



Georgia Red Cross Society (GRCS) team on site of the disaster. Photo credit: GRCS

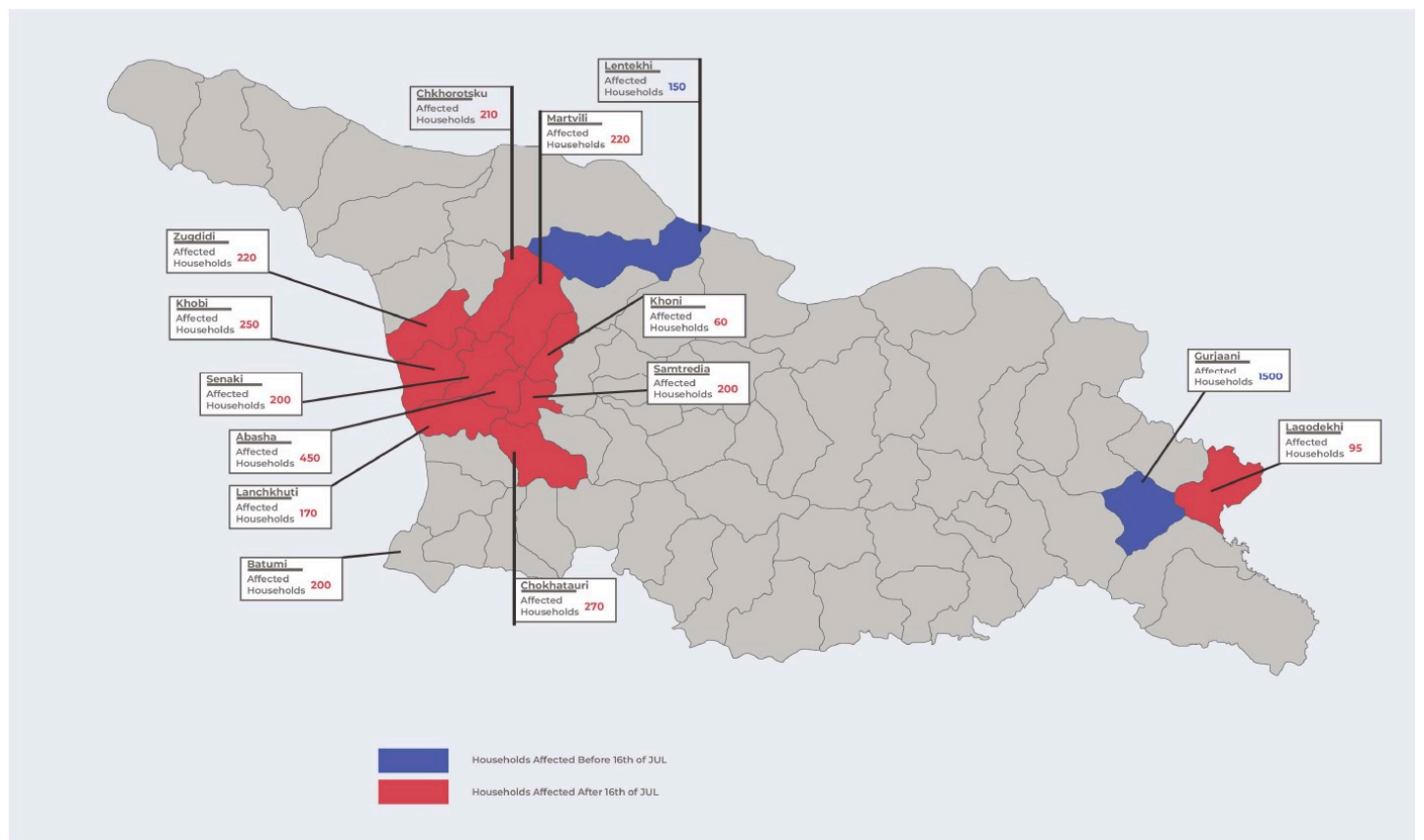
Appeal: MDRGE017	Total DREF Allocation: CHF 500,000	Crisis Category: Yellow	Hazard: Flood
Glide Number: FF-2023-000107-GEO	People Affected: 350,000 people	People Targeted: 9,800 people	
Event Onset: Sudden	Operation Start Date: 29-06-2023	Operational End Date: 31-12-2023	Total Operating Timeframe: 6 months

Targeted Areas:

Adjara Aut. Rep., Guria, Imereti, Kakheti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo (lower) Svaneti, Samergelo and Zemo (upper) Svaneti

The major donors and partners of the IFRC-DREF include the Red Cross Societies and governments of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, China, Czech Republic, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Malta, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, and the Netherlands, as well as DG ECHO, Mondelez Foundation, and other corporate and private donors. The IFRC, on behalf of the National Society, would like to extend to all for their generous contributions.

Description of the Event



Date of event

16-07-2023

What happened, where and when?

Starting on 16 June 2023, a month-long series of sporadic storms, heavy rainfall, and flash floods heavily impacted 15 municipalities across six regions of Georgia. The storm-affected regions span a variety of landscapes, from seaside urban areas to high mountainous rural settlements. The disaster significantly affected both rural and urban areas, causing extensive damage to agriculture, residential properties, and infrastructure.

