

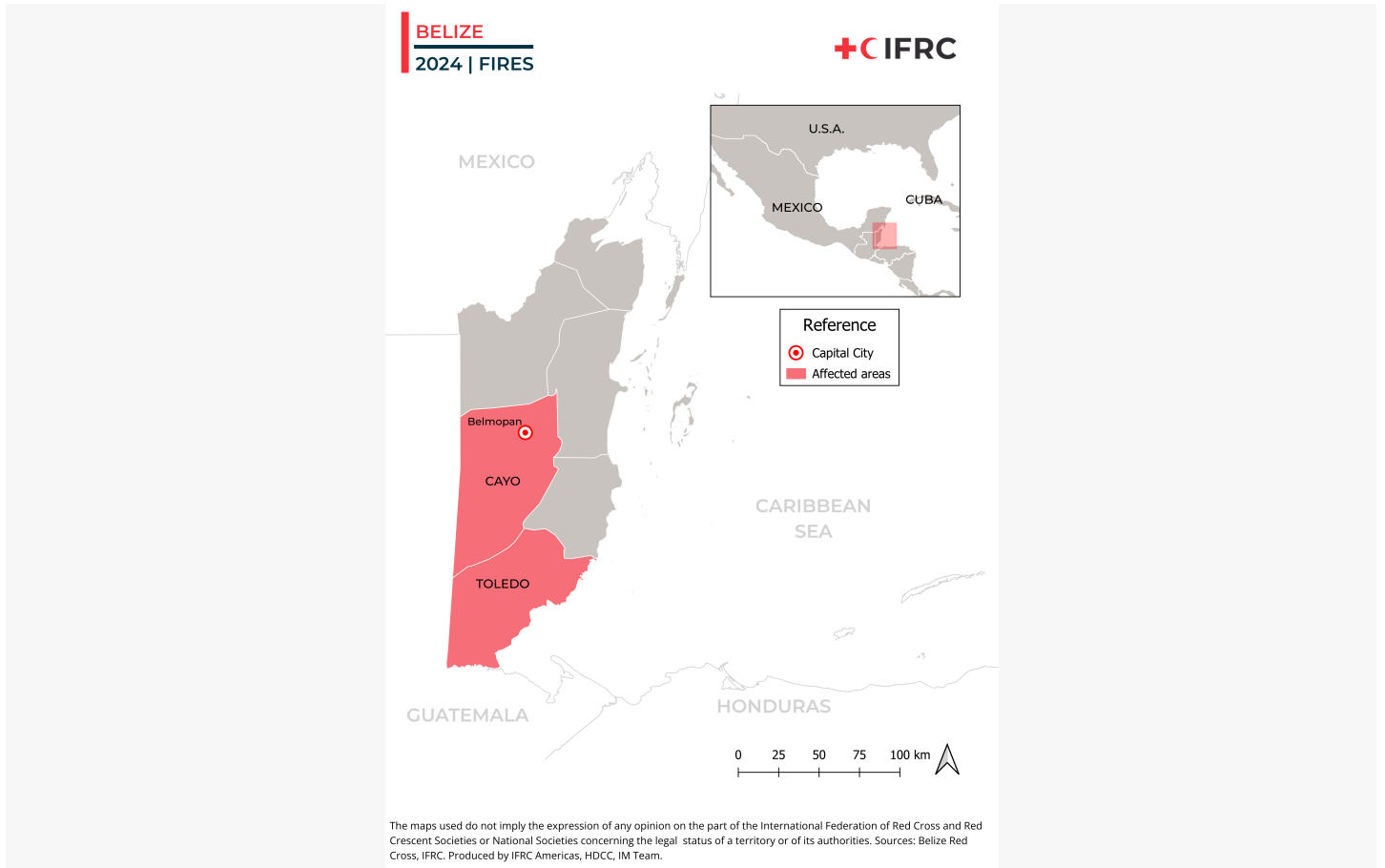


Belize Red Cross, 2024

Appeal: MDRBZ008	Total DREF Allocation: CHF 158,160	Crisis Category: Yellow	Hazard: Fire
Glide Number: WF-2024-000090-BLZ	People Affected: 800 people	People Targeted: 800 people	People Assisted: 800 people
Event Onset: Sudden	Operation Start Date: 06-06-2024	Operational End Date: 31-10-2024	Total Operating Timeframe: 4 months
Targeted Regions: Toledo			

The major donors and partners of the IFRC-DREF include the Red Cross Societies and governments of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, China, Czech, 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 thanks to all for their generous contributions.

Description of the Event



Map showing impacted areas in Belize. Source: BRCS

Date of event

26-05-2024

What happened, where and when?

Throughout May and June 2024, wildfires were observed across the Toledo and Cayo districts of Belize. These fires were attributed to human activity and/or lightning, exacerbated by prolonged dry weather and heat waves. On May 16, the Toledo District Emergency Operations Centre was activated.

