

# DREF operation



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Costa Rica: Earthquake

DREF operation n° MDRCR005  
GLIDE n° EQ-2009-000009-CRI  
13 January 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.

**CHF 55,000 (USD 49,273 or EUR 36,769) has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Costa Rican Red Cross in delivering immediate assistance to some 500 families (2,500 people) affected by the earthquake. DREF funds will also be used to purchase and distribute hygiene kits and kitchen sets, cover mobilization costs, search and rescue activities, the provision of pre-hospital evacuation and care, support to temporary shelter and further needs assessments. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.**



CRRC personnel carrying injured people after search and rescue activities.  
Source: Costa Rican Red Cross

**Summary:** An earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale hit Costa Rica at 13:21 local time on 8 January 2009. Preliminary reports indicate that several people were killed or reported missing, dozens have been injured, and infrastructure has been damaged that has isolated several communities.

According to the Costa Rican Seismologic Observatory the epicentre was located 6 km east from the Póas Volcano, in the province of Alajuela, north of the capital city of San José. The earthquake was felt throughout the country and in some border communities in Panama.

**This operation is expected to be implemented over the next 3 months, and will therefore be completed by 13 April 2009; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 13 July 2009).**

[<Click here for the DREF budget, here for contact details, or here for the map of the affected area>](#)

## The situation

On Wednesday 7 January 2009 the first quake of 4.0 on the Richter scale was registered 6 km east from the Póas Volcano. On Thursday 8 January at 13:21 local time an earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale shook Costa Rica with the epicentre located approximately 35 km from the capital city of San Jose and 6 km east from the Póas Volcano, a major tourist attraction. More than 1,200 aftershocks have been felt since then. The earthquake affected the central provinces of Alajuela, Heredia, San José and Cartago, which constitute the Central Valley.

According to the Costa Rican Seismologic Observatory (Observatorio Vulcanológico y Sismológico de Costa Rica – OVSICORI) the earthquake occurred within the Caribbean plate just east of its surface boundary with the Cocos plate. The earthquake had a strike-slip mechanism and most likely resulted from the release of built up stress within the crust of the Caribbean plate as the Cocos plate subducts beneath it. After the main earthquake, the latest reports from OVSICORI estimate that aftershocks have been registered continuously and are likely to be felt during the next days and weeks. On the night of 12 January, the OVSICORI registered four tremors of medium intensity and explained that when a strong earthquake takes place, there is a readjustment in the crust that can cause tremors in nearby plates. The following table indicates the recent aftershocks registered:

Time	Magnitude (Ritcher Scale)	Felt in
18:45	2.8 °	Vara Blanca, Poasito, Tacaes de Grecia
19:25	3.5°	Bajos del Toro
20:23	4.1°	Cinchona
21:37	4.0°	Bajos del Toro
1:09 (13 January)	4.3°	Poasito,, Vara Blanca, zarcerro, Grecia, Naranjo

The earthquake caused landslides and mud flows blocking main roads and isolating communities. Approximately, 225 houses have sustained damages; while 9 bridges collapsed and 25 access roads are partially blocked delaying rescue workers from reaching the affected zones. The tremor also interrupted the electric supply of at least 928 people. The most affected communities are Cinchona and Vara Blanca located north of Heredia, province neighbouring Alajuela. The reports from the Costa Rican Red Cross confirm that 18 people died, 91 people are injured, and 47 are missing. At the moment, 7 shelters are in operation sheltering 2,452 people whose houses have been damaged or destroyed. The following table indicates the latest numbers of people directly affected by the earthquake:

N° of affected people	
In shelters	2,452
Isolated	1,189
Injured	91
Deaths	18
Missing	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,797</b>

Thus far, the National Emergency Commission (Comisión Nacional de Emergencia – CNE) has issued a red alert for the following counties: Sarapiquí, Santo Domingo, San Rafael, San Pablo, San Isidro, Heredia, Flores, Belén, Barva, Paraíso, La Unión, El Guarco, Alvarado, Turrialba, Alfaro Ruiz, Valverde Vega, San Ramón, Naranjo, Grecia, Atenas, Alajuela, Vázquez de Coronado, Turrubares, Santa Ana, San José, Puriscal, Moravia, Mora, Montes de Oca, Goicoechea, Escazú, Desamparados, Curridabat, Aserri,



The earthquake damaged and destroyed houses in different communities. Source: La Nacion

Alajuelita and Acosta. In addition, the government has sent messages to the population to remain calm, but to make reserves of drinking water and preparations to leave their homes in case strong aftershocks should occur. Moreover, the OVSICORI continues to monitor seismic activity and provide current seismological reports of the situation.

