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Emergency Plan of Action (EPoA) Panama: Population Movement

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DREF Operation MDRPA011	
Date of issue: 5 December 2015	Date of emergency: 12 November 2015
Operation manager: Felipe Del Cid, Regional Disaster Management Coordinator for Central America	Point of Contact: Rosa Castillo – Director General in Charge – Red Cross Society of Panama (RCSP)
Operation start date: 11 December 2015	Expected timeframe: 2 months
Overall operation budget: 31,124 Swiss francs (CHF)	
Number of people affected: 5,000	Number of people to be assisted: 1,000
Host National Society presence: Red Cross Society of Panama	
Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners actively involved in the operation: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)	
Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: National Civil Protection System, and the General Directorate for Migration and Foreign Affairs	

[<Click here for the DREF budget. Click here for the contact information>](#)

A. Situation Analysis



Hundreds of Cubans detained in Puerto Obaldía (photo by Martí Noticias)

On 15 November 2015, a group of approximately 1,300 Cuban migrants flew to Ecuador and then travelled by their own means through Colombia to the border town of La Miel, Panama. The National Maritime Service of Panama (SENAN) in the province of Colon, mobilized the migrants to Puerto Obaldia in the province of Darien, where they completed a seven-day migratory process. They were then transferred by boat to Colon by SENAN, where Panamanian authorities requested the support of the Red Cross Society of Panama branch in Colon to assist with the provision of pre-hospital care and bottled water. Subsequently, the migrants took public transportation from Colon to Panama City and then toward the border with Costa Rica.

On 30 November 2015, 800 additional Cuban migrants arrived in Puerto Obaldia. By 4 December 2015, the number had increased to 1,460 Cuban migrants, which has remained largely unchanged to this date. The migrants have been waiting for more than a week to cross into Costa Rica, and they are unable to pay for either food or lodgings due to lack of funds. The migrants are sleeping outdoors in Puerto Obaldía waiting to cross through eastern Panama (through Carti via Chepo) to Panama City. The Red Cross Society of Panama covered all of the costs related to the first group of migrants. However, in view of this second group and probably others, the National Society considers it necessary to request a Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). The most vulnerable people among this migrant population include children, pregnant women, and older adults, and the disaggregation of gender information of number of kids, women and elderly is difficult to identify because the population's demographics is constantly changing. According to the Panamanian newspaper *La Prensa*, 22,000 Cubans have left the island, and it is estimated that up to 13,000 are heading to Panama.

The large number of Cubans, who have legally entered Panamanian territory, in their desperate attempt to reach the United States (US), is becoming a problem for immigration authorities. The migration director stated that some 50 people per day were entering the country at the onset of this wave of Cuban migrants, a number that has risen to 200 per day in recent weeks. The Cuban migrants are arriving from South America, as opposed to past decades when migrants attempted to reach the United States on rafts. Panamanian authorities have given them seven days to legalize their status in Panama, but virtually none of them return to the Immigration Office to update their status.

In an attempt to regulate this outflow since Nicaragua closed its borders, the Panamanian Government has restricted the number of people allowed to pass through Puerto Obaldía to 60 people per day, therefore increasing the number of migrants in Puerto Obaldía. The basic service structures in Puerto Obaldía, a small rural community of 468 inhabitants, have collapsed due to the large number of migrants arriving in the community. The Panamanian government has lifted its 60-person restriction; however, logistics capabilities only allows for the exit of only 271 people per day, including children since there is only one daily Air Panama charter flight that— can carry a maximum of 21 people; the Air Panama flight is the only options since children are forbidden to travel on ships according to national regulations.

Summary of current response

Overview of the National Society:

The Red Cross Society of Panama is made up of 23 committees that are grouped into ten provinces: Bocas Del Toro, Coclé, Chiriquí, Colon, Darién, Herrera, Los Santos, Panama, Panama Oeste and Veraguas.

As an auxiliary to state authorities, the Red Cross Society of Panama works in cooperation with them and under their leadership, prepares communities and individuals for emergencies and seeks their self-protection, commits to raising awareness regarding risks and develops practical actions to reduce them. It also advocates and technically advises on the development of laws, regulations, and standards that facilitate actions in the event of large-scale emergencies.

The branches in Colón, Barú, and Chepo, through which the Red Cross Society of Panama is providing assistance, have a broad structure of volunteers, ambulances, and vehicles operating to support humanitarian actions.