On May 26, the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) officially contacted the Belize Red Cross Society (BRCS) to request support in managing the emergency. Specifically, NEMO initially requested the BRCS's assistance to help first responders with the following:

- Deployment of first aiders to San Antonio Village to support the first responders addressing the fire;
- Procurement of protective gear, including leather boots, goggles, masks, and gloves, to be deployed to both the Toledo and Cayo districts;
- Utilization of BRCS's Kobo platform and software to conduct assessments, along with support from BRCS volunteers for joint assessments.

In the Toledo district, the fires affected agricultural lands, which are the main source of livelihoods and are predominantly Mayan protected communal lands. In the Cayo district, the fires primarily affected the Mountain Pine Ridge Reserve, a protected area.



Belize Red Cross, 2024



Belize Red Cross PDM survey, 2024



Belize Red Cross, 2024

Scope and Scale

By the end of the operation, there was no official or consolidated data available regarding the total acreage destroyed by the wildfires. However, initial assessments indicated that approximately 200 families, or 800 individuals, were affected across 24 villages in the Toledo district. The majority of the damage was related to agricultural lands and crop destruction rather than residential areas, though the smoke was reported to have caused respiratory distress.

At the time of the initial assessment, over 600 acres of agricultural land had been destroyed. This destruction occurred during the harvest season, when many crops were either almost ready for collection or had already been harvested and stored on farms to dry after a prolonged dry season. Unfortunately, this meant that many families lost not only their harvest but also stored crops, significantly impacting their livelihoods

Source Information

Source Name	Source Link
1. Government of Belize Press office - Update on NEMO's Response to Fires Near San Pedro Columbia	https://www.pressooffice.gov.bz/update-on-nemos-response-to-fires-near-san-pedro-columbia/
2. Wildfires Destroy Cadenas Outpost; Displace Several Families in Toledo	https://edition.channel5belize.com/wildfires-destroy-cadenas-outpost-displace-several-families-in-toledo/
3. Ya'axche Field Station Surrounded By Wildfires	https://www.7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=70328
4. Fires Trigger State Of Public Emergency In Toledo	https://www.7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=70292
5. Cayo District Reports Wildfires Amid Unusual Dry Season and Extreme Heat	https://lovefm.com/cayo-district-reports-wildfires-amid-unusual-dry-season-and-extreme-heat/
6. Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve Wildfires Threaten Flora and Fauna	https://lovefm.com/mountain-pine-ridge-forest-reserve-wildfires-threaten-flora-and-fauna/
7. Government of Belize Press office - Ministry of Blue Economy and Disaster Risk Management Establishes National Wildfire Response Task Force	https://www.pressooffice.gov.bz/ministry-of-blue-economy-and-disaster-risk-management-establishes-national-wildfire-response-task-force/
8. NEMO speaks on wildfires causing loss of thousands of acres	https://amandala.com.bz/news/nemo-speaks-on-wildfires-causing-loss-of-thousands-of-acres/
9. Government of Belize Press office -NEMO Responds to Fires Near San Pedro Columbia	https://www.pressooffice.gov.bz/nemo-responds-to-fires-near-san-pedro-columbia/



National Society Actions

Have the National Society conducted any intervention additionally to those part of this DREF Operation?

No

IFRC Network Actions Related To The Current Event

Secretariat

The IFRC's Port of Spain Country Cluster Delegation maintained close coordination with the Belize Red Cross Society. On May 26, a meeting with the National Society and Americas Regional technical units was convened to assess the situation and determine next steps. Following this, the National Society requested the activation of a DREF operation in response to the wildfires in the Cayo and Toledo districts. The IFRC also facilitated the deployment of surge personnel to support the National Society in implementing the operation's plan of action at the local level.

Participating National Societies

The Canadian Red Cross and the American Red Cross supported the National Society with technical assistance through surge personnel in CVA Preparedness (CVAp) and Operations Management

ICRC Actions Related To The Current Event

ICRC is not present in country

Other Actors Actions Related To The Current Event

Government has requested international assistance

No

National authorities

Operations/Mobilization of Resources:
NEMO Emergency Committees supported the affected population through the Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis Committee, as well as Search and Rescue (Fire Suppression) operations led by the Fire Department and the Belize Defense Force.

On May 24, the Ministry of Blue Economy and Disaster Risk Management prioritized the establishment of the National Wildfire Response Task Force, led by NEMO, to provide an immediate response. The Task Force met regularly to coordinate operations across the country.

The National Wildfire Response Task Force included the National Fire Service, the Forest Department, the Association of Protected Management Organizations (APAMO), the Belize Tourism Board, the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing, the National Association of Village Councils, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, the Belize Defense Force, and Astrum Helicopters.

Additionally, NEMO engaged the Belize Red Cross to support national efforts in responding to the needs of the affected population

UN or other actors

N/A

Are there major coordination mechanism in place?

