DREF operation update

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Paraguay: Floods

DREF operation n°MDRPY008
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17 December 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: 9 November to 3 December 2009.

Summary: CHF 256,996 (USD 250,515 or EUR 170,100) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 6 November 2009 to support the Paraguayan Red Cross (PRC) in delivering assistance to some 10,680 beneficiaries.

An affected house in the community of Itá Corá, Department of Ñeembucú. Source: Paraguayan Red Cross

This DREF operation will provide 2,136 families in the most affected departments of Misiones, Ñeembucú and Alto Paraná with essential relief items including mosquito nets and hygiene kits.

Furthermore, 320 households will receive support to repair their houses with International Federation shelter kits and 1,099 families will receive seeds for rehabilitation of crops. To date, the Paraguayan Red Cross informs that coordination has been carried out with local authorities and evaluations have been completed. A strategy for agricultural rehabilitation has been implemented and the first seed distribution is planned for mid December. Additionally, the shelter kits and mosquito nets were dispatched from PADRU and have been received by the PRC on 13 November. These items are now in the process of distribution.

This operation is expected to be implemented in three months and will be completed by 3 February 2010. In line with Federation reporting standards, the Final Report (narrative and financial) is due 90 days after the end of the operation (by 3 May 2010).

The Canadian government contributed CAD 50,000 to the DREF in replenishment of the allocation made for this operation. The major donors of 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

Since 22 September, continuous rainfall and overflow of dams caused flooding of the Paraná River affecting some 2,285 families (12,035 people) in 32 communities in the departments of Alto Paraná, Misiones (Ayolas and Itapúa), and Ñeembucú .

The Paraguayan Red Cross prioritized assistance in the coastal towns in the departments affected by flash floods as follows:

Department of Alto Paraná (Ciudad del Este):
On 18 October 2009, constant rainfall during the past two months caused the Paraná River to overflow. The floods affected 837 families (4,035 persons) from 18 communities belonging to the municipality of Ciudad del Este, which is the capital city of the department of Alto Paraná. On 21 October, these communities were affected by strong winds and hail in some areas of the municipality of Ciudad del Este. On 19 October the Alto Paraná department was declared an emergency zone under Resolution No. 4848/IM.

The flooded community of San Rafael in Ciudad del Este, Department of Alto Paraná. Source: Paraguayan Red Cross

Department of Misiones (Ayolas)
On October 18, the departmental government of Misiones issued a warning to the coastal population of the city of Ayolas as a result of accumulated rainfall in the area of Salto del Guaira, Matto Grosso and the flooding caused by the overflow of the Paraná River. Ten communities were flooded affecting 700 families (2,280 people). These families not only lost their homes but also lost crops, impacting their livelihoods and income.

Department of Ñeembucú:
Floods caused serious problems in the communities of Paso de Patria, General Diaz Mayor Martinez, Villalbin and Cerrito which were isolated. The floods forced families to abandon their homes and seek refuge in collective centres. Due to these events, the government of Ñeembucú requested support from the Centre for Civil Protection Operations – Branch COPCI Ñeembucú and the Paraguayan Red Cross to carry out assessments of the affected communities. Assessments identified 748 families (3,740 people) affected and approximately 705 hectares of subsistence family crops were damaged, leaving an atmosphere of widespread frustration among producers.

According to the governor of the department of Ñeembucú, 562 homes were affected by the overflowed Paraná River. The governor also stated that approximately 1,743 people were evacuated and 1,100 families' farms were affected. To date, the government estimates USD 820,000 in losses due to the floods.

Coordination and partnerships

Since the beginning of the emergency the Paraguayan Red Cross coordinated relief actions with the National Emergency Secretariat (Secretaría de Emergencia Nacional - SEN), the Emergency Department Committees of the affected departments as well as the affected municipalities. The local PRC branches in each municipality have assisted and coordinated with all the actors involved.

The municipality of Ciudad del Este has been responding to the immediate needs of the affected people with the distribution of items such as tents, blankets and food items including cookies and milk. The government also provided two ambulances with doctors, mobile health care, mineral water and 30 staff to help people to move to a safer location. The Municipality of Encarnación activated the Emergency Operations Centre, coordinating activities between public and private sectors: such as the national police, volunteers, the fire department, municipality, the Entidad Binacional Yacyreta —the administration of the hydroelectric power station for Paraguay-Argentina, which is the third largest in the world— and it has also coordinated with the Red Cross branches in Itapúa. The National Traffic Police was responsible for ensuring the safety of traffic, because most of the streets in low-lying areas were flooded.

The vast majority of those affected do not want to leave their homes and/or belongings for fear of losing them. The Entidad Binacional Yacyreta is relocating the families who decide to leave their homes. In addition, the Ayolas Municipality is providing vehicles for evacuation, and ensuring communications and coordination among the different organizations in the field.

On 8 December, the Entidad Binacional Yacyreta, in the city of Ayolas held a meeting to decide on technical security measures. The meeting resulted in the decision to ratify the gradual reduction of the dam's water level to 79 metres which is the maximum water level the dam can hold.

