DREF operation update

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Honduras: Civil Unrest

DREF operation n° MDRHN002
Update n° 1
2 November 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: 14 September to 14 October 2009

Summary: CHF 150,000 (USD 144,199 or EUR 99,005) has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Honduran Red Cross (HRC) in strengthening the capacity of 30 local branches in preparedness for an event related to civil unrest. The DREF funds will support the pre-positioning of relief items, provision of equipment for volunteers and medical and first aid supplies.

These items have assisted the HRC in providing assistance during several public protests that occurred related to upcoming presidential elections on 29 November.

This operation is expected to be implemented over three months, and will therefore be completed by 11 December.

Honduran Red Cross volunteers install a station for injured people. Source: Honduran Red Cross.

The Netherlands Red Cross contributed CHF 22,776 to the DREF in replenishment of the allocation made for this operation. The major donors to the DREF are the Irish, Italian, Netherlands and Norwegian governments and ECHO. Details of all donors can be found on: http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/responding/drs/tools/dref/donors.asp

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The situation

On 25 June 2009, the Honduran Red Cross informed of the social and political instability the country was facing due to political decisions made by the President. From then on, the political situation in Honduras has been volatile and uncertain, compounded by the ousting of the President on 28 June 2009. This situation has been causing pressure among the different political groups and the population is uncertain of the events the situation may generate in the future. The uncertainty the population faces led to a series of public demonstrations punctuated by calm periods. On 29 June 2009 and for several days afterwards, violent confrontations occurred in the capital city of Tegucigalpa.

Protests in the major cities of the country have been occurring sporadically. The tension among the parties involved is latent, and there is a concern that this tension might escalate during the upcoming presidential elections to be held on 29 November 2009.

On Monday 21 September, the ousted President returned to Honduras. He sought refuge inside the Brazilian Embassy in the capital Tegucigalpa and hundreds of his supporters gathered outside. The Honduran authorities imposed a round-the-clock curfew in the entire country and airports were closed temporarily to prevent and control riots and violent demonstrations. Nonetheless, curfews are no longer in place and airports are operating.

The process of negotiation between the ousted President and the interim President has been finalized with an agreement from both parties that highlights, among other points, the acknowledgement of the 29 November elections.

The situation remains critical and volatile as violence and civil unrest continues in different parts of the country especially in the capital city of Tegucigalpa.

Coordination and partnerships

Coordination and information channels are of crucial importance for the internal functioning of the Movement. The HRC has had close coordination with the delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation. In addition, the HRC's headquarters has constant communication with the local HRC branch network within the country to coordinate actions.

Periodic meetings have been held with the Partner National Societies (PNS) in country: the Canadian Red Cross, the Italian Red Cross, the Netherlands Red Cross, the Spanish Red Cross and the Swiss Red Cross to share information, review the security measures in the country and coordinate with personnel working in the on-going humanitarian projects carried out by the HRC. The ICRC and the International Federation are advising the HRC in the coordination with governmental agencies and the media.

During the civil unrest, the ICRC delegate in country has been constantly supporting and advising the HRC in areas including safe access. In addition, the ICRC has provided technical equipment including portable radios, protective helmets and vests for the identification of volunteers.

The Spanish Red Cross has provided food items and volunteer equipment (coats, boots and helmets) to the HRC. The Netherlands Red Cross and the Swiss Red Cross provided financial support for first aid kits for the branches not included in this DREF operation. In addition, the Netherlands Red Cross generously replenished DREF funds in the amount of CHF 22,776.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Honduran Red Cross has been constantly monitoring progress during the civil unrest the country is experiencing since 28 June 2009. On 21 September 2009, when the ousted president arrived in-country, the HRC activated its Emergency Operations Centre.

Volunteers specialized in first aid and pre-hospital care have been active in the HRC headquarters in Tegucigalpa. To date, 128 people have received medical assistance for treatment of: respiratory complications, minor injuries, hypertensive anxiety symptoms, traumas, hyperglycemia, fractures and cephalic symptoms.

