

DREF operation update



Panama: Floods

DREF operation n° MDRPA005
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Update n° 1
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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: 26 November to 25 December 2009.

Summary: CHF 55,038 (USD 54,459 or EUR 36,425) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 26 November 2009 to support the Red Cross Society of Panama (RCSP) in replenishing relief items distributed from prepositioned stocks to assist some 1,250 people.

A total of 250 families (200 in the province of Darién and 50 families in Colón) have received essential food and non-food items thanks to support provided by this DREF allocation. This operation is expected to be implemented by the Red Cross Society of Panama (RCSP) over a three-month period, and completed by 25 February 2010. In line with Federation reporting standards, the final report (narrative and financial) will be available 90 days after the end of the operation (by 25 May 2010).

The Netherlands Red Cross contributed EUR 20,000 and the Canadian Red Cross contributed CAD 20,000 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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A beneficiary in the province of Colón carries back to his home essential relief items provided by the Red Cross. Source: Red Cross Society of Panama.

The situation

As of 19 November, a high pressure system was located over the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea causing heavy rain in Central America. According to the National Civil Protection System (Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil - SINAPROC), this phenomenon resulted in heavy rain and floods. Rivers overflowed and floods caused landslides, affecting the provinces of Darién and Colón. These provinces sustained damages to the housing sector, basic services, infrastructures and family livelihoods. There was difficulty in accessing the most affected areas, since they could only be reached by air, or by walking through the flooded rivers. In

the province of Darién, 4,138 people were affected by the overflowing of four rivers. According to SINAPROC, 70 per cent of the agricultural production was damaged.

SINAPROC informed that the agricultural sector and livelihoods were much affected in the province of Darién. After preliminary assessments in Darién, it is considered that the damages have been severe since most of the crops are totally destroyed. The Civil Protection started providing assistance to the people affected in the province of Darién by distributing food parcels, safe drinking water and water purification tablets.

According to preliminary assessments from SINAPROC, a number of communities in Darién were affected by the overflowing of four rivers: Rio Chico, Rio Tupiza, Rio Tuqueza and Rio Chucunaque, whilst other communities were affected by floods given the heavy rainfall.



A young boy in the province of Colón receives a hygiene kit for his family. Source: Red Cross Society of Panama.

SINAPROC reported that heavy rain and floods also affected the province of Colón, mainly in the community of Eyadrua. A total of 30 families (110 people were affected, including: 60 children up to 17 years old; and 50 adults between 18 and 60 years old). In the district of Portobelo, 20 families from the communities of Buena Ventura, Bello Horizonte, Valle de la Media Luna and Maria Soto were affected by floods and landslides. At the beginning of the emergency roads were blocked for a period of eight hours.

Coordination and partnerships

Since the onset of the emergency the Red Cross Society of Panama has been coordinating activities and reviewing assessment information with SINAPROC and the Ministry of Health. SINAPROC and the government have provided drinking water to the most affected people. The Ministry of Agricultural Development (Ministerio de Desarrollo Agropecuario - MIDA) has carried out assessments in the affected

areas to obtain details of the damage to agricultural production and housing. In addition, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is providing technical advice. USAID and the Panama Canal Authority (Autoridad del Canal de Panama - ACP) are present in the community of Embera in the province of Colón developing tourism projects to support the community.

The International Federation, through its Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation for Central America and Mexico is communicating with and providing support to the National Society. Technical support is provided by a disaster management delegate from PADRU.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Since the onset of the emergency the Red Cross Society of Panama has been carrying out search and rescue, evacuations and first aid activities in the affected areas. Initial damage assessments were carried out by National Intervention Teams (NITs) in coordination with the Emergency Operations Centre (Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia - COE) established in the town of Yaviza in the province of Darién and in the city of Colón (province of Colón).

There have been 83 volunteers from the branches of Real and Meteti in Darién responding to the emergency in coordination



Affected families are reached through the distribution of relief items in the province of Darién. Source: Red Cross Society of Panama.

with the COE. The COE has been in permanent contact with the health, SINAPROC and police authorities, as well as the International Federation's Pan American Disaster Response Unit.

In line with the initial assessments carried out, the National Society drew up a plan of action to meet the basic needs of 200 families (with food and non-food items) in the province of Darién and 50 families (with non-food items) in the province of Colón. The RCSP coordinated the delivery of safe drinking water and water purification tablets with the Ministry of Health in both affected provinces.

Progress towards objectives

The RCSP has reached 250 families in the provinces of Darién and Colón with essential relief items. This DREF operation allowed the National Society to replenish its prepositioned stocks and cover operational costs related to this emergency response.

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)
Objective: Objective: 250 of the most affected families in the provinces of Darién and Colón will receive food parcels and essential relief items to assist them to return to their daily lives.
Activities planned:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct rapid emergency needs and capacity assessments. • Develop a beneficiary targeting strategy and registration system to deliver intended assistance. • Local procurement of food items and items for children's kits. • Dispatch of relief items from the Regional Logistics Unit in Panama to Darién and Colón. • Monitor and evaluate the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distributions. • Develop an exit strategy.

Progress:

The RCSP selected the beneficiaries based on the following criteria:

- People directly affected by the emergency and with difficulty to recover due to poor living conditions.
- Single mothers.
- People with disabilities.
- Families with children and elderly family members.
- Families who lost their livelihoods.
- People living in rural communities or isolated areas with difficult access to resources.

In the province of **Colón**, the RCSP provided humanitarian assistance to 50 families in the communities of Rio Gatun, Buena Ventura, Bello Horizonte, Valle de la Media Luna and Maria Soto. In addition, the RCSP provided training in the use of the water purification sachets.

The following table shows the amount of items distributed to the 50 families:

Item	Quantity
Hygiene kit	50
Water (5.05 litres per family)	252.5 litres
Blankets (3 per family)	150
Water purification sachet (86 sachets)	4,320
Tarpaulin (1 per family*)	15
Mosquito nets (Six per family)	300
Soap (20 bars per family)	1,000

In Colón, 15 families lost their houses; therefore, the RCSP provided these families with tarpaulins.

On 28, 29 and 30 November, the RCSP carried out distribution of relief items in the province of **Darién**, reaching 200 families. As mentioned earlier, the beneficiaries were selected by locality and level of loss of livelihoods (orchards). The following communities were reached:

Community in Darién	Number of benefited families
El Salto	70
Nazaret	48
El Comun	42

Nuevo Belen	35
Yaviza	5
Total	200

The 200 families received the following items:

Item	Quantity
Hygiene kit	200
Jerry cans (2 per family)	400
Plastic sheets (distributed according to the level of affectation per family)	150
Blankets (2 per family)	500
Water (1.5 litres per family)	200
Water purification sachet (12 per family)	2,400
Mosquito nets (6 per family)	1,200
Kitchen kit	200
Plastic buckets	200
Food parcel	200
Children's kit	200

It is important to note that the number of family members in the targeted communities oscillates between five and ten members; therefore, six mosquito nets were distributed per family.

Challenges:

Distribution activities were a challenge since many of the benefited communities were isolated and difficult to access. Nevertheless the RCSP completed the distributions by the end of November 2009.

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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