The Costa Rican president declared a state of National Emergency on Monday 12 January. The number of people indirectly affected by the earthquake is still being estimated as damage and needs assessments are ongoing in the affected areas.

## Coordination and partnerships

The Pan American Disaster Response Unit Operations Coordinator was in the field providing support to the Costa Rican Red Cross in the ongoing operation for the floods that took place during the end of November, when the earthquake struck the country. The PADRU Operations Coordinator continued to provide support with this new emergency, until 11 January 2009. PADRU's regional shelter advisor has been actively participating in meetings with several United Nations agencies in Panama to coordinate relief response actions.

The Costa Rican Red Cross (CRRC) is in constant communication 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 Costa Rican government through the CNE has been constantly monitoring the evolution of the emergency and has also activated all regional and local emergency committees. On Friday 9 January, the main CNE warehouse containing relief items for 5,000 families burned down. However, the event will not impact the ongoing relief efforts.

The government is supporting and coordinating all institutions responding to the emergency. It also has relief supplies including blankets, mattresses and basic food items ready for deployment to the most affected areas.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The CRRC search and rescue teams responded to the emergency minutes after the event occurred and worked to reach the people in the affected areas, evacuating them and providing first aid care. The relief committee, national counsel and relief operation directory have been activated. 20 CRRC auxiliary committees are currently operating and 60 others are on alert. CRRC has sent 12 relief officers, National Intervention Teams (NITs) with the logistic support of approximately 400 men and women volunteers and more than 40 vehicles (4 x 4, rescue, ambulances) and one all terrain vehicle (Unimog) to the affected zones.

The main actions of the CRRC are focused on carrying out search, rescue and evacuation activities, providing pre-hospital care to the affected people and carrying out damage and needs assessments. At the moment, the National Society is exploring the most affected zones to search for possible isolated communities and rescue trapped or injured people.

Activities have begun in the management of emergency shelters. The Emergency Operations Center in San José has been activated to collect and communicate all information received from the field. Thus far, the Costa Rican Red Cross has carried out 515 search and rescue evacuations and has transported dozens of injured people to hospitals. Also a collection centre has been opened to receive contributions from the civil population and private sectors. CRRC volunteers and personnel are currently classifying the large quantity of items donated to commence the distribution of relief items.

Moreover, 20 Red Cross Youth volunteers are providing psychological support (PSP) to children in shelters through the programme *Retorno a la Alegría*. The programme aims to give children a respite from the disaster by conducting different recreational activities and games. Thus far, 300 children have benefited from these activities in the different shelters.

The overall Plan of Action of the CRRC is to complete search, rescue and evacuation activities, and then to complete the overall Plan of Action of the CRRC which aims to strengthen its capacities and to assist people in shelters through complementary activities in water and sanitation during the relief phase of the emergency.

Also the National Society will implement a programme to reestablish links between families who lost contact with relatives during the emergency. Afterwards, the CRRC plans to develop activities on early recovery and rehabilitation of livelihoods regarding food security, water and sanitation and housing rehabilitation. The most affected families will benefit from activities such as: the rehabilitation of at least three rural aqueducts, construction of houses and distributions of planting materials.

The Costa Rican Red Cross is currently involved in two other emergency response operations. The first operation funded with DREF funds started in 17 September 2008 to respond to the floods caused by the influence of tropical storms in the Pacific and Chorotega region. Afterwards, on 1 December 2008 a preliminary emergency appeal was issued jointly for Costa Rica and Panama to respond to the effects of new floods caused by a low pressure system in the provinces of Limon and Cartago.

## The needs

The main needs identified are non perishable food items (milk, water), hygiene items, kitchen items, blankets, mattresses, tents and back-up generators to provide electricity. Additional needs will more likely be identified as government agencies and the Costa Rican Red Cross continue performing damage and needs assessments.

**Beneficiary selection:** Official lists will be base for the identification, classification and selection of families. The lists will be elaborated through surveys in earthquake-affected zones by CRRC personnel with help from the communities. Red Cross lists will also be compared with official government and NGO lists from the zones to avoid duplication of efforts.



Costa Rican Red Cross Youth volunteers painting a girl's face during a PSP intervention in the shelter located in Sarapiquí.  
Source: CRRC

## The proposed operation

This DREF operation will cover preliminary assessments to identify 500 of the most affected families (2,500 beneficiaries). Immediate assistance in the sectors of emergency relief (basic non-food) will be delivered to the affected communities and capacity building for the National Society will be enhanced.

