



Operation Update Paraguay: Dengue

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DREF n° MDRPY021	
Operation Update n° 1: 19 May 2020	Timeframe covered by this update: 29 February 2020 to 10 May 2020
Operation start date: 29 February 2020	Expected timeframe: 5 months, with 2-month extension requested with this Update. New end date: 31 July 2020.
DREF allocated (CHF): 263,806 Swiss francs	N° of people being assisted: 11,400 people
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners actively involved in the operation: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	
Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: National Emergency Secretary (SEN), Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare (MSPBS), municipal and departmental governments and the Pan-American Health Organization.	

Summary of the main revisions made to the Emergency Plan of Action: This DREF operation has been extended for two months to 31 July 2020 to complete activities that have been delayed or suspended due to measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. On 16 March 2020, the Paraguayan authorities declared a nationwide Health Emergency that includes movement restrictions and lockdowns to prevent the spread of COVID -19. This situation has halted community actions, especially those related to health and hygiene promotion. The Paraguayan Red Cross (PRC) will continue to provide assistance based on its ability to reach the affected population and adhering to the regulations issued by the government. However, if restrictions are extended, greater operational implementation challenges will emerge.

A. Situation analysis

Description of the disaster

Between January and 2 May 2020, a total of 42,710 cases of dengue were registered in Paraguay. This recent outbreak has led to the death of 64 people across 19 of the country's health regions, mainly in the departments of Asunción and Central departments. A total of 175,082 suspected cases¹ were reported - 70.74 per cent in the Metropolitan Area consisting of Central (111,104) and Asunción (12,750). Three serotypes (DEN-1, DEN-2 and DEN-4) are currently in circulation across the country, although the most commonly identified at the country level is the DEN-4 serotype. The number of dengue cases reported dropped in the last week of April (week 18) compared to initial weekly epidemiological statistical numbers for arbovirus. This could be attributed to the current COVID-19 context, considering that government recommendations and prevention measures suggest people refrain from going to health centres



Paraguayan Red Cross (PRC) volunteers conducted water and sanitation assessments in the district of Capiatá - Asunción Source: PRC.

¹ <http://www.vigisalud.gov.py/page/#arbovirosis.html>

or referral hospitals if they present symptoms and instead use the hotline established for reporting these symptoms. As dengue and COVID-19 share certain symptoms from an epidemic health management standpoint, people presenting fevers are considered as possibly suffering from COVID-19 and are not being treated as having dengue. This could lead to the loss of the actual dengue threshold in the general population.

The country is currently under a health emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, reporting 431 people who are positive for the virus and 10 dead in 16 departments from this viral strain.² On 16 March, the national government declared a National Health Emergency due to COVID-19, imposing preventive isolation, mobility restriction and social distancing measures. These measures were extended to the end of April, which hindered the implementation of the Plan of Action activities to response to dengue in communities, especially actions related to the organizing and training of community brigades, interventions in schools, and the performance of community health and hygiene assessments and surveillance actions in communities, among others. On 3 May, the government began gradually easing general preventive isolation measures (smart quarantine)³, activating basic services and allowing partial population mobilization. It is expected that conditions could become more stable if corresponding prevention measures are observed.

Summary of the current response

Overview of Host National Society

As soon as dengue cases began to increase at the beginning of the year, Paraguayan Red Cross began actions to reduce vector-borne diseases caused by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which, in addition to dengue, causes zika and chikungunya. PRC branches in Ñeembucú, San Pedro, Limpio, Capiatá, Mariano Roque Alonso and Asunción were activated when the number of cases began to rise, deploying approximately 50 volunteers and providing support in the departments with the highest incidence through prevention actions such as community surveillance, promotion of hygiene habits, elimination of breeding sites and fumigation.

The National Society is implementing a communications campaign called "Health in your Hands". In view of the national health emergency declared because of COVID-19 and the dengue emergency, it was deemed appropriate to conduct an integrated communications campaign given that both diseases require changes in hygiene-related behaviours and habits.

The branches involved in the Plan of Action (Mariano Roque Alonso, Capiatá, Asunción and Limpio) had mobilized to identify community leaders and family health units before the COVID-19 health emergency was declared.