The communications system is improving through the implementation of information and reporting mechanisms among the local HRC branches and the Emergency Operations Centre. The procurement of telecommunications equipment is a key component to this improvement. The local HRC branches maintain constant communication with the Emergency Operations Centre through the delivery of situation reports

where all actions carried out are summarized for each of the local branches. The Emergency Operations Centre informs the National Disaster Intervention Teams through information bulletins and there is a constant flow of information between the HRC headquarters and the local branches.

The operational capacity of the Disaster Management Office of the Honduran Red Cross has been strengthened through the following completed activities:

- Identification and inclusion of two volunteers from the National Intervention Teams in the National Emergency Operations Centre.
- Identification and hiring of a local coordinator for the DREF operation and a Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member for the operation.
- Monitoring and feedback on improvements for the contingency plan on Civil Unrest.

A Contingency Plan is being drafted in relation to the Presidential Elections that will be carried out on 29 November 2009. The plan explains the capacity of all the branches (human and logistical resources), as well as coordination mechanisms at all levels (national, departmental and local) for each of the possible scenarios that could take place and the definition of guidelines for intervention in each scenario.

The procurement of first aid items, telecommunications equipment and volunteer equipment is in progress.

The first workshop for staff and volunteers of the HRC Tegucigalpa branch on operating Secure Access in first aid and pre-hospital care was completed on 11 October. A total of 28 participants (8 staff and 20 volunteers) were trained during the workshop facilitated by a RIT member. Other workshops are scheduled for the coming month.

Progress towards objectives

General Objective: To accomplish an effective and efficient response in complex emergencies.

Specific Objective: Replenish equipment for the first aid team and visibility for 30 HRC local branches and inclusion of volunteers in preparation actions at a National level.

Replenishment of volunteer equipment
Objective: The operational capacity of 30 Honduran Red Cross local branches will be strengthened by receiving visibility and first aid equipment to respond to an imminent disaster.
Activities planned: • Identification of the 30 HRC local branches • Bidding of suppliers following local procurement procedures • Mobilization of first aid equipment from PADRU to Honduras • Distribution of equipment among the local branches.

Approximately 350 volunteers from the Honduran Red Cross will receive the following items and equipment:
• 10 first aid tents
• 150 portable first aid kits

Progress:

- The 30 local HRC branches have been identified:

Tegucigalpa	El Progreso	La Esperanza	Pimienta	Catacamas
San Pedro Sula	El Paraíso	San Lorenzo	Marcala	San Manuel
La Ceiba	Puerto Cortés	Tela	Poterillos	Trinidad
Nacaome	Santa Bárbara	Quimistan	Villanueva	Yuscarán
Comayagua	Talanga	Santa Rosa de Copan	Choloma	Jesus de Otoro
Siguatepeque	Taulabé	Juticalpa	Las Vegas	Choluteca

Selection criteria for identified branches:
1. Branches reporting an increase of relief services and local events after the socio-political situation.

2. Located in points prone to social unrest and with major concentrations of people.
3. Logistical influence: branches located along the main roads of communication that make them strategic points in the case of possible paralysis of the country.
4. Branches in border areas.
5. As elections are planned in November (last stage of the rainy season), branches located in areas prone to risk of adverse, recurrent events also are also taken into consideration.

- Bidding and procurement of first aid items for pre-positioning in regional warehouses

Due to the increase in violence and the need for additional HRC interventions in first aid and pre-hospital care, additional resources will be allocated for these activities; therefore the hygiene kits (planned under the Disaster Preparedness objective below) will no longer be purchased, as planned. Consequently, more funds will be available to provide first aid care to the affected population.