### Health in Emergencies

**Objective: The Costa Rican Red Cross will complete vital response activities (search and rescue evacuations and damage and needs assessments) and will provide care to shelters.**

#### Activities planned:

- Mobilization of CRRC volunteers and staff to affected areas.
- Field monitoring of earthquake-affected areas, especially in Vara Blanca and San Miguel.
- Conduct rapid damage and needs assessments.
- Conduct search and rescue evacuations.
- Provide pre-hospital care to injured people.
- Verification and surveys of the most affected populations.
- Maintain coordination and communications between headquarters and field Red Cross staff and public institutions.

400 volunteers and staff from the CRRC are working in the emergency response, support for operational and transportation costs of distributions of relief items is sought to be provided through DREF funds. Therefore, a large allocation of funds is to cover the operational costs related to transportation of relief items and mobilization of volunteers to the most affected areas. The Costa Rican Red Cross will continue to carry out search and rescue evacuations and damage and needs assessments.

In addition, the Psychosocial Support interventions carried out by the PSP unit of the CRRC in shelters and affected communities will be covered under this objective.

### Relief distributions (basic non-food items)

**Objective: 500 families (2,500 people) will benefit from the distribution of relief items to recover from the effects of the earthquake.**

#### Activities planned:

- Develop beneficiary targeting strategy and registration system to deliver intended assistance.
- 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 distributions.
- Develop an exit strategy.

Each family will receive the following:

- 1 hygiene kit
- 1 kitchen set

500 hygiene kits and 500 kitchen sets have already been dispatched from PADRU on 11 January.

Further in kind donations from the Costa Rican civil society (water, food, blankets, mattresses, etc) are also being distributed to the affected families.

### National Society Capacity Building

**Objective: The capacity of the Costa Rican Red Cross in disaster response and preparedness will have been strengthened.**

#### Activities planned:

- Deployment of a RIT specialized in reporting to support the CRRC.

## 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

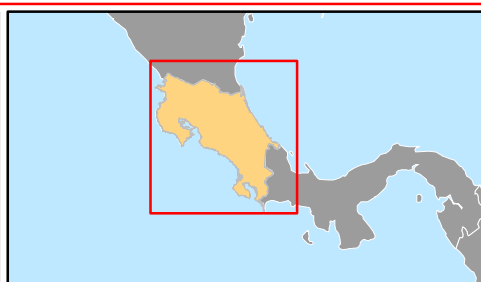
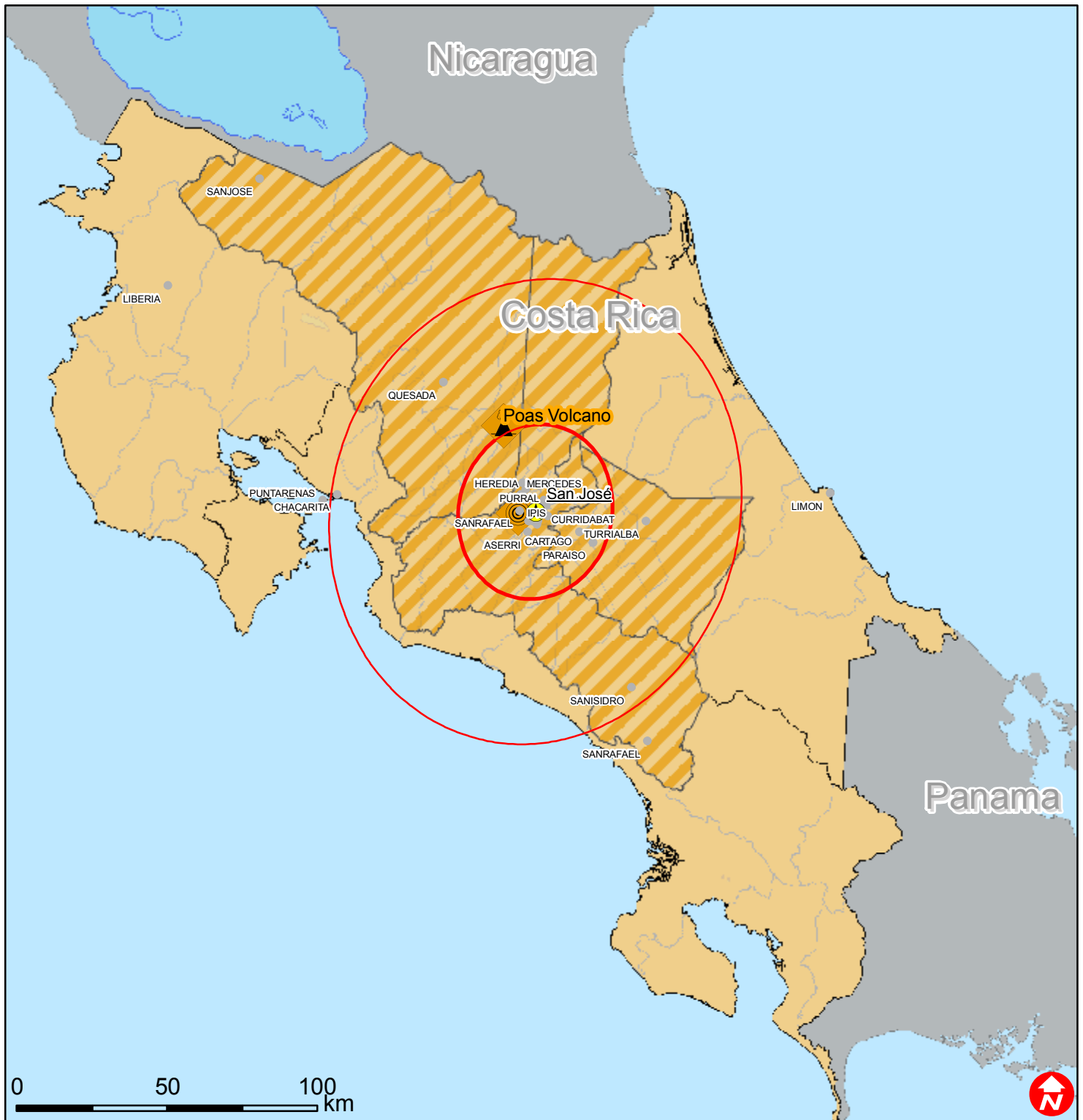
**For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:**