In rural areas, the agricultural sector experienced bigger losses, with floods damaging fields, destroying crops, and killing livestock. Agriculture is a crucial source of subsistence and income for most households in the affected regions. Additionally, residential houses suffered significant damage to roofs and ground floors, which typically serve as the main living and storage areas. Media footage depicted floodwaters reaching up to one meter high in several municipalities, swamping the rooms, and damaging furniture and electronics, particularly in the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region.

Urban areas also experienced severe disruptions due to the heavy rainfall, with central streets and ground floors of buildings flooding. Transportation and mobility were heavily impacted, with roads destroyed, fallen trees blocking routes, and vital infrastructure such as bridges and power transmission towers damaged. Some municipalities endured gas and electricity outages for more than a day, and the Kutaisi International Airport was forced to suspend operations for several hours.

Georgia's lower-middle-income status made the impact of the disaster even worse. According to national statistics, one in five people who live in rural areas are below the poverty line, making these communities especially vulnerable to disasters of such nature. Additionally, disparities in access to public infrastructure and services between rural and urban areas make recovery efforts more complicated, especially in remote and mountainous regions.

The early-recovery process required comprehensive efforts to address immediate needs, including shelter, clean water, food, and medical assistance. Repairing and rebuilding damaged infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, was crucial for restoring connectivity and facilitating economic recovery. Long-term efforts were required to support the agricultural sector and assist affected households in

rebuilding their livelihoods through financial and agricultural assistance. This required collaboration between the authorities, humanitarian organizations, and local communities. In the first days of the disaster, the Government of Georgia established a special commission to assess the damage and coordinate recovery efforts across the affected regions. The Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, along with regional and local municipalities, took over the responsibility of cleaning the affected areas and restoring damaged areas and infrastructure.

Recognizing the significant impact on livelihoods and the focus of public authorities on infrastructural recovery, the Georgian Red Cross Society (GRCS) stepped in to provide Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) to 2,800 households in the affected regions, ensuring that the most vulnerable people received essential support to cover the costs for the most essential needs in their households.



Photo taken by GRCS volunteer showing the impact of the hail in center of Gurjaani

Scope and Scale

A series of storms and flash floods in 15 municipalities of the six regions affected more than 350,000 individuals in total and left about 100,000 people in need of essential livelihood support. The disaster impacted multiple areas in all six regions, affecting both urban and rural settlements: Batumi city/municipality was affected in Adjara Autonomous Republic (A/R); Chokhatauri and Lanchkhuti municipalities in Guria Region; Lentekhi municipality in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti Region; Gurjaani Municipality in Kakheti Region; Kutaisi, Samtredia and Khoni Municipalities in Imereti Region; Abasha, Zugdidi, Martvili, Senaki, Chkhorotsku and Khobi municipalities in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region. Out of the 15 municipalities, the storms recurrently affected Lentekhi and Gurjaani municipalities in June and July 2023.

The 2023 floods in Georgia stand out as an unprecedented event, setting it apart from the typical seasonal disasters experienced in the region. Unlike floods recorded during previous flood seasons, the 2023 floods showcased an expanded magnitude and severity, affecting more regions and people at once than ever before. This unprecedented nature of the 2023 floods underlined the necessity for a more thorough examination of its causes and implications and underscored the importance of implementing adaptive and resilient measures to confront such unusual and extreme events in the future. Georgia's population and economy have been vulnerable to recurring flooding and floods in the past decades. Flooding also has compounding effects in Georgia via its impact on landslides and mudflows. The Georgian National Environmental Agency estimates that more than 70 percent of the territory lies in geological disaster risk zones.

The disaster had a detrimental, two-fold impact on the local population's livelihoods by 1) significantly worsening people's living conditions by damaging the furniture, household electronics, and food and hygiene supplies usually stored on the ground floors of the

residential houses and 2) destroying agricultural plots in the rural area, that are often the only source of subsistence to the families. Furthermore, local small shops and agricultural activities were also destroyed, further compounding the impact on the local population's livelihoods as they lost access to basic livelihoods in enclosed areas of their residences. As a result, many families faced the need to restore and repurchase their damaged household items and supplies. At the same time, their economic conditions were significantly worsened due to the effects of the flooding, including disrupted agricultural activities. This put a serious strain on an average, lower-middle income household budget and an incomparable economic burden on socially vulnerable families.

Source Information

Source Name	Source Link
1. National Media Footage of the Flood Effects in the Regions of Western Georgia	https://mtavari.tv/news/130253-stikia-senakshi-daitbora-satskhovrebeli-sakhlebi
2. National Media Footage of the Flood Effects in the Regions of Western Georgia	https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32461061.html
3. National Media Footage of the Flood Effects in the Regions of Western Georgia	https://1tv.ge/video/stiqia-dasavlet-saqartveloshi-2/

National Society Actions

Have the National Society conducted any intervention additionally to those part of this DREF Operation?	No
Please provide a brief description of those additional activities	-

IFRC Network Actions Related To The Current Event

Secretariat	<p>The IFRC provided operational support and technical expertise necessary for successful fundraising and implementation of the current DREF operation through its South Caucasus Country Cluster Delegation. The delegation operates from Tbilisi, Georgia and comprises six international staff and four local staff: Head of Delegation, Programme Coordinator, Community Engagement & Accountability (CEA) Delegate, Cash & Voucher Assistance (CVA) Delegate, Education in Emergencies Delegate, Disaster Management Delegate, Informational Management Senior Officer, Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER) Senior Officer, Health Officer, Finance Manager, and Finance & Admin Officer.</p> <p>IFRC focuses on Membership Coordination, National Society Development (NSD), and providing technical and financial support to the GRCS' emergency and disaster responses through its DREF and Emergency Appeal funding mechanisms. National Society Development is prioritized by Partnership Development and Resource Mobilization, and capacity building in the framework of Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response (PER approach).</p>
Participating National Societies	<p>Swiss Red Cross supports the Georgia Red Cross with technical and programming advice, including sharing best practices for piloting a different approach to Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) tailored to the country's context.</p> <p>Austrian Red Cross Society supported GRCS with the Simplified Early Actions Protocol (EAP) Feasibility Study. This study contributed to revisiting the initial plans of GRCS to proceed with the EAP wider implementation as an exit strategy of the DREF Operation.</p>

Based on the findings of the study, due to the lack of necessary technical settings in the country, contingency planning is more feasible for the preceding.