The local bidding and procurement process for the first aid kits is ongoing. The contents of the kits are the following:

Quantity	Unit of measure	Description
30	Gallon	Antiseptic soap
30	Gallon	Iodine solution
30	Gallon	Clinical alcohol
30	Gallon	Oxygenated water
30	Lb	Large roll of gauze
750	Units	Roll of bandages of 2¨
750	Units	Roll of bandages of 2¨
300	Units	Elastic bands of 4"
600	Units	Triangular bandages
30	Tubes	Hypoallergenic Surgical tape of 2"
150	Boxes	Latex gloves
30	Lb	Roll of cotton
30	Bottles of 60 ml	Vaseline
30	Bottles of 60 ml	Methyl salicylate
30	Gallon	Anti spasmodic
30	Gallon	Anti diarrhoeic
7,500	Unit	Acetaminophen of 500 Mg.
150	Units	Thermometer tapes
30	Boxes	Surgical masks
150	Unit	Burn ointments
150	Small bottle	Eye drops
300	Small bottle	Drops for toothache (Anestil)
150	Units	Antibiotic cream
150	Units	Scissors
30	Units	Stethoscopes
30	Units	Sphygmometer
150	Units	Cervical emergency collars (non-orthopedic)
1000	Bottles of 100 ml	Empty plastic bottles with lid
1000	Bottles of 50 ml	Empty plastic bottles with lid
150	Units	Small lamps for pupil examination

- Mobilization of first aid equipment from the Regional Logistics Unit to Honduras:

The International Federation's Regional Logistics Unit is in the process of dispatching 10 tents and 292 first aid backpacks. Regarding the increase in first aid items needed, 292 portable first aid kits have been dispatched.

These items will arrive in Honduras by the end of October. Once the first aid backpacks are completed with the local first aid items, the 292 first aid kits will be distributed among the 30 local branches.

Disaster preparedness
Objective: The Honduran Red Cross will be better prepared with the pre-positioning of hygiene kits and communications equipment. In addition, the HRC will carry out a workshop focusing on: logistics, Safer Access and application of the Code of Conduct in complex crises for its volunteers.
Activities planned: • Procurement and mobilization of 2,000 hygiene kits and communications equipment. • Installation of communications equipment in the local branches. • Holding of a logistics workshop with a significant component in Safer Access and the operative application of the Fundamental Principles and the Code of Conduct.

Progress:

- Procurement and mobilization of 2,000 hygiene kits and communication equipment.
  As mentioned above, due to the increase in violence and the need for additional HRC interventions in first aid and pre hospital care, additional resources will be allocated for these activities; therefore the hygiene kits will no longer be procured.

- Bidding and procurement of the first aid and telecommunications equipment.
  A bidding process is taking place for a repeater and once procured, the HRC technician in telecommunications will install this in a strategic location in the country in order to improve communications with all the HRC branches.

- A logistics and safer access workshop was carried out to apply the operational principles and Code of Conduct in complex emergencies.

In order to reach more volunteers and increase the impact of this activity, more than one workshop will be carried out. All selected branches will have at least one person participating in Safer Access workshops.

Honduran Red Cross relief volunteers during the Safe Access workshop in Base II, Tegucigalpa. Source: Honduran Red Cross

On 11 October the first workshop was carried out including relief personnel and volunteers from the Honduran Red Cross in the Tegucigalpa branch. The workshop was focused on Safer Access, first aid and pre-hospital care. The objective of these workshops is the application of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement as well as the security measures recommended by the

ICRC and the International Federation. This workshop took place over seven hours with the attendance of 28 participants: 16 men and 12 women and was held with a participatory methodology since participants discussed case studies and carried out role play to understand better the technical concepts and be in a position to put them into practice.

Additional workshops are scheduled. The next workshop and simulation exercise is planned for October in San Pedro Sula.

Challenges:

The main challenge for this operation is related to the external environment and the difficulty and length of time it has taken for both parties to reach an agreement on the holding of elections in November 2009, exacerbating instability in the interval.

Work towards an institutional strategy for internal and external communication to ensure protection of the National Society's integrity and to guarantee safer and more efficient access, has also proved challenging.

At present, some branches are reporting floods in the Sula Valley (northern region of the country) and minor earthquakes. This may pose an additional burden to the HRC with regard to resources (material and human resources) if the situation worsens.

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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