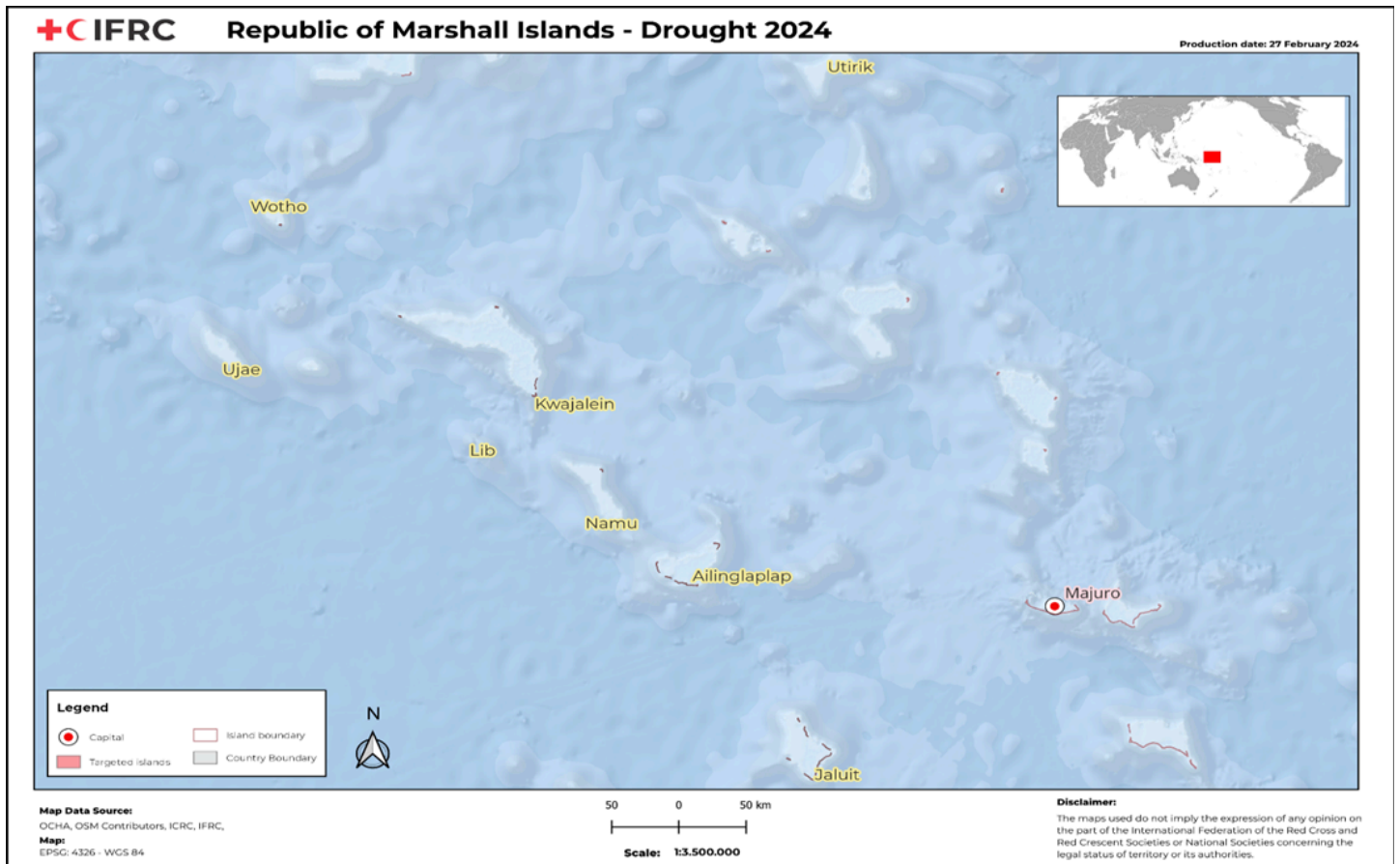




MIRCS setting up the Reverse Osmosis Machine in Ujae, one of the drought – affected atolls in Marshall Islands. (Photo: MIRCS)

Appeal: <b>MDRMH004</b>	Total DREF Allocation: <b>CHF 201,811</b>	Crisis Category: <b>Yellow</b>	Hazard: <b>Drought</b>
Glide Number: <b>2024-000016</b>	People Affected: <b>13,924 people</b>	People Targeted: <b>5,000 people</b>	People Assisted: <b>1,560 people</b>
Event Onset: <b>Slow</b>	Operation Start Date: <b>08-03-2024</b>	Operational End Date: <b>31-08-2024</b>	Total Operating Timeframe: <b>5 months</b>
Targeted Areas: <b>Ratak Chain, Ralik Chain</b>			

# Description of the Event



Map of Marshall Island (Photo: IFRC)

## Date when the trigger was met

27-02-2024

## What happened, where and when?

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) consists of 30 atolls and 5 isolated islands, making up a total of 1,225 islands and islets. These are divided into two island chains: the Ralik Chain and the Ratak Chain. The RMI is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to its geographic and topographic characteristics. The islands and atolls are low-lying, with an average elevation of less than two meters above sea level, making them particularly susceptible to rising sea levels and other impacts of climate change.

Droughts have become more frequent and severe over the past decade in the RMI, exacerbating water scarcity and affecting agricultural productivity. Severe droughts in 2015-2016, exacerbated by El Niño, caused widespread water shortages and economic damages, affecting more than half of the population. In 2019, the RMI faced one of its worst droughts, prompting the government to declare a state of emergency. This drought affected the northern atolls the most, where residents had to rely on emergency water shipments and desalination units to meet their basic water needs. The drought conditions persisted into 2020, exacerbating the already strained water resources and leading to increased salinity in the soil, which further hindered agricultural activities.