Current response

In addition to its role as an auxiliary to State authorities, the Red Cross Society of Panama is a member of the National Joint Task Force System, along with other actors such as the Fire Department, National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC for its acronym in Spanish), the National Police, the Panama's National Border Service (SENAFRONT for its acronym in Spanish) and the National Navy/Air Service.

The following are additional actions conducted by the RCSP

1. The national executive president, the director general in charge, the national relief director, and the president of the Colon and Barú Red Cross branches are monitoring actions in Puerto Obaldía and Paso Canoa in order to support and coordinate humanitarian assistance.
2. The Red Cross branch in Colon is working with 20 volunteers and 1 ambulance.
3. On 15 November 2015, the Colon Red Cross branch started providing pre-hospital care to 1,300 Cuban migrants, distributing 1 litre of water per person (1,300 litres of water) and providing tea and cookies.

The Central Operations Headquarters has conducted the following activities:

- ✓ Coordination with the Ministry of Health, Caritas, SENAN, and SENAFRONT to continue assisting migrants in Puerto Obaldía.
- ✓ Resource Mobilization: vehicles, specialized equipment, ambulances and staff to Puerto Obaldía in order to support the operation.

Overview of actors in the country

SINAPROC coordinates risk management activities; it is currently providing bottled water to the migrants. The main actors in national emergency coordination are the National Police, SENAFRONT and the Ministry of Health.

The National Council of Private Enterprise (CONEP for its acronym Spanish) is going to construct temporary sanitary toilets to minimize the risk of open defecation and improve excreta disposal. Moreover, the Ministry of Health (MINS

for its acronym in Spanish) and Water authorities (IDAAN for its acronym in Spanish) will be rehabilitating the local aqueduct in order to improve the water quality by repairing the slow filter tank and the chlorination system.

Movement Coordination

From the beginning of the emergency, direct communications have been maintained with the IFRC's Pan-American Disaster Management Unit (PADRU) through various internal meetings with the national relief director and the director general. There has been constant monitoring to assess the needs of both the population and the operation, maintaining constant communication with the National Society and providing support to efforts being conducted.

Needs analysis, beneficiary selection and risk assessment

Needs analysis:

The migrant Cuban population is currently entering the community of La Miel at the rate of 200 people per day. From there, they travel to Puerto Obaldía, where they are given seven days to complete the entry process for Panama. According to authorities, this has been going on for 5 years now at a rate of some 50 people a day, but this number has increased recently due to the fact that the preferential treatment granted to Cubans by the US government is about to end.

Health

An outbreak of the Zika virus is expected since the Ministry of Health has confirmed three cases among Cuban immigrants; however, it cannot be said that this outbreak is due to this migration since this disease comes from South America, Dengue, chikungunya, and malaria, of which 52 cases have been detected and three confirmed among Cuban migrants, are also threats. MINSA has taken preventive measures such as epidemiological controls, elimination of breeding grounds and fumigation in areas where patients suffering from these diseases have been detected.



River where the migrants shower.



Increase of solid waste.

Source: Red Cross Society of Panama

Water

The community of Puerto Obaldía has a rural aqueduct that has the capacity to meet the community's needs; nonetheless, it is not working properly since it lacks materials and supplies for safe water treatment.

Sanitation

The community lacks adequate solid waste and excreta disposal facilities. The huge increase in population and associated foreign aid being provided has dramatically increased the amount of solid waste in the community, causing a rise in mosquito breeding sites and proliferation of other vectors such as rats.

Several cases of chronic diseases have been detected due to poor sanitary conditions and the lack of human resources (doctors and nurses). The population lacks access to basic toilet facilities, including the vulnerable groups such as children, pregnant women and older adults. Weather conditions in the area are extremely hot, making dehydration a constant concern.

Beneficiary selection:

Priority will be given to vulnerable groups: children, pregnant women, older adults, dehydrated people and those in need of medical assistance.

Risk assessment:

The restrictions enacted at the beginning of the crisis by Panamanian authorities to allow passage to only 60 migrants per day increased tensions between migrants and authorities, which led to widespread outbreaks of violence that could affect humanitarian personnel.

B. Operational plan and strategy

Overall objective

Contribute to the health of migrants in the country through health, hydration and hygiene services for 1,000 people.

Proposed strategy

Provide pre-hospital care to migrants: The RCSP's has been providing pre-hospital care to the approximately 1,300 Cuban migrants in Puerto Obaldía. Due to lack of personnel, the RCSP will provide medical personnel from the institution for 30 days to support the health centre in Puerto Obaldía in coordination with MINSA.

