



Volunteers deployed for Election Preparedness in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro training for First Aid

Appeal: MDRZA017	Total DREF Allocation: CHF 167,795	Crisis Category: Yellow	Hazard: Other
Glide Number: -	People Affected: 3,000,000 people	People Targeted: 30,000 people	People Assisted: 25,857 people
Event Onset: Slow	Operation Start Date: 10-05-2024	Operational End Date: 31-07-2024	Total Operating Timeframe: 2 months
Targeted Regions: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, Kwazulu-natal, Mpumalanga, North-west, Western Cape			

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, German, 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 of South Africa

Approximate date of impact

The South Africa 2024 National General Election took place on the 29th of May 2024. As a country with a history of frequent protests often tied to dissatisfaction with service delivery, the South African Red Cross Society (SARCS) applied for a DREF to prepare for potential protests. Despite the results published on the 2nd of June 2024, showing the possibility of a coalition government, the whole election process was peaceful, highlighting the importance of SARCS's preparedness.

Provide any updates in the situation since the field report and explain what is expected to happen.

In response to the 2024 national election in South Africa, the South African Red Cross Society (SARCS) took proactive measures to ensure the safety and well-being of communities amidst concerns of heightened tensions and potential unrest. Recognizing the risks of election-related violence and disruptions, SARCS mobilized its resources to provide medical assistance and psychosocial support in areas that were predicted to be prone to protests and unrest. The organization worked closely with local authorities, community leaders, and other humanitarian organizations to set up first aid stations, distribute essential supplies, supporting and escorting those participating in voting at the various polling stations.

Additionally, the South African Red Cross Society focused on promoting peace and non-violence throughout the election period. Through various outreach programs, SARCS engaged with communities to raise awareness about the importance of peaceful participation in the democratic process. Volunteers and staff conducted workshops and information sessions, emphasizing the need for tolerance and understanding among different political groups. SARCS also provided security training for staff and volunteers to help prevent the escalation of tensions in communities, which contributed to the peaceful environment during the election period.



SARCS Volunteers providing services on election day at one of the voting polling station



SARCS first aid volunteer treating a injuries for one of the people who were fighting at a polling station

Scope and Scale

The 2024 general elections in South Africa occurred against a backdrop of significant socio-political tension, with concerns about potential electoral violence that could impact lives, livelihoods, well-being, and infrastructure across various regions. However, the election period remained peaceful, with no major incidents reported, which was a relief given the historical context and the outcome of the elections.

High-risk areas such as Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), the Eastern Cape, and parts of the Western Cape were particularly vulnerable due to their dense urban centers and history of political clashes. Despite these concerns, these regions did not experience the expected unrest. Medium-risk provinces like Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and North-West also remained calm, with only sporadic disturbances that were quickly managed. The Free State and Northern Cape, traditionally low-risk areas due to their historically peaceful elections, continued their usual trend.

Vulnerable groups, including the elderly, children, people with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and residents of informal settlements, who were at risk due to their socio-economic conditions and proximity to politically sensitive areas, fortunately did not face significant threats during the elections. Historical precedents, such as the July 2021 unrest and the 2008 xenophobic attacks, highlighted the potential dangers of electoral violence, which the NS wanted to avoid by all means, but the peaceful 2024 election period was well managed with minimum disturbances.

The South African Red Cross Society (SARCS), leveraging lessons from past elections, prepared targeted interventions to mitigate risks, particularly in high-risk areas. Their readiness and response plans highlighted the importance of being prepared to safeguard vulnerable communities. However, the peaceful nature of the 2024 elections was a testament to the effectiveness of these strategic efforts, ensuring a stable and secure environment for the electoral process.

While the elections went in a relative calm, there were some protests recorded, especially in May and mainly in KZN and Gauteng, necessitating a response. Main incidents context included:

- Polling Station Disruptions – Protests over missing ballot papers evolved into service delivery demonstrations, leading to police intervention and injuries.
- Youth Involvement & Escalation – some youth joined protests associated with alcohol consumption were reported to contribute to troubles reported, gender-based violence, and theft, requiring NS first aid response.

- The conditions in polling stations and gatherings, especially for vulnerable groups were generating Health concerns with cases of dehydration & Medical Referrals needed in the voting points and surrounding areas.

