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Emergency Plan of Action Final Report

Armenia: Hailstorm

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DREF operation	Operation n° MDRAM004
Date of Issue: 8 March 2019	Glide number: OT-2018-00146-ARM
Date of disaster: 17–18 August 2018	
Operation start date: 7 September 2018	Operation end date: 7 December 2018
Host National Society: Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS)	Operation budget: CHF 257,134
Number of people affected: 9,900	Number of people assisted: 5,051
N° of National Societies involved in the operation: One – ARCS	
N° of other partner organizations involved in the operation: Local and regional authorities of targeted communities; local bank	

A. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Description of the disaster

On 17 and 18 August 2018, a hailstorm damaged almost all yield capacity in Shirak region of Armenia. According to the rapid assessment conducted jointly by the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS) and Shirak regional authorities, 2,202 households (approximately 9,900 people) in 11 communities were affected, out of which 1,143 households from the three most affected communities lost from 80 to 100 per cent of their yield capacity – including potatoes, vegetables, flax, cumin, lentils, peas, cucumber, etc. Moreover, there were also sporadic cases of damaged houses and cattle farm roofs reported, but not on a large scale.

Summary of response

Overview of Host National Society

ARCS, including its Shirak regional branch conducted several meetings with regional authorities, obtained all available official assessment reports and organized a needs assessment in some of the affected 11 communities. ARCS also held a meeting with the Ministry of Emergency Situations, and agreed to share all information and coordinate activities in the affected region. At the regional level, the ARCS representatives met with the Shirak Region administration responsible staff, where agreement for cooperation and information exchange was reached. At the local level, ARCS met with local authorities of affected communities and received regular updated information regarding the situation in the field. Moreover, ARCS Shirak regional branch team visited several affected communities to assess the situation and meet with affected people.

Based on the data available from official sources and ARCS Shirak regional team, ARCS disaster response team (DRT) together with regional government representatives selected the most affected three communities (see map appended to this report), to be targeted by the operation. Beneficiary selection criteria were developed, and beneficiary lists were prepared based on the outcome of meetings with the authorities of the three communities. According to reports from the authorities, hail in these communities had destroyed even the leaves of the crops, leaving farmers without means of living. In Arapi community, 185.8 hectares of potatoes, vegetables, flex, lentils, etc. were damaged. Nahapetavan



Image 1. Needs assessment. Photo: ARCS

community had 25 hectares of completely damaged wheat. Witnesses claimed that crops had been left without leaves after the hail so that annual harvest was totally destroyed. Sarnaghbyur community had 127 hectares of cultivated land destroyed by the hail. Damage to other communities would range from 50 to almost 70 per cent for almost all types of crops. Total damage caused to affected communities calculated by the Ministry of Agriculture amounted to AMD 903.54 million (approx. CHF 1.84 million).

The National Society, as a United Nations Disaster Management Team (UN DMT) member, received and shared information on the situation with all stakeholders. At the time of writing, ARCS was the only organization among NGOs and INGOs that took action to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected people.



Image 2. Needs assessment. Photo: ARCS

Needs analysis

The main source of income of the people living in the targeted communities is agriculture. The season starts in spring and ends with harvest in autumn. During this period the people take loans to purchase seeds, fuel, fertilizers, etc.

Regarding the functioning of the local market, it is important to highlight that, from spring to autumn, people often purchase goods from local shops/markets on credit. As they would often not have much cash at the beginning of the agricultural season, they would agree with the shop owners that the debts accrued during the season would be paid back in the autumn, after the harvest. The loss of crops resulting from the hailstorm has made an impact on the local market, with investments difficult to recover, putting a strain on the entire local market system.

Therefore, to meet peoples' basic needs, ARCS chose to provide support with unconditional and unrestricted cash. Local markets were fully functional and the selected communities are close to the second largest city of Armenia (Gyumri) – up to maximum 20 km.



Image 3. Needs assessment. Photo: ARCS

The assistance allowed the targeted people to cope with the immediate needs which was not possible to be covered from the seasonal harvest and it provided them with the possibility to cover essential food expenses for a month. ARCS closely coordinated with regional and local authorities to finalize the lists of beneficiaries, and agreed on the selection process and most appropriate distribution methods, time and place.

