

DREF OPERATIONAL LEARNING

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| Purpose: | Learning about the main challenges from the Floods and Demonstrations operations |
| Operation | Georgia – Floods (MDRGE012) Georgia – Demonstrations (MDRGE013) |
| Participant(s): | Priscila Gonzalez – DREF Team |
| Dates: | November 25 th to 30 th , 2019. |
| Destination: | Tbilisi, Akhmeta and Telavi, Georgia. |

Outstanding findings:

Despite the delay for the procurement of the NFIs for distribution under the DREF floods operation, the GRCS was able to distribute the items within the operations timeframe, and these were still relevant for the needs of the affected population as other organizations did not respond in this area.

The DREF demonstrations operation provided critical visibility and positioning opportunity to the National Society for first aid provision in the case of mass gatherings or civil unrest. The peer support received from the Ukrainian Red Cross was essential, and further collaboration should be encouraged

A. BACKGROUND



1. Georgia – Floods (MDRGE012):

On 12 May 2019, heavy rain and hail affected Kakheti Region of Georgia, mainly **Lagodekhi, Akhmeta, Telavi and Dedoplistskaro municipalities**. As a result of the heavy rain (125 mm), yards, entrances, basements and first floors of many houses and buildings were flooded. Furthermore, infrastructure, such as roads and bridges connecting the villages, riverbank protections, as well as agricultural lands and fruit trees have been destroyed. In total **the disaster affected 1,272 families (5,088 people) in Kakheti Region**. In general, in the targeted municipalities 25 per cent are youth (below 20) and 21 per cent are elderly (above 60). The main livelihood of the households is agriculture (harvest, vineyards) which were seriously damaged by the disaster. The relevant authorities worked on rehabilitation of the roads and bridges affected by the disaster; therefore, all affected communities are accessible. No injuries were recorded, and local people have access to health services.

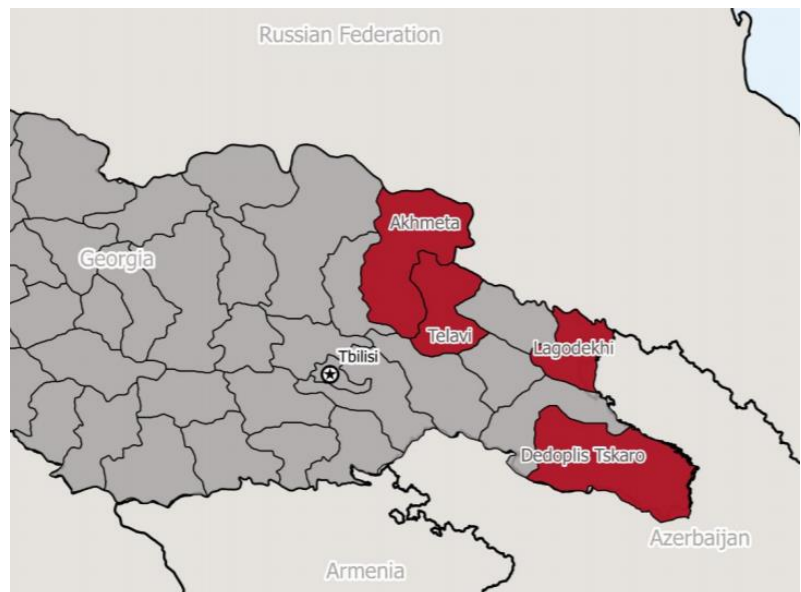


Figure 1: Target municipalities under the MDRGE012 operation. The review took place in Akhmeta and Telavi municipalities and in Tbilisi.

For further information see the [Emergency Plan of Action \(EPoA\) for the DREF Operation – Georgia: Floods \(MDRGE012\) and Final Report published.](#)

Summary of the response:

Through this DREF operation MDRGE012, the Georgian Red Cross was able to:

- Provide relief assistance to the affected 1,272 households (5,088 people).
- Distribute food parcels to the 5,088 people whose houses were flooded and/or harvest – being the main source of income in this region – were destroyed.
- Distribute hygiene kits and other household items to 323 families (1,292 persons) to those whose houses were flooded.

The DREF operation was approximately implemented as planned yet the distribution took place 2-3 weeks later than originally planned. By mid-August, before the RDRT mission took place, the following activities were conducted:

- List of beneficiaries have been coordinated with the local authorities of the target locations.
- Food and Non-Food items have been purchased by the GRCS Logistics Department
- The FI and NFI have been hand over to the local authorities
- FI and NFI have been delivered to the 1272 affected families in Telavi, Akhmeta, Lagodekhi, and Dedoplistskaro Municipalities. GRCS staff and volunteers together with the Regional and Local authorities took active part in distribution process.
- An RDRT mission took place between 18-22 August to implement a post-distribution monitoring survey and to participate in the Lessons learnt Workshop.
- The lessons learnt workshop took place on 21st of August in Telavi.