ICRC Actions Related To The Current Event

ICRC was not involved in the response. It is noteworthy that ICRC has been present in Georgia, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia since 1992. Currently, the office comprises of 89 staff members, of which 74 are national (Residents) and 15 internationals (Mobile).

Other Actors Actions Related To The Current Event

Government has requested international assistance	No
National authorities	The heavy rain in the affected regions has prompted local authorities to prioritize the cleaning of the area and the pumping of water from the house basements. The local authorities focused on addressing the immediate need to repair infrastructure, remove water and mitigate further damage caused by the flooding.
UN or other actors	No response has been identified from any of the UN agencies present in Georgia.

Needs (Gaps) Identified



Shelter Housing And Settlements

The heavy flooding severely affected the living conditions in residential houses, causing significant damage to roofs and ground floors. These areas are often used for storing household electronics and long-term supplies of food and hygiene items. In rural and semi-rural settlements, most residential houses are built close to the ground, with the first floors serving as the main residential and storage areas.



Livelihoods And Basic Needs

According to World Bank data, Georgia is a lower-middle-income country. Data from the National Statistics Agency of Georgia shows that every fifth person residing in the rural area is under the poverty line. The already existing vulnerability of this segment was further increased due to the disaster's negative effect on their livelihoods. GRCS needs assessment demonstrated that the impact on houses and agriculture was substantial, with 27 per cent of the surveyed reporting home destruction and 82 percent engaged in agricultural activities facing complete or severe damage.



Multi purpose cash grants

In early October, the GRCS conducted a comprehensive survey to validate the initial rapid assessment findings and proposed modality, deploying 16 trained volunteers in collaboration with the IFRC. Questionnaires were distributed through GRCS branches to 371 individuals in various affected regions. The survey aimed to identify the top three priority needs post-disaster. The majority (80 per cent) emphasized the need for financial assistance, followed by food aid (49 per cent) and physical/medical care (27 per cent). The assessment highlighted vulnerable groups, with 65 per cent identifying the elderly living alone. The findings validated initial assessments and affirmed the proposed modality for effective disaster response.



Health

In the initial phase of the disaster response, GRCS volunteers recorded the need and requests for psycho-social support services within the affected people. The need for physical/medical care was later reconfirmed by 27 percent of the surveyed within the needs assessment.



Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

During the rapid needs assessment, GRCS volunteers identified a very high likelihood of waterborne disease risks.

Operational Strategy

Overall objective of the operation

The overall objective of the operation was to provide livelihoods and basic needs emergency assistance to the people affected by the flash floods through a Cash and Voucher Assistance modality. The operation covered 9,800 people (2,800 households) in 10 municipalities in six country regions. All targeted households received the assistance.

Operation strategy rationale

The response strategy implemented by the GRCS aimed to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable households affected by the disaster in an efficient, appropriate, and dignified manner. The strategy focused on two main components: the provision of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) to enable people to purchase essential items and cover their immediate needs in a dignified manner, and addressing psychosocial, health, and hygiene risks arising as a consequence of the disaster.

Key Points Outlining the Strategy

Initial Impact Assessment: Local authorities conducted an initial impact assessment, triggering the expansion of the operation due to additional flash rainfall on 16 July, 2023. The severity of the disaster surpassed expectations, overwhelming the affected population and local authorities. Previous disaster records indicated that the most severe floods in the past 30 years affected about 2,000 people at once and mostly focused on individual regions/areas, whereas the current flood affected 350,000 individuals. Since local authorities primarily focused on rehabilitating damaged infrastructure, the GRCS addressed humanitarian needs, leading to the expansion and extension of the response.

Finalization of Assessments, Plans, and Design: GRCS local branches actively coordinated with the local authorities to stay alert about the specific damages and required assistance. Lists of targeted individuals were finalized in coordination with the authorities to ensure focused, transparent, and effective relief efforts.

Rapid Assessment for Markets (RAM): Despite operational challenges hindering a comprehensive market assessment, the GRCS incorporated specific inquiries into the needs assessment exercise, focusing on people's market access, product availability, and the use of financial assistance. While 49 per cent reported changes in the quality, quantity, or price of regularly purchased products after the disaster, 97 per cent claimed not to have received financial aid from any organization. However, 86 percent expressed confidence in utilizing financial assistance in the markets if received. Interviews by the GRCS project team with nationwide chain markets revealed the active and efficient functioning of market branches in disaster areas, with no reported product supply issues. Despite the difficulties in implementing a thorough market assessment, the above-mentioned efforts to understand the market condition have demonstrated that financial assistance can address the needs of the affected population by their access to the market.

