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DREF operation update

Timor-Leste: Dengue outbreak

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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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: 24 January to 9 February 2014.

Summary: CHF 32,204 was allocated from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 24 January 2014 to support the Cruz Vermelha de Timor-Leste (CVTL) in delivering assistance to 17,000 beneficiaries in two sub-districts of Dili district.

CVTL has been conducting an awareness campaign since the second week of January 2014 in close coordination and collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

CVTL volunteers conducted household visits in two target sub-districts, visited 753 households to deliver dengue messages and refer potential cases to the hospital. These activities were carried out along with MoH workers who distributed Abate pills (larvicide) to the same households.

Led by the MoH, CVTL also participated in a mass public awareness campaign – using vehicles and megaphones to spread messages.

The procurement of cleaning tools and the production of information, education and communication (IEC) materials, such as banners and brochures, are on-going. CVTL plans to have a television talk show together with the MoH to further educate the communities on the dengue outbreak and prevention.



Red Cross volunteers and a family discuss ways to prevent dengue from spreading around their home. As part of the dengue outbreak response, a total of 753 households from two target sub-districts were reached by CVTL volunteers with awareness/education on dengue. Photo: IFRC Timor-Leste

The situation

A dengue fever outbreak occurred in the Timor-Leste capital Dili, with an escalation in the number of dengue cases in early January 2014. As of the first week of February, the number of confirmed cases at the national hospital has increased drastically; to date, 197 cases have been reported with two fatalities. The Ministry of Health expects the numbers will continue to increase in the coming months due to the wet season. In response to the outbreak, the government conducted a meeting with several humanitarian organizations operating in country, including CVTL. The Ministry of Health, with support from the World Health Organisation, has been focussing on vector control activities to control mosquito breeding. In recognition of its role as auxiliary to the government, CVTL has been asked to support the awareness campaign in two target areas.

Coordination and partnerships

The Ministry of Health is leading the outbreak response; they carried out vector control activities such as fogging in the areas with dengue positive patients as well as distributing Abate pills to eliminate mosquito larvae in household water reservoirs. Due to limited funding, some organizations such as Aloia Foundation and Future Timor Hari made available their technical staff and transportation facilities to support the MoH campaign.

CVTL conducted a one-day epidemic control refresher training for volunteers involved in the operation. A CVTL branch staff who had received epidemic control training at the end of last year was the lead facilitator for the event. During the training, the representatives from WHO and MoH also took part in facilitating some sessions. Two MoH staff shared different topics on dengue; one staff explained about basic knowledge on the infection and the Timor-Leste dengue national policy whilst the other staff explained about the MoH vector control programme including provision of training for volunteers to conduct health promotion to families. During their sessions, the facilitator also shared information about the joint activity with CVTL in the upcoming campaigns.

WHO staff shared information on their roles and responsibilities in assisting the government including their support during the epidemic response



On 31 January 2014, a joint campaign was conducted in Kampung Alor suco, Comoro sub-district. Staff from the environmental health department of the Ministry of Health provided an outline of activities to participants from CVTL and other organizations. Photo: IFRC Timor-Leste

As a follow up on the significant increase of dengue cases in Dili district, joint campaigns with the MoH were conducted twice a week. In each activity, CVTL volunteers carried out household visits whilst MoH workers distributed Abate pills at the same house.

To cover a larger target community, a bigger joint campaign led by the MoH was conducted on 5 February 2014. CVTL, Health Alliance, Future Timor Hari and other organizations conducted a mass campaign and spread dengue messages through megaphones. Up to 28 CVTL volunteers carried out house to house visits. Public health students from Universidade da Paz (Paz University) participated by distributing Abate pills to be put in household water reservoirs.

To ensure effective implementation of collaborative efforts, CVTL attended coordination meetings with other organizations once a week. During the meetings, CVTL shared various activities they had conducted and provided feedback on cases in target areas.

The IFRC country delegation in Timor-Leste has been in close contact with the WHO country office to coordinate joint activities and to avoid duplication. A coordination meeting was conducted with WHO to share the IFRC response on the outbreak.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Progress towards outcomes

Emergency health

Outcome: The number of dengue cases in Dili District is reduced through health education, promotion activities and environmental cleaning among 17,000 beneficiaries in Becora and Formosa areas of Dili District during the three-month operation.

Outputs and activities planned

- Conduct refresher training in dengue and behaviour change communication knowledge and practices for 28 volunteers of Dili branch
- Print 5,000 dengue fever awareness brochures, 100 posters and other information, education and communication (IEC) materials
- Provide education on environmental sanitation and dengue for 4,250 families in target areas
- Conduct cleaning campaign in target communities
- Conduct cleaning campaign in CVTL national headquarters and Dili branch office
- Conduct dengue awareness campaigns through radio and other communication channels
- Conduct dengue awareness session for CVTL national headquarters and Dili branch staff once in a month
- Monitor and evaluate activities
- Conduct lesson learnt workshop
- Conduct short baseline and end-line survey in communities to measure impact of the activities

Progress:

- a. During the reporting period, CVTL volunteers carried out awareness/education through household visits and reached to 753 households from two target sub-districts. The awareness/education includes information on dengue, prevention measures at personal and community levels, and referral/reporting of cases with symptoms similar to dengue, among others. These activities were carried out along with MoH workers who distributed Abate pills (larvicide) to the same households.

CVTL collaborated with other health partners in order to reach more households and districts. Led by MoH, CVTL participated in mass public awareness campaigns – using vehicles and megaphones – which involved the Health Alliance, Futura Timor Hari (FTH), Alola Foundation and other NGOs.

CVTL also worked with public health students of Universidade da Paz (Paz University) who distributed Abate pills to households.

CVTL conducted weekly clean-up campaigns at headquarters and district offices. The clean-up campaigns for target communities will be carried out once cleaning tools and self protection equipment are available.

- b. To prepare CVTL for dengue control in communities, the National Society organized a day-long refresher training around dengue prevention and control using the adapted IFRC epidemic control for volunteer (ECV) toolkit and training manual for a total of 23 volunteers (11 women and 12 men). The training highlighted the dengue national policy and vector control programme, as well as key activities of the CVTL outbreak response, was facilitated by technical staff from MoH, WHO and the IFRC country office.
- c. The production of dengue information education and communication (IEC) materials – such as leaflets, banners and posters – as well as procurement of self-protection equipment is in process.
- d. A baseline survey was conducted in target areas to capture the level of target community knowledge. This was preceded by an orientation on the conduct of baseline surveys participated by 20 volunteers (ten women and ten men) from Dili branch. f. The health staff of CVTL Dili branch as well as the health emergency manager from the national headquarters have conducted regular monitoring visits to observe volunteer activities. Routine evaluation meetings were conducted weekly at the branch office to receive feedback from volunteers.
- g. The IFRC health and disaster risk-reduction delegate provides on-going technical support i.e. field monitoring, and provided feedback on volunteers' activities. Coordination meetings with CVTL management team at the headquarters level were conducted regularly.

Challenges

There were no major challenges during the period, except for some delays in implementation of joint activities due to coordination of schedules amongst partners, particularly during household visits to conduct health awareness activities and distribute Abate pills. The health-in-emergency manager at CVTL national headquarters requires support to manage the operation effectively. CVTL continues to work closely with partners to improve the coordinated response in communities.

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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.



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.