Source Information

Source Name	Source Link
1. Mail&Guardian	https://mg.co.za/news/2024-04-24-concourt-to-hear-iecs-appeal-to-mk-party-ruling/
2. Justice and Crime Prevention Cluster, SA Government	https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/justice-crime-prevention-and-security-cluster-ministers-outline-state
3. Experts analysis - Oxford	https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/resource/south-africa-what-the-july-unrest-tells-us-about-the-2024-elections/
4. Africa News	https://www.africanews.com/tag/south-africa-protests/
5. Government Parliament official website	https://www.parliament.gov.za/national-assembly
6. SABC News	https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/timeline-the-july-unrest-that-left-the-country-crippled/
7. Bussiness Live	https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/politics/2024-04-26-zuma-mk-party-given-until-tuesday-to-file-papers-in-iec-application/
8. Local Media	https://www.news24.com/southafrica/news/disruptions-at-polling-stations-either-thwarted-or-delayed-voting-20240529

National Society Actions

Have the National Society conducted any intervention additionally to those part of this DREF Operation?	No
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IFRC Network Actions Related To The Current Event

Secretariat	In the context of election response, IFRC actively supported SARCS through the Pretoria Cluster Office. The IFRC supported SARCS team with PMER, Finance, and Programs expertise to ensure smooth implementation of the intervention. The teams committed to biweekly calls as a platform for information exchange and this was also a platform where critical operational decisions were made.
Participating National Societies	N/A

ICRC Actions Related To The Current Event

The ICRC, through its Southern Africa Delegation Office, contributed to the election preparedness efforts of SARCS, focusing specifically on humanitarian principles and access. The ICRC’s involvement primarily centered around providing training on the Safer Access Framework to help the National Society gain safer and more effective access to affected populations during times of armed conflict or other disturbances, such as elections. The ICRC supported SARCS through workshops, simulations, and advisory services, enhancing their capacity to operate safely in potentially volatile electoral contexts.



Other Actors Actions Related To The Current Event

Government has requested international assistance	No
National authorities	The Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) undertook comprehensive measures to prepare for the general elections, ensuring safety and order during this pivotal time. The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) co-led these efforts by coordinating with various government agencies to enhance security and manage logistics. This coordination involved the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), which ramped up security operations to monitor hotspots for election-related violence and ensure the protection of voters and polling stations. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) played a crucial role by managing the electoral process, and setting up robust mechanisms to ensure that elections were free, fair, and transparent. This included voter education campaigns, efficient handling of the electoral rolls, and ensuring that all polling stations were equipped with the necessary materials and staffed by trained personnel. Additionally, the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) was activated to address any emergencies or natural disasters that might have occurred during the election period, ensuring a swift governmental response to maintain public safety and infrastructure integrity. Together, these entities worked in a coordinated manner to uphold the democratic process and ensure that elections were conducted smoothly and peacefully. Furthermore, the South African Red Cross Society (SARCS), as an auxiliary to the Government and its Departments responsible for humanitarian and social affairs, was well-positioned to assist during the election period and ensured a holistic approach to addressing humanitarian needs through provision of first aid and psychosocial first aid, which included escorting elders and people with disabilities during elections at the polling stations.
UN or other actors	The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) collaborated with the National Society (NS) on election preparedness even in previous years. Through this collaboration, SARCS staff and volunteers participated in 'Elections Observer' training to attain "Observer Status" in line with IEC regulations. Additionally, SARCS was prepared to provide first aid services at identified voting stations if needed.

Are there major coordination mechanism in place?

SARCS participated in the National Joint Coordination on the National and Provincial Elections led by the Department of Cooperative Governance, and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC). This was a major coordination mechanism specifically designed to oversee the smooth execution of national, provincial, and regional elections. This mechanism served as a pivotal platform for various government entities to collaborate effectively. Its primary role was to synchronize efforts across different levels of government and ensure that all aspects of election preparedness—from security to logistics—were comprehensively managed. This coordination involved key stakeholders such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), and other relevant agencies, who worked together to address potential risks and implement preventive measures. By fostering a united response framework, this coordination mechanism enhanced the government's capacity to manage and respond to any issues that might have arisen during the election process, thereby ensuring that elections were conducted smoothly and without disruption.

