

www.ifrc.org  
Saving lives,  
changing minds.

## DREF operation update Panama: Floods

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

### DREF operation n° MDRPA008 GLIDE n° FL-2012-000126-PAN Update n°01 –18 December 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.

**Period covered by this update:** 7 August to 7 October 2012.

**Summary:** 104,620 Swiss francs were allocated from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 7 August 2012 to support the Red Cross Society of Panama (RCSP) in delivering assistance to some 2,500 beneficiaries.

At the end of July, severe rainfall and the occurrence of a waterspout affected the provinces of Bocas del Toro and Los Santos with flooding and wind damage to roofs and crops. Approximately 4,300 persons were affected in the two provinces. With support of the IFRC's DREF the Red Cross Society of Panama (RCSP) was able to reach some 2,500 beneficiaries with blankets, hygiene and kitchen kits, jerry cans, mosquito nets and tarpaulins. Additionally, the RCSP began to implement Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion (WASH) workshops with the beneficiaries. The remainder of the PHAST and WASH workshops and the Epidemic Control for Volunteers training will be completed in the last month of the operation.



RCSP volunteers participating in PHAST and WASH workshops. Source: Red Cross Society of Panama

During the last two weeks in October, the country was affected by flooding in the same communities that were being supported with this DREF funding. Furthermore, many activities had been halted because of civil unrest/ demonstrations in different provinces related to the passing of a new law. Even though the majority of activities had been completed or are underway, the disruption caused by the civil unrest divided the resources of the RCSP and therefore the National Society requested an extension of one month in order to close the financial reports. The operation will therefore be completed by December 2012. In line with the IFRC's reporting standards, the final report (narrative and financial) is due 90 days after the end of the operation (by March 2013).

The major donors and partners of DREF include the Australian, American and Belgian governments, the Austrian Red Cross, the Canadian Red Cross and government, Danish Red Cross and government, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), the Irish and the Italian governments, the Japanese Red Cross Society, the Luxembourg government, the Monaco Red Cross and government, the Netherlands Red Cross and government, the Norwegian Red Cross and

government, the Spanish Government, the Swedish Red Cross and government, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the Medtronic and Z Zurich Foundations, and other corporate and private donors. The IFRC, on behalf of the Red Cross Society of Panama, would like to extend thanks to all for their generous contributions. The Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO) has replenished the DREF to the amount of 50 per cent of the allocation made to this operation.

<http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/responding/disaster-response-system/financial-instruments/disaster-relief-emergency-fund-dref/>

[<click here to view contact details>](#)

## The situation

During the last week of July 2012, the provinces of Bocas del Toro and Los Santos were affected by severe rains which caused flooding, and a waterspout which resulted in wind damage to homes and crops. These weather phenomena affected 857 families (4,298 persons) in the two provinces. On 29 July the National Civil Protection System (Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil, SINAPROC) reported that one child died, 32 persons were injured and 1,432 persons took refuge in collective centres.

The Changuinola, Teribe and Sixaola rivers, the three main rivers of Bocas del Toro province, overflowed affecting communities near the border with Costa Rica. In the Los Santos province the winds associated with the waterspout detached roofs and uprooted trees. In all, the winds which swept in with the waterspout affected 72 families and more than 50 homes and two schools lost their roofs. The rains in Bocas del Toro also severely damaged the banana crops, a staple element of the local economy in Bocas del Toro, and also affected roads and electric and water services.

Since the events occurred humanitarian assistance has been given in the form of blankets, tarpaulins, hygiene kits kitchen kits, jerry cans and mosquito nets which were allocated to the most affected. Additionally, PHAST and WASH workshops have taken place.

During the last two weeks in October the same areas hit by flooding resulting in this DREF contribution were affected by additional floods and landslides and some 1,880 persons were affected. These rains were as a result of Hurricane Sandy. In addition to the rains, Panama experienced several days of civil unrest and clashes with security forces as a result of political issues in the area of Colón. The unrest spread from Colon and into Panama City. Three persons were killed in the disturbances and 500 were injured over a period of five days.

## Coordination and partnerships

The fire brigade, national police and other ministries have been working with their local offices in the emergency zone and formed a provincial EOC for decision making in which the RCSP took part. Coordination has been maintained with these levels of government and with local and regional authorities in the province of Bocas del Toro. In Los Santos the RCSP has maintained coordination with the Ministry of Health (MINSAs) taking part in the development activities in the communities and local governments to support the residents.

In Bocas del Toro, the government, through the office of the First Lady and SINAPROC, sent humanitarian aid consisting of water, bags of food, blankets and other items. In addition, food provided by the government was cooked in communal pots for 20 families. SINAPROC sent water purification plants to fulfill the needs of families in collective centres and affected communities. Distribution of food and water was maintained in some communities; however there was a challenge to reach communities along the border of Costa Rica and on the banana farms.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

### Progress towards outcomes

This DREF-supported operation is assisting those worst affected with hygiene kits, kitchen kits, mosquito nets, blankets, tarpaulins, jerry cans, community-based health promotion and disease prevention activities.

## Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

**Outcome: The immediate needs of 500 families affected are met through the distribution of essential household items.**

**Output 1: 500 families are reached with one hygiene kit, one kitchen kit and three blankets.**

**Output 2: 50 families are reached with two tarpaulins**

**Activities planned:**

- Conduct rapid emergency needs and capacity assessments.
- Develop beneficiary targeting strategy and registration system to deliver intended assistance.
- Distribute relief supplies to affected families.
- Monitor and report on relief distributions

**Progress:** The RCSP With the support of the DREF has reached its targeted 500 families with 428 in Bocas del Toro and 72 families in Los Santos.

