


www.ifrc.org  
Saving lives,  
changing minds.

# Disaster relief emergency fund (DREF) Honduras: Fire in Comayagua Penitentiary

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**DREF operation n° MDRHN006**  
**GLIDE n° [FR-2012-000028-HND](#)**  
**23 February 2012**

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) 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 emergency response. 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.

**81,792 Swiss francs have been allocated from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Honduran Red Cross (HRC) to replenish medical stocks and to provide pre-hospital care to penitentiary inmates and psychosocial support to some 400 families. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.**



**Volunteers of the Honduran Red Cross (HRC) remain near the Attorney General's Office morgue to provide psychosocial support to affected families retrieving the bodies of their relatives. Source: HRC**

**Summary:** A fire in the Comayagua Farm Penitentiary (Granja Penal de

Comayagua) which started on 14 February left hundreds of injured inmates and 366 dead. The Honduran Red Cross has been actively involved in providing pre-hospital care to the injured and it has also started to provide psychosocial support to the relatives of deceased inmates. The DREF operation will support the National Society in the replenishment of medical inputs and equipment ensuring that the Honduran Red Cross can continue providing pre-hospital care to the affected persons. In addition, the DREF will assist the National Society to provide psychosocial support to the families of inmates as well as to the volunteers working in the first aid activities.

This operation is expected to be implemented over three months, and will therefore be completed by 23 May 2012; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 23 August 2012).

**[<Click here for the DREF budget; here for contact details and here to view the map of the area>](#)**

## The situation

At 22:50 hours on 14 February a fire was reported in the Comayagua Farm Penitentiary (Granja Penal de Comayagua), located in the department of Comayagua. The fire affected five of the ten housing modules which make up this centre, located 90 kilometres north of the capital city of Tegucigalpa. Comayagua Farm Penitentiary, with a capacity for 250 inmates, was housing 852 prisoners, of which 475 survived the fire, whilst 366 perished as informed by the National Human Rights Commissioner (Comisionado Nacional de Derechos Humanos, CONADEH). However, these figures may change as the Hospital Escuela in Tegucigalpa is still treating many of the inmates with serious injuries. This could be considered one of the most tragic penitentiary fires in recent history of the Americas. The surviving prisoners are currently located outdoors within the grounds of Comayagua penitentiary.

This is the third time such an incident has occurred in Honduras in the last ten years, with the first penitentiary fire (in April 2003) accounting for 66 deaths and the second (in May 2004) causing the death of 104 inmates. Overall, Honduras has 24 penitentiary centres with the capacity of holding 8,280 persons, however, in 2011 the system had, approximately 15,000 inmates, 160 per cent above its limit.

The day of the incident, the Permanent Commission for Contingencies (Comisión Permanente de Contingencia, COPECO), the Fire Department and other local authorities, as well as the Honduran Red Cross, deployed personnel immediately to assist with the containment of the fire, emergency evacuations and first aid care for the surviving prisoners. The National Police also supported the preventive evacuation of the modules which were not affected in the correctional facility. All forensic personnel in the country have been called on to assist with the identification of the deceased with the support of expert teams from different nations.

COPECO has installed a kitchen near the Comayagua Penitentiary to provide food to the families that have remained near the centre whilst waiting for information on their relatives. However, as the Attorney General's Office transferred bodies to Tegucigalpa for identification, many family members of the deceased have also moved to Tegucigalpa. As a result, COPECO also installed, on 15 February, a camp in the grounds of the National Vocational Training Institute (INFOP,) which has the capacity to attend some 600 people. The area was fumigated, and water and sanitation equipment has been installed.

Tension between relatives of the deceased and the government has been rising since the latter announced the transfer of bodies to Tegucigalpa. Some of it was defused as the government promised to assist families with their return to Comayagua for funeral services. However, due to the time required for identification, tensions rose again and new confrontations developed on 20 February for some minutes.