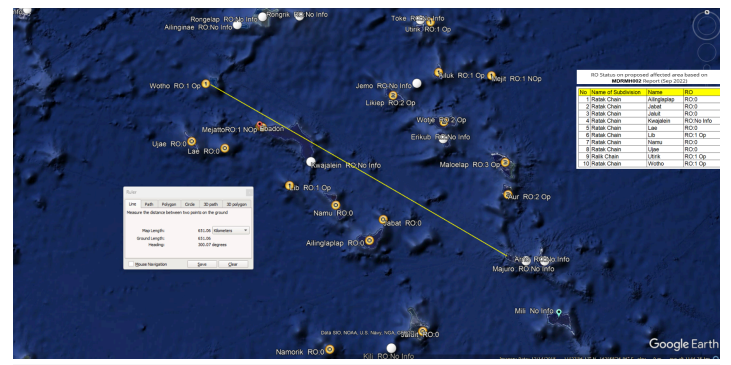
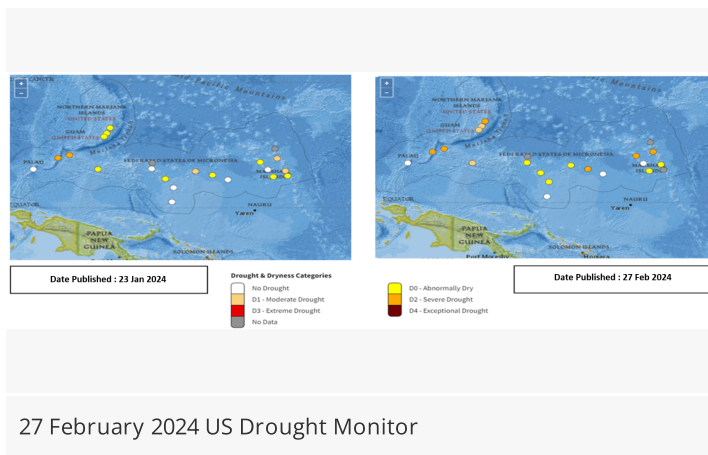
The situation slightly improved in 2021 and 2022 with some rainfall, but the overall trend of decreasing precipitation continued. By late 2023 and early 2024, the drought conditions had worsened again, with many atolls experiencing severe water shortages. The US Drought Monitoring Report from February 2024 highlighted that Kwajalein Atoll and Wotje Atoll had escalated to severe drought conditions, while Majuro and Jaluit were categorized as abnormally dry.

The weather and drought conditions in the Marshall Islands during the 2023/2024 drought have been heavily influenced by the El Niño phenomenon, which has led to significantly reduced rainfall and exacerbated drought conditions. The El Niño event has caused below-normal rainfall across much of the region, including the Marshall Islands. This has resulted in prolonged dry spells and severe drought conditions. Sea surface temperatures (SSTs) have also been above normal, contributing to the dry conditions. The Marshall Islands

experienced a significant rainfall deficit, with some areas receiving less than half of their usual precipitation. For instance, Majuro recorded only 5.11 inches of rain in February 2024, which is 2.5 inches below the average. The lack of rainfall has led to critical water shortages, affecting both drinking water supplies and agricultural activities. Reservoir levels have dropped significantly, with Majuro's reservoir reaching only 71% of its total capacity by February 2024. (<https://www.drought.gov/sites/default/files/2024-03/Pacific%20Winter%202024.pdf>).

These recurring and worsening drought conditions have had profound impacts on the communities within the RMI. The lack of reliable water sources has led to increased reliance on imported water and desalination units. The agricultural sector, which many communities depend on for their livelihoods, has suffered due to the inability to grow crops in saline soils. The persistent drought conditions have increased soil salinity, further hindering crop growth and food security. This has led to reduced agricultural productivity, threatening the livelihoods of farmers and increasing dependency on imported food. The economic strain from these conditions is significant, as the costs of importing water and food rise, and local agricultural output declines.

Following the increased impact of the drought in 2024, the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society (MIRCS) requested a DREF allocation to support communities affected by the drought.



Google Earth Map for RO location and distances of location from Majuro

## Scope and Scale

Information gathered through MIRCS coordination with community island leaders in March 2024 confirmed water shortages on multiple islands, with some experiencing no rainfall for three to six months. Some islands and atolls experienced water shortages and prolonged periods without rainfall in several of the islands and atolls from November 2023. Community leaders reported that the rainwater catchments in their communities had begun to dry up, with some already empty. This resulted in poor household sanitation as residents limited water usage for personal and domestic hygiene, prioritizing it for drinking and cooking. The quality of water used for cooking and drinking deteriorated, falling below the standards available before the drought. Consequently, water-borne illnesses and illnesses due to poor hygiene increased, as observed in previous instances. According to the MIRCS, 13,924 individuals were affected across 10 islands.

The El Niño event of 2023-2024 began to weaken after its peak between November 2023 and January 2024. By April 2024, conditions started transitioning towards El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO)-neutral. This marked the end of El Niño's significant influence on the Marshall Islands' weather patterns, and some islands and atolls began receiving rainfall. The RMI saw significant improvements in drought conditions, with a return to normal by late July to early August. Although the drought started to diminish after April 2024, the effects of the drought persisted for several months in the most affected atolls and islands. It took months for aquifer sources to refill, water quality to improve, and water-dependent crops to be replanted and harvested. Despite the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) receiving substantial annual rainfall, the storage capacity owned by communities and individuals was limited. Groundwater supplies were constrained due to the small size of aquifer pockets. This issue was further complicated by high evaporation rates, with an estimated 50 percent of rainfall contributing to recharging the freshwater aquifer, as seen in Majuro.

According to the Climate Security Risk Assessment of the RMI by UNDP, the RMI faced extreme freshwater scarcity, similar to other low-lying atoll nations. The World Bank noted in 2009 that the country lacked conventional water sources such as rivers, streams, or lakes, and even small surface ponds were exceedingly rare. Consequently, rainwater harvesting was critical for the Marshallese, with 79 percent of households on neighboring islands depending on it for drinking water, according to a 2020 report by the Pacific Community (SPC). In contrast, only 9 percent relied on groundwater. The vulnerability of these water supplies was heightened by climatic events like king tides and storm surges, which could cause saltwater intrusion into the fragile aquifer, a concern highlighted by the Green Climate Fund.

Island communities heavily reliant on rainwater for their daily needs were significantly impacted by these developments. Shallow wells, which held only a thin layer of freshwater just a few inches beneath the surface, soon became insufficient due to rising temperatures and increased usage. In some instances, this freshwater resource gradually became saline. For islands affected by inundation in January 2024,



the freshwater aquifer had already been compromised, resulting in highly saline underground water, making it undrinkable.