Provision of Psychosocial Support (PSS), Health, and Hygiene Promotion: In-person consultations and targeted messages were offered to provide emotional support and strengthen coping mechanisms. Community engagement activities aimed to mitigate health and hygiene risks post-flooding. At the beginning of the response, GRCS distributed educational materials on waterborne disease prevention to affected communities. Additionally, two MHPSS training sessions were conducted to enhance the PSS capacity of GRCS volunteers, with 30 volunteers trained.

Response Analysis and Coordination: Throughout the duration of the disaster, GRCS upheld coordination and communication with its branches and local municipalities in the affected region. Following a thorough needs assessment analysis and discussions with chain market representatives, it was concluded that the proposed unconditional, restricted e-voucher modality was suitable. Additionally, it was identified that PSS (Psychosocial Support) and in-kind hygiene support would serve as complementary measures to address the needs in the area. As part of the response analysis, GRCS strategically targeted the most affected vulnerable households for CVA in ten



affected districts out of the 15, coordinating closely with local authorities to prevent duplication with existing support.

Procurement of Financial Service Provider: A financial service provider was solicited to implement the e-voucher modality (prepaid bank card to redeem from the selected markets). The contracting of a Financial Service Provider (FSP) is a critical step for the GRCS in the distribution of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during the DREF operation. Considering Georgia's income tax regulations and leveraging past experiences, including responses to the Tbilisi flood in 2015 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, GRCS applied the e-voucher (pre-paid bank card) modality to support flood-affected individuals. Lacking an active FSP agreement, GRCS initiated discussions with potential providers, leading to a partnership with TBC Bank. In addition, restricted bank cards required official approval from the National Bank of Georgia, aligning with the country's banking legislation. Successfully completing the approval and FSP contracting processes in October and November, GRCS ordered 2,800 cards for distribution.

Determining the Assistance Amount: GRCS provided GEL 350 (CHF 126) per household with prepaid bank cards, covering 40 percent of the total basket cost, primarily for household food expenses.

Previous experience and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): GRCS leveraged its experience in implementing CVA, including a previous operation in response to the Tbilisi flood in 2015 and the CVA SOP developed in 2019, which was adapted/updated to guide CVA implementation in emergencies.

Monitoring and Evaluation: A Monitoring and Evaluation package was designed at the beginning of the operation, together with the detailed Plan of Action, to provide the basis for regular data collection and inform the course of implementation. Three joint monitoring visits by IFRC and GRCS assessed the GRCS preparations for the operation implementation, compliance with the best practices, and requirements of assistance distribution. GRCS commissioned a PDM report to measure the satisfaction level, evaluate the perceived quality of support provided, and gather feedback for future operations. Three joint IFRC and GRCS led focus group discussions and gathered more in-depth insights from the assisted people to validate the findings of the PDM and inform the future design of the modality.

Lessons Learned Workshop: A workshop evaluated the operation's effectiveness and efficiency. The workshop was completed with sessions on simplified early action protocols aiming to enhance the understanding of the necessity of preparedness activities, including the simplified early action protocols, for communities recurrently affected by the floods.

Community Engagement and Accountability: The DREF operation design was informed by a needs assessment and results of the damage evaluation conducted by the local authorities at the onset of the disaster. GRCS ensured the communities were informed about the distribution details and debit card usage details through proactive information dissemination, including direct outreach to the people assisted. The GRCS distribution team addressed feedback and inquiries at the distribution sites. Additionally, detailed instructions on card usage and the GRCS helpline number were visibly placed in each sealed envelope, containing the debit cards. A post-distribution monitoring survey and focus group discussions helped further record the community feedback on the operation.

The exit strategy for the DREF Operation was discussed as part of the lessons learned workshop. It included a contemplation on transitioning from short-term emergency relief to long-term recovery and resilience-building programs. Development of Early Action Protocols (EAP) for flood-prone regions was not feasible in the coming two years time as the meteorological forecasting system is not fully capable of producing forecasts with the required accuracy. Consequently, GRCS decided that Contingency Plans will be used to cover similar scenarios at the local (municipality) level, with active involvement from meteorological services and local communities in risk adaptation planning. Gurjjani and Senaki municipalities are identified as areas most prone to flash floods. Two drafts of a plan were developed for these municipalities. The drafts will be revised by local authorities and communities in both locations.

Targeting Strategy

Who was targeted by this operation?

Almost 350,000 people were affected by the disaster in 15 municipal districts in six regions. In close coordination with local authorities, GRCS targeted ten municipal districts to avoid duplication of assistance with the five regions already supported by the local authorities. GRCS' local branches and local authorities worked together to create the beneficiary lists by using local authorities' databases and conducting door-to-door visits.

Explain the selection criteria for the targeted population

The results of the needs assessment revealed that the disaster mainly affected people's houses and agricultural fields, which are often their only source of income. Almost 27 per cent of the surveyed people indicated damage to their houses, and 50 per cent specified severe damage. The affected reported more severe disruption of their agricultural production activities with 82 per cent of the people



engaged in agricultural production reporting either complete or severe damage of their plots and prospective harvest by the disaster.

The assessment revealed that the affected individuals belong to economically and demographically vulnerable groups who are primarily reliant on agriculture for their survival. This group mainly comprises older individuals, with 44 per cent of those surveyed being over 60 years old, with an average monthly household expenditure of approximately GEL 650 (CHF 219).

