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Emergency Plan of Action operation update

Panama: Population Movement



DREF operation update no. MDRPA011	
EPoA update no. 1; 22 March 2016	Timeframe covered by this update: 1 December 2015 to 28 January 2016
Operation start date: 1 December 2015	Operation timeframe: 2 months, until 11 February. Extension has been requested for one more month until 11 March 2016.
Overall operation budget: 31,124 Swiss francs (CHF)	
No. of people being assisted: 2,500 (up from 1,000 originally)	
Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners currently actively involved in the operation: Red Cross Society of Panama (RCSP), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)	
Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: National Civil Protection Service (SINAPROC), National Border Service (SENAFRONT), National Navy System (SEMAN), Christian Pastoral, Ministry of Health, Immigration Service, Social Security Service, protestant churches, civil society, private sector (growers)	

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Summary of major revisions made to emergency plan of action:

The RCSP was able to secure logistic resources to mobilize staff and humanitarian assistance to the area with the aim of carrying out actions from 1 to 3 February 2016. **This is why the National Society is hereby requesting an extension of this operation.**

The AH1N1 outbreak has also demonstrated the need to update the National Society's health staff on new safety trends regarding this hazard. **The RCPS is thereby requesting an increase in DREF funding with the aim of supporting government authorities on this effort.**

A. Situation analysis

Description of the disaster

Update on the original situation: The amount of migrants entering Panama through La Miel - Puerto Obaldía and arriving in Paso Canoas has diminished, largely due to the fact that Ecuador is now requesting a visa. However, between 3 and 5 people still arrive each day. To date, approximately 1,300 Cuban nationals are staying in collective centres at the Paso Canoas border. It is a known fact that the migrants who have sufficient resources are staying throughout the country, renting houses and rooms from Panamanian families while they wait for their situation to be resolved so that they can continue on to Costa Rica en route to the United States.

In Puerto Obaldía, overcrowding has worsened, and some Cuban migrants are now entering the country from Colombia through unusual areas such as Yaviza and Metetí in the province of Darién on their way to Panama City.

Newly assessed situation: The first four cases of AH1N1 influenza were reported in the Paso Canoas region in the first four weeks of 2016. One of the cases was a migrant staying in one of the collective centres, who later died from the illness; two other infected people remained hospitalized in critical condition.

After a week, cases went up to an average of 37, and the number is expected to rise. The Ministry of Health started a massive vaccination campaign, and it has issued an epidemiologic alert for the province of Chiriquí.

Based on the ongoing nature of the population movement situation and on the recently established presence of the AH1N1 virus among the migrant population and in the area in general, the IFRC are requesting an extension of this operation.

Telecommunications in Puerto Obaldía are limited and costly, and the migrants seeking shelter there do not often have the resources to pay for internet and/or public payphones. The need for a satellite phone to provide restoring family links (RFL) services has surfaced in keeping with the findings from recent field assessments.

Summary of current response

Overview of Host National Society

The Red Cross Society of Panama, through the Colón and Barú Branches, has carried out actions in line with the original plan of action for the population movement crisis. In addition, the Barú Branch has carried out the following actions in line with the newly identified situation:

- Activation of the security protocol for staff and volunteers in the sector.
- Constant communication with government partners (Governor's office, Ministry of Health, SENAFRONT and others)
- Vaccination of all members from the Barú Branch
- Continuous attention provided to Cuban migrants staying at Progreso and Milenium collective centres.
- Observance of all safety and prevention measures in place when ambulances and equipment are used to treat possible AH1N1 cases.

Overview of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in country

The Red Cross Society of Panama continues to coordinate all of its actions with its IFRC counterparts in country.

Overview of non-RCRC actors in country

Catholic and protestant churches are providing physical spaces for collective centres in Paso Canoas, where meals are being prepared by churches, Red Cross staff and volunteers and by the migrants themselves.

SENAFRONT is hosting and providing protection for the collective centres, as well as providing meals in Puerto Obaldía.

The **Ministry of Health** is carrying out mass vaccinations and Health in Emergency (HiE) campaigns.

SINAPROC is managing a collective centre in Paso Canoas.