The International Federation, through its Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation for the Southern Cone and Brazil has been in constant communication and is providing support to the National Society. Technical support is provided by a disaster management delegate from PADRU.

Since 1999, the PRC has been working on development projects in the most vulnerable communities in the country, supported by the International Federation and by bilateral agreements with the Spanish Red Cross, with a focus on health and disaster preparedness. Following the drought which affected the Chaco region in 2002, the International Federation launched an appeal to assist the department of Boquerón. As a result of this appeal, more sustainable and long-term projects in the communities were developed. Nevertheless, every year the droughts have been affecting more people and further short term and long-term projects are needed to assist the most vulnerable.

The ECHO delegation in Paraguay has provided funds to this emergency which will be managed by the Finnish Red Cross and the Paraguayan Red Cross. In addition, the Spanish Red Cross has provided humanitarian assistance to the National Society in order to carry out complementary activities to this DREF operation.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Since the emergency started, the PRC activated its response team and has been providing humanitarian assistance as well as defining the lines of action in order to to minimize risk in the affected areas. As a result of the severity of this emergency and the need for quick coordination and action the PRC is working vigorously with the lines of action established by the SEN and local authorities. The PRC drew up a plan of action for this DREF operation, which forms part of a general plan to provide response to the needs of three departments. The PRC is part of the Emergency Operations Centre (Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia - COE) which is coordinated by the Ministry of National Emergency.

The PRC deployed a team of three National Intervention Teams (NIT) members to the field to support the evaluation and facilitate survey data and the mobiliziation of volunteers.

A National Intervention Team (NIT) member carrying out assessments in the affected community of Barrio San José in the department of Misiones. Source: Paraguayan Red Cross

The PRC plans to focus on strengthening the local branches through all the relief activities involved in the operation and strengthen the links with the local authorities in the affected departments. To accomplish this task the National Society has the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which seeks to coordinate with the plans of the SEN and local governments to improve results. The PRC is promoting the formation of Emergency Operation Centres as an operational tool for the local governments. Additionally, the National Society is training its volunteers in response preparedness in the area of shelter management. The PRC will deploy National Intervention Team members to support this activity in the local branches.

Progress towards objectives

The PRC's main objective is to assist affected families in rural and semi-urban areas in Alto Paraná, Misiones and Ñeembucú due to the recent floods caused by the overflowing of the Paraná River. The immediate needs identified are the rehabilitation of agricultural crops and community education in temporary collective centres management.

The PRC has identified the beneficiary families and communities based on level of vulnerability. The National Society has coordinated with local authorities to provide a better response. The main challenges identified are to maintain a stable environment and to establish well-coordinated activities with all actors involved in the operation.

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)
Objective: To assist 2,136 families of the most vulnerable families in the departments of Misiones, Ñeembucú and Alto Paraná with humanitarian aid non food items such as hygiene kits and mosquito nets.
Activities planned: • Conduct further needs and capacity assessments. • Coordinate with SEN, the municipalities involved and the leaders of each community to explain the methodology of the intervention (administrative procedures). • 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.

Progress:
The National Society has shared its plan of action with the local governments and has held coordination meetings with the SEN to explain the operational activities. The activities are coordinated through the municipalities and the local branches, which will provide a census with the support of the NITs. The mosquito nets have arrived by charter flight in-country and the hygiene kits are scheduled to arrive next week by sea cargo. The distribution of the mosquito nets is planned for mid December and the PRC has identified the beneficiary families in the departments of Misiones, Ñeembucú and Alto Paraná.

Challenges:
There were no challenges identified within this objective.

Rehabilitation of livelihoods
Objective: 1,099 of the most affected small farmer families in the departments of Misiones and Ñeembucú will receive seeds to sow new crops.
Activities planned: • Develop a strategy of intervention and agricultural improvement in flood affected land. • Develop terms of reference of the agricultural engineer for the operation. • Hire an engineer • Once agricultural engineers perform damage and need assessments in the communities affected by the flood., a diagnosis of beneficiary communities will be drawn up in the area of crops with respect to types of crops, losses of crop, potential crops that will flourish in the flood zone and development of the strategy of intervention in the sector and the schedule will be developed. • Prepare a work schedule in terms of assistance, training and supply of seed. • Selection and census of beneficiaries. • Selection of suppliers. • Distribution of seeds to affected families. • Agricultural engineer will provide technical assistance. • Monitoring and evaluation.

Progress:
The agronomy engineer has been appointed to assist in the operation and has completed a diagnosis and developed an intervention strategy for the rehabilitation of crops in the departments of Misiones and Ñeembucú. The agronomist will support the distribution of the seed and provide technical support to the farmers.