After the lists of beneficiaries were verified and prior to the distribution ARCS also communicated with the affected families in order to keep them informed on the criteria and selection process for the one-off unconditional cash distribution. Besides the complaint mechanism through selection process where the beneficiaries were able to raise their concerns and provide suggestions for improvement was established in the communities. The community members were asked to submit written complaints to the Shirak branch of ARCS. They were discussed on a weekly basis. Main complaints were regarding not being included in the lists (9 out of 11 complainant families were additionally included in

the lists), spelling mistakes of their names (49 cases, all satisfied). All other complaints and suggestions were discussed during the lessons learnt event held at the end of the project.

Risk Analysis

The main operational risk was related to the process of the cash distribution to beneficiaries. In order to avoid long queues in the bank and related discomfort it was decided to organize the distribution with fixed dates, and beneficiaries were informed beforehand when and where to go to get the entitled assistance.

B. OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

Unconditional Cash distributions

Outcome: The most affected population (1,103 households / 5,051 persons) have their basic needs met through the provision of cash (CHF 45.89 per person, which is 83 per cent of the food basket value) to help them cope with consequences of hail storm and loss of their income.

Outputs:

- The disaster area is assessed to identify the most affected households.
- Beneficiary targeting strategy is developed, including encashment plan and registration system to deliver intended assistance.
- Easily accessible complaint mechanism is established in targeted communities.
- Cash is distributed.
- Activities are monitored and evaluated, and reporting is provided on cash distributions.

The principle criteria to select the communities in the target area was the highest amount of losses (from 80 per cent to 100 per cent) of the harvest. The assistance allowed the targeted people to cope with the immediate needs, which is not possible to cover from the income from the seasonal harvest expected. It was anticipated that the government would be able to compensate commercial losses, however, no action has been taken to date. Small-holder producers were particularly vulnerable. The PDM showed that about 60 per cent of beneficiaries spent the cash provided to buy food, medicines, clothes and other household items. Others bought seeds and other agricultural goods.

The city of Gyumri is located near the affected communities and markets are accessible to purchase necessary household items. Since people were able to pay cash for the goods, the number of suppliers increased. The local shops who used to sell their goods on credit got the opportunity to improve their business.

Implementation

Initially, ARCS was going to use cash in envelopes modality. However, after the risk assessment conducted internally by the ARCS DM department, it was decided to involve a third party (Armenian Business Bank) and run all distribution via bank local branches in Shirak Province. The selection of the bank was based on existing long-term cooperation, mutual agreements between both organizations, bank presence in affected area and flexibility according the fees and service costs.

In order to ensure dignified distributions and security for beneficiaries and ARCS staff, it was decided to have a limited cash disbursement, based on the daily capacity of the bank branch to serve the recipients. The beneficiaries were informed by the local authorities and ARCS staff when they should go to the bank and collect money. ARCS DM coordinator with the support of RDRT member developed the encashment plan to structure the distribution process.

During the beneficiary targeting, the ARCS closely collaborated with local authorities. In order to reduce risks of wrong calculation, ARCS held preliminary random checks in households at the end of September, based on the lists provided by the authorities. ARCS HQ and Gyumri branch staff together with volunteers conducted random checks in all three villages to justify numbers of family members.

An IFRC Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) member visited Armenia for providing technical assistance in project implementation. A post-distribution monitoring (PDM) questionnaire form was developed and translated to the Armenian language with the help of the ARCS DM coordinator. This helped to ensure the organization accountability and support to identify positive and negative parts of the intervention.

The questionnaire was put on a digital platform (Kobo Collect), which helped to

- streamline National Society information management process,
- provide instantaneous communication between HQ and branches,
- reduce time for data processing and analysis,
- ensure effective use of human resources.

The RDRT member together with ARCS HQ DM staff held an induction session for Gyumri branch volunteers on using Kobo application. Additional instructions on form management were provided for ARCS HQ DM staff.

As of the result of monitoring, the number of beneficiaries has increased compared to the original target. The cash distribution is completed now and overall 1,103 families consisting of 5,051 persons received the cash assistance.

During post-distribution monitoring, about 15 per cent (180 families) were visited by ARCS volunteers. A lessons-learned workshop was conducted with the participation of the ARCS staff and volunteers, local authorities, community leaders. Outcomes of the workshop and PDM are described in the *Detailed Operational Plan* section below.