In consultation with local branches and local authorities, the operations team decided to use the combination of two following criteria to select the recipients: 1) Households below the poverty line who are already registered in the local authority database. These people also meet other vulnerability criteria such as large household size, disability, older people group, and others; and 2) households that have suffered severe damage to their property (50 per cent or more) due to a disaster.

Total Targeted Population

Women	5,096	Rural	-
Girls (under 18)	-	Urban	-
Men	4,704	People with disabilities (estimated)	2.7%
Boys (under 18)	-		
Total targeted population	9,800		

Risk and Security Considerations

Please indicate about potential operation risk for this operations and mitigation actions

Risk	Mitigation action
Programmatic: Security risks of GRCS staff and volunteers.	The number of people who have key information was limited. Staff who know the local area were involved; and adequate training about activity implementation was provided. Intensive communication with national and local authorities and stakeholders was conducted. It was ensured that beneficiary targeting was carried out in a transparent and participatory way, with a complaint and feedback mechanism designed and implemented to allow beneficiaries to complain in a peaceful way.
Programmatic: Card usage technical problems can result from a lack of information, such as blocked cards due to incorrect PIN codes, stolen cards, damaged cards, unintended use, balance checks, and others.	A comprehensive communication plan and well-functioning complaint and feedback mechanism was established.
Organizational: Reputational risks.	Well-designed communication plan was put in place.
Contextual: 1. Beneficiary transportation risks. 2. Risk of another disaster (rain, flood, etc).	1. Recipients who need transportation support for shopping/card collection were identified and branch capacity used for this support. 2. Weather conditions were checked before the distribution.

Has the child safeguarding risk analysis assessment been completed?

No



Implementation



Multi Purpose Cash

Budget: CHF 388,406

Targeted Persons: 9,800

Assisted Persons: 9,800

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
% of people reporting that the assistance was delivered in a safe, accessible, accountable, and participatory manner	85	98
% of households receiving CVA support that report being able to sufficiently meet their basic needs	85	96
Number of people supported with voucher	9,800	9,800
Number of households supported with vouchers	2,800	2,800

Narrative description of achievements

Targeting, registration, selection, verification: Collaborating with local branches, beneficiary lists were created through door-to-door visits and database utilization, ensuring a targeted and efficient response. Criteria for beneficiary selection included severe property damage and households under the poverty line, considering additional demographic factors. Beneficiary registration and verification processes were conducted through household visits, addressing data cleaning and duplication. The GRCS CVA team's field visit in November included consultations with authorities and community leaders, completing missing data and verification visits. The final beneficiary list, encompassing various regions, was developed through this comprehensive process.

Distribution: IFRC CVA delegate assisted GRCS in developing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to manage the card distribution process. Tailored for efficiency and compliance, the SOP covers crucial aspects such as card management and ensuring basic standards are met throughout the distribution process. prior to the distributions, the GRCS conducted field visits to assess capacity and monitor distribution sites, leading to the formulation of a detailed distribution plan. GRCS established two teams with specific roles for staff and volunteers, aiming to distribute around 300 cards daily during the three-week timeline in November and December. Most cards were successfully distributed according to the schedule, and the remaining uncollected cards were to be distributed in a timely thanks to the outreach activities done by GRCS's local level presence.

Reconciliation: This is one cross-check activity done after the distribution to ensure that the distribution and entitlements went as planned. Every day after each cycle of the distribution, GRCS's finance team reviewed and reconciled the card distribution numbers, POS slips of the cards activated using the POS device, and the balances loaded with the online bank transaction reports.

Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM): GRCS conducted a post-distribution monitoring (PDM) activity between 12-24 January 2024, following the successful completion of most card distributions by December 2023. The PDM aimed to assess the e-voucher modality's effectiveness and scrutinize the selection, registration, and distribution processes. The sample size included 310 CVA recipients from ten municipalities, with a hybrid methodology involving outbound calls (202 people) and in-person surveys (108 people) through household visits. Additionally, three focus group discussions enriched the PDM findings, providing qualitative insights and PDM quantitative data. Demographic data revealed a balanced gender distribution and varying age groups. Key findings emphasized the project's success, with high satisfaction levels (98 percent) and positive feedback on information sufficiency, impact on needs, assistance usage for food, and preference for similar assistance methods. Minor concerns were reported by three people, out of which two reported dissatisfaction with waiting time, and one person reported distance-related difficulties. These assessment findings underscore the project's efficacy in meeting beneficiary needs while maintaining high satisfaction among the assisted.

Preparedness and Lessons Learned Workshop

From 29-31 January 2024, the GRCS hosted a three-day workshop on lessons learned, preparedness, and contingency planning. Two



workshop days were dedicated to the recently implemented CVA project within the DREF operation. All participants involved in the project, including staff, volunteers, local branch members, and several municipality representatives, were invited to participate in the workshop.

The workshop structured the analysis of the CVA DREF operation under three main categories: Communication and Coordination, Community Engagement and Accountability, and Overall Operational Capacity. The discussions covered the entire project life cycle, delving into processes such as assessment, response analysis, planning, implementation, distribution, and monitoring.