The National Society is working with the national sanitation agency, DIGESA, to coordinate waste management at the central and capital-city level, through the municipalities, which will later coordinate with branches. PRC is also working in coordination with the Ministry of Health and authorities in affected municipalities.

Overview of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement Actions in country

The Regional Disaster Management Coordinator for South America from IFRC's Disasters and Crisis department was deployed to Paraguay to support the National Society with assessment, planning and coordination for the emergency. Likewise, a surge member was deployed to operations management in support of the National Society. The IFRC CCST in Buenos Aires has been providing support through its head of cluster and its financial officer. The Regional Logistics Unit (RLU) assisted by sending 8,840 mosquito nets to support the operation; and 5,000 Swiss francs were

² http://www.vigisalud.gov.py/files/boletines_covid19/2020_19/SE19_2020.pdf

³ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/dependencias/portal/adjunto/79727f-DecretoN3576CuarentenaInteligenteFASE1.pdf>

made available to the National Society to acquire personal protection equipment (PPE) for staff and volunteers to support COVID-19-related protection and prevention measures.

Overview of non-RCRC actors in country

Government entities are currently focused on the COVID-19 health emergency. The epidemiological surveillance system remains active.

Needs analysis, targeting, scenario planning and risk assessment

Health: A total of 42,710 cases of dengue were registered as of Epidemiological Week 18, causing the death of 64 people across 19 health regions in the country, mainly in the departments of Asunción and Central. A total of 175,082 suspected cases were reported, of which 70.74 per cent were in the Metropolitan Area, mostly attributed to the circulation of the DEN-4 serotype.

While the number of reported dengue cases are below or at normal levels for this time of year, there is a risk that these may increase in the coming months during the May to August rainy season, especially in highly vulnerable communities that do not have regular sanitation services or capacity to purchase cleaning materials.

Other factors that increase these communities' vulnerability and that may lead to an increase in cases is their geographical location (close to the river), living conditions with no sanitation habits, limited state access to the most affected communities, the low level of community organizing, and the lack of complementarity with health systems for early detection of dengue cases.

The COVID 19 emergency has greatly affected people's psychosocial health. The financial crisis being experienced by many families because of the impact that health provisions and restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Health and the government have had on their livelihoods, and the resulting lack of income, is affecting their capacity to purchase food products, medications and meet immediate needs.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene promotion: The collateral effects of the current COVID-19 pandemic have generated risky situations. This has particularly occurred in certain areas and/or communities where the financial crisis has forced residents to engage in social behaviours that leave them more exposed to dengue.

Because of the lack of household income, residents are unable to pay monthly garbage collection fees to the municipality (local municipalities outsource garbage collection services). People have resorted to disposing of their waste in specific locations within their neighbourhoods and/or communities, creating clandestine garbage dumps near their homes.

This is the case in the municipalities of Mariano Roque Alonso, Limpio and Capiatá, where residents are creating improvised garbage dumps or burning their garbage, which increases the likelihood of breeding sites in communities. The soon-to-arrive seasonal rains constitute one factor leading to the large-scale proliferation of arboviral agents; a second factor is related to the families' livelihoods. Most engage in the collection of aluminium cans, cardboard, and plastic and glass bottles, which they pile and store until they have accumulated a certain number of kilos (companies who purchase recycled objects pay by the kilo). This leads to high levels of accumulated waste in homes, which are vector breeding grounds and leaves families exposed to an increased quantity of vectors, such as *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. This situation is exacerbated during the rainy season.

Targeting

Health and sanitation actions cover the departments of Asunción and Central, targeting 11,500 people through actions aimed at preventing and containing dengue. These reach at least 1,280 families, 11 schools and 20 hospitals to reduce the impact of the disease.

Actions will continue to be implemented by volunteers deployed from PRC branches in Capiatá, Asunción and Mariano Roque Alonso in 16 communities and 12 schools targeted for intervention.