The reliable alternative water source was Reverse Osmosis (RO) Desalination units, owned by some islands, the IOM, and the NDMO. The MIRCS drought IFRC-DREF response operation in 2022 documented their locations and repair status. An updated assessment revealed that many of the RO desalination units were non-functional. RO Desalination uses pressure to push water through a semipermeable membrane, removing contaminants to produce potable water. These systems required high-pressure conditions and regular maintenance, including replacing filters, pump parts, and power supplies. Many units became non-functional due to lack of management, a corrosive environment, and insufficient maintenance.

The lack of water significantly impacted livelihoods. Plants dried up, leaving the island barren. People spent more time collecting water, reducing time for income-generating activities. Much of the land was unsuitable for farming, and drought and soil salinity caused crops like coconut and breadfruit to wither. The atoll population relied heavily on fishing and local produce sales. Outer islands had fewer livelihood options, exacerbating the challenges. Many were forced to divert efforts to water collection or relocate, as reported by the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society.

## Source Information

Source Name	Source Link
1. Quarterly Climate Impacts and Outlook (Quarter 3 2024) - APDRC	<a href="https://apdrc.soest.hawaii.edu/Hawaii_USAPI_Climate_Summary/dashboard/pdf/Q3_2024_Pacific_Region_Climate_Impacts_and_Outlook_final.pdf">https://apdrc.soest.hawaii.edu/Hawaii_USAPI_Climate_Summary/dashboard/pdf/Q3_2024_Pacific_Region_Climate_Impacts_and_Outlook_final.pdf</a>
2. Quarterly Climate Impacts and Outlook (Quarter 2 2024) - APDRC	<a href="https://apdrc.soest.hawaii.edu/Hawaii_USAPI_Climate_Summary/dashboard/pdf/2024/Q2_2024_Pacific_Region_Climate_Impacts_and_Outlook_final.pdf">https://apdrc.soest.hawaii.edu/Hawaii_USAPI_Climate_Summary/dashboard/pdf/2024/Q2_2024_Pacific_Region_Climate_Impacts_and_Outlook_final.pdf</a>
3. Drought Information Statement Issued by NWS Tiyán, Guam	<a href="https://forecast.weather.gov/product.php?issuedby=GUM&amp;product=DGT&amp;site=nws&amp;format=txt">https://forecast.weather.gov/product.php?issuedby=GUM&amp;product=DGT&amp;site=nws&amp;format=txt</a>
4. www.worldometers.info	<a href="https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/marshall-islands-population/?tblang=persian">https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/marshall-islands-population/?tblang=persian</a>
5. World Meteorological Organization Weather Climate Water	<a href="https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/el-nino-expected-last-least-until-april-2024">https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/el-nino-expected-last-least-until-april-2024</a>
6. COSPPAC Monthly Bulletin January 2024 page 16 Paragraph 2	<a href="https://library.sprep.org/content/cosppac-monthly-bulletin-january-2024">https://library.sprep.org/content/cosppac-monthly-bulletin-january-2024</a>

## National Society Actions

Have the National Society conducted any intervention additionally to those part of this DREF Operation?	Yes
Please provide a brief description of those additional activities	Marshall Island Red Cross Society procured three Reverse Osmosis Desalination units through the support of the USAID and Flexifund, contributed by Australian Red Cross to support the recurring droughts in the country.

## IFRC Network Actions Related To The Current Event

Secretariat	The IFRC, via its Country Cluster Delegation in Suva (CCD Suva), operates a North Pacific Sub Delegation hosted by the Marshall Islands Red Cross. This delegation provides
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	<p>support to three national societies, namely, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau. The IFRC has developed a five-step methodology for drought risk assessment to assist the national societies in evaluating drought conditions in the Marshall Islands. Staff from the IFRC's Suva and North Pacific offices collaborate closely with the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society to oversee the developing drought scenario and provide technical assistance for crafting operational strategies.</p> <p>The IFRC also provided technical assistance to analyze the drought situation and develop the drought response plan. IFRC also supported MIRCS in executing sectoral activities as per the plan in the DREF request. Two surge personnel were deployed to support the operation (WASH Coordinator and PMER Coordinator) and supported MIRCS in analyzing collected data for decision-making, developing and disseminating key messages, and creating IEC materials.</p> <p>IFRC also supported in preparing various reports, developing feedback mechanisms, and designing infographics. IFRC also supported the international procurement for MIRCS, completing the procurement of Reverse Osmosis (RO) units, jerry cans, and other operational supplies.</p>
<b>Participating National Societies</b>	<p>Currently, there are no Partner National Societies (PNS) within the country. Australian Red Cross contributed to the operation through the El Niño Flexi Fund. The collaboration complemented the DREF, by enabling MIRCS to procure three reverse osmosis units and contributes towards a more sustainable response by the National Society.</p>

## ICRC Actions Related To The Current Event

No ICRC presence in Marshall Island

## Other Actors Actions Related To The Current Event

<b>Government has requested international assistance</b>	No
<b>National authorities</b>	<p>The government agencies deployed RO units to Lib and Likiep Islands to address water shortages.</p> <p>MIRCS actively coordinates with community representatives to seek the required information. As an active member of the National Disaster Committee (NDC), MIRCS continues to coordinate its efforts under the leadership of the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) in partnership with local governments for further logistical support. The government is providing coordination support through its technical WASH Cluster Lead, EPA, and NDMO.</p>
<b>UN or other actors</b>	<p>IOM and NDMO worked closely to facilitate the deployment of the RO units to the drought-affected islands. It was reported that technicians were deployed to operationalize the RO units.</p>

### Are there major coordination mechanism in place?

The coordination was managed by the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) leadership in partnership with local governments. MIRCS was an active member of the National Disaster Committee (NDC) and continued to coordinate its efforts under this forum. MIRCS sought assistance and coordination support from EPA, technical WASH Cluster Lead, and NDMO as needed.