Lessons Learnt

- CVA effectiveness and preparedness: It was noted that both GRCS and affected community members recognized the effectiveness and efficiency of the CVA modality. To be well-prepared for future disasters and to have full-fledged in-house CVA expertise, GRCS will scale up its CVA capacity by following the ongoing CVA Preparedness process.
- Coordination with local authorities and local-level NS capacity: The workshop also noted the necessity of continuous coordination with municipalities and the establishment of the GRCS branches in locations without branches.
- Infrastructure and database development: The lack of updated vulnerable lists posed a challenge/delay in developing the beneficiary lists. It was noted that GRCS local branches need to take action to develop their own database for vulnerable community members, which can ease the process of beneficiary selection in times of crisis. Actions are needed to invest in infrastructure and volunteer capacity to achieve this goal.
- Advocacy for Legal Flexibility: The approval process from the National Bank of Georgia for implementing this e-voucher modality posed a delay. It was also noted that taxation regulation in the country hinders the implementation of the direct cash assistance modalities considering future crises/disasters. Actions are recommended to advocate the CVA at national and regional levels, urging the government to provide legal flexibility for cash and voucher assistance during emergencies.
- Technical staff capacity: IFRC technically supported the conduct of the focus group discussions. It was noted that this missing capacity should be met by extending this support with the participation of the GRCS staff in relevant technical training.

Challenges

Despite successfully completing the Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) modality during DREF operation, the GRCS encountered several challenges throughout the implementation process, such as:

- The absence of a local branch database and bureaucratic challenges while collaborating with local governments on the development and verification of the beneficiary lists caused certain delays in project execution compared to the planned timeline.
- Challenges and extended waiting times for government approval of the planned intervention modality resulted in delays in the FSP procurement process (approval from the National Bank of Georgia).
- These delays in the implementation created an information gap between the registration and distribution dates, leaving community members uninformed about the process.

Overall operation-related challenges

- Dealing with multiple disasters recurring in the same geographical area during the project implementation posed a significant challenge.
- The lack of a GRCS office in some disaster-affected areas has led to a shift of capacity from one region to another, making it challenging to deploy resources effectively in a timely manner.
- Participants in the workshop indicated that more robust communication and coordination between the GRCS HQ and local branches may have improved the project's implementation.
- The inability to access disaster regions in a timely manner due to damaged infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and power outages, created logistical challenges. This is an external challenge but is considered in contingency and preparedness sessions.
- Insufficient numbers of trained volunteers familiar with the specifics of implementing the applied CVA method (E-Voucher modality) impacted the execution of various project activities.
- Limited financial, human resources, and technical capacity restricted the project's ability to cover a larger population.

Taking preventive measures to mitigate these challenges is crucial for improving future project implementations and ensuring more effective and timely responses to community needs.



Health

Budget: CHF 4,846

Targeted Persons: 3,030

Assisted Persons: 1,935



Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
% of people reporting that the assistance improved the psychosocial conditions and consequences of the disaster	85	0
% of people reporting that the assistance supported them in mitigating health and hygiene risks	85	0
Number of people are covered by RCCE	3,000	1,935
Number of GRCS volunteers trained in PFA and hygiene promotion	30	30

Narrative description of achievements

- In June 2023, ten target branches received online training on Water, Sanitation, Hygiene, and Waterborne diseases and their prevention. This was followed by community outreach activities focusing on information dissemination at the local level on the importance of WASH and waterborne disease prevention. During the first months of the response, 553 households in the Gurjaani and Lentekhi municipalities were covered with educational and informational materials.
- 2 MHPSS trainings were conducted for 30 GRCS staff and volunteers in June and August 2023. Trained volunteers provided Psychological First Aid to those affected by floods and other mudslide populations.

Lessons Learnt

- In light of the challenges related to the CVA focus, it has been noted that it is important that the resources and capacities are planned with an equal attention to all sector priorities, so that other sectors do not exhaust the capacities to complete other sector-related activities properly. This is particularly related to the challenges faced with conducting appropriate surveys on the satisfaction, effectiveness and efficiency with the assistance related to health, hygiene and MHPSS assistance.

Challenges

- The Health and hygiene promotion, including the MHPSS activities, were initiated immediately after the onset of the response. This was followed by the operational focus on cash and voucher assistance, which was concluded with the post-distribution monitoring (PDM) in January 2024. Since the CVA intervention was first of its kind implemented by the GRCS, the CVA intervention exhausted the capacities of the GRCS, and made it difficult to conclude the health and hygiene promotion and the MHPSS activities with a post-distribution monitoring exercise.



Community Engagement And Accountability

Budget: CHF 10,064

Targeted Persons: 360

Assisted Persons: 1,935

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
% of people satisfied with the amount of information shared before receiving voucher assistance	85	99
% of people reporting satisfaction with vouchers support	85	96

Narrative description of achievements

A participatory needs assessment conducted by GRCS played a crucial role in understanding the needs, priorities, preferences, and market access of the affected people, particularly in the context of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA). Over 97 percent of those surveyed indicated they had not received any financial assistance from other sources, with almost 86 percent expressing interest in receiving assistance to meet their basic needs through market transactions.

In terms of community engagement:

- General Meetings Participation: 96 percent of those surveyed through a needs assessment, specified their participation in general meetings to support decision-making processes.
- Information Needs: Approximately 53 percent expressed the need for more information about the risks and protective measures related to disasters.

In the realm of information provision:

- Phone Calls: GRCS conducted individual phone calls to CVA recipients, providing detailed information about the CVA intervention, including assistance details, transfer processes, card collection, and spending guidelines.
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): GRCS prepared a concise FAQ document for field colleagues and circulated it to relevant local authorities, branches, volunteers, and other humanitarian actors. The document was also shared with GRCS Hotline operators in advance of distributions.
- Booklet: A two-page booklet offering useful information on card usage was developed and included in the card distribution envelopes.