Needs (Gaps) Identified



The South African Red Cross Society remained on standby to provide health and humanitarian support during the 2024 elections. Due to the peaceful nature of the election, there was no need for large-scale intervention to support communities, however, due to some public safety threats raised by sporadic protests and security incidents, there were some injuries and pre-hospital care services needed. Among



the few incidents reported with injuries mainly in KZN, Gauteng. Among the main events that were considered in the risk analysis in May and during polling days, there were:

- Polling stations disruptions caused by gaps in crowd management with long queue involving many vulnerable people with fragile health conditions. There was also a reported event of protests over missing ballot papers evolved into service delivery demonstrations, leading to police intervention and injuries. In some polling stations, the youth came intoxicated, and they started joining protests by political party supporters, which further escalated the protests, resulting in more injuries, gender-based violence, and stealing of people's belongings. The NS had to provide first aid to the injured, especially in KZN and Gauteng.
- Actions of theft and alcoholism in surrounding locations and few protest over missing ballots papers.

Due to the long queues and delays at voting stations, a lot of people were dehydrated and referred to hospitals. Especially the vulnerable groups such as pregnant and lactating women, the disabled, the elderly. The queue and the management in the polling stations increased that situation.

As a result, SARCS had to maintained a strategic Deployment of the first aid responders and respond to alerts at polling stations; community centers but also nearby areas such as youth gathering places. Response teams were positioned to support peaceful voting and manage disruptions.



Protection, Gender And Inclusion

It was imperative that if the elections led to widespread violence and population displacement, the affected population was anticipated to being potentially at a higher risk of protection concerns which included sexual and gender-based violence and violence against children. The elderly, persons with disabilities, women, girls, and children were anticipated to require support in an event of violence.



Migration And Displacement

Migration and displacement were considered in the projected scenario were SARCS prepared to address specific needs related to migration and displacement through the provision of the Restoring Family Links (RFL) program. The program focused on locating individuals, restoring contact between separated family members, and facilitating reunifications where possible.

SARCS also prepared to provide psychological support to affected individuals and disseminate information on safe practices and available services to migrants and displaced persons. This included distributing crucial information to ensure personal safety and access to essential services amidst the turmoil that could accompany elections. By addressing anticipated gaps in mental health support and information accessibility, SARCS aimed to enhance the resilience of affected communities.

The 2024 elections, despite being politically charged and marked by threats of disruption, proceeded without major violence. As a result, there was no need for the South African Red Cross to intervene in support of migrants or displaced populations.



Community Engagement And Accountability

SARCS prioritized Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) during the election period to ensure that its interventions were effective and attuned to the specific needs and expectations of the communities it serves. Recognizing that elections often heighten tensions and disrupt community dynamics, SARCS identified a critical need to bolster trust and improve communication channels between itself and the communities. This involved addressing the gap in understanding and acceptance of SARCS's role during crises, which was vital for ensuring both access to affected areas and the safety of volunteers and aid recipients.

To bridge these gaps, SARCS intensified its community outreach efforts with programs specifically designed to educate the public about SARCS's role and services, while actively seeking feedback from community members. This feedback was crucial for refining operational plans and making them more responsive to local needs. By engaging directly with the communities through organized meetings and interactive sessions, SARCS aimed to address any misconceptions and build a foundation of trust that facilitated smoother operations during the elections.

Furthermore, SARCS enhanced its transparency and accountability mechanisms. The organization expanded the use of social media and community meetings to ensure that communication remained open and accessible. These tools were not just for disseminating information but were also crucial for gathering real-time feedback and addressing any concerns that might have arisen. This strategic approach allowed SARCS to gain insights into local dynamics, adapt to evolving situations, and respect local customs and concerns, ultimately improving their election-related operations' effectiveness and community acceptance.

Operational Strategy

Overall objective of the operation

The overall objective of this operation was for the National Society to strategically position itself to effectively address the humanitarian needs that could have arisen from potential pre-election and post-election violence over the period of two months. The operation focused on providing first aid, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), community engagement and risk communication, as well as protection, gender, and inclusion (PGI) for those that were at risk or exposed to elections trouble risks.