Operational support services

Human resources

The ARCS recruited one local coordinator and mobilized 10 volunteers from National Society HQ DRT and affected communities. For the operation ARCS assigned the Disaster Management staff, driver and other support staff as required to support the implementation of the operation. The IFRC Regional Office for Europe deployed an RDRT member in order to assist the National Society in setting up the planned cash response, and the Regional Cash Coordinator also provided remote support during the design of the cash programme.

Logistics and supply chain

ARCS provided sufficient number of vehicles to implement the operation and the DREF budget supported the fuel costs.

Information technologies (IT)

The ARCS web-site was used to cover the process of the project implementation sharing the updates from the field, as well as photos and other relevant materials. IT support was ensured by ARCS to establish the beneficiary database.

Communications

A press release was published explaining the objective of the operation, mentioning the target communities and beneficiary categories, the amount of cash to be distributed to affected people. A story on the process was published in the ARCS website.¹

Security

The area of the operation does not have major security issues. Cooperation with local authorities ensured the safety and security at the distribution points.

Planning, monitoring, evaluation, & reporting (PMER)

The planning, monitoring and evaluation was conducted by the ARCS DM department through the whole period of the project implementation. A lessons learnt workshop was conducted at the end of the project. Technical support for the cash distribution was provided by IFRC Cash Coordinator.

Administration and Finance

ARCS Finance Officer was following closely the financial component implementation and provided assistance.

¹ <https://www.redcross.am/news/armenian-red-cross-society-provides-humanitarian-aid-to-the-most-affected-by-hailstorm-families-of-arapi-sarnaghbyur-and-nahapetavan-communities-in-shirak-region.html>

C. DETAILED OPERATIONAL PLAN



Livelihoods and basic needs

People reached: 5,051 (1,103 households)

Male: 2,576 (estimate)

Female: 2,475 (estimate)

Indicators:	Target	Actual
The most affected population have their basic needs met through the provision of cash to help them cope with consequences of hail storm and loss of their income	1,143 households / 5,000 persons	1,103 households / 5,051 persons
Provision of cash per person	CHF 46	CHF 45.89
Narrative description of achievements		
<p>Local authorities of the province provided the lists of affected communities. Based on that information ARCS together with the local authorities selected three most affected communities: Arapi, Nahapetavan and Sarnaghbyur. The authorities also provided the lists of affected households from the mentioned communities. ARCS volunteers led by the Shirak branch coordinator conducted the preliminary assessment of the lists and finalized them taking into account the complaints from the beneficiaries.</p> <p>The kick-off meeting was held in Gyumri on 14 September with the participation of ARCS DM staff, Shirak branch staff and volunteers, province level authorities, heads of targeted communities. The participants discussed the planned activities, coordination and communication mechanisms, cash distribution strategies.</p> <p>Initially it was planned to provide cash to beneficiaries in envelopes. However, after discussion with all the stakeholders it was decided to contract a local bank and after the beneficiary lists finalization the affected population was directed to the nearest branch of the partner bank on preliminary agreed dates and time. As a result, ARCS distributed cash (CHF 45.89) to 1,103 families (5,051 people) in three communities. Post distribution monitoring (PDM) was initiated after the completion of the cash distribution. 180 households were approached for a feedback on the results of the intervention. The analysis of the PDM were discussed during the lessons learnt workshop.</p>		
Challenges		
<p>Main challenge was regarding the risks related to the distribution of cash in envelopes. After the risk assessment conducted internally by the ARCS DM department, it was decided to involve a third party (Armenian Business Bank) and run all distribution via local bank branches in Shirak Province.</p>		
Lessons Learned		
<p>On 7 December 2018, a lessons learnt workshop was conducted in Gyumri – Shirak branch of ARCS. ARCS DM staff, Shirak branch staff and volunteers, province level authorities, heads of targeted communities as well as representatives of beneficiaries participated in the workshop. The results and achievements, post distribution monitoring information and other issues were discussed. The main lessons were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The assistance was very relevant. The cash was used mainly for procuring seeds and fertilisers for agricultural purpose. Some families were able to pay back the debts accumulated during the year. 2. The methodology of providing the cash through the bank was quite appreciated as it was very transparent and appropriate. Meanwhile, it is important to keep in mind the capacities of the branches to serve a certain number of people in order to avoid long queues. 3. There is a need to provide longer time and resources for beneficiary registration in order to avoid dissatisfaction and misunderstandings. 4. The ARCS staff and volunteers worked very hard and covered all tasks planned initially. 5. Capacity building on cash transfer programming for all the stakeholders was mentioned as one of the important issues for the future. 		

