

DREF Bulletin Update



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

CENTRAL AFRICA: FLOODS AND LANDSLIDES

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 185 countries.

In Brief

Period covered by this update: 21 December 2006 to 23 February 2007.

History of this Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)-funded operation:

- CHF 169,213 was allocated from the Federation's DREF on 21 December 2006 to respond to the needs of this operation. Please refer to: <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/appeals/06/MDR62002.pdf>

This operation is aligned with the International Federation's 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.

Background and current situation

In November 2006, the north-eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Orientale and Équateur), experienced two-week torrential rains that caused a significant rise in the water level of the Congo River and its tributaries. In Kisangani and the surrounding localities, 6 people drowned and 22 were rescued from raging waters. Several farms were submerged in areas that rely on agriculture while roads were destroyed, rendering some localities inaccessible. The rise in the water level also caused the submersion and destruction of houses, latrines and cemeteries, thereby increasing the risk of waterborne diseases epidemics, displacement of populations and a drastic increase in the prices of food items – following the destruction of crops. Approximately 8,131 houses were destroyed in Orientale Province and 911 in Bumba (Équateur Province).

The Kisangani provincial committee of the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (RCDRC) – through its local committees – distributed 39,805 metric tonnes (MT) of food items provided by the World Food Programme (WFP). Beneficiaries included 5,372 persons from 1,004 households in the 9 villages that make up the Isangi territory. Currently, 10,200 MT of food has been positioned at the Red Cross warehouse to support sanitation activities in Zinia, which is one of the most affected localities of Kisangani.

Due to financial constraints, only five sites have been included in the Red Cross operation; Bumba in Équateur Province (with its four neighbourhoods), Zinia neighbourhood in Kisangani, and Yalitombo and Yekela and Yafunga in Isangi territory (Orientale Province). Red Cross and community-based volunteers in the five sites have been trained and damaged water and sanitation (WatSan) facilities have been identified for rehabilitation. Hygiene sanitation campaigns and rehabilitation activities are underway in all five localities.

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Working in collaboration with local authorities and the communities, volunteers conducted an evaluation of the situation in the five identified sites. The findings revealed that 9,042 houses had collapsed and a similar number of latrines had been destroyed alongside 49 water wells and 10 streams. In addition, the trunk sewer of Zinia that facilitates the draining of waste water into the Congo River has clogged completely. The floodwaters are currently drying away from the flooded zones, with the onset of dry season.

Regional overview

Gabon: After the torrential rains of 2006, the country is now experiencing a dry season with no major consequences. Mindful of the serious damage that was caused by the rains in the country, the Gabonese Red Cross Society, with support from the Federation's Central Africa sub-regional office (CASRO), has started preparing to respond to future potential floods.

Central African Republic (CAR): Since 2004, the Central African Republic (CAR) has been experiencing recurrent floods that have caused serious material damages. Over the past two years, 3,000 families have been affected and 2,000 houses have been destroyed in Bangui and surrounding localities.

Sao Tome & Principe: Although Sao Tome & Principe has not yet experienced a serious disaster, the country is highly exposed to risks of all sorts of disasters. Last year's rains did not cause serious damages, but meteorologists have warned that it could happen at any time. There is therefore a need to build the disaster preparedness and response capacities of the Sao Tome & Principe Red Cross to enable it to respond efficiently at any time. Moreover, the national society is the only existing organization that can respond to disasters in the country.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

In line with the joint plan of action that was outlined in [DREF Bulletin no. MDR62002](#), the activities outlined below have been carried out with the support of the Federation's field delegates.

Objective 1: To reduce the effects of floods on vulnerable populations in the Orientale and Équateur provinces of the DRC and prevent the risk of epidemics within the next three months.

Distributing non-food items (NFIs) to 757 families affected by floods: Based on the criteria predefined by local authorities, representatives of affected communities and other agencies present in the field, NFIs have been distributed in two of the four neighbourhoods of Bumba (Équateur province) as follows: 68 insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) for pregnant women, 47 mats for children aged under five, 26 plastic sheeting for affected families living with foster families, and 84 blankets for the elderly. This activity is expected to continue in Bumba and in the other four sites targeted by the operation.

Sensitizing the populations on hygiene and sanitation practices to prevent cholera: Seven sensitization campaigns on water, basic sanitation, personal and collective hygiene have been organized in the five sites targeted by the operation.