Emphasis was placed on major metropolitan areas, townships, and rural regions, which had historically been hotspots for election-related violence and service delivery protests. This comprehensive approach included close collaboration with various partners and stakeholders, extensive training of volunteers, strategic prepositioning of supplies, and seamless integration into the national coordination frameworks led by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC). Through these coordinated efforts, the National Society aimed to respond promptly and efficiently to any emergencies, ensuring community safety and maintaining stability during the critical election period.

Operation strategy rationale

The South African Red Cross Society (SARCS) adopted a comprehensive approach to support community safety and resilience during the 2024 general elections. Drawing on its long-standing trust and acceptance within local communities, SARCS was able to access targeted locations and implement effective interventions. Its response strategy was guided by a detailed risk analysis, which shaped the phased actions undertaken throughout the electoral process.

During the readiness phase, SARCS responded to official alerts and national security assessments by organizing key preparedness activities. It trained 250 volunteers in emergency first aid and psychosocial support, with additional technical support from the IFRC and ICRC. To help prevent potential violence, SARCS developed and disseminated peace-promoting messages across communities. Furthermore, it engaged in the National Joint Coordination Meetings to ensure its operational plans were closely aligned with national safety frameworks. In parallel, SARCS procured and strategically positioned first aid kits and essential medical supplies to ensure its teams were equipped to respond rapidly to any incidents of electoral unrest.

As the elections approached, SARCS activated its response teams, focusing on high-risk areas to provide immediate assistance and promote calm at polling stations. On election day, SARCS provided on-site first aid services at polling centers and deployed mobile teams to respond to injuries and health emergencies as they arose. Psychosocial support was extended to voters, election staff, and community members affected by political tension or trauma. SARCS also ensured that vulnerable groups—including the elderly, persons with disabilities, pregnant and lactating women—received tailored support to facilitate their safe participation in the elections. Volunteers assisted these groups in navigating access barriers at polling stations, offering mediation to allow them to move through long queues, providing seating when needed, and protecting them from potential unrest.

Health-related challenges also emerged due to long queues and delays at some voting stations. Many individuals experienced dehydration and were referred to medical facilities by SARCS teams. Volunteers actively promoted health awareness, encouraging voters to remain hydrated and to maintain safe distances in queues. Special attention was given to the needs of vulnerable individuals, particularly those living near polling stations. SARCS volunteers prioritized their safety and comfort, ensuring they were protected and supported throughout the voting process.

Through its proactive and impartial engagement, SARCS made a significant contribution to the risk management during the elections even though not major risk or risk linked arising from election contexts.

Targeting Strategy

Who was targeted by this operation?

The operational strategy of SARCS was meticulously designed to assist the most vulnerable communities during the electoral period. This strategy targeted the most at-risk areas across the nine provinces, identified through a comprehensive assessment of historical events, demographic information, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and the positioning of polling stations. SARCS focused on metropolitans, townships, and rural areas within and surrounding key hot spots identified as Kwa-Zulu Natal, Gauteng, Eastern Cape and Western Cape with a particular emphasis on locations near polling stations, schools, government buildings and shopping centres. These areas were prioritized due to their high population densities and the heightened risk of election-related disturbances, making them critical points for maintaining voter turnout and ensuring safety.



- High-Risk Areas
 - Durban (KwaZulu-Natal) – Major urban center with historical unrest.
 - Pietermaritzburg (KwaZulu-Natal) – Political tensions and protest history.
 - Johannesburg (Gauteng) – Economic hub with frequent service delivery protests.
- Medium-Risk Areas
 - Tshwane (Pretoria) (Gauteng) – Administrative capital with political demonstrations.
 - Mthatha (Eastern Cape) – Localized political tensions and infrastructure issues.
 - Cape Town (Western Cape) – Occasional unrest tied to governance disputes.

SARCS provided crucial support to those most susceptible to exposure or most vulnerable during the elections. The primary groups targeted included voters, electoral officials, volunteers, and ordinary community members who live near polling stations were at heightened risk during both the voting process and the announcement of results. After the election results were announced, the risk extended to the general public, including traders and residents in commercial areas and densely populated communities. Particular attention was given to low-income residents, migrants, refugees, and individuals living in informal settlements, as these groups often face significant challenges during times of unrest due to their precarious living conditions and limited access to essential services.