As a member state of CDEMA, Belize's NEMO is integrated into CDEMA's response system. Following a request for support from NEMO to CDEMA, the Caribbean Development Partners Group – Disaster Management convened on May 28. During this meeting, NEMO's



Director briefed regional humanitarian partners on the situation in Belize and the national response efforts. CDEMA and its regional partners, including the Red Cross, shared updates on ongoing and planned interventions to support the response. Coordination and follow-up meetings continue along the operation implementation at national and local levels

Needs (Gaps) Identified



Livelihoods And Basic Needs

Agricultural land in the Toledo District has been most keenly affected by the wildfires. Farms were primarily impacted by the fires, resulting in the loss of crops and livestock. Livestock impacted include chicks, chickens, turkeys, and ducks. Farming assets lost include barbed wire, farm sheds, storage, spray pumps, among other assets. An exhaustive list of crops that have been lost includes staple cash crops such as cassava, tomatoes, plantain, sweet potatoes, and beans. A full list of impacted crops and the estimated monetary damages have been provided in the needs assessment. The estimated total value of losses to the agricultural sector by the Forestry Department in Belizean dollars is 8 million dollars. Of the farms that were accessible, approximately six hundred plus (600+) acres of agricultural crops and livestock were lost. In addition, this period is the usual land preparation time for replanting for the upcoming crop season. However, many farmers had crops stored in the field from the previous planting season and were unable to secure their harvest before the fires.

Based on the information provided and local media reports, farmers presented high needs of livelihood support. Livelihood interventions were aimed to take the form of multipurpose cash grants which allowed those most keenly affected to make their own decisions regarding their main needs in rebuilding their lives and livelihoods.

It should be noted that at the time of the initial damage assessment conducted by NEMO, not all farmers were available. Therefore, upon completion of those assessments, more communities might be identified, which will increase the number of communities needing assistance.



Multi purpose cash grants

Agricultural land in the Toledo District was the most severely impacted by the wildfires, with farms suffering significant losses of crops, livestock, and farming assets. Livestock losses included chicks, chickens, turkeys, and ducks, while farming assets such as barbed wire, farm sheds, storage facilities, and spray pumps were also destroyed. Staple cash crops, including cassava, tomatoes, plantain, sweet potatoes, and beans, were lost. A detailed list of affected crops and the estimated monetary damages, valued at approximately BZD 8 million by the Forestry Department, was documented in the needs assessment.

Approximately 600 acres of agricultural land, crops, and livestock were destroyed. The fires coincided with the critical land preparation period for the upcoming planting season, leaving many farmers unable to secure their stored harvests from the previous season. As a result, farmers required urgent livelihood support to recover.

One farmer from San Pedro Colombia described the situation: "We gotta go back and plant back, start back at square one; we have to just plant all the trees that we lost, all the corn, the beans, everything. Some farmers are, if you can see, it's all burnt. The avocado tree over there, the cacao tree, it's all dry, it's all gone, so now we have to start back, we have to plant back again."

In response, livelihood interventions included multipurpose cash grants, enabling affected farmers to address their priority needs and begin rebuilding their lives and livelihoods. These interventions aligned with the findings of the needs assessment and the expressed needs of the affected communities.



Health

The National Disaster Office (NEMO) requested support from the Belize Red Cross Society to mobilize First Aid Teams to assist community first responders in addressing the fires. Key needs included treating burns, smoke inhalation, and eye irritation caused by prolonged exposure to ash and smoke. To ensure responders' safety, NEMO requested the provision of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including leather boots, goggles, masks, and gloves, along with additional first aid kits equipped for burn treatment. These items were successfully deployed to the Toledo and Cayo districts.

The psychosocial impact on those who lost their livelihoods was significant. A local farmer highlighted the devastation, stating, "It's so sad



for some of the people that are so far in the jungle with their crop trying to do their best, but it's very difficult to assist them there," describing the fire's destruction as "devastating".



Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

The initial needs assessment, supported by the Caribbean Development Partners Group (CDPG) meeting on May 28th, 2024, identified an urgent need for hygiene and cleaning kits to address critical water, sanitation, and hygiene (WATSAN) gaps in fire-affected communities. Timely distributions and coordination with partners were required to ensure essential support to households, while community feedback highlighted the relevance of the assistance provided. Emerging needs, such as crop recovery and pest control, underscored the importance of integrated recovery efforts.



Community Engagement And Accountability

The integration of minimum actions on Community Engagement and Accountability within the operation was considered a key need to success in an adequate response. Engaging community members in decisions regarding their own needs was necessary considering the planned actions. By doing this, the BRCS ensured that the perspectives of all groups, particularly those most affected were considered. By involving the community, the affected population could help identifying specific local challenges and developing tailored solutions that are more likely to be accepted and supported. This CEA approach ensures that interventions are culturally appropriate and effective. Furthermore, it fosters active community participation builds a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Operational Strategy

Overall objective of the operation

Through the IFRC-DREF, the Belize Red Cross Society reached 200 families (800 people), primarily farmers, who lost their crops due to the wildfires, as well as 50 community first responders, over 4 months at the request of the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) of the Government of Belize. Assistance was provided through the implementation of activities in Health, WASH, and Multipurpose Cash & Voucher Assistance with a focus on a cross-cutting Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) as a comprehensive approach. Interventions were limited to the Toledo District based on the initial needs assessment conducted by NEMO. Overall interventions allowed the Belize Red Cross to reach 1,020 people

Operation strategy rationale

The Belize Wildfires DREF response strategy addressed immediate needs while adapting to emerging challenges through ongoing assessments and community engagement. Key interventions included the distribution of PPE and first aid kits to first responders, dissemination of health messages, and provision of hygiene and cleaning kits using pre-positioned stock for rapid deployment. The CVA program supported vulnerable groups identified via community consultations.