Psychosocial support: Two specialists will provide psychological care in Puerto Obaldía, as well as recreational activities for children using the "return of happiness" methodology with the help of two volunteers from the National Society.

Distribution of safe water to 500 families: Pur water purifying sachets will be distributed for 30 days. These will be handed out at distribution points established by the Red Cross Society of Panama in Puerto Obaldía along with training on their use, which will cover the needs of a group of immigrants in Puerto Obaldía for one week until MINSA and IDAAN can provide further support. Training will be provided to the population on safe water handling and treatment. MINSA, in conjunction with IDAAN will be working on improving the rural aqueduct. The Pur sachets were donated by Proctor & Gamble to the Red Cross Society of Panama for emergency response. The DREF will be used to support the logistics and mobilization of these items to the affected area.

Delivery of personal hygiene kits: Hygiene kits will be designed to be used by one person for five days, and different kits will be developed for men and women. The kits will contain at least bar of soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush, toilet paper, wet towels, alcohol gel and sanitary napkins. The hygiene kits were also donated by Proctor & Gamble to the Red Cross Society of Panama.

Hygiene promotion activities: Training will be conducted on personal hygiene, solid waste management and management of excreta as a complement to MINSA's activities on sensitizing the community on how to protect itself. The RCSP will develop the key hygiene key messages to support CONEP, which will build sanitary facilities to dispose of excreta. MINSA and IDAAN will rehabilitate the local aqueduct and conduct hygiene promotion activities and water treatment at the household level.

Operational support services

Human Resources: In order to implement this plan of action, the RCSP has the following multidisciplinary technical team that will ensure the implementation of the activities:

- 40 volunteers, including doctors, nurses, paramedics, psychologists, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) technicians (in Puerto Obaldía)
- One logistics, security, and operations officer in Puerto Obaldía
- Two psychologists and two volunteers with psychosocial support (PSS) training (Puerto Obaldía)
- Administrative – accounting staff at the RCSP's headquarters
- Relief and Operations Directorate personnel and its respective departments.
- Procurement Department personnel (purchasing, warehousing, fleet)
- Communications Department personnel
- Volunteer personnel from the branches.

Process monitoring is through the institutional administrative structure in all its departments and the national relief director (who has the support from the interim general director). [The RCSP's headquarters also has a monitoring team for financial reporting, and it is responsible for ensuring the quality of intermediate and final reports.

The chain of responsibility in the monitoring process includes the local, national and international level.

Logistics and supply chain: The operation will likely not require the purchase of materials outside of the country; instead, all purchases will be made in-country as domestic markets carry the items required for the operation.

The RCSP has a procurement process that is managed via the Accounting Department, through which all supplies and equipment needed by the branches are purchased, and the IFRC endorses the purchasing procedures.

Communications: Communication initiatives will help strengthen the National Society in terms of information and public relations capacity for future emergencies. Key aspects of relief and recovery operations, including achievements, challenges, donors, beneficiaries, and support needs, will be promoted constantly in all the relevant channels mentioned above.

As for the communications relationship between the National Society and the Movement, the Communications Department will provide extensive coverage of the actions that will be carried out and issue press releases, background stories, etc. as required.

Key messages will be disseminated at the national level for this operation, focusing on staff security, fulfilment of the Fundamental Principles and the IFRC's migration policy and code of conduct.

Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER): The RCSP will have a monitoring team made up of the National Relief Corps. Since activities are short term, this project will only be required to submit a final report to the IFRC in January 2016. A lessons learned workshop will be conducted since this is the RCSP's first experience with a population movement operation.

Administration and Finance: The Financial Accounting Directorate has trained staff available to provide the necessary support to the areas of work included in the plan of action.

The Financial Accounting Department's strategy focuses on the following points:

- a. Complying with the issuance of reports and the constant monitoring of compliance and proper use of budget allocations.
- b. Informing the various coordinators of work areas regarding the full utilization and proper use of the resources allocated to the plan of action.

C. DETAILED OPERATIONAL PLAN

Quality programming / Areas common to all sectors

Objectives	Indicators
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.	There is a final report by the end of the project There are sources of verification of actions conducted by the end of the project
Output 1.1: The project has been monitored and implemented as per the timeframe established in the EPOA	No. of activity progress reports
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.	No. of published bulletins
Activities	December

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Monitoring visits from RCSP's headquarters				
Monitoring visits from the IFRC				
Preparation of internal reports				
Publication of press releases and key messages				

Health

Needs analysis: The migrants must travel for several days and through Ecuador and Colombia before arriving in Panama. The MINSA-run health centre in Puerto Obaldía only has two doctors. However, the migrant and local population suffering from chronic or acute health problems have received medical care and pre-hospital care in Puerto Obaldía with the RCSP's support.