# Needs (Gaps) Identified



## Livelihoods And Basic Needs

Drought significantly impacts agriculture in the Marshall Islands, affecting crop yields, soil quality, and water resources. The naturally poor fertility of atoll soils limits agriculture to a few crops, such as coconuts, breadfruit, bananas, and pandanus fruit trees, which struggle under extreme conditions. Reduced yields from these crops lead to food shortages and increased reliance on imports. Prolonged drought and rising sea levels increase soil salinity, further hindering crop growth. Freshwater scarcity complicates irrigation and agricultural productivity, threatening food security and the economy. As fishing and local produce sales become unreliable, dependency on imported foods rises, increasing the risk of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

Multipurpose cash grants are a viable emergency response, but the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society (MIRCS) has not yet achieved the necessary cash readiness. Long-term programs are needed to enable MIRCS to deliver interventions like cash grants and cash-for-work assistance effectively, along with conducting market assessments and value chain analyses.

Water for consumption, a critical necessity during droughts, is not considered a market commodity for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) on remote islands, as RO Desalination Units primarily serve non-commercial purposes.

In the outer islands, livelihoods rely heavily on crops like breadfruit and coconut, which are vulnerable to increased groundwater salinity. This salinity, exacerbated by drought and high evaporation rates, can dry out these vital trees. The effects of drought become evident as water evaporates and no rainfall occurs, leading to leaf drop. In cases of island inundation, breadfruit trees can fail within a week.

Reports indicate that some individuals migrate to other islands due to water scarcity. This highlights the importance of implementing RO systems and other measures to reduce negative coping strategies and address the critical need for potable water, supporting the resilience and sustainability of island communities.



## Health

The absence of access to safe water has significant health consequences. Outbreaks of diseases become common, with a lack of safe drinking water and insufficient water for hygiene and sanitation practices leading to diarrheal illnesses, skin and eye infections, particularly when hygiene standards decline. Improper waste management during these times further elevates health hazards and environmental harm. Additionally, the uncertainty and insecurity brought on by drought conditions cause psychological distress and exacerbate existing mental health issues.

During water shortages, health issues such as conjunctivitis (pink eye) and gastrointestinal problems (diarrheal illnesses) are prevalent in the atolls and islands of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). These issues become more serious during times of water scarcity. Dehydration is a major concern, especially for the very young, the elderly, and those with existing medical conditions. Limited access to healthcare in many affected atolls and islands further exacerbates the problem during drought periods.



## Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

The immediate and paramount need in the affected regions is access to potable and safe water for consumption and domestic use, along with ensuring adequate hygiene and sanitation. This situation is exacerbated by diminishing rainwater collected in storage tanks, which traditionally serve as the primary freshwater source for people living on atolls and islands. Additionally, the underground freshwater lens, already limited, is becoming saline or brackish, with no immediate prospects for recovery due to the lack of substantial rainfall.

During the DREF operation, it was identified that the existing Reverse Osmosis (RO) desalination units are insufficient, as most are no longer functioning due to lack of maintenance. Although agencies such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) deployed several units, many islands and atolls still lack availability or have units with small water production capacity. The water containers are also poorly maintained, with several showing poor water quality due to insufficient purification efficiency. Hygiene practices are limited in the affected islands and atolls due to a lack of hygiene materials.

MIRCS staff and volunteers need capacity enhancement in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) to support knowledge sharing and raise awareness among community members on best hygiene practices. The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) actively encourages



water conservation among the public in response to the critical water shortage. This includes the upkeep and efficient use of water harvesting systems and the careful rationing of limited rainfall, underlining the importance of a coordinated approach to manage the water crisis effectively.

In conclusion, there is an urgent requirement for access to clean water, the need for technical expertise and volunteer training in WASH practices, and the importance of community engagement in water conservation efforts to navigate the current drought challenges.



## Protection, Gender And Inclusion

Integrating Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) considerations in drought situations is crucial for several reasons. Drought exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, disproportionately affecting women, children, the elderly, and marginalized groups. PGI integration helps to identify and address these vulnerabilities effectively.

Women and marginalized groups often face barriers to accessing essential resources during droughts. By considering gender dynamics and ensuring inclusivity in assessments, communities can build resilience more effectively. PGI integration in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) and community health interventions is essential. Advocacy for accessible and safe services ensures that the needs of all affected populations are considered in planning and that services are offered in a dignified manner.



## Community Engagement And Accountability

Effective community engagement and accountability are critical components of the drought response in the Marshall Islands. Inclusive participation ensures that diverse perspectives and needs are considered, while utilizing local knowledge tailors interventions to the specific context of the respective islands or atolls.

Accountability involves clear communication about response plans, resource allocation, and decision-making processes. Establishing robust feedback mechanisms allows community members to voice their concerns and suggestions, ensuring their input is addressed. Regular monitoring and evaluation help assess the effectiveness of response activities, while responsiveness to feedback ensures interventions remain relevant and adaptive to changing needs.

# Operational Strategy

## Overall objective of the operation

The operation aims to support 5,000 people affected by the drought, focusing on providing access to clean water, water storage solutions, and conducting health and hygiene awareness and training in selected communities across Ailinglaplap, Jabat, Jaliut, Kwajalein, Lae, Lib, Namu, Ujae, Utirik, and Wotho over five months.

To effectively meet the needs of the targeted populations, the operation plans to roll out several key activities and supports:

- Develop and adapt a needs assessment tool tailored to the specific requirements of the drought response efforts throughout this operation.
- Leveraging on existing community and partners' Reverse Osmosis water purification systems to ensure the provision of safe drinking water.
- Ensuring the efficient distribution of drinking water to targeted areas.
- Providing essential WASH items to targeted community.
- Enhancing community awareness on hygiene and health practices to mitigate drought-related health risks.
- Strengthening the skills and technical knowledge of volunteers through ongoing training and support.

By implementing these measures, the operation aims to significantly improve access to clean water for the targeted populations, enhancing community and individual health practices, and supporting the operational capacity of MIRCS staff and volunteers in implementing the operation. The timeframe has been considered, taking into account the logistical considerations of procurement, the geographical proximity of the islands which may affect the required timeframe for response, and the need for efficient coordination and consolidation of reports.

During the operation time frame, some of the activities for the operation needed to be revised due to significant changes in context, whereby:



- Many of the existing Reverse Osmosis Desalination units are non – functional and not able to be repaired or maintained by MIRCS.
- MIRCS had to do individual assessments in each community as there are no secondary information available for the communities on those islands
- By June 2024, when the first RO unit that MIRCS procured arrived, some islands and atolls have received rain and no longer needed RO units for desalination as they are able to utilize rainwater harvesting.