Adjustments focused on prioritizing accessible villages, expanding criteria to include additional vulnerable groups, and reallocating resources from less-utilized psychosocial support services. These changes enhanced efficiency and ensured an inclusive, impactful response.

The implementation of the strategy was based on the needs identified originally by NEMO and the request for assistance by the NEMO to the BRCS

Targeting Strategy

Who was targeted by this operation?

The operation targeted farmers in the rural communities of the Toledo District most affected by wildfires. The intervention focused on the villages of Aguacate, Blue Creek, Crique Jute, Jordan, Na Luum Ca, Mafredi, San Antonio, San Jose, San Pedro Colombia. These communities were selected based on assessments conducted by NEMO on-site during the event, their proximity to Punta Gorda (PG), which served as the logistical hub, and their significant reliance on agriculture, which was severely impacted by the disaster



Explain the selection criteria for the targeted population

The initial needs assessment provided by NEMO indicates that 200 families (800 people) were impacted within the Toledo District.

- Farmers whose farms were mostly or completely burnt
- Farms were assessed by NEMO and presented to the BRCS for inclusion into the program

Total Assisted Population

Assisted Women	-	Rural	100%
Assisted Girls (under 18)	-	Urban	-
Assisted Men	-	People with disabilities (estimated)	1.5%
Assisted Boys (under 18)	-		
Total Assisted Population	800		
Total Targeted Population	800		

Risk and Security Considerations (including "management")

Does your National Society have anti-fraud and corruption policy?	Yes
Does your National Society have prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse policy?	Yes
Does your National Society have child protection/child safeguarding policy?	Yes
Does your National Society have whistleblower protection policy?	Yes
Does your National Society have anti-sexual harassment policy?	Yes

Please analyse and indicate potential risks for this operation, its root causes and mitigation actions.

Risk	Mitigation action
Limited connectivity in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication channels were established to ensure proper information sharing between teams in the field and BRC HQ. - A SAT phone was available throughout the operation. - To mitigate the risk of losing communication, the security team monitored and ensured that all field activities concluded at a predetermined hour each day
The target population misinterpreting the BRC's assistance, potentially causing undue harm due to perceived inequalities in the distribution of aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belize Red Cross Society closely coordinated with local authorities and community leaders to facilitate information gathering and ensure a timely and effective response to identified needs. - Community engagement actions were prioritized and roles and responsibilities between Belize Red Cross Society and NEMO were clarified. - Feedback mechanism was put in place.



Limitations on the implementation of actions due to difficult roads between PG and the various villages that limited internal travel

The Belize Red Cross Society rented a four-wheel-drive vehicle to ensure transportation met the necessary conditions for travel in rural Belize. Field trips using two vehicles was preferable.

Please indicate any security and safety concerns for this operation:

In the context of the operation to address the wildfires in Belize, there were additional safety and security issues that had to be carefully addressed to ensure the effectiveness of the humanitarian response. The most pressing concern was the threat of the ongoing fires. The wildfires posed significant safety risks to response personnel and communities. To ensure an effective response, the National Society enacted robust safety measures and evacuation protocols to protect field teams

Has the child safeguarding risk analysis assessment been completed?

No

Implementation



Multi Purpose Cash

Budget: CHF 54,954

Targeted Persons: 800

Assisted Persons: 800

Targeted Male: -

Targeted Female: -

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
Number of families reached with multipurpose cash transfer programme	200	204
Percentage of households receiving cash transfers who are satisfied with the amount and the timeliness of the assistance provided	80	98
Number of multipurpose cash feasibility assessments conducted in total	1	1
Percentage of requests for support received by cash help desk solved	80	0

Narrative description of achievements

The voucher program was a prioritized activity in this emergency response. The completed activities included:

Data was collected on-site during the fires by NEMO and lists were provided to the Belize Red Cross Society, while information on the vendor and supply markets used for various commodities was also collected by the Belize Red Cross. Challenges were encountered in accessing items and markets locally, for which a feasibility assessment was conducted, at the end two vendors were selected in Punta Gorda, contracted, and trained by the CVA team.

In coordination with NEMO, the Belize Red Cross Society prioritized nine villages out of the original 24 affected. These were served with food and non-food items (F/NFI) to proceed with the CVA program. Seven of the nine villages were the original ones assigned to the BRCS by NEMO, while two were added by the team for accessibility and given the selection criteria. The final villages included were: Aguacate, Blue Creek, Crique Jute, Jordan, Na Luum Ca, Mafredi, San Antonio, San Jose, San Pedro Colombia.