To effectively reach and assist these vulnerable groups, SARCS adopted a comprehensive approach involving robust community engagement and partnerships with local organizations that maintained trust within these communities. Collaborations with migrant and refugee support organizations ensured that aid communications were accessible in multiple languages and formats. Additionally, SARCS utilized mobile units to deliver aid directly to areas where vulnerable populations were concentrated, ensuring that support reached those unable to access static first aid stations. Through these efforts, SARCS not only addressed immediate humanitarian needs but also contributed to a broader sense of stability and security during and after the elections.

Explain the selection criteria for the targeted population

During the 2024 South African National General Election, SARCS focused on delivering aid to the most vulnerable populations by utilizing a data-driven approach to identify high-risk localities. The selection criteria for targeted populations was based on demographic data, risk assessments, and vulnerability factors specific to the election context. By combining insights from the latest census data with historical election-related violence incidents and socio-economic factors, SARCS effectively allocated resources and support to areas most at risk, ensuring a responsive and inclusive approach.

SARCS also leveraged on geographical information systems (GIS) and community feedback mechanisms to refine its strategy, while partnerships with local organizations were crucial in reaching vulnerable groups. The organization placed special emphasis on major metropolitan areas, townships, and rural regions known as hotspots for election-related violence and service delivery protests. This focused strategy ensured that SARCS's resources were deployed where they were most needed, maximizing the effectiveness of their intervention and reinforcing their commitment to supporting those at greatest risk during the election.

Number of people reached per Province:

Gauteng	3945
Kwa Zulu Natal	3179
Free State	2855
North West	2141
Eastern Cape	1232
Mpumalanga	1205
Western Cape	932

Total Targeted Population

Women	10,608	Rural	31%
Girls (under 18)	4,992	Urban	69%
Men	9,792	People with disabilities (estimated)	1%
Boys (under 18)	4,608		
Total targeted population	30,000		



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?	No
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
Difficulty of access to the targeted population due to the presence of protest movements.	Volunteers received safer access training with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). This training equipped volunteers with the necessary tools to facilitate their access to and acceptance by the community
SARCS personnel being exposed to safety and security risks.	Use of SARCS branded visibility items such as gilets, umbrellas and gazebos. Strict adherence to existing safety protocols and coordination with relevant authorities regarding the security environment.
Reputational risk for SARCS due to the population's lack of knowledge of its mandate, its missions, and RC Fundamental Principles.	Information and sensitization campaigns were conducted to educate the population about SARCS's mandate, missions, and principles. Training on the code of conduct and against fraud and corruption was also enhanced for volunteers and staff.
Unavailability of National Society staff and volunteers due to the management of several operations being implemented by SARCS, leading to increased workload.	Strategic human resource management was applied, including scheduling and rotation of staff and volunteers, recruitment of additional personnel, and the potential hiring of temporary staff to manage the increased workload effectively.

Please indicate any security and safety concerns for this operation:

SARCS prioritized addressing security and safety concerns during election periods due to the complex socio-political landscape of South Africa. In major cities and townships, the primary risks included various forms of crime and violence triggered by political and civil unrest, which intensified during elections with increased public engagement. The threats ranged from demonstrations and riots to severe repression by authorities, roadblocks by vigilante groups, and a rise in opportunistic crimes. The significant increase in service delivery protests since the beginning of the year further escalated these risks.

Particular provinces like KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and Mpumalanga (MP) were especially concerning due to ongoing political killings and disputes that worsened security challenges during the elections. The legal case at the Constitutional Court between the MK Party and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) added to the tensions. To navigate these challenges, SARCS appointed a security focal person to liaise with the IFRC Cluster security manager and the ICRC delegation for real-time information exchange on security conditions. This role was vital for maintaining situational awareness and adjusting SARCS's operations accordingly. The security manager kept close communication with branches in high-risk areas and collaborated with community authorities to gather intelligence, ensuring SARCS effectively managed the volatile election environment while prioritizing the safety of its personnel and the communities it served.