- **In Costa Rica:** Miguel Carmona Jimenez, President Costa Rican Red Cross; email: [presidencia@cruzroja.or.cr](mailto:presidencia@cruzroja.or.cr); phone: (506) 2233-7033; fax: (506) 255-3098.
- **In Panama:** Ariel Kestens, Head of Pan American Disaster Response Unit, Panama; email: [ariel.kestens@ifrc.org](mailto:ariel.kestens@ifrc.org); phone: (507) 316 1001; fax: (507) 316 1082.
- **In Costa Rica:** Jean-Pierre Taschereau, Operations Coordinator, PADRU; email: [jp.taschereau@ifrc.org](mailto:jp.taschereau@ifrc.org) phone: (507) 316 1001, fax: (507) 316 1082; cell phone: (507) 6677 6347.
- **In Panama:** Fabricio Lopez, Regional Representative of the Regional Representation Office for Central America and Mexico; email: [fabricio.lopez@ifrc.org](mailto:fabricio.lopez@ifrc.org); phone: (507) 380 0250; fax: (507) 317 1304.
- **In Panama:** Maria Alcázar, Resource Mobilization Coordinator for the Americas; email: [maria.alcazar@ifrc.org](mailto:maria.alcazar@ifrc.org); phone: (507) 380 0250; fax: (507) 317 1304.
- **In Geneva:** Pablo Medina, Operations Coordinator for the Americas; e-mail: [pablo.medina@ifrc.org](mailto:pablo.medina@ifrc.org); phone: (41) 22 730 4300.

[<DREF budget and map below; click here to return to the title page>](#)



# Costa Rica: Earthquake



- Capital
- Cities
- Volcanos
- 6.2 earthquake
- Affected area
- Lake

## DREF OPERATION BUDGET SUMMARY

Annex 1

### Costa Rica Earthquake

MDRCR005

**BUDGET CHF**

#### RELIEF NEEDS

Shelter	
Construction Materials	
Clothing & Textiles	
Food	
Seeds & Plants	
Water & Sanitation	
Medical & First Aid	
Teaching Materials	
Utensils & Tools	17,500
Other Supplies & Services	12,000
<b>Total Relief Needs</b>	<b>29,500</b>

#### CAPITAL EQUIPMENT

Land & Buildings  
Vehicles Purchase  
Computers & Telecom Equipment  
Office/Household Furniture & Equip.  
Medical Equipment  
Other Machinery & Equipment

#### TRANSPORT, STORAGE & VEHICLES

Storage - Warehouse	
Distribution & Monitoring	1,500
Transport & Vehicles Costs	9,000
Service fee & Recovery	1,725

#### PERSONNEL

International Staff	
Regionally Deployed Staff	3,300
National Staff	4,850
National Society Staff	
Consultants	

#### WORKSHOPS & TRAINING

Workshops & Training

#### GENERAL EXPENSES

Travel	1,400
Information & Public Relations	
Office running costs	
Communication Costs	
Professional Fees	
Financial Charges	150
Other General Expenses	

#### PROGRAMME SUPPORT

Programme Support - PSR	3,575
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<b>Total Operational Needs</b>	<b>25,500</b>
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<b>DREF ALLOCATION</b>	<b>55,000</b>
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