recover from the effects of the landslide.

Activities planned:

- Local purchase of kit products
- Preparation of the kits
- Identification and census of beneficiaries
- Distribution of the kits

Progress and impact:

The procurement of items for the hygiene, kitchen and cleaning kits was carried out locally following Federation procurement standards. The suppliers delivered the items during the week of 23 February to the ARC branch in Salta for the preparation of the kits. 15 ARC volunteers worked in the preparation of the personal hygiene kits for adults during a three-day period, and the truck was loaded on 13 March to dispatch the items to the targeted families.

The identification of beneficiaries was carried out during the third week of February in the neighbourhoods of Santa María and Punta Saavedra, as well as in the indigenous neighbourhoods of Tobas (I and II) and Chorotes. The process of identification of beneficiaries was completed by a team composed of ARC headquarters staff, and ARC volunteers from the branches of Salta, Corrientes, Resistencia, Córdoba, San Juan and Don Torcuato. Priority was given to the families worst affected by the landslide and to families with children up to 36 months of age in the targeted neighbourhoods.

After damage and needs assessments and beneficiary selection were completed, each family received beneficiary cards in order to monitor the relief items distributed. The ARC is assisting families that were selected in the different shelters and families that stayed with relatives and friends after the landslide. The following table presents the number of beneficiary families per neighbourhood:

Neighbourhood	Number of targeted families
Santa María	160 families
Punta Saavedra	170 families
Los Tobas (Toba I and II) and Chorotes	230 families
Total	**560 families**

The 40 remaining kits of relief items were distributed among evacuated families from the neighbourhoods of Santa María and Punta Saavedra who are currently staying in the homes of relatives or friends in Tartagal.

Each adult hygiene kit contained items for a five-member family for at least one month. The quantity and type of items included in the hygiene kits is detailed below:

Adult hygiene kit	
5	Units of soap x 250gr
5	toothbrushes
2	Tooth paste 145 grams
20	Feminine hygiene pads
1	Toilet paper 12 units
1	1 litre shampoo
3	Small towels
2	Large towels
1	Cream mosquito repellent 200gr
3	Disposable shaving razors

For the preparation of the children's hygiene kits and kitchen kits, 10 ARC volunteers worked during a three-day period, and the truck was loaded for distribution on 20 March 2009. The children's hygiene kit was designed for infants up to 36 months of age and contained items for one child to last up to one month. The contents of the children's hygiene kit and kitchen kit are detailed below:

Children hygiene kit for up to 36 months of age	
150	Diapers
2	Large cotton bags
1	Bottle of shampoo
1	Soap bar

Kitchen kit	
5	Plastic glasses
5	Plastic plates
5	Stainless steel spoons
5	Stainless steel forks
5	Stainless steel knives
1	5 -10 litre pot with handles
1	Large stainless steel skillet
2	Match boxes
1	Kettle

Distributions of kitchen and children's hygiene kits were carried out first in the neighbourhoods of Santa María and Villa Saavedra, and in the second round in Toba I and II, and Chorote. However, the total of 600 families to received children's hygiene kits was not met as 120 families did not have children aged up to 36 months. The ARC is therefore visiting other neighbourhoods affected by the landslide and floods in order to distribute the remaining kits.

A total of 15 ARC volunteers worked in the preparation of the cleaning kits during a three-day period, and the truck was loaded on 6 March. The distribution of cleaning kits was carried out in the aforementioned neighbourhoods using the same methodology. Each family received a cleaning and kitchen kit (for a five-member family) for one month, containing the following items:

Cleaning kit	
1	Broom
1	Hand brush
5	Litres of concentrated detergent
5	Litres of concentrated bleach
1	10-12 litre bucket
3	Steel sponge (all-purpose)
2	Kitchen cloths
4	250gr Soap bars
1	Wide shovel

An additional of 85 families were assisted with kits from local donations received in the ARC branches. The ARC coordinated with Caritas to include these families under the response efforts of that organization.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion

Objective: 600 families will benefit from the provision of water and sanitation kits for one month, adequate sanitation as well as hygiene promotion.