2. Georgia – Demonstrations (MDRGE013):

On 20 June 2019, citizens of Georgia blocked Rustaveli Avenue in front of the Parliament. The above was initially resisted by law enforcement officers, but later they allowed protesters to block the road. The protests that started against the fact that Russian member of Parliament presided over the session of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy in the Parliament of Georgia. Demonstrations involved the gathering of several thousand people every night.

20 June saw clashes taking place between protesters and police, as the latter was not letting the demonstrators to enter the parliament building. The confrontation started when protesters tried to push through the police cordon. Police used water cannons, tear gas, rubber bullets and rubber slugs to disperse the demonstrators. In total 240 people were injured and taken to the interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy constitutes a permanent communication structure between parliamentarians of the members' states aiming at unity in diversity of Orthodox Christians on the basis of the principles and values of Christianity and democracy. This was the 1st time the GRCS implemented a DREF operation for this type of emergency.

For further information see the [Emergency Plan of Action \(EPoA\) for the DREF Operation – Georgia: Demonstrations \(MDRGE013\) and its final report.](#)

The GRCS deployed teams trained in First Aid and Psychosocial First Aid to the area.

B. OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

The Terms of Reference for the review identified the main themes and questions to explore:

2. Floods:




- How the **coordination mechanism** within the GRCS, and with external actors, in the field worked during the implementation timeframe? Was the GRCS one of the few actors to respond the needs of the affected population?
- The perspective of the GRCS regarding the use of **cash & voucher assistance** in future operation or in-country challenges?
- Repetitive nature of the emergency and does the GRCS have any specific **longer-term plan/mandate** for this type of emergencies in country?
- The **timeliness and the accuracy** of the activities conducted under the DREF operation against the original plan.

2. Demonstrations:

- How was the **coordination mechanism** between within the GRCS, with the governmental bodies as well as with the other humanitarian actors in the field during the implementation timeframe?
- How the **PER approach** contributed into the GRCS response during DREF? Was the GRCS able to review their Plan of Action for PER?
- What was the **impact of the experience** and DREF operation on the GRCS?

C. METHODOLOGY

The Review was conducted during the visit to the Georgian Red Cross's headquarters in Tbilisi and branches located in Akhmeta and Telavi municipalities (Kaheti region). Information gathering consisted of:

- **Desk review** of primary and secondary data: DREF operation bulletin for both operations, post-distribution monitoring report from floods operations, lessons learned workshop report from both operations. 
- Discussions with the head of the South Caucasus CCST as well as Europe Regional Office staff (Head of DCPRR and Disaster Preparedness focal point).
- Discussions with Deputy Secretary General and Disaster Manager Coordinator of the GRCS (main operational focal point) 
- **Key informant interviews** with RC partners (Austrian RC and ICRC), local authorities, GRCS branch managers and volunteers, families reached through the assistance. 
- **Focus groups discussions** with two GRCS branches. A total of 27 persons participated in KII and FGD.
- **Observational visits** to two municipalities where flooding took place and to GRCS branches and HQ.
- A session with GRCS staff and volunteers to discuss and validate the findings.

D. OBSERVATIONS

1. Coordination mechanisms

a. Demonstrations:

- Role of the GRCS was not clearly defined at the start of the emergency. Once the GRCS decided to engage the GRCS members approached local authorities as well demonstrators to explain the role of the GRC.
- A group of doctors providing assistance during the demonstrations were using the emblem. The GRC, jointly with the IFRC and ICRC analysed this situation. This showed some the need to strengthen communications mechanisms and actions points.
- The South Caucasus CCST coordinated a call with the Ukrainian RC for experience-sharing which worked well. Leadership from both National Societies (GRCS and URC) also discussed the situation from the perspective of management. This exchange built the confidence of the GRCS to engage in the event and be present to provide first aid. Technical support from ICRC also enable the GRCS to operate always safeguarding the safety of their members by identifying safe areas to position GRCS staff and volunteers during the demonstrations.
- The GRCS highly appreciated the URC support.
- The engagement of the GRCS in this mass event was a turning point for the GRCS in terms of visibility and experience, which was facilitated by the coordination between Movement partners in-country and supported by the DREF operation.

b. Floods:

- As this was localized and small-scale flooding, other NGOs or international humanitarian organizations did not engage to provide assistance in this occasion.
- The local municipal authorities provided support focused on road repairs, but close coordination took place with GRCS to mobilize staff and volunteers, conduct damage & needs assessments and distribute relief items. The local authorities often rely on the Red Cross for this type of support.
- Other organizations (e.g. USAID, World Vision) are working in long-term projects, and some are more focused on advocacy-related projects.
- Based on the discussions with local authorities Telavi and Akhmeta the GRCS is well respected as institution in these municipalities.