The **Panamanian government** has arranged for a hotel for some of the migrants, thus eliminating three small areas that were being used for that purpose in Paso Canoas.

Social Security is providing medical attention and medications to people infected with AH1N1 and other diseases.

Civil Society has arranged and delivered donations of food and hygiene materials. Some individuals have decided to host migrants in their homes, especially at the onset of this operation.

Private sector growers have donated vegetables and beans.

Needs analysis and scenario planning

Risk Analysis

Security issues related to the overcrowded collective centres and the desperation of a migrant population that has limited resources to reach their final destination and is not being permitted to continue their journey could lead to stress-related reactions.

Risks related to the AH1N1 influenza virus and vectors such as the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito that carries Zika, chikungunya and dengue fever are real and prevalent in the areas of action.

Due to risks posed to the volunteers by the various diseases that are present, it has been recommended that they take a flight or a boat to Puerto Obaldía; however, the return trip is not guaranteed.

The Red Cross Society of Panama is hereby requesting an extension of this DREF operation based on:

- The newly assessed AH1N1 influenza outbreak in the Paso Canoas/Barú area.
- The logistical difficulties in carrying out the planned activities in Puerto Obaldía.
- The newly assessed need for RFL in Puerto Obaldía.
- The increase in the number of people being assisted by RCSP within this operation.

B. Operational strategy and plan

Overall Objective

Contribute to the health of migrants in the country through health, hydration and hygiene services for 1,000 people, as well as providing RFL services to the migrant population.

Proposed strategy

The National Society will continue to carry out actions in line with the established plan of action for this operation, including ongoing assessments of the situation in order to continue to meet the needs of beneficiaries and ensure a coherent approach among partners.

- Additional assessments were carried out, one in each border region, once DREF funding was received.
- Migrants were surveyed on the different aspects of the intervention. Results were complemented with direct observation.
- Psychosocial support workshops have taken place in the collective centres; each migrant has been invited to participate in the workshops.
- Cases of HIV/AIDS have been identified and advocacy efforts are being made with authorities so that these individuals receive proper treatment and medication.
- Awareness raising talks have been held with SENAFRONT agents with the aim of increasing the compliance with SPHERE standards, especially in Puerto Obaldía. In Paso Canoas, the Red Cross Society of Panama and SINAPROC are effectively observing these guidelines.

Operational support services

Coverage expanded to both borders

Paso Canoas, the border with Costa Rica, was included in the operation in light of the continued increase in migrant population arriving and being forced to stay there as a direct consequence of Nicaragua's decision to close its border with Costa Rica.

Services offered

- First aid care provided to migrants
- Logistics staff supported the government-run collective centres
- Distribution of humanitarian assistance
- Support and transportation to hospitals
- Hygiene promotion and waste management
- Prevention of AH1N1 influenza in migrants and the general population in light of an outbreak
- Psychosocial support and individualized support by National Society team of psychologists and social workers.
- Restoring family links

Human resources

A total of 75 volunteers from the Barú, David, Bugaba and Colón Branches have participated in this operation. Among these volunteers are social workers, psychologists, medical emergency technicians, emergency vehicle operators, logistics National Intervention Teams (NITs), Water and Sanitation NITs, first aid and health promotion volunteers, and general volunteers.

Logistics and supply chain

All items are purchased from local National Society providers; all of the purchases are subject to IFRC procedures, and they are validated by the accounting department

Information technologies (IT)

As the operation progressed, it was determined that in light of the limited and costly internet and telecommunications access, it is important to have a satellite phone to support the RFL efforts with the migrants in Puerto Obaldía .

Communications

The National Society is actively using social media to publicize their actions in each area. There has also been regular contact with the mainstream media outlets, which are sharing information on radio and on their web-based information channels.

Security

All of the observed security issues are related to overcrowding in the collective centres. In Paso Canoas, specific actions have been taken to correct these issues. However, since SENAFRONT conducts some rounds at night, it is very dark and the migrants are staying in tents very near the water in Puerto Obaldía, vulnerability is increased.