After prioritization, a CVA verification survey was conducted in the nine villages with the beneficiaries on the list provided by NEMO. A few additional individuals were included in the program after being identified by community leaders as being among the most vulnerable, either due to age or disability, and based on the extent to which they were impacted by the wildfires but missed by NEMO.



Following the analysis, 204 of the most vulnerable households were selected for participation, properly registered and informed of the assistance by text message and official invitation letters were sent to community leaders.

Based on local needs and context, the paper voucher from the IFRC was valued at BZD 500 each, and an additional voucher funded by the IDB of BZD 400 each. Families also received bus fare and freight fare to support their visit to the distribution site and the vendors.

The CVA distribution was completed over four distribution days at the BRCS Punta Gorda Branch reaching 204 households. Volunteers were present at vendor sites during the distribution days to ensure smooth implementation. It is important to note that some heads of households registered at the initial stage were unable to be present in the distribution phase. Farms are often registered under the name of the male head of the household if he is the main farmer. As such, the NEMO lists were provided using the head of household name. Note also that farmers were often occupied in their farms, cleaning after the wildfires, and replanting to take advantage of the rainy season which commenced during this operation

To address this, solutions were identified for proxies, such as spouses or elder children, who presented themselves to receive distributions on behalf of the head of household. During the CVA verification process, it appeared that this was a significant number of cases. To verify the proxies' identities, the team worked with local leaders, such as chairpersons and community leaders. Verification was further conducted using the original beneficiary details.

For the CVA distribution, farmers were asked to come in person with their identification cards to receive the vouchers. However, given limitations on time, all 9 villages had to be accommodated within 4 distribution days. While most primary recipients did attend in person, some still sent their proxies. To address this issue, the BRCS team requested that persons present the identification card of the registered individual alongside their own. Lists of secondary persons associated with the primary person were also kept for accountability. Based on this experience, it is recommended that consent forms are used in the future to allow primary beneficiaries to designate secondary recipients formally.

After the distributions, a CVA validation survey was conducted to 202 households, which also served to better collect family information and assess post distribution satisfaction. Survey was implemented as follows: 76 consultations were conducted in the community of San Jose and Na Luum Ca, 39 households were approached, while an additional 37 program participants were surveyed across the communities of Aguacate and Crique Jute, while 50 were implemented among Jordan, Mafredi, San Pedro, Blue Creek and San Antonio villages.

The 202 households surveyed, among these, 127 households had children under the age of 14 years (total of 275 children), while 49 households had elderly persons over the age of 65 with a total of 72 elderly persons benefitting from this program (this data was not collected by gender disaggregation). Representing the households in the surveys were 35 women and 167 men (of the missing data, one was male, and one was female). Of all children under the ages of 18 years, 8 had chronic illnesses, 5 lived with disabilities, 1 was bedridden, and 6 required psychosocial support. For all elderly persons in the households, respondents reported 35 persons with chronic illnesses, 10 living with disabilities, 5 who were bedridden, and 5 who required psychosocial support.

When asked about the level of damage persons experienced on their farms due to the wildfires, 68% of households (139/202) reported that they were completely destroyed. Regarding the impact that wildfires had on their income, 57% reported that all of their income was affected by the wildfires. Overall, the Post-distribution monitoring (PDM) exercise was conducted by the Belize Red Cross in October 2024 through the technical support of the CVA regional coordinator. The PDM provided valuable insights into risks, participant satisfaction, and the program's effectiveness and for continuous improvement for future CVA programs).

Lessons Learnt

- Full-time National Society personnel acting as operational leads and dedicated CVA focal points are essential to enhance programme efficiency and effectiveness in future responses.
- Documentation and processes should be standardized, with a stronger emphasis on preparedness ahead of future crises.
- A more robust verification process should be established to strengthen preparedness, potentially in collaboration with government agencies.
- Data and information management systems must be digitalized and managed effectively. Profiles should be created for affected individuals, and data should be collected by profile rather than by activity.
- Data collected on-site by other organizations needs to be better triangulated to ensure accuracy and reliability.
- The CVA model empowered recipients to make choices based on their individual needs. However, the availability of vendors and items should be expanded to improve the programme's impact.
- Clear and consistent communication protocols should be implemented to keep all community members, particularly in rural areas, informed about programme timelines and expectations.
- Flexible CVA models, such as offering options like cheques or digital payments, should be introduced to cater to diverse community preferences and address infrastructure constraints in rural areas.