Strengthen National Society

Indicators:	Target	Actual
Recruit Coordinator	1	1
Recruit Driver	1	1
Recruit volunteers	4	10
Involve a member of IFRC RDRT	1	1
Issue a press release	1	1
Post information on the website	1	1

Narrative description of achievements

During the implementation of the response, activities a Project Coordinator and Driver were recruited for three months. The operation budget covered the fuel expenses for the vehicle provided by ARCS for the project purposes. The HQ DM staff visited the area twice a month for conducting monitoring, meeting the authorities, beneficiaries as well as coordinating the ongoing issues. ARCS President and the Secretary General met the Province Governor at the very beginning to discuss the objective of the intervention and agree on further cooperation and coordination.

It was initially planned to recruit 4 ARCS volunteers for conducting surveys, monitoring and working directly with beneficiaries. During the project period there were 6 members of the targeted communities who came to offer their voluntary assistance in the activities. ARCS used their resources during the distribution of cash.

From 8 to 12 October 2018, an IFRC RDRT member visited Armenia to provide technical assistance in project implementation. The PDM questionnaire form was developed and translated to the Armenian language with the help of the ARCS DM coordinator. This helped to ensure the organization accountability and support to identify positive and negative parts of the intervention. The questioner was put on digital form (Kobo Collect).

180 households were assessed during the PDM. 51 per cent of respondents were men and 49 per cent women. The age groups were: 51-61 (30 per cent), above 63 (24 per cent), 40-50 (21 per cent), 29-39 (19 per cent), 18-28 (6 per cent). 55 per cent of households had up to 7 members in the family, 30 per cent 2-4, 12 per cent 8-10. 66 per cent of beneficiaries spent less than 2 hours in the queue at the bank. 96 per cent were satisfied with the assistance. The purpose of cash spent is provided above.

Challenges

There were no major challenges related to strengthening the National Society.

Lessons Learned

The main lessons learnt included the need for building capacities of ARCS staff and volunteers as well as local stakeholders in CTP, its modalities, ways of implementation and best practices.

D. THE BUDGET

The budget for this DREF operation was CHF 257,134, of which CHF 252,109 was spent. The remaining balance of CHF 5,025 will be returned to the DREF account per standard IFRC procedures. Please refer to the final financial statement, appended to this report, for details.

Contact information



Click here for:

- [Emergency Plan of Action \(EPoA\)](#)

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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 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian 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.

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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

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2018/09-2019/01	Operation	MDRAM004
Budget Timeframe	2018/09-2018/12	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 06/Mar/2019

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRAM004 - Armenia - Hailstorm

Operating Timeframe: 07 Sep 2018 to 07 Dec 2018

I. Summary

Opening Balance	0
Funds & Other Income	257,134
DREF Allocations	257,134
Expenditure	-252,109
Closing Balance	5,025

II. Expenditure by area of focus / strategies for implementation

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
AOF1 - Disaster risk reduction			0
AOF2 - Shelter			0
AOF3 - Livelihoods and basic needs	244,950	252,109	-7,159
AOF4 - Health			0
AOF5 - Water, sanitation and hygiene			0
AOF6 - Inclusion, gender and protection			0
AOF7 - Migration			0
Area of focus Total	244,950	252,109	-7,159
SF11 - Strengthen National Society capacities	6,752		6,752
SF12 - Ensure effective international disaster management	5,432		5,432
SF13 - Influence others as leading strategic partners			0
SF14 - Ensure a strong IFRC			0
Strategy for implementation Total	12,184		12,184
Grand Total	257,134	252,109	5,025

DREF Operation

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2018/09-2019/01	Operation	MDRAM004
Budget Timeframe	2018/09-2018/12	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 06/Mar/2019