## Coordination and partnerships

The Honduran Red Cross' headquarters activated its National Emergency Monitoring Centre (Centro Nacional de Monitoreo, CNM) and started to coordinate with COPECO's central office and the Attorney General's Office. Through the point of contact in the Attorney General's Office, the National Society has reported its early actions and offered support to remove and identify bodies and to provide psychosocial support for family members through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

In order to assist families with their mourning process and the stress of the situation, the National Society has also coordinated with the Department of Psychology of the National Autonomous University of Honduras and the national organization Psicoacción. Alongside these partners, the HRC installed a tent near the Attorney General's Office morgue in order to reach families waiting for the identification of their relatives. The National Society is also coordinating with the Mental Health Department of the Secretariat of Health to reach families at the camp installed in INFOP.

A delegation of the ICRC is also working alongside the HRC to determine current needs and the most suitable ways to address them. Through the support of the ICRC, the National Society donated supplies such as 150 body bags, 70 coats, 70 suits, 70 hospital caps and 70 pairs of surgical gloves.

In addition, the HRC, in coordination with radio and television stations (Emisoras Unidas and Televicentro), has installed a collection centre for food and other relief items to assist the surviving inmates. During visits to the different media outlets, the National Society explains the mission of the Red Cross and the actions taken thus far by the Movement.

# Red Cross and Red Crescent action

## The needs

**Selection of people to be reached:** The current DREF operation aims at replenishing medical supplies and other equipment used in evacuations and in providing pre-hospital assistance and psychosocial support to the inmates in Comayagua Farm Penitentiary and their families.

Volunteers and technical staff from the Comayagua, Taulabe, Márcala, Siguatepeque, Jesús de Otoro and Tegucigalpa branches are in need of protective gear for the management of bodies, as well as psychosocial support. In addition, the National Society is in need of assistance to continue supporting the HRC's 130 volunteers involved in the response to the current crisis, particularly to ensure the rotation of medical personnel from other areas of the country.

## The proposed operation

The current DREF-supported operation will assist the HRC with three lines of action:

1. Replenishment of medical supplies used during the evacuation and pre-hospital care of inmates from Comayagua Penitentiary.
2. Provision of psychosocial support and first aid care to 400 affected families.
3. Provision of psychosocial support to 130 volunteers and technical staff responding to the crisis.

### Emergency health

**Outcome: The emergency medical needs of inmates and the psychosocial needs of 400 families of inmates affected by the fire in the Comayagua Penitentiary are covered.**

**Output 1: Inmates are provided with rapid medical management of injuries.**

**Output 2: 400 families of inmates in need of psychosocial support are assisted.**

**Output 3: 130 volunteers supporting activities receive psychosocial support.**

#### Activities planned:

- Replenish materials and tents used in the installation of mobile clinics
- Replenish and acquire new protective gear and medical supplies used in the treatment of inmates and their relatives.
- Provide psychosocial support for affected families who are installed in INFOP camp.
- Provide psychosocial support for volunteers involved in the evacuations and pre-hospital care activities.

The health unit of the National Society developed a plan of action to provide psychosocial support and first aid care in two areas: one close to the Comayagua Penitentiary and the other in Tegucigalpa, near the Attorney General's Office morgue. Currently, the mobile clinic in Tegucigalpa is supported by 42 volunteers and technical staff, some of whom are also assisting with the management of bodies. This clinic has already assisted over 35 persons to cope with the emotional stress of the loss of relatives and injured.

The team of volunteers and technical personnel from the Honduran Red Cross in Comayagua have assisted 34 persons in the penitentiary who suffered from third grade burns, fractures, dislocations, wounds from sharp objects (zinc sheets). Thirty-one of the burn patients were transported to the Santa Teresa Comayagua Hospital, of which three of the patients were admitted for further care. The HRC branches from Taulabe, Márcala, Siguatepeque, Jesús de Otoro and Tegucigalpa have also supported these activities.