Operation Risk Assessment

Scenario	Humanitarian consequence	Potential Response
Increase in coronavirus cases at community level (community circulation)	This could limit Plan of Action activities in the field due to movement restrictions that may be imposed by the government; risk of infection for volunteers carrying out the actions.	Establish an intervention strategy, adhering to government measures, that provides adequate response to communities for the prevention of incidence of dengue cases.
Security issues when deploying to the field	Movement may be limited by weather factors affecting mobilization on the ground. Potential difficulties in accessing communities due to the absence of roads fit for all kinds of weather	With community leaders and operation coordinators, evaluate and assess various security issues, operational security, safer access, safe permanence, proper uniformity, means of transportation and visibility for field teams before entering communities
Frequent rains foster the proliferation of vector breeding sites	Forecasts could influence current case levels. People keep getting sick, including vulnerable groups.	The plan will be revised in the event of a sustained increase despite actions. Additional funds may be requested.
An increase in the number of dengue cases, where demand would exceed capacity.	Developing severe dengue is another latent possibility. Increased morbidity and mortality in people with chronic or immunosuppressive diseases.	The number of cases will influence planned measures and the plan's revision will be based on achievements. Greater coordination with governmental and non-governmental organizations to improve the level of response.

B. Operational strategy

Proposed strategy

Overall Operational Objective

To contribute to the reduction of the spread of dengue in 16 communities in the departments of Asuncion and Central through health prevention, hygiene promotion, and the implementation of the community mobilization strategy.

Operational strategy

PRC is working on actions to support 6,400 vulnerable people in the departments of Asuncion and Central and 5,000 in hospital. The operational strategy follows PAHO recommendations and includes risk communication, integrated vector management, and personal prevention measures.

With the easing of mobility restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 context, Paraguayan Red Cross is implementing the approach strategy to identify the community brigades and families to be benefitted through the delivery of cleaning kits in 16 communities. The families' information is being collected and the hygiene assessment is being conducted with support from volunteers from the Mariano Roque Alonso, Capiatá, Asunción and Limpio branches.

Operational Support

Human Resources

To implement actions, the operation has hired a technical team made up of one health technician, one field technician, one administrative and logistics officer, one driver, 50 volunteers from four branches, and staff from the National Society. In addition, a surge member has been deployed, who has been assisting the National Society with operation management and coordination.

Logistics and supply chain

The RLU has assisted with the international purchase of 8,840 mosquito nets as well as with the bidding process for the acquisition of family kits, and provided technical assistance for the acquisition of community kits, brigade kits and school kits, according to IFRC guidelines.

Communications

PRC's national communications office has planned communications strategies for projects in execution. There is a person responsible for preparing and implementing said strategies at the national level, who is also a national-level advisor on CEA matters.

The communications strategy for the Dengue DREF was affected by the COVID-19 emergency declared worldwide (10 March by WHO and 16 March in Paraguay). Considering that the Dengue DREF was to begin implementation on 10 March and the urgent need to communicate information on COVID-19, it was deemed appropriate to define an integrated communications campaign. That is how the "Health in your Hands" campaign was born, which integrates points to generate changes in the population's behaviour, considering that:

- Both diseases are caused by viruses
- Both require changes in hygiene-related behaviours and habits
- Both require commitment by all

Aspects that can differentiate the messages but that are complementary:

- COVID-19 Personal hygiene
- COVID-19 Social distancing
- Dengue: Household and community hygiene

The following provide information on the reception of the messages on dengue prevention, vector elimination and waste management disseminated over several social networks⁴:

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
Scope	45,200	54,514 retweets	954 reactions
Interactions	33,534		
Shared materials	1,344 times		

Information Technology

An electronic survey to collect data for the purpose of community assessments related to the target population has been designed using the Kobo Collect platform, given the practicality and ease of use of the digital tool.

This tool is already in use, enabling users to observe and collect information on community family structure, the most common occupations, particular water, sanitation and hygiene aspects (water sources, water supply and treatment, waste management, availability of cleaning and hand-washing utensils, among others), and knowledge related to dengue and coronavirus.

Two modalities are used to apply the surveys: over the phone and face-to-face. Field work was required in communities for which there is no secondary information or previous mapping that would allow conducting phone surveys. The teams are being operated by volunteers supervised by project team technicians.

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/115292341894212/posts/2892255797531172/>
<https://www.facebook.com/115292341894212/posts/2887145934708825/>
<https://www.facebook.com/115292341894212/posts/2865937500163002/>

Security

The National Society has a security plan for implementing actions in the field. The plan includes scenario planning for risks that could potentially arise during the Plan of Action's implementation, such as social tension, increased number of dengue cases, and limited mobility on the ground because of blocked access to communities due to rains. Volunteers conducting actions in the field have insurance that covers accidents suffered during field operations, as well as protection equipment consisting of long-sleeved shirts, caps, repellent and sunscreen. Volunteers are provided personal protection equipment as prevention against COVID-10, including biosecurity measures and adequate disinfection of vehicles.

Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Fulfillment of Plan of Action indicators is monitored through the monitoring matrix and the submission of progress (reports) in the PRC.

Administration and Finance

The PRC Administration Directorate will be responsible for management of funds in country, in compliance with IFRC standard procedures defined in the Letter of Agreement signed between PRC and IFRC for the operation's implementation.

For its part, IFRC, through the Finance Department, will provide the necessary support to the operation for the review, validation of budgets, bank transfers, and technical advice to the National Society on IFRC financial procedures.

C. Detailed Operational Plan



Health

People targeted: 11,400

Male: 4,902

Female: 6,498

Health Outcome 1: Transmission of diseases of epidemic potential is reduced

Indicators:	Target	Actual
# of people for whom immediate health risks are reduced	11,300	in progress

Health Output 1.1 Community-based disease control and health promotion is provided to the target population

Indicators:	Target	Actual
# of families trained at community level	1280	in progress
# PRC volunteers trained in epidemic control and sanitation and hygiene	50	50
# of community brigades formed and trained	16	in progress
# of kits distributed to brigades	16	pending

Progress

Households health promotion for elimination of breeding sites, protection actions, dengue symptoms and warning signs, in line with CBHFA, PHAST and CEA approach methodologies: Activities pending.

Training in schools to control the spread of dengue): 11 schools identified; actions in schools are limited by restrictions related to COVID-19.

Training of community brigades to control the spread of dengue in target communities: 16 communities identified; currently working on the identification of community brigades; five brigades have been identified to date.

Community surveillance activities: Activities pending

National Dengue Communication Strategy: Communications campaign "Health in your Hands", promoted on social networks and linked to COVID-19 and dengue prevention.

Workshops for branch PRC focal points on vector control, sanitation and hygiene promotion: Development of topics for online training of volunteers in branches involved: vector control, health in emergencies, Psychosocial Support (PSS), community mobilization, community-based surveillance

N°	TRAINING TOPIC	TRAINED VOLUNTEERS BY BRANCH				Total
		Asuncion	Capiatá	Limpio	Mariano Roque Alonso	
1	Vector Control 1	20	13	12	15	60
2	Vector Control 2	20	13	12	15	60
3	Vector Control 3	20	13	12	15	60
4	Rapid Health Assessment	20	13	12	15	60
5	Water and Sanitation	20	13	12	15	60
6	Social mobilization and communication for the exchange of knowledge	20	13	12	15	60

7	Community-based surveillance	20	13	12	15	60
8	Psychosocial support	20	13	12	15	60
9	Gender protection and inclusion	20	13	12	15	60
10	Waste Management	20	13	12	15	60
11	Use of Personal Protective Equipment	20	13	12	15	60

Challenges

Declaration of national health emergency as of 16 March; application of measures restricting travel to communities, preventive quarantine, social distancing.

Lessons learned

Implement actions and activities such as the communications strategy, to communicate key messages about dengue and COVID to the population.

Take advantage of quarantine for online training to volunteers on topics related to actions to be implemented in the field.

Health Output 1.2: Vector-borne diseases are prevented

Indicators:	Target	Actual
# of households reached with Long-Lasting Insecticidal Nets (3,840 units)	1280	in progress
# of hospitals supported with Long-Lasting Insecticidal Nets (5,000 units)	20	pending

Progress

Distribution of Long-Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLIN') to families: Currently working on identifying families; 180 families have been identified to date.

Distribution of Long-Lasting Insecticidal Nets to hospitals that have been attending cases: The Ministry of Health has requested that this activity be implemented after isolation measures end; the activity has been coordinated with authorities.

Challenges

Health authorities have not provided the list of hospitals to which the 5000 LLINs will be delivered as they are focused on the COVID-19 health emergency.