Table 1: Sensitization campaigns and beneficiaries reached

Province	Neighbourhoods/localities	No. of campaigns	No. of volunteers involved	No. of persons sensitized			
				Women	Men	Children	Total
Équateur	Bumba	3	71	780	343	179	1,302
Orientale	Zinia/Kisangani	1	40	1,654	1003	143	2,800
	Yeikela/Isangi	1	10	134	58	24	216
	Yalitombo/Isangi	1	10	287	135	98	520
	Yafunga/Isangi	1	10	199	81	106	386
	Total	7	141	3,054	1,620	550	5,224

Conducting advocacy campaigns with other organizations and state services for longer-term actions and the need to construct facilities for drainage of surface water in high-risk zones: Red Cross authorities have met six times with the authorities of four territories and two agencies in Kisangani so as to identify longer-term actions to be taken to combat floods. Local authorities in Bumba are contemplating moving the populations living in zones that are exposed to potential floods to more secure zones.

Rehabilitating and maintaining water sources and wells, as well as private and public toilets: 3 of the 15 water wells that were damaged in Bumba have been rehabilitated (the beneficiaries cleaned the wells while the Red Cross built protection copings and cover slabs with openings to facilitate the drawing of water), and the catchment of a water source is ongoing. Some 34 wells and 8 damaged water sources have been identified in Kisangani and Isangi territories. Building materials have already been purchased and rehabilitation work has started on five wells in Zinia (Kisangani), and in Yekela, Yafunga and Yalitombo (Isangi territory). These activities are carried out by community members under the coaching of newly trained Red Cross volunteers.

Training 100 Red Cross volunteers in the promotion of basic hygiene and sanitation practice in the 10 neighbourhoods/localities affected by floods: A total of 141 volunteers (59 Red Cross volunteers and 82 community-based volunteers) have been trained on the promotion of personal and collective hygiene, as well as on basic sanitation techniques.

Table 2: Number of volunteers trained per locality

Province	Localities	Number of trained volunteers		
		Red Cross	Community	Total
Équateur	Bumba	40	31	71
Orientale	Zinia/Kisangani	10	30	40
	Yeikela/Isangi	3	7	10
	Yalitombo/Isangi	3	7	10
	Yafunga/Isangi	3	7	10
	Total	59	82	141

Regional preparedness: Preparedness activities are going on in the national societies involved in the operation, namely Gabonese Red Cross Society, Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sao Tome and Principe Red Cross. A regional resource person (who is a regional disaster response team member) is currently touring the three national societies with the objective of training a total of 90 volunteers on WatSan and participatory hygiene and sanitation transformation (PHAST).

Federation field delegates conducted a vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) and put in place an early warning system in high risk zones. Red Cross and community-based volunteers are being trained on conducting sensitization campaigns. It is anticipated that after the ongoing training, the data collected will be used to develop or update the contingency plans on floods response in the three national societies. In addition, agricultural and sanitation tools will be put at the disposal of the three societies to facilitate the cleaning of gutters and sanitation work in areas that are exposed to floods. Furthermore, NFIs such as blankets, mats and plastic sheets will be pre-positioned in each national society.

Constraints

The water table in the sites targeted by the operation is too close to the ground surface (about one metre in depth), and this makes it very difficult to build wells according to international norms. In addition, the budget of the operation has been drastically reduced thereby affecting the intervention. The operation managers had to reduce the number of sites to be covered, the quantity of NFIs to be distributed, the number of beneficiaries to support and the number of facilities to be rehabilitated.

Coordination

The various crisis committees, which are composed of representatives of all the actors involved in the operation, ensure the coordination of activities under the supervision of territorial administrators and medical doctors from the central offices of the concerned health zones.

Federation field delegates have been organizing working sessions to decide on actions to be taken in the field. Information sharing is also organized at all levels. The field delegates have also been participating in crisis committee meetings and in the technical meetings of the Population Movements Cluster. They have provided technical support in planning, implementation and supervision of activities as well as financial management. Regarding regional planning, the Federation will advocate before partners and other humanitarian actors in targeted countries for efficient coordination of the floods response.

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As far as the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is concerned, the disaster management officer ensures the follow-up of activities through supervision missions, while five supervisors and team leaders are following up the activities on a daily basis.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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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.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

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