In Bocas del Toro aid kits have been delivered consisting of blankets, tarpaulins, hygiene kits and kitchen kits. These have been distributed to affected families in five communities, one in the border area community of Las Tablas. The others are in the banana farms 01 to 04 where persons were sheltered in schools because of the flooding of their homes.

**Table 1.** Total humanitarian aid delivered to beneficiary families in the province of Bocas del Toro and Los Santos, September 2012.

Province	Blankets	Kitchen Kits	Hygiene Kits	Tarpaulins
Bocas del Toro District of Changuinola	1,284	428	428	75
Los Santos District of Las Tablas	216	72	72	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2. Total distribution per community and family in Bocas del Toro and Los Santos

	Beneficiary Communities	Total beneficiary families
<b>Bocas del Toro District of Changuinola</b>	Las Tablas	55
	Finca 01	83
	Finca 02	96
	Finca 03	124
	Finca 04	70
<b>Los Santos District of Las Tablas</b>	El Muñoz	38
	San José	34
<b>Total</b>		<b>500</b>

**Challenges:** On the banana farms 95 per cent of the people are indigenous and belong to various ethnic groups living in the region. These families live on scattered and isolated farms. Communication with the population is difficult as language is an issue and there are challenges with road access. This is why on-farm deliveries to the affected farms take a while, because of the difficulty of access and the dispersion of families.

The problem in the province of Los Santos is access. In many areas there were landslides and it has been difficult to make the humanitarian deliveries. Additionally, these are rural communities are scattered with some on low hillsides.

## Emergency health

**Outcome: The immediate risks to health and well-being are reduced through prevention and**

<b>promotion actions to 500 families.</b>
<b>Outputs: 500 families are reached with three mosquito nets and information on epidemic control</b>
<b>Activities planned:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with existing public health services to assess and monitor the health risks</li> <li>• Train volunteers using the Epidemic Control for Volunteers (ECV) toolkit</li> <li>• Distribute 1,500 mosquito nets (3 per family)</li> <li>• Develop and implement community-based health promotion and disease prevention activities</li> </ul>

**Progress:** In Bocas del Toro 1,284 mosquito nets were distributed and in Los Santos 216 were distributed, three per family in each province to the same families reached in the other distributions. In all 1,500 mosquito nets were distributed. The RCSP is coordinating with MINSA in developing activities to assess and monitor health risks.

The training of volunteers using the Epidemic Control for Volunteers (ECV) toolkit is being organized. The material was distributed and the participants are preparing for this activity in the community.

<b>Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion</b>
<b>Outcome: The risk of waterborne and water related diseases related to recent flooding has been reduced through hygiene promotion to 500 families.</b>
<b>Outputs: 500 families are reached with jerry cans and hygiene promotion campaigns.</b>
<b>Activities planned:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train volunteers on PHAST methodology</li> <li>• Distribute jerry cans (2 per family)</li> <li>• Complete health and hygiene promotion activities in coordination with local and national authorities.</li> <li>• Monitor and evaluate promotion activities</li> </ul>

**Progress:** In Bocas del Toro 856 jerry cans were distributed and in Los Santos 50 jerry cans were distributed, two per family. In total 906 jerry cans were allocated according to family needs. In both provinces the RCSP organized PHAST and WASH workshops for 25 volunteers who were then able to reach the affected communities. So far 428 families have been reached (86 per cent of the target).

The PHAST workshops were held in the communities affected by flooding where trained volunteers advised individuals in targeted communities regarding appropriate sanitation based on the maintenance of latrines, garbage collection and sewage disposal and also explained how to eliminate vector breeding sites which cause disease. Also, volunteers covered the topics of personal hygiene education concerning hand washing, bathing, washing and combing hair and brushing teeth. Additionally, the topics of food preservation and preparation, and the use of PUR water purification sachets were also covered, particularly in communities without piped water.

As the communities are made up of indigenous persons, the presentations were made in native language by volunteers from the communities.

In Bocas del Toro water distribution has been supported by the National Institute of Aqueducts and Sewers (Instituto de Acueductos y Alcantarillados Nacionales, IDAAN), and private partners in shelters and affected communities.

**Challenges:** In the district of Changuinola, the challenge has been to maintain hygiene activities in the indigenous population of farms 01 to 04, as the proposed behaviour changes sometimes clashed with the population's customs and beliefs.

## Contact information

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

- **In the National Society:** Jaime Fernández, President of the Red Cross Society of Panama.  
Phone: +507-315-1388, email: [presidencia@panama.cruzroja.org](mailto:presidencia@panama.cruzroja.org)
- **Americas zone office in Panama, phone: +507 317.3050**

- Benoit Porte, acting PADRU coordinator; email: [benoit.porte@ifrc.org](mailto:benoit.porte@ifrc.org)
- Douglas Baquero, regional logistics coordinator; email: [douglas.baquero@ifrc.org](mailto:douglas.baquero@ifrc.org)
- **In Geneva:** Christine South, operations support, Phone: +41.22.730.4529, email: [christine.south@ifrc.org](mailto:christine.south@ifrc.org)

#### **For Resource Mobilization and Pledges:**

- **In IFRC Zone:** Inga Purmalis, resource mobilization officer; email: [inga.purmalis@ifrc.org](mailto:inga.purmalis@ifrc.org)

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

- **In IFRC Zone:** Jane Grimshaw; PMER manager; email: [jane.grimshaw@ifrc.org](mailto:jane.grimshaw@ifrc.org)

---

### DREF history:

- This DREF was initially allocated on 07 August 2012 for CHF 104,620 for three months to assist 2,500 beneficiaries.



[Click here](#)

1. Click [here](#) to return to the title page

---

### 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 Disaster Response](#) 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.
-