The main information gathered by the agronomist in the departments of Misiones and Ñeembucú was the following:

- Identification of problems, causes and consequences due to the effects of the floods
- Identification of traditional agricultural crops
- Classification of crops according to the type of use
- Estimation of amount of hectares used by families per area
- Assessment of percentage of crops affected by the floods
- Determinatin of types of crops to be rehabilitated per family in each area
- Determination of amount of area in hectares to be rehabilitated by families

Problem identified:

Main problem	Main causes	Main consequences
1) Low production of family crops (for family use and sale)	• Increase of water levels of the Parana River	• Deficient nutrition and health problems. • Minimal generation of income
	• Low capacity for risk prevention	• Vulnerability in climatic inclemency.

The following table shows the traditional crops affected by the emergency and classified by the type of use per family:

Nº	Crops	Consumption	Sale	Affected crops (%)
1	Camerún (type of grass)	√	√	70
2	Sugar cane	√	√	70
3	Sweet potato	√		100
4	Maize Tupí	√	√	100
5	Maize Chipa	√	√	100
6	Maize Locro	√	√	100
7	Cassava	√	√	85
8	Peanut	√	√	100
9	Bean	√	√	90
10	Squash	√	√	90
11	Pumpkin	√	√	95
12	Watermelon	√	√	95
13	Melon	√	√	90
14	Tomato	√		90
15	Pepper	√		90
16	Carrot	√		90
17	Chard	√		80
18	Onion	√		90
19	Cabbage	√		90
20	Lettuce	√		90
21	Beet	√		90

The agronomist concluded that 90 per cent of the traditional crops were affected. Short to medium term crops were prioritized to assure the availability of food for the affected families. Among these, vegetables were mainly chosen since the cultivation period for the rest of the crops has passed. A chronogram of activities was developed for a period of three months. The following communities in the departments of Ñeembucú and Misiones will receive the following seeds:

Department of Ñeembucú Mayor Martinez		
Crops	**Number of Families**	**Total grams**
Vegetables	108	
Lettuce		540
Chard		1,080
Scallion		324
Cabbage		324
Carrot		864
Tomato		432
Pepper		540
Beet		1,080
Pumpkin		10,800
Squash		10,800
Watermelon		10,800
Extensive Crops	**Number of Families**	**Total Kilograms**
Maize Tupí Karape Pytã	108	1.620
Kumanda'i		1.296
Maize Locro		570
Cerrito		
	491	**Total grams**
Lettuce		2,455
Chard		4,910
Scallion		1,473
Cabbage		1,473
Carrot		3,928
Tomato		1,964
Pepper		2,455
Beet		4,910
Pumpkin		49,100
Squash		49,100
Watermelon		49,100
Extensive crops	**Number of families**	**Total kilograms**
Maize Tupi Karape Pyta	250	3,750
Kumanda'i	250	3,000
Maize Locro	250	1,320
Department of Misiones Ayolas		
Crops	**Number of families**	**Total grams**
Lettuce	500	2,500
Chard		5,000
Scallion		1,500
Cabbage		1,500
Carrot		4,000
Tomato		2,000
Pepper		2,500
Beet		5,000
Pumpkin		50,000
Squash		50,000
Watermelon		50,000
Extensive crops	**Number of families**	**Total kilograms**
Maize Tupi Karape Pyta	292	4,380

Kumanda'i		3,504
Maize Locro		1,541

A total of 599 families in Ñeembucú and 500 in Misiones will receive seeds. As shown in the table above, some families within the 1,099 targeted will receive also extensive crops (maize seeds) as these families have been assessed by the agronomist to have the required extension of land to grow these types of crops.

Challenges:
No challenges were identified within this objective.

Shelter

Objective (immediate needs): Provision of 320 Shelter Kits to 320 households with severely damaged houses in the community of Ñeembucú

Activities planned:

- Coordinate with SEN, the municipalities involved and the leaders of each community to explain the methodology of the intervention (training and working groups)
- Develop a plan for distribution and training in communities where shelter kits will be distributed.
- Develop forms for recipient database.
- Train volunteers on the use of shelter kits.
- Prepare material on use of shelter kits for dissemination
- Train final users on the use of the shelter kits and delivery of the kits.
- Supervise and monitor the use of the shelter kits
- Conduct workshops on 'Managing Temporary Collective Centres'
- Organize of work teams by sector

Two Regional Intervention Team members from the PRC trained in shelter by the Federation will provide training in the use of the shelter kit to the volunteers involved in the activity and to the final users.

No additional material is needed as the households will be repaired with wooden material recovered locally and from former structures. Monitoring will be carried out by the trained volunteers from several PRC branches.

Moreover, three workshops in 'Managing Temporary Collective Centres' will be carried out, one in each PRC branch of the affected areas.

Progress:
The PRC has been coordinating activities and will carry out an information workshop for the National Society volunteers in the local branches and municipalities focusing on the area of temporary collective centre management. Once the workshop is carried out, the PRC will distribute the shelter kits which were dispatched from PADRU by charter flight and are currently in customs. The shelter kit training for volunteers will be carried out in the third week of December as well as the distribution of the shelter kits. In addition, the recipient database isbeing developed. The remaining activities are pending and information on progress will be provided in the next DREF operation update.

Challenges:
There are no challenges 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	**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.

of humanity".	• 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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