Population to be assisted: Displaced population suffering from chronic or acute health problems in Puerto Obaldía

Objectives	Indicators			
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	No. of people assisted at the Puerto Obaldía health centre (disaggregated by gender/age group)			
Output 3.1 Ensure pre-hospital care to the migrant population in Puerto Obaldía, with support from the RCSP through 1 ambulance and 100 Red Cross staff members	No. of people assisted with pre-hospital care (disaggregated by gender/age group)			
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".	No. of people assisted with psychosocial care (disaggregated by gender/age group)			
Activities	December			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Hospital care at the Puerto Obaldía health centre with support from the RCSP and in coordination with MINSA				
Pre-hospital care to migrants and locals in Puerto Obaldía, through the RCSP volunteers, doctors and paramedics				
PSS for migrant and local children in Puerto Obaldía.				

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 assisted in Puerto Obaldía.

Objectives	Indicators
Outcome 4 Immediate reduction of the risk of waterborne and	No. of people assisted with safe water

water-related diseases for 1,000 people	(disaggregated by gender/age group)			
Output 4.1 Contribute to the hydration and hygiene of 1,000 affected people.	No. of water purifying agents distributed			
Output 4.2 Hygiene-related goods (NFIs), which meet Sphere standards, are provided to the target population of 1,000 people	No. of people provided with personal hygiene kits			
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	No. of people receiving hygiene promotion activities and key messages			
Activities	December			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Daily distribution of water purifying agents to 1,000 people in Puerto Obaldía				
Purchase of 12 chlorine tablets for in-line chlorinator				
Distribution of personal hygiene kits to 1,000 people in 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 + 5073151388-89 email: crppresidencia@cruzrojadedpanama.org.
- **In IFRC regional office in Panama:** Omar Robinson Emergency WASH Senior Officer; phone: +5073173050; email: omar.robinson@ifrc.org.
- **Regional Logistics Unit (RLU):** Stephany Murrilo, Zone Senior Logistics & Mobilization Officer, Phone: +5073173050; 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 and monitoring coordinator; phone: +507 317 3050; email: priscila.gonzalez@ifrc.org.

For Resource Mobilization and Pledges:

- **In IFRC regional office in Panama:** Ursula Araya, Relationship Management Coordinator. +507 317 3050; email: Ursula.araya@ifrc.org.

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DREF OPERATION

11-Dec-15

MDRPA011 - Panama Population Movement

Budget Group	DREF Grant Budget CHF
Shelter - Relief	0
Shelter - Transitional	0
Construction - Housing	0
Construction - Facilities	0
Construction - Materials	0
Clothing & Textiles	0
Food	5,130
Seeds & Plants	0
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	0
Medical & First Aid	5,313
Teaching Materials	2,155
Utensils & Tools	0
Other Supplies & Services	0
Cash Disbursements	0
Total RELIEF ITEMS, CONSTRUCTION AND SUPPLIES	12,598
Land & Buildings	0
Vehicles	0
Computer & Telecom Equipment	0
Office/Household Furniture & Equipment	0
Medical Equipment	0
Other Machinery & Equipment	0
Total LAND, VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT	0
Storage, Warehousing	0
Distribution & Monitoring	0
Transport & Vehicle Costs	4,802
Logistics Services	0
Total LOGISTICS, TRANSPORT AND STORAGE	4,802
International Staff	0
National Staff	0
National Society Staff	646
Volunteers	4,426
Other Staff Benefits	0
Total PERSONNEL	5,072
Consultants	0
Professional Fees	0
Total CONSULTANTS & PROFESSIONAL FEES	0
Workshops & Training	1,026
Total WORKSHOP & TRAINING	1,026
Travel	3,335
Information & Public Relations	1,129
Office Costs	257
Communications	544
Financial Charges	308
Other General Expenses	154
Shared Office and Services Costs	0
Total GENERAL EXPENDITURES	5,726
Partner National Societies	0
Other Partners (NGOs, UN, other)	0
Total TRANSFER TO PARTNERS	0
Programme and Services Support Recovery	1,900
Total INDIRECT COSTS	1,900
TOTAL BUDGET	31,124