Due to this, the activities were changed to:

- Procurement of three RO desalination units through the support of USAID and Flexi fund (Australian Red Cross).
- Reduced amount of clean drinking water distributed due to reduced needs in the communities. This led to reduced number of people reached for the overall operation.
- MIRCS hired and sent a technician to one of the atolls (Maloelap) to fix the RO desalination unit
- 26 assessments conducted in communities reaching to 26 communities instead of 20 communities as per initial plan

This DREF operation funded the operations, consumables, and maintenance for RO units during the operations timeframe.

## Operation strategy rationale

Addressing the water shortage was paramount, requiring a comprehensive approach. The evaluation and repair of existing RO units on affected islands were prioritized, with damaged parts replaced to restore functionality. The National Society coordinated with partners ensuring clean water reached impacted communities.

In previous instances of water scarcity, the prevalence of diseases like pink eye and diarrhea increased. MIRCS, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, distributed vital information on disease prevention and control. Leveraging diverse media channels, MIRCS ensured these key messages reached vulnerable communities effectively. Ensuring household water treatment and safe storage practices was crucial, particularly during periods of water scarcity. The national society also mobilized and distributed jerry cans from its disaster preparedness stocks. These jerry cans enabled communities to store water.

MIRCS actively engaged with vulnerable communities, advocating for the enhancement and preservation of water quality through various methods and techniques. Additionally, raising awareness about good hygiene practices was a significant focus of their outreach efforts.

CEA integration is pivotal in the interventions outlined above. A diverse communication strategy is used, including using variety of communication channels to distribute awareness messages, ease hardships, and empower communities to confront future challenges effectively.

## Targeting Strategy

### Who was targeted by this operation?

The targeting strategy for this operation was designed to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable populations within drought-affected areas, ensuring equitable access to resources and support. The focus was on people of identified atolls and islands that experienced water shortages, based on field reports and confirmed through engagements with local elected representatives. Special attention was given to vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, who faced increased risks including health issues, food insecurity, and limited access to safe water due to the drought. This approach was aimed at reducing the direct effects of drought on health and well-being and tackling the inequalities that increased vulnerability to environmental challenges.

This included communities on several islands in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) that were hit by storm surge in January 2024, leading to even more water shortages because their main sources of freshwater underground were damaged. This strategy outlined the operation's focus on reaching and supporting those who needed it the most, addressing the unique challenges they faced due to the drought and recent storms. These priorities were identified through detailed assessments conducted in the affected areas.

### Explain the selection criteria for the targeted population

The rationale for targeting specific groups in this operation was based on the need to support those most at risk from environmental crises, focusing on women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities due to their increased vulnerability. The response activities were designed to provide support to overall communities while also including other vulnerable groups such as women and children, who generally faced heightened challenges during droughts, affecting safety, hygiene, and health. The elderly and those with disabilities may have encountered barriers in accessing resources. Targeting these groups ensured support efforts were equitable and tailored, aiming to address specific needs and vulnerabilities, thereby enhancing the intervention's effectiveness. By prioritizing these vulnerable



populations, the strategy aimed not only to provide immediate aid but also to build resilience and improve long-term recovery prospects, ensuring all individuals had access to necessary support and were equipped to withstand future environmental challenges.

## Total Targeted Population

Women	1,528	Rural	21.5%
Girls (under 18)	922	Urban	78.5%
Men	1,593	People with disabilities (estimated)	-
Boys (under 18)	957		
Total targeted population	5,000		

## Risk and Security Considerations

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

Risk	Mitigation action
In Pacific countries like RMI, there are limited economic resources, infrastructure, and capacity for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Working within resource-constrained environments may require innovative approaches, collaboration with local partners, and strategic resource allocation.	Prioritize capacity-building initiatives to strengthen volunteers' capacities, local institutions, and community resilience. Foster partnerships with governments, INGOs, NGOs, UN, and private sector entities to leverage resources and expertise. Innovate and adapt programming to maximize impact with limited resources.
The Marshall Islands is prone to natural disasters such as drought, Winter storm surge, and King tides. These events can cause significant damage to infrastructure, disrupt operations, and pose risks to the safety and well-being of staff, volunteers, and communities.	Establish communication protocols to alert staff and communities of impending disasters. Collaborate with local authorities and communities to strengthen the preparedness of staff, volunteers, and communities engaged in the operation.
Many islands of RMI are remote and isolated, making logistics and transportation challenging. Limited access to resources, medical facilities, and communication infrastructure can impact the effectiveness and efficiency of operations.	Utilize the existing partnerships with government departments and local authorities to identify effective transportation and logistics solutions.

Please indicate any security and safety concerns for this operation

Sea transportation will have direct risk for the safety of equipment and personnel from different aspects; weather, vessel, in adequate safety equipment, and lack of security regulation for the travel

Sea transportation inter island must follow proper procedures including schedules, training on wearing the proper equipment, volunteer insurance, limit of boat passenger and observe the weather

Water scare may lead people to take unpredicted actions with the intention to secure water for their family. Discussion with community leader for the security situation before visiting the island.

The National Society's security framework will apply throughout the duration of the operation to their staff and volunteers. In case of need for deployment for personnel under IFRC security's responsibility, including surge support and integrated PNS, the existing IFRC country security framework will apply, and rapid security assessments and analysis will be carried out. All IFRC must, and RC/RC staff and volunteers are encouraged, to complete the IFRC Stay Safe 2.0 e-learning courses. Staff and volunteers to be aware of the security status and briefed on reactions in emergency.

Has the child safeguarding risk analysis assessment been completed?



# Implementation



**Budget:** CHF 13,845

**Targeted Persons:** 5,000

**Assisted Persons:** 1,560

## Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of people reached with health promotion as a response to an emergency by community-based volunteers	5,000	1,560

## Narrative description of achievements

During the operation timeframe, MIRCS reached a total of 1,560 people. To achieve this, MIRCS implemented a comprehensive approach focusing on health promotion and community engagement. They conducted various health promotion activities, including awareness sessions tailored to educate the community about drought-related health risks and preventive measures. These sessions were designed to inform and empower community members, ensuring they were well-prepared to handle the challenges posed by the drought. Topics included hand washing, the benefits of drinking clean water, and its use in daily life. These health promotion activities were part of the broader hygiene promotion efforts.