---

## Contact information

**For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:**

- **In the Honduran Red Cross:** Oscar Fernandez, National Director of Operations and Relief, Honduran Red Cross; phone: + 504.3399.4703; email: [ofernandez@honduras.cruzroja.org](mailto:ofernandez@honduras.cruzroja.org)

- **IFRC regional representation for Central America and Mexico in Costa Rica:** Fabricio Lopez, regional representative for Central America and Mexico; email: [fabricio.lopez@ifrc.org](mailto:fabricio.lopez@ifrc.org)
  - **IFRC Americas zone office in Panama:** phone: + 507.317.3050
    - Jorge Zequeira, PADRU coordinator; email: [jorge.zequeira@ifrc.org](mailto:jorge.zequeira@ifrc.org)
    - Douglas Baquero, regional logistics coordinator; email: [douglas.baquero@ifrc.org](mailto:douglas.baquero@ifrc.org)
    - Jane Grimshaw; PMER manager; email: [jane.grimshaw@ifrc.org](mailto:jane.grimshaw@ifrc.org)
  - **In Geneva:** Christine South, Operations Support, Phone: +41.22.730.4529, email: [christine.south@ifrc.org](mailto:christine.south@ifrc.org)
- 



**Click here**

1. **DREF Budget [below](#)**
  2. **Click [here](#) to return to the title page**
  3. **Click [here](#) to view map of the affected area**
- 

## How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision 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.

[www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)  
**Saving lives, changing minds.**



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

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
  2. Enable healthy and safe living.
  3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.
-

# DREF OPERATION

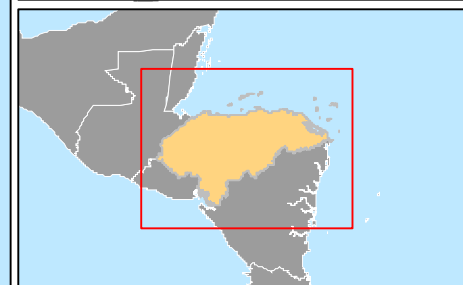
23-Feb-12

MDRHN006 Honduras Fire

<b>Budget Group</b>	<b>DREF Grant Budget CHF</b>
Shelter - Relief	6,200
Shelter - Transitional	
Construction - Housing	
Construction - Facilities	
Construction - Materials	
Clothing & Textiles	
Food	
Seeds & Plants	
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	
Medical & First Aid	30,800
Teaching Materials	3,000
Ustensils & Tools	
Other Supplies & Services	10,000
Emergency Response Units	
Cash Disbursements	
<b>Total RELIEF ITEMS, CONSTRUCTION AND SUPPLIES</b>	<b>50,000</b>
Land & Buildings	
Vehicles Purchase	
Computer & Telecom Equipment	
Office/Household Furniture & Equipment	
Medical Equipment	
Other Machinery & Equipment	
<b>Total LAND, VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>0</b>
Storage, Warehousing	
Distribution & Monitoring	2,000
Transport & Vehicle Costs	3,000
Logistics Services	1,000
<b>Total LOGISTICS, TRANSPORT AND STORAGE</b>	<b>6,000</b>
International Staff	
National Staff	
National Society Staff	1,330
Volunteers	12,870
<b>Total PERSONNEL</b>	<b>14,200</b>
Consultants	3,500
Professional Fees	
<b>Total CONSULTANTS &amp; PROFESSIONAL FEES</b>	<b>3,500</b>
Workshops & Training	
<b>Total WORKSHOP &amp; TRAINING</b>	<b>0</b>
Travel	
Information & Public Relations	2,000
Office Costs	300
Communications	300
Financial Charges	500
Other General Expenses	
Shared Support Services	
<b>Total GENERAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>3,100</b>
Programme and Supplementary Services Recovery	4,992
<b>Total INDIRECT COSTS</b>	<b>4,992</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>81,792</b>



# Honduras: Fire



Fire in Comayagua Farm Penitentiary

0 25 50  
km