2. Cash & voucher assistance (Floods):

- Based on the assessment and the impact on the main livelihoods of the affected population (damage to crops) CVA would have been an ideal mechanism.



Photo 1: Workshop session to share and validate preliminary findings with the Georgian Red Cross Society staff from Disaster Management, Youth, Finance, PGI, First Aid, Volunteering. Tbilisi, December 2019. Source: IFRC

- General feedback is that cash (in particular, unconditional cash) is not a methodology widely disseminated or well-understood. The government uses it for social programs or specific programs (e.g. to cover the costs of pesticides for farmers) but no examples were given for emergency or disaster response. There are still myths in the Georgian society on the use of CVA.
- Danish RC worked with the GRCS on “ready to response” project to support the GRCS to be cash ready.
- Austrian RC is also support the GRCS to increase CVA capacities.
- Through its PER process the GRCS has identified CVA as a priority to strengthen. There’re SOPs, tools and templates which were developed through the Danish RC project.
- However, the GRCS still identified that more capacity building on this is needed. A good option to have more buy-in could be to conduct a session with branch leadership and authorities on CVA.

3. Seasonality and long-term actions (Floods):

- Region is prone to fires, droughts, landslides and floods, as well as hailstorms in the wine region.
- The communities in these areas experience issues with ravine and drainage systems.
- Many of the systems/infrastructures in communities need more regular maintenance which could be a reason why floods or rains cause the level of damage. More advocacy and technical supported could be provided to the communities in

4. Impact of the experience (Demonstrations):

- Great learning experience for the staff and volunteers who supported. They had to go to the areas where the demonstrations were taking place, communicate to stakeholders the role of the Red Cross, ensure clear visibility of their members, observe and monitor the situation, identify safe areas and escape routes in case the situation became unsafe.
- It identified the need for continuous training on FA and PFA for volunteers.
- The GRCS gained learning and experience on how to handle potential sensitive situations on social media.

5. DREF application process:

- For the floods, the rainfall was continuous and it diffculted conducting assessments. The GRCS branches initially experienced delays in communicating with Tbilisi to report the scale. The GRCS engaged in an internal discussion of why this was the case.

Beneficiary Satisfaction and impact

- The GRCS conducted a satisfaction survey post distribution of the household items with support from the RDRT in country, the results are reflected in the final report of the operation.
- During the review, families visited refered that it would have been nice to receive support support (as some distributions took place a month after the disaster). Other families also refered to the need for support to cover repairs in their homes.
- In terms of the distribution of food and households items, it has been identified, by the branches and head of district, that despite the delay with the procurement and distribution of the NFIs, these still had a positive impact in response to the needs of the affected



Photo 2: Visit conducted to one of the persons reached through the DREF operation for floods. Her house and cellar (where food is stored) was flooded, she lost many belongings. She and her children received relief items and food items from the Red Cross. December

population. It's noteworthy that although the actions were still relevant, this is because those affected by the disaster could not cover their needs through other means as other organizations were not supporting in this area.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information gathered related to the main challenges for the implementation of this operation, as well as identified best practices, there are the main recommendations for the National Society:

- The National Society must continue to **enhance their readiness regarding procurement procedures**; this could be: Establishing agreements for the preapproval of providers, using the experience of this operations, the GRCS can reach out to the providers utilised during the floods operation, as they are now IFRC procedures.
- Continued **training for volunteers** in particular in damage and needs assessment, FA and PFA, and CVA.
- **Integrate translation costs** in the budget in future DREF operation to ease the burden on the DM team of the NS.
- The Review validated the findings and **priorities to address under the PER Plan of Action** of the NS: procurement, cash readiness, increased training in technical areas. Hence, the GRCS should continue to prioritize work in these areas.
- In relation to the operation to respond to demonstrations, the NS with support from Movement partners in the region should **continue the collaboration and technical support with the Ukrainian RC** and other NS. This peer support was noteworthy and a key experience to continue building upon.
- Consider in future DREF operation the **integration of an RDRT for the length of the operation** to support the DM unit of the GRCS.

1. Floods:

- Integrate continuous assessments to ensure alignment of assistance and needs.
- For future planning, reviewed planned NFI package aligns with the size of families and allow for multifamily households
- Integrate cash feasibility study for next emergency
- Integrate PDM as a standard process for operations in the GRCS

2. Demonstrations:

- Integrate scenario and contingency plan within the NS response plan for civil unrest demonstrations including training for volunteers
- Identify clear triggers for when to engage on similar situations
- Establish and disseminate Security plan for civil unrest or
- Communications plan (talking points, social media guidelines for staff and volunteers,
- Ensure follow-up call with Ukrainian RC through ICRC and IFRC offices to maintain peer support.
- For 2020 through the next FA training in Batumi branch (Danish RC) integrate space for experience sharing with branch volunteers on the demonstrations experience.