In addition to the awareness sessions, MIRCS volunteers carried out extensive household visits. These visits allowed the volunteers to provide personalized guidance, assess individual needs, and distribute essential resources directly to the affected households. This hands-on approach ensured that the assistance provided was targeted and effective, addressing the specific requirements of each family.

Throughout this operation, MIRCS reached 30 communities across 10 atolls, demonstrating wide geographical coverage. This comprehensive outreach ensured that even the most remote and vulnerable populations received the necessary support and information. By engaging with the communities on multiple levels, MIRCS effectively enhanced the resilience and well-being of the affected populations, contributing significantly to the overall drought response efforts.

## Lessons Learnt

- Given the vast distances and high travel costs associated with reaching the various islands and atolls of the Marshall Islands, the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society (MIRCS) must carefully plan and coordinate the activities for the operation. MIRCS staff and volunteers have to accomplish multiple tasks in a single trip to maximize efficiency and minimize costs.

## Challenges

- High logistical cost for travel to the affected community



**Budget:** CHF 118,726

**Targeted Persons:** 5,000

**Assisted Persons:** 1,560

## Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of target communities / sites with WASH situation assessments conducted at least once	2	26
# of people reached by WASH assistance	5,000	1,560
# of WASH situation assessments conducted in total	1	26
# of people who have been supplied by RCRC with an improved protected source of drinking water (according to WHO and Sphere standards)	5,000	565
# of people (and households) reached by hygiene promotion activities in the response	5,000	1,560

## Narrative description of achievements

In this operation, the primary focus was on the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector. MIRCS reached 1,560 people, ensuring their needs were met through various targeted activities. The operation catered to a diverse group, including both males and females.

### 1. Utilization of RO machines

- MIRCS assessed the condition of RO units and coordinated with the agencies that were operating the RO units. After the assessment, it was determined that:
  - 6 out of 11 of the RO units were no longer functional and is not repairable
  - The existing RO units have low capacity and not sufficient for the population of the islands
- Following the assessment, MIRCS adjusted its operations by:
  - Procuring 3 units of RO machines with the support of Australian Red Cross through Flexifund. MIRCS is able to support the communities in a more sustainable manner with the newly procured RO machines as drought is becoming a recurrent event in RMI.
  - In one of the atolls, Maloelap, MIRCS hired a technician to repair the RO machine and restored its operation. The machine is able to produce 1,350 litres of water per day that is used by the community and meeting their minimum requirement of clean drinking water. MIRCS was able to reach 167 individuals through this activity.
- Following the arrival of the RO machines, MIRCS staff and volunteers were trained on utilization and maintenance of the machines. The staff and volunteers also trained community members on utilization and maintenance of the machines. This will be an ongoing process and the MIRCS staff and volunteers will continue on doing trainings in communities to sustain the knowledge.
- These RO units enabled MIRCS to supply clean water to 398 people across four communities in four atolls.
- The operations, consumables and maintenance of RO machines are supported through this operation.

### 2. Procure Packaged Water for Immediate Distribution:

- MIRCS did not procure packaged water. MIRCS reevaluated the feasibility of procuring and distributing the bottled water and decided that the activity was not feasible. There was no community with critical need of water that can be answered through packaged water.

### 3. Assess the Current Situation of household water treatment and safe storage:

- MIRCS conducted comprehensive WASH situation assessments in 26 communities across 10 atolls. Although the target was for one assessment, the team adjusted to have separate assessments for each community as the locations are dispersed. These assessments provided a clear understanding of the WASH conditions in these areas. They included household WASH assessments, salinity tests of groundwater and wells, and water quality testing of household and community water tanks.
- Additionally, MIRCS checked the water levels in these tanks to determine the available water reserves. This detailed analysis allowed MIRCS to identify the most vulnerable communities in need of water distribution.

### 4. Develop educational materials on household water treatment (HHWT):

- MIRCS with the support of IFRC created educational materials for outreach activities explaining the importance of household water treatment and safe storage by adapting IFRC HHWT manual.
- The educational materials included information on various methods and practices for improving and preserving water quality as well as emphasized the link between water quality and good hygiene practices.
- Some posters and leaflets were drafted and will be used in future operations.



#### 5. Conduct Outreach Activities:

- MIRCS organized community meetings, and outreach events to disseminate educational materials and messages during their visits in the atolls/islands. MIRCS tailored the messaging to address specific concerns and cultural considerations as needed.

#### 6. Promote Good Hygiene Practices:

- MIRCS integrated messages about good hygiene practices (such as handwashing with soap) into the awareness campaign and highlighted the importance of hygiene in preventing waterborne diseases and maintaining overall health.
- This comprehensive approach ensured that the affected population received necessary information to maintain good hygiene practices, thereby enhancing their resilience against waterborne diseases and other health risks associated with the drought. The household level assessments and awareness sessions were helpful in promoting best practices in safe storing of water in the communities. Communities were also exposed to household and community level water treatment and understand the need and how to do water treatment.
- Staff and volunteers were trained to ensure effective delivery of messages.

#### 9. Distribution of Jerry cans and replenishment:

- Jerry cans were distributed in the areas that were affected by inundation which was also affected by drought. 398 units of jerry cans were distributed for that operation and replenished accordingly.

### Lessons Learnt

- MIRCS did not have any RO machines prior to this operation and was unable to support the communities effectively during the peak of the crisis. This lack of equipment significantly hindered their ability to provide clean drinking water when it was most needed. However, with the recent acquisition of three RO machines, MIRCS is now in a much stronger position to respond to such needs. These machines will enable MIRCS to deliver services more promptly and efficiently, ensuring that communities have better and more reliable access to clean drinking water.
- MIRCS staff and volunteers are now well-trained in utilizing and maintaining the RO machines. This will enable MIRCS to continuously provide services to the communities, as access to clean water can be limited in RMI.
- MIRCS staff and volunteers have been trained with updated and tailored outreach materials for health and hygiene promotion, enabling them to continuously provide these services in RMI. Water quality testing is a great visual tool to promote water treatment with the community. One of the considerations for the future is to explore into solar disinfection water treatment that is generally unknown in the community but was highlighted in the community that they were interested due to low cost and less specialized equipment required.
- Transporting the RO machines in the country can have very high costs due to the distance and lack of availability of transportation services that can carry the RO machines. MIRCS will be engaging further with the partners in-country to coordinate the transport of RO machines in managing the transportation costs and ensuring services are provided to the communities in the most efficient manner.
- Utilizing tools such as KOBO and drones to simplify and maximize use of data collection and data utilization

### Challenges

- The procurement of the RO machines took a considerable amount of time due to the technical approvals required. In addition to this, the long duration needed to transport the machines to the Marshall Islands further extended the timeline. Given the remote location of the Marshall Islands, shipping routes are less frequent and longer, contributing to delays.
- Due to the late arrival of the RO machines (the first machine arrived in June), many of the islands had started receiving rain and reduced the need for the RO machines to be deployed immediately to cater urgent needs. This led to a reduced number of people reached.
- The logistical costs of transporting the RO machines between islands/atolls in the country can be very high.