Actions implemented

The National Society has informed SEN of the 5000 LLINs available so that they can provide the list of hospitals to which they must be delivered.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

People targeted: 6,400

Male:2,752

Female:3,648

WASH Outcome 2: Immediate risk reduction of waterborne and water-related diseases in target communities

Indicators:	Target	Actual
# of people at lower risk of dengue due to appropriate prevention and waste management measures	6,400	in progress

WASH Output 2.1: Continuous assessment of water, sanitation, and hygiene situation is carried out in targeted communities

Indicators:		Target	Actual
# of WASH assessments		3	In process
# of coordination meetings with local institutions involved in dengue control and prevention		6	In process
WASH Output 5.1: Adequate sanitation that meets Sphere standards in terms of quantity and quality is provided to the target population.			
Indicators:		Target	Actual
# of school Cleaning Kits delivered.		12	Pending
# of Community Cleaning Kits delivered		16	Pending
# of Family Cleaning Kits delivered		1,280	Pending
# of families receiving hygiene promotion and waste management clean-up kits		1,280	Pending
Progress			
<p>Conduct WASH assessments with respect to needs and target population: WASH assessments have begun in communities in Capiatá, Mariano Roque Alonso and Asunción.</p> <p>Institutional articulation for the implementation of joint activities that contribute to the control and prevention of dengue: Coordination with DIGESA for waste management has begun.</p> <p>Distribution of 16 community clean-up kits: In the process of being purchased.</p> <p>Distribution of 11 school clean-up kits: In the process of being purchased.</p> <p>Distribution of 1280 family clean-up kits: In the process of being purchased.</p> <p>Awareness raising activity in hygiene promotion with CEA approach: Pending.</p> <p>Printing of hygiene promotion material: Posters have been designed, and RFQs for their printing have been sent out.</p> <p>Joint community clean-up campaigns: Contact has been initiated with DIGESA to coordinate waste management.</p> <p>Challenges Purchase processes delayed due to national health emergency restrictions related to COVID; many suppliers were already working at half capacity, which are now working behind closed doors and only filling orders for home delivery.</p> <p>Lessons learned With the easing of restrictions, processes have been resumed in order to move forward with purchases.</p>			

National Society Strengthening

S1.1: National Society capacity building and organizational development objectives are facilitated to ensure that National Societies have the necessary legal, ethical and financial foundations, systems and structures, competences and capacities to plan and perform

Output S1.1.6: National Societies have the necessary corporate infrastructure and systems in place

Indicators:	Target	Actual
# of PRC branches involved in this operation	4	4
# of PRC volunteers mobilized	75	25

A lessons-learned workshop carried out	1	pending
# volunteers provided with personal protective equipment	50	in process
150 volunteers are insured	150	150
A Security Plan developed	1	1

Progress

Recruitment of operational staff (health, field coordinator, financial-administrative-driver x 3 months)
Operation fully staffed to coordinate and implement actions in the field

Support to local branch implementation: Branches are being supported through protection equipment, per diem, etc.

Strengthening the capacity of volunteers through procedures and protocols to prevent risks associated with vector-borne disease: Volunteers have received the team biosecurity protocol for activities in the field.

Follow-up activities: Actions in the field are being monitored.

Lessons Learned Workshop: Will be held at the end of the operation.

Protection and visibility materials for volunteers involved in emergency response: Waiting for supplier to deliver visibility and protection items.

Insurance for volunteers: 161 volunteers are insured.

Develop a security plan: There is a security plan for mobilizations in the field.

International disaster response

Outcome S2.1 Effective and coordinated international disaster response is ensured

Indicators:	Target	Actual
A monitoring and operational support mechanism	1	1

Output S2.1.1: Effective and respected surge capacity mechanism is maintained.

Indicators:	Target	Actual
Monitoring visits	3	1
Surge capacity mobilizations	2	1

Activities

Progress

Monitoring and support missions by IFRC (CCTS, DM, Finance and Logistics): Travel is restricted due to the health emergency; however, remote monitoring is carried out.

Mobilization of rapid response personnel (General and Health Promotion & WASH RITs x 3 months) :
Mobilization of a General RIT for DREF coordination and support and assistance to NS.

For more information, specifically related to this operation, please contact:

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief** and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Response (Sphere) in the** provision of assistance to the most vulnerable. The vision of the International Federation is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies**, with a view to preventing and **alleviating human suffering, and** thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives,
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



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