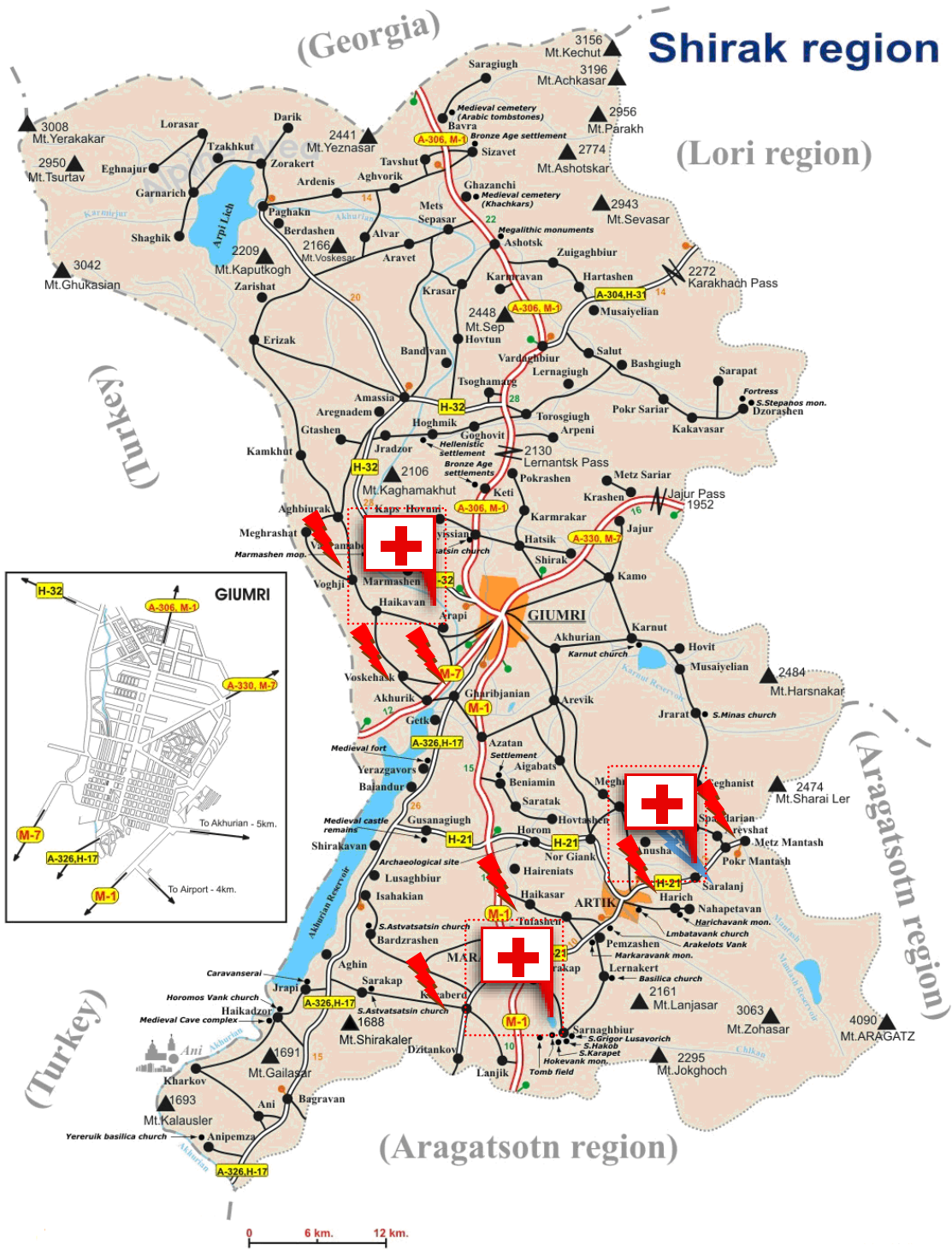
All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRAM004 - Armenia - Hailstorm

Operating Timeframe: 07 Sep 2018 to 07 Dec 2018

III. Expenditure by budget category & group

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
Relief items, Construction, Supplies	230,000		230,000
Cash Disbursement	230,000		230,000
Logistics, Transport & Storage	840		840
Distribution & Monitoring	390		390
Transport & Vehicles Costs	450		450
Personnel	4,200		4,200
National Society Staff	3,300		3,300
Volunteers	900		900
Workshops & Training	700		700
Workshops & Training	700		700
General Expenditure	5,700	382	5,318
Travel	5,100	357	4,743
Office Costs	600		600
Financial Charges		25	-25
Contributions & Transfers		236,340	-236,340
Cash Transfers National Societies		236,340	-236,340
Indirect Costs	15,694	15,387	307
Programme & Services Support Recover	15,694	15,387	307
Grand Total	257,134	252,109	5,025



Communities affected by hail



Communities targeted by DREF