- Localized needs assessments should be conducted prior to distributions to ensure resources are appropriately targeted, reducing redundancy and addressing specific community needs

Challenges

- Limitations in reaching the farms to conduct assessments in person by BRCS/IFRC due to the remoteness of the villages.
- The use and carrying of personal identification was occasionally uncommon among community members, making it necessary to rely on some chairpersons to confirm the identity of certain individuals during the verification process. However, IDs were required at the distribution stage, and this approach proved effective. Bridges flooding and bus schedules played a key role in the scheduling of the distribution dates in town.
- Many persons registered sent proxies to be registered and/or to receive the support
- Survey data collected was sometimes confusing and human input errors contributed to a lot of time spent later cleaning datasets.
- Loss of some physical documents in the field (which was recovered later) could have contributed to a data confidentiality breach
- Security concerns in the field included a lack of phone networks. VHF/SAT phones should therefore be allocated to these remote locations. Ensure use of 4-wheel drive cars. Rentals are a risk.
- Delayed receipt of tranche transfers from donor and delayed journal reporting affected the timeline of activities



Budget: CHF 30,747

Targeted Persons: 300

Assisted Persons: 300

Targeted Male: -

Targeted Female: -

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
Number of community members informed with key prevention health messages	300	300
Number of people (first responders, community, and volunteers) assisted through psychosocial support services	100	50

Narrative description of achievements

In the National Society's original response plan, the two indicators - # of community first responders and # of first aid responders provided with PPE - were combined into a single target of 65 individuals for this activity. A total of 65 community first responders and first aid responders received PPE, distributed as follows: 35 in Toledo District, 20 in Cayo District, and 10 in Belize District. The PPE kits excluded boots as the available options did not meet the required standard for fire conditions; their plastic soles were unsuitable for withstanding the heat.

The National Society partnered with the Ministry of Health to coordinate and disseminate key prevention health messages on mosquito-borne diseases, especially dengue and zika. In the last weeks of BRC's response, almost a thousand confirmed dengue cases were registered in the country, most of them coming out of the Toledo District. The BRC disseminated preventive key messages during the relief and the CVA distributions.

Initially, NEMO assigned the BRCS responsibility for providing psychosocial support (PSS) to those affected by the wildfires. The National Society gauged community interest in PSS while participating in assessments carried out by NEMO during the ongoing wildfires. However, differing accounts from community members indicated a low level of interest in psychosocial support, making it a challenging activity to implement in the program. Despite this, 50 individuals received psychosocial support services during the initial days of the emergency in the villages of Dolores, San Pedro Colombia, and San Antonio. Additionally, the IFRC CCD in coordination with the Regional Logistics Unit, initiated a completed the replenishment process for 30 first aid kits, which arrived in Belize City by 19 September. to ensure continuity in the response for future events.



Lessons Learnt

- Items specifically needed to respond to wildfires and support first responders can be maintained in storage for future responses and pre-stocked by the NS.
- Documentation of distributions need to be standardized
- Interventions for PSS should be community-led and evidence-based Staff/volunteers who are trained in PSS could work with communities during non-crisis times to better understand their needs and engage them

Challenges

- Lack of available vendors that could align to quality standards. This brought some delays in the final acquisition of the PPE.
- Implementing mental health activities continues to be a challenge due to reduced interest from communities in receiving this service, for which awareness sessions are still required to reduce the stigma



Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

Budget: CHF 19,383

Targeted Persons: 800

Assisted Persons: 800

Targeted Male: -

Targeted Female: -

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
Number of hygiene kits distributed	200	223
Number of cleaning kits distributed	200	200

Narrative description of achievements

The BRCS reached 223 households in the prioritized districts through the distribution of 223 hygiene kits, while 200 households received cleaning kits. The effectiveness in the response was due to the pre-positioned stock the BRCS had in their warehouses, which allowed a rapid mobilization of items. Through the IFRC, DREF kits distributed were replenished.

These distributions were conducted in coordination with the IDB, who provided 1,109 food and 200 water packages.

In addition, a total of 239 households were interviewed in a satisfaction survey during both food and non-food item distributions, where the overall response was positive. 99% of respondents agreed that the quality of the assistance was good, and that the response received was aligned with community needs. Main questions were:

1. Do you feel the assistance you received today is of good quality? (yes, somewhat, no)
2. Was the support you received today respectful to your needs? (yes, somewhat, no)

Farmers also reported concerns about a new issue affecting crops planted after the fire, particularly rice and corn. They observed significant damage caused by insects and army worms, which prevented the corn from reaching maturity. These concerns have been brought to the attention of the Belize Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for appropriate action and intervention

Lessons Learnt

- Registration processes need to be improved, particularly regarding standardization of documentation to prevent loss of physical data, better accuracy and less confusion over numbers, and confidentiality issues.
- Constantly maintain communication with teams deployed to ensure their security, it is recommended to better travel in four-wheel cars and alternate phone access (VHF/SAT) need to be in place



Challenges

- Limitation in the distribution registration process
- Accessing to the communities prioritized represented a challenge to the BRCS as roads are in poor conditions and there is a lack of connectivity, which limits communications. It was registered that one team member was stranded for most of a day without help or phone network. Post this occurrence, volunteers travelled by teams and strict working hours in the communities were established to maintain volunteers' security



Community Engagement And Accountability

Budget: CHF 1,864

Targeted Persons: 5

Assisted Persons: 8

Targeted Male: -

Targeted Female: -

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
% people satisfied with receiving distributed items of good quality and with dignity	80	98
Number of community consultation meetings	5	6

Narrative description of achievements

Prior to the post distribution survey, six focus group discussions were conducted with a total of 106 participants (72 Male; 34 Female) across the villages of Santa Theresa, Jordan, Aguacate, Blue Creek, Mafredi and San Marcus with the aim to collect data to set up the CVA program. Qualitative data was gathered regarding the urgent and priority needs within each community, including CVA preferences.