Has the child safeguarding risk analysis assessment been completed?	Yes
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Implementation



Budget: CHF 87,492

Targeted Persons: 30,000

Assisted Persons: 15,489

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of people reached with first aid and pre-hospital care by trained RCRC volunteers or staff in a crisis, disaster or conflict	1,000	4,437
# of people reached by Psychological First Aid	1,750	1,752
# of volunteers trained in First Aid	500	503
# of first aid kits/bags secured	300	350

Narrative description of achievements

Key results include:

- 500 first aid responders trained of which 250 deployed.
- 4,437 people received First Aid and pre-hospital care (1,820 in Gauteng, 1,005 in North West, 960 in KwaZulu-Natal, 402 in Eastern Cape, and 250 in Mpumalanga).
- 1,752 people received PFA and MHPSS services (800 in Gauteng, 350 in North West, 320 in KwaZulu-Natal, 200 in Western Cape, and 82 in Mpumalanga).

A total of 15,489 people (5,847 males and 9,642 females) were reached through Health interventions, which also included Health in Disasters, Nutrition, and Epidemic Preparedness Awareness. These messages were necessary for vulnerable groups found exposed to the hard conditions of voting at risk or suffering from dehydration, self care challenges that could put them in bad situation in the queue for vote or pre-electoral gathering. The NS volunteers supported in raising Health awareness by reminding people to keep healthy by drinking water, met minimum nutritional needs and being hydrated. Additionally messages were provided on keeping safe distance in queues.

Injury cases addressed were not directly election-related but included incidents linked to alcohol consumption, service delivery protests, GBV, few incident from crowd managements and theft victim in gathering and polling nearby areas.

- In preparation for the general elections, the South African Red Cross Society (SARCS) conducted refresher training for 500 volunteers and staff across all identified hotspot provinces. The training covered First Aid, Psychological First Aid (PFA), and Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA). The aim was to strengthen operational capacity, enhance community acceptance, and ensure safer access during the election period. Refresher training for Red Cross Action Teams (RCAT) specifically focused on improving preparedness and response in high-risk areas.
- SARCS played a leading role in coordinating the election response with government entities (COGTA and NDMC) and key partners. A referral system was established and actively managed in collaboration with health centers, hospitals, police, and other relevant institutions to ensure timely access to necessary services.
- Operational readiness was enhanced through the prepositioning of response and identification materials in all targeted provinces, including Red Cross-branded umbrellas, First Aid kits, gilets, and gazebos. Additionally, 350 First Aid kits were procured and distributed in advance.
- A surveillance team was established to manage First Aid alerts, conduct ongoing risk mapping, and coordinate with healthcare facilities through a newly established alert and referral system.
- During the election response phase, 250 trained volunteers were deployed across nine hotspot provinces, with an average of 27 volunteers per province operating before, during, and after the election period. Volunteers provided emergency First Aid at voting stations and in surrounding communities, as well as PFA and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to affected individuals and intervention teams.



All through the election calendar, SARCS strengthened its communication channels and maintained continuous monitoring and surveillance nationwide. Regular debriefing sessions were conducted to improve response effectiveness. RCAT teams were kept on standby and deployed to high-risk areas as needed, with SARCS HQ teams conducting monitoring visits in seven provinces in coordination with provincial and branch managers.

Lessons Learnt

- It is very important to have more people trained on first aid such that when the need increases they can be easily deployed.
- First aiders should receive additional training in conflict resolution and emergency preparedness for situations beyond typical medical scenarios. This can include handling crowd disturbances, minor altercations, and coordinating with law enforcement for serious incidents.
- Clear communication channels should exist between security teams and first aiders to address incidents swiftly and prevent escalation.
- Provide clean bottled water stations at all polling sites for both voters and staff. This will promote hygiene, prevent dehydration, and enhance voter comfort during long wait times.

Challenges

- First aiders had to address sporadic issues, such as fights and squabbles, that were unrelated to election activities but posed health and safety risks at polling stations. Although the first aiders were prepared and present, there were still challenges in managing these unexpected situations.
- Polling stations did not have adequate sanitation and water facilities, such toilets and water taps.
- The absence of food and water at polling stations created unnecessary hardships for both voters and volunteers.