Planning, monitoring, evaluation, & reporting (PMER)

The RCSP is monitoring the operation by deploying a general evaluator on every team that goes to the field. This person is in charge of supervising the adequate development of all of the actions, and a report is then sent to the Directorate General and the Project Liaison Office.

C. Detailed Operational Plan

Early warning & emergency response preparedness

Outcome 1 The operation's implementation is managed in a coordinated manner, with an adequate implementation and monitoring system, for 30 days in Puerto Obaldía.	Output 1.1 The project has been monitored and implemented as per the timeframe established in the emergency plan of action	75%	
	Output 1.2 The Red Cross Society of Panama's efforts have been disseminated via press releases to the media and the airing of key messages.	80%	
Activities	Is implementation on time?		% of progress
	Yes	No	
Monitoring visits from RCSP's headquarters	X		80%
Monitoring visits from the IFRC		X	0%
Preparation of internal reports	X		80%
Publication of press releases and key messages	X		80%
Progress towards outcomes			
<p>Three field deployments have taken place; however, IFRC staff members have not yet been to the field. Five general reports and five workshop reports have been drafted. Information has been disseminated through digital media and social networks in line with the capacity of the National Society's budding communications department.</p> <p>It has been a challenge to coordinate actions in Puerto Obaldía, as there is no Red Cross Branch in the area and transportation depends on available space on local flights (21 seats on two flights per week), and on available space on a SENAN boat for the transportation of humanitarian assistance.</p>			

Programming / Areas Common to all Sectors

Migrants have been in Panama and received medical and pre-hospital care from the David, Barú, Bugaba and Colón Branches, as well as from the Ministry of Health.

Needs analysis: Assistance provided to people suffering chronic or acute health issues in both border areas.

Population to be assisted: Persons living with HIV/AIDS, chronic respiratory illnesses and skin conditions due to fever and/or various infections. Special attention is being given to children.

Health & care			
Outcome 3 Contribute to the reduction of the vulnerability of the migrant and local population through the provision of pre-hospital, hospital care in health as well as psychosocial support activities	Outputs		% of achievement
	Output 3.1 Ensure pre-hospital care to the migrant population in Puerto Obaldía, with support from the RCSP through the provision of 1 ambulance and 100 Red Cross staff members		80%
	Output 3.2 Ensure psychosocial support to Cuban migrant children in Puerto Obaldía, with support from two psychologists and two volunteers trained in "return of happiness".		100%
Activities	Is implementation on time?		% progress (estimate)
	Yes (x)	No (x)	
Hospital care at the Puerto Obaldía health centre with support from the RCSP and in coordination with MINSAs		X	0%
Pre-hospital care to migrants and locals in Puerto Obaldía, through the RCSP volunteers, doctors and paramedics	X		100%
PSS for migrant and local children in Puerto Obaldía.	X		100%
Progress towards outcomes			
<p>Transportation to Puerto Obaldía has proven difficult, and staffing the medical team has also been challenging. Therefore, the RCSP has not been able to deploy many medical practitioners to the area. However, the Ministry of Health (MINSAs for its acronym in Spanish) has a strong presence and capability to cover needs in the area, especially since the influx of migrants has diminished.</p> <p>On 15 November 2015, 1,200 migrants were moved to a SENAN facility in Sherman, Colón. In coordination with MINSAs, the Colón Branch provided primary health care to these migrants for 3 days through 2 teams of 7 volunteers each and 1 ambulance per team. The teams encountered skin conditions, dehydration, insect bites, type II diabetes, diarrhoea, skin lesions, vertigo, gastritis, stress-related headaches, colds and allergies among the migrant population. During these actions, 2,000 1.5-litre water bottles were distributed.</p> <p>A total of 8 psychosocial support workshops have been offered to the Cuban migrant population: 7 in Paso Canoas and 1 in Puerto Obaldía. The issues covered include self-esteem, social values, tolerance, stress management, communication with others and coping with emotions. The contents of the workshops were adapted to suit a mostly adult audience.</p>			

Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion

Needs analysis: Migrants have been in Puerto Obaldía for more than seven days, with limited funds to cover personal hygiene costs and without safe water for human consumption.