In addition, pamphlets highlighting the eligibility criteria were created and taken to the communities during the verification process, which were distributed in the focus groups sessions. Posters in English and Spanish (Mayan is mostly an oral language) providing instructions on the use the vouchers and on feedback/complaint mechanisms were on display at the distribution sites.

Information desks at distribution sites were also available and provided explanations on program details including feedback mechanisms which were also available on the vouchers physically. Volunteers were placed at the vendors on the distribution days only to support families with further questions, relay any concerns by the vendors, and to conduct brief satisfaction surveys with the families. The volunteers also took this opportunity to disseminate key health messages given an increase in mosquito borne disease cases in the region at the time.

Some of the CVA preferences results, as elaborated on in the feasibility study were that the population normally paid with cash to purchase their basic items. However, approximately 60% of people never visit an ATM, claiming that most of them do not have a bank account or that the distance is far too much

These answers, allowed the team to plan the CVA programme based on the preferences of the population.

Furthermore, satisfaction surveys were conducted to 54 households with the aim to understand households' perception and satisfaction on the aid provided. In that sense, the survey consisted on the following four questions.

1. How do you feel it went today when receiving the voucher? (1 = very dissatisfied with the process, 2 = somewhat dissatisfied with the process, 3 = neutral with the process, 4 = somewhat satisfied with the process, 5 = very satisfied with the process)
2. Please rate how satisfied you are with the choice of goods made available to you today (1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = somewhat dissatisfied, 3 = neutral, 4 = somewhat satisfied, 5 = very satisfied)
3. Do you know why you were selected for this program?
4. At any point today, did you feel uncomfortable by anything that anyone did or said to you? (If yes, enter the answer in the remarks question box.)



For the first question, 50 respondents were very satisfied with the process of receiving the voucher, three were somewhat satisfied, and one somewhat dissatisfied. For the second question, 36 respondents were very satisfied, 17 were satisfied, and 1 was somewhat dissatisfied with the choice of goods made available that day, the latter explained that the seeds the farmers needed were not available at these vendors (cacao seedlings, mainly).

All respondents, when answering the third question, were aware they were selected for the program due to their farms being affected by the wildfires, showing selection criteria was well understood by the population.

For the fourth question, six respondents answered that they felt uncomfortable during the day. Only two respondents registered their complaints in the remarks and they indicated that it was due to the lack of seeds available, the amount for seeds (BZD 400) being too much for seeds and could be used for other items, and that the quality and type of seeds sold did not align with their needs as they prefer to use heritage or native seeds of their own villages whereas the ones sold at the shops tends to germinate in a limited manner or do not produce a good harvest, according to them.

Generally speaking, the 54 respondents were pleased and grateful for the support by the BRCS actions. Many expressed their satisfaction at having the opportunity to select the items they wanted and need for themselves from the stores to support their farms and livelihoods. As reported by the vendors, many households were unable to use the full seeds voucher and tried to use it to buy other items, which was not possible. Additionally, the vendors explained that farmers were focused on purchasing items for their farms using the unrestricted IFRC voucher, even though there were items available for purchase which were unrelated. A few affected persons asked BRCS staff and volunteers whether they could purchase groceries, which indicated that some level of food insecurity still exists in the communities. They were flagged to be assisted again when the BRCS continued its food distribution by IDB donor

Lessons Learnt

- Maintain relationship-building with community leaders during non-crisis periods to foster trust, collaboration, and preparedness for future emergencies.
- The strength, organization, and commitment of community leaders (e.g., chairpersons or alcaldes) play a critical role in community engagement and participation. Cohesive communities with active leadership are easier to work with, while in areas with less engaged leaders, other members stepped up to relay information, especially in areas where phone coverage was low or in remote areas like San Jose village.
- Conduct feasibility studies and post-distribution surveys to gather essential information from communities. These tools are crucial for designing activities that address the specific needs of affected populations and should remain a key practice.

Challenges

- There were disagreements by the community leaders and the community members at the focus group discussions ahead of the verification process about the persons who were assessed by NEMO. Claims were made that not all those who were affected were duly documented.
- Language challenges with only the volunteer lead knowing all the languages of the communities.



Secretariat Services

Budget: CHF 28,755

Targeted Persons: 0

Assisted Persons: 0

Targeted Male: -

Targeted Female: -

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
Number of SURGE personnel support the operation	1	4
Number of IFRC monitoring and support missions	3	3



Narrative description of achievements

Through the IFRC-DREF SURGE process 4 personnel were deployed. The first rotation team arrived in the second week of July, one operations manager and a CVA officer. The operations manager stayed 3.5 weeks and the CVA officer stayed 6 weeks. The second rotation operations manager arrived beginning of August and stayed two months while the second rotation CVA officer arrived shortly afterwards and stayed one month. Teams in the field were constantly supported by the SURGE personnel to guide the National Society in the implementation of the activities based on the IFRC standards. Support from the POS CCD was also guaranteed at all times.