Regarding complaint and feedback channels:

- Helpline: GRCS maintained a well-structured helpline, which was already operational during previous crises. The hotline, featuring five operators proficient in three languages, served between 10:00 and 18:00 on working days. The helpline number was prominently placed in the bank card design and communicated during information phone calls.

Local capacity building:

- GRCS local branches, volunteers, and local government were briefed on how to guide people to the GRCS helpline or provide information from the FAQ in response to information requests.

Community insights on operations' effectiveness:

- To gather the feedback of the people assisted following the distributions, GRCS employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, combining a post-distribution monitoring survey with the findings of the three focus group discussions. The PDM reached a representative distribution of affected households across various municipalities, with a total outreach of 344 interviews, including 202 hotlines and 108 home visits. This distribution ensures a broad representation of affected communities in the evaluation.

Focus Group Discussions:

- Between 23 and 25 January, GRCS, with technical support from IFRC, conducted three focus group discussions with community representatives and beneficiaries, totaling 32 people (14 men and 18 women). These discussions were held in the target locations of the operation, specifically in Gurjjani, Kutaisi, and Senaki. During the discussions, GRCS talked with the participants about the beneficiary selection process, the use of TBC cards, impact, and accountability. Overall, people provided positive feedback regarding the selection process and TBC card modality. However, some issues were raised during the discussion regarding communication, which were addressed and will be improved upon in future operations as lessons learned.

Lessons Learnt

- The emphasis on post-distribution monitoring surveys underscores the importance of feedback mechanisms in assessing the effectiveness of aid delivery and identifying areas for improvement. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are crucial for learning and adapting responses based on real-time outcomes. In terms of the PDM conducted, a greater focus was placed on monitoring the effectiveness of the CVA component, leading to the less capacity to focus on M&E activities for other components such as PSS. In the future, a dedicated approach to measure PSS activities, with an emphasis on qualitative measures, will be applied.
- The engagement of volunteers from the affected regions in the training and implementation phases reinforces the importance of involving communities in their recovery process. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that interventions are aligned with the actual needs of the targeted people.

Challenges

- The lack of a database for local branches and bureaucratic hurdles in cooperation with local authorities led to some delays in the implementation related to the scheduled timeline.
- There's an indication that not all beneficiaries were aware of how to provide feedback or seek assistance if they encountered problems with the aid received.



• The IFRC monitoring visit to a card distribution site in Lagodekhi on 6 December 2023 observed a trending lack of information among the assisted people about the purpose of the assistance and selection criteria. While assisted people demonstrated their satisfaction with the instructions provided by the GRCS team on the spot about the distribution timeline, waiting line management, and card usage instructions, many had questions about the selection process and the objective of the assistance. These observations call for amplifying proactive community outreach efforts with clear and concise communication points that highlight the purpose of the assistance and the selection criteria. These key messages should be disseminated prior to the distribution through various channels, such as community meetings, informational material, social media platforms, and channels preferred by the affected people, in particular older people. Additionally, training should be provided to distribution teams to ensure they are equipped to address questions about selection criteria confidently.



Secretariat Services

Budget: CHF 17,706

Targeted Persons: 100

Assisted Persons: 115

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
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Narrative description of achievements

The IFRC provided technical support throughout the entire operation. This support included conducting a needs assessment, organizing community engagement meetings, establishing a CVA modality in the response, conducting a visibility study for simplified early action protocols, and monitoring post-distribution. IFRC SSC staff provided technical support and directly participated in these activities.

Throughout the process, the IFRC CVA delegate collaborated closely with the GRCS project manager and CVA officer, fulfilling the technical support and guidance aspects as part of his role. To streamline the process, the IFRC CVA delegate aided in acquiring the essential tools from the CIE toolkit (Cash in the Emergency toolkit) and supported their adaptation to fit the Georgian context. This involved contributing/supporting the development of the activity plan, coordinating cash activities with other humanitarian actors, conducting risk assessments and analyses, preparing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for distribution, conducting needs assessments, and developing questionnaires for various exercises such as Post-distribution monitoring (PDMs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), market assessments, etc.

A Monitoring and Evaluation package was designed at the beginning of the operation, together with the detailed Plan of Action, to provide the basis for regular data collection and inform the course of implementation. Three Joint monitoring visits by IFRC and GRCS assessed the GRCS preparations for the operation implementation, compliance with the best practices, and requirements of assistance distribution.

The number of assisted people reflects the number of staff and volunteers who received tailored support from IFRC throughout the operation. This includes:

- 15 GRCS staff members
- 100 volunteers involved in the operation, including 30 volunteers supported through the training program reported under National Society Strengthening

Challenges

- Implementing CVA as a new form of assistance presented significant challenges in ensuring compliance with national legislation and regulations. Navigating this complex legal landscape required diligent research, stakeholder engagement, and often innovative problem-solving.
- Encouraging almost every employee at GRCS HQ to participate in the operation highlighted the difficulty of guaranteeing sufficient internal resources and preparedness for an operation of this scale. Efficient resource management and personnel collaboration were necessary to balance the demands of the CVA intervention with the current operations.
- Introducing the CVA modality brought operational challenges related to the privacy of the assisted people, financial transparency, and the effective delivery of assistance to the forefront. Addressing these challenges demands innovative approaches and a willingness to adapt based on feedback and emerging best practices.
- During the lessons learned workshop, it was emphasized that proper preparation is necessary, which includes discussions and meetings



at the national level. Any initiatives must comply with the existing laws and operational principles. It is essential to involve stakeholders from various sectors early on to minimize potential obstacles and ensure that the operation is well-informed and compliant.