### Protection, Gender And Inclusion

**Budget:** CHF 0

**Targeted Persons:** 5,000

**Assisted Persons:** 1,560

### Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
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# of volunteers trained/oriented on PGI min standards	30	22
# of child safeguarding risk analysis assessment conducted	1	1

## Narrative description of achievements

At the beginning of the operation, MIRCS volunteers and staff underwent comprehensive training in Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) minimum standards to ensure the smooth and effective execution of their activities. This training was crucial in equipping the team with the necessary knowledge and skills to address and integrate PGI considerations into all aspects of their work. A total of 24 volunteers and staff members (F=7, M=17) participated in this intensive training session. The training covered various topics, including identifying and addressing gender-specific needs, promoting inclusivity, and safeguarding vulnerable populations, ensuring that the operation was conducted with sensitivity and respect for all community members.

In addition to the PGI training, MIRCS, with the support of the IFRC Regional Office, conducted a child safeguarding risk analysis assessment as part of the operation. This assessment aimed to identify potential risks to children within the affected communities and to develop strategies to mitigate these risks. The child safeguarding risk analysis was a critical component of the operation, ensuring that the needs and safety of children were prioritized and that any interventions were child-friendly and protective.

The training and the child safeguarding assessment underscored MIRCS's commitment to upholding high standards of protection and inclusivity. By integrating PGI principles and conducting thorough risk assessments, MIRCS ensured that their response not only addressed the immediate needs of the affected populations but also promoted long-term resilience and well-being. This approach facilitated a more holistic and inclusive response, recognizing the diverse needs of different community members and working towards equitable and sustainable recovery.

## Lessons Learnt

- Continuous training for staff and volunteers is crucial. Equipping them with the knowledge and skills to address PGI issues ensures that they can respond sensitively and effectively to the needs of vulnerable groups. This will also support incorporation of PGI considerations into all stages of planning and implementation helps ensure that the needs of all community members, especially the most vulnerable, are addressed.

## Challenges

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## Community Engagement And Accountability

**Budget:** CHF 7,455

**Targeted Persons:** 5,000

**Assisted Persons:** 1,560

## Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# communication strategy tailored to cultural norms and preferences	1	1
# of feedback mechanisms established	1	1
# and percentage of complaints or feedback about the RCRC operation which receive a response through established community communication	50	0

## Narrative description of achievements

- One of the achievements of this operation was the development and implementation of a feedback mechanism for MIRCS. This initiative aimed to enhance community engagement and accountability, ensuring that the voices and concerns of the affected populations were heard and addressed promptly. Under this operation, MIRCS established a dedicated hotline number for feedback and complaints. This hotline served as a direct communication channel between the community and MIRCS, enabling individuals to report issues, provide feedback, and seek assistance.
- No calls were received during the operations period.

## Lessons Learnt

- Further dissemination of the hotline is helpful to encourage the use of the hotline for any feedback.
- Communities were also providing feedback during outreach activities and household assessments. This is an approach that can continue to provide access and understanding of the household level needs for MIRCS and informed the planned actions by MIRCS. MIRCS will continue to use this approach in future operations to ensure needs of the community are sufficiently addressed.

## Challenges

- MIRCS staff and volunteers had to bring food from Majuro when traveling to the outer islands/atolls due to the lack of availability of food in the areas to be purchased. There were instances where there was very limited amount of food was able to be brought due to limited space in airplanes going to the islands/atolls.



## Secretariat Services

**Budget:** CHF 37,488

**Targeted Persons:** 100

**Assisted Persons:** 1,560

## Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of rapid response personnel support the operation	2	2
% of financial reporting respecting IFRC procedures	100	100
# of surge missions or deployments	2	3
% of volunteers involved in response who are insured	100	0

## Narrative description of achievements

In order to bolster the DREF operation, IFRC deployed two surge personnel to the Marshall Islands for a three-month period, from April to June, to provide technical support to MIRCS. These delegates brought specialized expertise in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) and Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (PMER), significantly enhancing the operational capacity and effectiveness of the response. IFRC also deployed another person at the end of the operation to support MIRCS in closing the operation.

The surge personnel specializing in WASH played a pivotal role in assessing the water and sanitation needs of the affected communities. The WASH Coordinator conducted comprehensive WASH situation assessments in 18 communities across seven atolls. These assessments included household surveys, salinity testing of groundwater and wells, and water quality testing of both household and community water tanks. By assessing the water levels and quality, the WASH delegate identified the most vulnerable communities in need of immediate water distribution. This detailed analysis informed the strategic deployment of three Reverse Osmosis (RO) units.

The surge personnel focused on PMER ensured that all activities under the DREF operation were systematically planned, monitored, evaluated, and reported. This delegate established robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks, enabling MIRCS to track the progress and impact of their interventions accurately. The PMER Coordinator provided training and support to MIRCS staff and volunteers,



enhancing their capacity to conduct household assessments, collect and analyze data, and prepare comprehensive reports. These efforts were crucial in maintaining transparency and accountability, as well as in sharing assessment reports with the government and other supporting agencies.

During the DREF operation, MIRCS produced and submitted detailed financial reports to the IFRC, ensuring transparency and accountability in financial activities and expenditures. This detailed financial reporting helped maintain donor confidence and ensured the efficient allocation of resources.

## Lessons Learnt

- The surge personnel supported the running of the operations and provided valuable technical support to MIRCS. However, the surge personnel was not able to arrive in country at the beginning of the operations due to travel challenges and visa requirements which delayed the support for MIRCS in the start of the operations. Readiness for surge deployments should be considered and planned for harder to reach countries in Pacific to ensure timely support is provided to the National Societies.