Population to be assisted: A total of 1,000 affected people including migrants and possible host communities with no water and personal hygiene items in Puerto Obaldía.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion			
Outcome 4 Immediate reduction of the risk of waterborne and water-related diseases for 1,000 people	Outputs		% of achievement
	Output 4.1 Contribute to the hydration and hygiene of 1,000 affected people.		50%
	Output 4.2 Hygiene-related goods (non-food items [NFIs]), which meet Sphere standards, are provided to the target population of 1,000 people		80%
	Output 4.3 Hygiene promotion activities, which meet Sphere standards in terms of the identification and use of hygiene items, provided to the target population of 1,000 people		80%

Activities	Is implementation on time?		% progress (estimate)
	Yes	No	
Hygiene kits distributed in Paso Canoas	X		70%
Distribution of information kits on good hygiene in Paso Canoas	X		70%
Distribution of hygiene kits and hygiene promotion activities in Puerto Obaldía		X	0%
Distribution of bottled water in Colón	X		100%
Distribution of water purification sachets in Paso Canoas	X		100%
Progress towards outcomes			
<p>For all of the actions carried out to date, the RCSP used its own resources. Items distributed were pre-existing in RCSP warehouses, and the technicians and specialists involved in the operation are Red Cross volunteers.</p> <p>As stated before, all of the actions in Puerto Obaldía have been affected by the limited and sometimes unavailable transportation for volunteers and humanitarian assistance items. This is reflected in the progress percentage.</p> <p>The RCSP was able to secure logistic resources to mobilize staff and humanitarian assistance to the area with the aim of carrying out actions from 1 to 3 February 2016. This is why the National Society is hereby requesting an extension of this operation.</p> <p>The AH1N1 outbreak has also demonstrated the need to update the National Society's health staff on new safety trends regarding this hazard. The RCPS is thereby requesting an increase in DREF funding with the aim of supporting government authorities on this effort.</p>			

Restoring Family Links (RFL)

Although not initially part of the plan of action, RFL has surfaced as a need since the Puerto Obaldía area, which is the first point of entry into Panama, does not have adequate telecommunications infrastructure.

Needs analysis: Satellite phones are needed so that migrants can call their family members in Cuba.

Population to be assisted: More than 400 Cuban migrants staying in Puerto Obaldía who do not have sufficient resources or other means to make phone calls to their family members in Cuba. A person-by-person survey will be carried out to ascertain the validity of the need.

RFL			
Outcome 5 Contribute to the emotional and psychosocial wellbeing of migrants by providing them a means of communication with family members	Outputs		% of achievement
		Output 5.1 Migrants are able to contact family members in Cuba through the satellite phone	
Activities	Is implementation on time?		% progress (estimate)
	Yes (x)	No (x)	
Cuban migrants place calls to families in Cuba		X	0%
Progress towards outcomes			
This activity will be carried out once the satellite phone is available and transported to Puerto Obaldía.			

Contact Information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- **In Red Cross Society of Panama:** Rosa Castillo, Director Executive; phone +507 3151388/89 email: crppresidencia@cruzrojadedepanama.org.
- **In IFRC regional office in Panama:** Omar Robinson Emergency WASH Senior Officer; phone: +507 3173050; email: omar.robinson@ifrc.org.
- **Regional Logistics Unit (RLU):** Stephany Murrilo, Zone Senior Logistics & Mobilization Officer, Phone: +507 3173050; email: Stephany.murillo@ifrc.org.
- **In Geneva:** Cristina Estrada, quality assurance senior officer, phone: +41.22.730.4529, email: cristina.estrada@ifrc.org.

For Performance and Accountability (planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting enquiries):

- **In IFRC regional office in Panama:** Priscila Gonzalez, Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Coordinator; phone: +507 317 3050; email: priscila.gonzalez@ifrc.org.

For Resource Mobilization and Pledges:

- **In IFRC regional office in Panama:** Alejandra Van Hensbergen, Relationship Management Senior Officer. +507 317 3050; email: alejandra.vanhensbergen@ifrc.org.

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Enable **healthy**
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Promote social inclusion
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace**.