Budget: CHF 78,979

Targeted Persons: 100

Assisted Persons: 40

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
Number of lessons learned workshop conducted	1	1
Number of GRCS volunteers involved in the response	100	100
Number of GRCS staff involved in the response	5	15

Narrative description of achievements

Supported by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Georgia Red Cross Society (GRCS) initiated a training program to improve the abilities and preparedness of volunteers in areas affected by flooding. These training workshops had two main goals: first, they trained volunteers in performing post-distribution monitoring surveys, and second, they provided them with the tools and methodology needed to complete comprehensive needs assessments. 30 volunteers and 10 staff members participated in this programme and received important knowledge and skills. In addition to preparing the volunteers for the immediate responsibilities, this effort advanced the larger objective of strengthening the GRCS's disaster response capabilities by guaranteeing a reserve of skilled workers ready to deploy in the event of future emergencies.

The distribution of Cash and Voucher Assistance in ten Georgian communities was a significant achievement. Through the efficient use of this modality, the GRCS showed that it was capable of creativity and adaptation, in addition to offering the impacted populations relevant help.

- With a significant gap since their last CVA project and the ongoing CVA capacity-building process, GRCS has demonstrated substantial progress in advancing the national society by adopting CVA as a model and successfully hosting an impactful project. The active involvement of GRCS' key operational departments, such as disaster management, finance, logistics, legal, etc., and their flexibility to find innovative solutions were the key factors behind the successful conclusion of this CVA Project.
- Indeed, finance and logistics play crucial roles in ensuring the smooth implementation of CVA, adhering to both IFRC and NS financial rules and logistics requirements. Representatives from the finance department actively participated in the physical card distribution process across all locations and ensured the activation of the cards. Meanwhile, the logistics departments demonstrated commendable performance by initiating the procurement process of the financial service provider to establish a local payment solution. This novel and challenging process significantly enhanced the departments' understanding of the CVA concept.
- The encashment process was effectively carried out across ten branches with the active involvement of GRCS Branch Development representatives. They organized and facilitated smooth communication and coordination among branch staff and volunteers. Additionally, the participation of local authorities was crucial, ensuring thorough cross-checking of beneficiary lists and fostering strong coordination among key stakeholders at the local level.
- Given the sensitive nature of handling beneficiary data, robust information management and data protection measures were essential. Representatives from the GRCS IT and IM departments ensured that all related procedures and requirements were meticulously implemented and adhered to.
- Recognizing the importance of capacity development, GRCS adopted a holistic approach to strengthen capacities not only at the headquarters level but also within branch staff and volunteers. This approach extended beyond branches directly involved in CVA implementation to neighboring branches, enhancing overall operational readiness and effectiveness.
- The introduction of this new CVA approach within GRCS necessitated significant involvement from high-level management throughout the entire implementation process. This included conducting various types of high-level meetings, such as those with governmental structures, local and regional authorities, and other key stakeholders. These engagements played a crucial role in ensuring the seamless implementation of the entire operation, including the synchronization of the country's legislative procedures with the operational framework.



Challenges

- The adoption of the CVA modality by GRCS necessitated extensive preparation, involving numerous national meetings and discussions. These deliberations were pivotal in aligning GRCS operational plans with existing national laws and regulations, ensuring that the strategy was innovative yet compliant. Government entities, regulatory bodies, and partner organizations actively engaged stakeholders in this process, addressing various challenges such as beneficiary privacy, financial transparency, and regulatory adherence.



Financial Report

DREF Operation

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2023/6-2024/8	Operation	MDRGE017
Budget Timeframe	2023/6-12	Budget	APPROVED

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Prepared on 02/Dec/2024

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRGE017 - Georgia - Flash Floods

Operating Timeframe: 29 Jun 2023 to 31 Dec 2023

I. Summary

Opening Balance	0
Funds & Other Income	500,000
DREF Response Pillar	500,000
Expenditure	-491,740
Closing Balance	8,260

II. Expenditure by planned operations / enabling approaches

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
PO01 - Shelter and Basic Household Items			0
PO02 - Livelihoods			0
PO03 - Multi-purpose Cash	388,406	364,700	23,706
PO04 - Health	4,846	4,550	296
PO05 - Water, Sanitation & Hygiene			0
PO06 - Protection, Gender and Inclusion			0
PO07 - Education			0
PO08 - Migration			0
PO09 - Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery		29,436	-29,436
PO10 - Community Engagement and Accountability	10,064	9,450	614
PO11 - Environmental Sustainability			0
Planned Operations Total	403,316	408,136	-4,820
EA01 - Coordination and Partnerships			0
EA02 - Secretariat Services	17,706	8,787	8,919
EA03 - National Society Strengthening	78,979	74,817	4,162
Enabling Approaches Total	96,685	83,604	13,081
Grand Total	500,000	491,740	8,260

[Click here for the complete financial report](#)

Please explain variances (if any)

During the planning phase of the operation, high communication costs were included in the budget under Secretariat Services, with the main purpose of deploying a communication team to Georgia to create a video story with footage from the disaster site. However, once the operation began, the communication needs changed, as did the opportunity to capture good footage of the disaster area. For these reasons, the costs were not fully spent.

Contact Information

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

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[Click here for reference](#)