In addition, the IFRC Americas Regional Office (ARO) Communications team developed a communication strategy for the operation. A mission was conducted by the IFRC Regional Senior Communications Officer, who participated in the CVA and F/NFI distributions from 13-16 September to collect communication materials, including photos and videos for social media content. Additionally, the BRCS received a VHF radio as part of capacity strengthening efforts. The PoS CCD Country Plan Manager supported field monitoring from 13-16 September and provided further support to the National Society headquarters in Belize City until 19 September. The third IFRC support mission by the CVA regional coordinator was held in October to prioritize completing the post-distribution monitoring survey and analysis.

Lessons Learnt

- It is recommended that a single surge team remain for the duration of the operation to ensure smoother implementation and continuity of activities. Allocation and introduction of the new appeal manager would have been supportive to the operations manager in the field.
- It is necessary to have at least one member staff hired by the operation within the National Society to ensure activities are implemented and communications are ensured between IFRC and leadership.

Challenges

- The CVA officer's missions could have been better planned to ensure proper support to the National Society, especially in the analysis of action processes.
- The departure of the regional coordinator in the middle of the operation without advance notice left a technical and managerial gap.
- The National Society did not have the capacity to dedicate a full-time operations staff member to this response, which limited the implementation of activities. Alongside the wildfire response, the Belize Red Cross was managing two other ongoing programs that already occupied the Disaster Management focal points. Surge personnel worked with National Society management to carry out the program, but this required extensive communication and frequent approvals to ensure alignment.



National Society Strengthening

Budget: CHF 22,458

Targeted Persons: 50

Assisted Persons: 37

Targeted Male: -

Targeted Female: -

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
Number of volunteers involved in response who are insured	50	37
% of operational staff and volunteers receiving a security briefing	100	86
Number of Lessons Learned Workshops	1	1

Narrative description of achievements

A total of 37 volunteers (13 male and 24 female) participated actively in the operation. The BRCS Volunteer and Youth Development Officer submitted insurance subscription forms for all volunteers, and the certificates of insurance were completed. Security briefings and



safety training were conducted, reaching 32 out of the 37 volunteers, while the remaining 5 were unable to join remotely. In the field, briefings and debriefings were held with volunteers before and after each activity, including relevant safety and security reminders.

The National Society also engaged volunteers from outside the prioritised districts, enabling the BRC to better support activities, including assisting NEMO with the fire response in the Cayo District. During programme implementation, 14 volunteers were deployed on-site to support activities in the Toledo District.

To enhance volunteer safety, visibility vests were provided to ensure proper identification of National Society volunteers, serving as an additional security measure.

A BRC wildfire response lessons learned workshop was held on October 25, 2024, facilitated by representatives from the IFRC Port of Spain Country Cluster Delegation with support from the National Society. Participants included Red Cross staff, community leaders, volunteers, and national disaster response focal points. The outcomes of this session have been incorporated into this report, and the full lessons learned report is available for further reference.

Lessons Learnt

Increasing volunteer recruitment year-round and expanding beyond the existing pool of individuals could prove beneficial. Volunteers involved in an operation need to have minimum training in Information Management as they are on the field collecting data. It has become a need to ensure teams are able to properly manage this field assessments to optimize time.

Challenges

- Despite having good reception and willingness from volunteers to implement activities, the number of volunteers actually available was sometimes low for operational needs.
- It remains as a key priority to strengthen information management capacities to volunteers as some limitations were encountered when collecting data in the field



Financial Report

DREF Operation

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

MDRBZ008 - Belize - Fires

Operating Timeframe: 06 Jun 2024 to 31 Oct 2024

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2024/5-2025/6	Operation	MDRBZ008
Budget Timeframe	2024-2025	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 23/Jul/2025

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

I. Summary

Opening Balance	0
Funds & Other Income	158,160
DREF Response Pillar	158,160
Expenditure	-126,713
Closing Balance	31,447

II. Expenditure by area of focus / strategies for implementation

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
AOF1 - Disaster risk reduction	9,654	530	9,124
AOF2 - Shelter			0
AOF3 - Livelihoods and basic needs	51,600	60,402	-8,802
AOF4 - Health	28,870	14,554	14,316
AOF5 - Water, sanitation and hygiene	18,200	17,525	675
AOF6 - Protection, Gender & Inclusion			0
AOF7 - Migration			0
Area of focus Total	108,324	93,012	15,312
SF11 - Strengthen National Societies	22,836	20,919	1,918
SF12 - Effective international disaster management			0
SF13 - Influence others as leading strategic partners			0
SF14 - Ensure a strong IFRC	27,000	12,782	14,218
Strategy for implementation Total	49,836	33,701	16,136
Grand Total	158,160	126,713	31,447

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

Please explain variances (if any)

A total of CHF 158,160 was allocated from the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) for the implementation of this operation. By the end of the operation, total expenditures amounted to CHF 126,673. The unspent balance of CHF 31,487 will be returned to the DREF.



Contact Information

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[Click here for reference](#)