## Challenges

- Limited flight route to and from the country which impact travel options for surge personnel



**Budget:** CHF 24,297

**Targeted Persons:** 100

**Assisted Persons:** 31

## Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of volunteers involved in the response operation that have increased their skills in response and management of operations	30	31
# of volunteers provided with equipment for protection, safety and support (e.g. PSS) appropriate to the emergency	30	0
# of lessons learned workshop conducted	1	1

## Narrative description of achievements

MIRCS enhanced the knowledge and capacity of its volunteers by arranging a series of comprehensive training sessions with the support of two delegates during the DREF operation. These sessions aimed to equip volunteers and staff with the necessary skills to effectively carry out various aspects of the response operation.

A total of 31 volunteers and staff members were trained in several key areas. Training on Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) minimum standards ensured that the team could address these critical issues sensitively and effectively during their work. This training was crucial for promoting equitable and inclusive aid distribution and protecting vulnerable groups. In the area of hygiene promotion, volunteers were trained to deliver vital health and sanitation messages to the communities, aiming to improve hygiene practices and reduce the risk of disease outbreaks. This training included methods for conducting awareness sessions, household visits, and distributing informative materials. Technical training on the operation of Reverse Osmosis (RO) units was provided to ensure that volunteers could effectively manage and maintain these critical water purification systems.

Additionally, volunteers were trained in using the Kobo Toolbox for data collection, which included methodologies for accurately gathering, maintaining, and reporting data. One staff member also received on-the-job training in PMER to carry forward this knowledge in future operations. This training was pivotal for conducting thorough assessments and ensuring that accurate information was available for decision-making and reporting.



These training sessions collectively strengthened the volunteers' capabilities, enabling them to perform their roles more effectively and contribute to the overall success of the operation. Through these capacity-building efforts, MIRCS ensured that its team was well-prepared to address the diverse needs of the affected communities and deliver high-quality support and services.

## Lessons Learnt

- During the lessons learned workshop, it was highlighted that MIRCS will further explore into engagement and improvement in coordination with stakeholders in country. This includes having pre-disaster meetings at both national level and in communities.
- MIRCS will also further explore arrangements with service providers for transportation as transportation is the main challenge that was faced by MIRCS in reaching the communities.
- MIRCS will also look into strategically prepositioning stocks on other islands and atolls, not just in Majuro. This approach ensures that essential supplies are readily available across multiple locations, enhancing MIRCS' ability to respond swiftly and effectively to emergencies
- Given the vast distances and high travel costs associated with reaching the various islands and atolls of the Marshall Islands, the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society (MIRCS) must carefully plan and coordinate the activities for the operation. MIRCS staff and volunteers have to accomplish multiple tasks in a single trip to maximize efficiency and minimize costs.

## Challenges

Overall, operations in Marshall Islands face the following challenges which needs to be accounted for future operations.

- **Geographical Isolation:** The Marshall Islands consist of 29 atolls and 5 isolated islands spread over a vast area in the central Pacific Ocean. This geographical dispersion makes travel between islands particularly challenging. The distances are significant, and many islands are only accessible by boat or small aircraft, which can be time-consuming and logistically complex.
- **High Travel Costs:** Due to the remote location of the Marshall Islands, travel costs are notably high. The number of flights to the Marshall Islands is limited, with only a few airlines operating routes to the main international airport in Majuro. This limited availability can lead to higher prices and less flexibility for travelers. Flights are often fully booked, especially during peak travel seasons such as during Micronesia Games which makes it difficult to secure a seat. Additionally, the cost of fuel and maintenance for boats and planes is elevated due to the need to import these resources from distant locations. There is also a limited number of service providers offering shipping options which also reduced the ability of MIRCS to travel to the communities especially to the outer islands/atolls.
- **Logistics and Supply Chain Issues:** The logistics of transporting goods and people to and from the Marshall Islands are complex and costly. Shipping goods to the islands involves long transit times and high shipping fees. This affects not only travel but also the availability and cost of goods on the islands. The high logistics costs contribute to the overall high expense for the operations in the Marshall Islands.
- **Infrastructure Limitations:** The infrastructure on many of the islands is underdeveloped, which can further complicate travel. Airports and ports may have limited facilities, and transportation options on the islands themselves can be sparse. This can make it difficult for MIRCS in arranging its operations.



# Financial Report

## DREF Operation

### FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

#### MDRMH004 - Marshall Islands - Drought

Operating Timeframe: 08 Mar 2024 to 31 Aug 2024

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2024/3-2025/1	Operation	MDRMH004
Budget Timeframe	2024/3-8	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 28/Mar/2025

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

### I. Summary

<b>Opening Balance</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Funds &amp; Other Income</b>	<b>201,811</b>
DREF Response Pillar	201,811
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>-150,284</b>
<b>Closing Balance</b>	<b>51,527</b>

### 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			0
PO04 - Health	13,845	22,888	-9,043
PO05 - Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	118,726	110,604	8,123
PO06 - Protection, Gender and Inclusion			0
PO07 - Education			0
PO08 - Migration			0
PO09 - Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery		3,285	-3,285
PO10 - Community Engagement and Accountability	7,455		7,455
PO11 - Environmental Sustainability			0
<b>Planned Operations Total</b>	<b>140,026</b>	<b>136,776</b>	<b>3,250</b>
EA01 - Coordination and Partnerships			0
EA02 - Secretariat Services	37,488	7,774	29,714
EA03 - National Society Strengthening	24,296	5,733	18,563
<b>Enabling Approaches Total</b>	<b>61,784</b>	<b>13,507</b>	<b>48,277</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>201,811</b>	<b>150,284</b>	<b>51,527</b>

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

## Please explain variances (if any)

Regarding the variances on individual budget lines, these are primarily due to the accounting treatment of vouched and unvouched transactions recorded under codes 8402 and 8421. It is important to note that the development of the DREF Budget occurred prior to the implementation of the ERP system, which accounts for the variance of CHF 94,000 under Contributions and Transfers. In theory, these expenses should be attributed to the corresponding individual budget lines in the DREF Budget.

# Contact Information

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

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[Click here for reference](#)