Activities planned:

- Purchase of kit products
- Preparation of the kits
- Identification and census of beneficiaries
- Distribution of the kits
- Distribution of key messages on good hygiene practices (brochures and posters) through house visits and radio spots

Progress and impact:

The procurement of items for the water and sanitation kits was carried out locally following Federation procurement standards. 15 ARC volunteers worked in the preparation of the kits during a three-day period, and the truck was loaded on 6 March to dispatch the items to the targeted families. Each water and sanitation kit contained the following items for five people up to one month:

Water and Sanitation kit	
1	10 litre jerry can with tap
1	2 litre pitcher
2	1 litre of bleach
1	Dropper

ARC staff and volunteer delivering water and sanitation kit to a woman as well as information on how to use bleach to make water safe. Source: ARC

The first distribution round reached the most affected families living in Punta Saavedra, Santa María and Belé and the second round of distributions reached affected indigenous families in the neighbourhoods of Toba I, Toba II and Chorote. The water and sanitation kits were distributed to the same families that received the aforementioned relief kits.

Moreover, brochures and posters were sent from the ARC headquarters to the Salta ARC branch, Tartagal with information on respiratory infections, diarrhoea, dengue, HIV and AIDS, and malaria. In addition, the radio spots with key messages on dengue prevention were distributed to four local radios in Tartagal and one in Vespusio. The radio spots were in Spanish and in Wichi, the mother-tongue of the indigenous populations of the area.

Emergency health

Objective: People that have been evacuated will benefit from psychosocial support and hygiene promotion activities to contribute to their well-being.

Activities planned:

- Recreational activities with children in temporary shelters.
- Psychosocial support for men and women in temporary shelters.
- Workshops in psychosocial support and disease prevention

Progress and impact:

The ARC provided psychosocial support to a total 742 people sheltered in four evacuation centres (approximately 300 adults and 442 children) in order to help them cope with stress related symptoms as a result of the emergency. ARC staff and volunteers carried out one group workshop in each evacuation centre focused on safe water through the use of bleach, diarrhoea prevention (use of safe water and good hygiene practices in the handling of food), dengue prevention (use of mosquito repellent and elimination of possible breeding grounds). The PSP support provided to children was carried out through activities such as singing, group activities, indoor and outdoor games as well as talks with health messages.

In addition, the ARC carried out house visits to the homes of affected families in Villa Saavedra and Santa María neighbourhoods that were not evacuated or that had already returned to their houses. The beneficiaries received PSP support as well as brochures with information on dengue, diarrhoea and safe water. Approximately, 600 people have been reached through the house visits conducted in these two neighbourhoods affected during the emergency. The ARC also visited one elderly home to provide PSP support to its residents.

Emergency Health (Dengue Prevention)

Objective: 1,000 families (approximately 5,000 beneficiaries) will benefit from the provision of dengue prevention kits.

Activities planned:

- Printing of publication materials with key health messages relevant to the dengue outbreak.
- Conduct house visits to promote dengue prevention at the community level.
- Provision of dengue prevention kits to 1,000 families.

Progress and impact:
This objective aimed to provide 1,000 families with dengue prevention kits designed for a family of five members for one month. The targeted families are as follows:

- 160 families in Santa María
- 170 families in Punta Saavedra
- 230 families in Los Tobás (Toba I and II, and Chorotes)
- 210 families in Belén
- 60 families in Supe
- 70 families in neighbourhood 365.

Argentine Red Cross volunteers preparing the dengue prevention kits to be distributed. Source: ARC

The remaining 100 kits were distributed among evacuated families from the neighbourhoods of Santa María and Punta Saavedra who are currently staying in the homes of relatives or friends in Tartagal.

Each dengue prevention kit contained the following items: 5 units of spray mosquito repellent (160 cc), 10 boxes of mosquito repellents (spiral), 2 bottles of insecticide for mosquito (360 cc), and 1 repellent cream for children (9 gr). The kits were designed to last one month for a family of five members.

During the distribution of dengue prevention kits, ARC volunteers provided family members with information on the correct use of mosquito repellent and how to eliminate the proliferation of breeding groups of the mosquito Aedes aegyptis. Detailed information on the distribution of these dengue prevention kits will be available at the final report for this operation.

During the April the ARC will provide additional training to new volunteers on topics such as safe water and dengue prevention, and trainings will later be carried out in two neighbourhoods.

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.

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<Click here to return to the title page>