Protection, Gender And Inclusion

Budget: CHF 9,721

Targeted Persons: 30,000

Assisted Persons: 750

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of RCRC staff and volunteers trained on Prevention and protection of sexual exploitation and abuse and child safeguarding	250	250
# of RCRC staff and volunteers who have been briefed and signed the Code of Conduct	250	250
# of people reached by protection, gender and inclusion services	250	750
# of people trained on implementing the PGI Minimum Standards	250	250

Narrative description of achievements

- 250 volunteers and staff were also briefed on the PGI minimum standards and code of conduct, contextualized in their respective locations. 250 staff and volunteers were also briefed and signed the code of conduct to avoid misconduct during the implementation. This included awareness on the identification of PGI issues in an emergency and referral pathway. 250 Staff and volunteers were trained on the prevention and protection of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as child safeguarding. The NS reached 750 people with protection, gender and inclusive services.

Coordination was established with local authorities and other humanitarian organizations to ensure a comprehensive response to the needs of displaced populations, with a focus on protection, gender, and inclusion services.

Lessons Learnt

- A clear and well-distributed communication strategy should be implemented to ensure that all voters, especially vulnerable groups, are aware of special voting arrangements available to them. This would prevent unnecessary discomfort and confusion.
- In future election government should strengthen awareness campaign focused on special voting rights for vulnerable groups should be rolled out in advance to minimize the risk of these individuals having to endure long waiting times or physical strain
- Train volunteers and staff to assist voters with disabilities or mobility challenges. Dedicated staff should be assigned to help these individuals navigate the voting process and ensure they can cast their ballots comfortably and safely.

Challenges

- There was a lack of information regarding special voting arrangements for pregnant women, the elderly, and people living with disabilities who were supposed to vote from the comfort of their homes. Due to this lack of information and awareness, they were forced to wait in long queues like everyone else. Despite this, most of the volunteers were attentive and assisted them by helping them access the voting station, even carrying them if necessary. Pregnant women were helped to skip the queue, while elderly individuals were carried to the voting booth and provided with water.
- Polling stations did not have clear protocols for prioritizing pregnant women, elderly individuals, and people with disabilities, which forced them to wait in long queues, increasing their discomfort and discouraging participation.



Community Engagement And Accountability

Budget: CHF 10,329

Targeted Persons: 30,000

Assisted Persons: 30,000

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
National Society contributing to national coordination mechanisms and national plan for risk communication and community engagement	1	1
# of staff, volunteers and leadership trained on community engagement and accountability (disaggregated by staff / volunteers /sex)	250	250
# of community consultation meetings.	6	6

Narrative description of achievements

• Community sessions were conducted with various community leaders to make them aware of the operation and gain their trust as we were approaching the election phase. These initial meetings were conducted to make sure that the community was aware of the role of the Red Cross should there be any sign of unrest as well as to spread messages of peace and unity during the election time. In efforts to enhance accountability to the affected communities, SARCS set complaints and feedback mechanisms, where they collected feedback from 8,150 people (3224 males and 4926 females), this was meant to identify areas of improvement/ concerns and address them to ensure the community remains satisfied. 80% of the respondents were aware of the role that SARCS was playing in these elections to ensure peace and safety of everyone. Whilst 40% anticipated tension after results were published 63% expressed gratitude that the elections were not violent. It was also identified that people were happy that there were many polling stations to vote from which made it convenient to go and vote. From the feedbacks shared before the elections SARCS volunteers were given more information to support the elderly and to direct people to the polling stations on the day of the elections. As a lesson learnt SARCS will continue to share the Red Cross mandate with communities to ensure they are aware of the role the Red cross plays in the country. Vehicles were prepositioned and ready across the high-risk provinces and upon response activation, they were deployed across the hotspots identified as highlighted above. SARCS also held online meetings with the IFRC to update on the election's situation across the 9 provinces in the country.

The community was sensitized about the RC's mandate and the mechanisms in place, with an emphasis on neutrality and impartiality principles, through community meetings conducted. Local representatives at institutional and community levels were engaged to enhance messages around peace, NS presence, and mandate during the elections. Key stakeholders, including community leaders,



election officials, security forces representatives, city officials, and health workers were involved. The overall operation managed to reach over 30 000 people across all the provinces with sensitization and peace messages to ensure they prioritize peace should the elections turn violent.

During the readiness phase, 250 volunteers were briefed on CEA principles. Key messages on fostering peace and unity were prepared. Tools for feedback, including face-to-face interactions through Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews, surveys were also administered via KoBo. Community meetings were conducted to collect key information using these tools to strengthen CEA and to also give feedback to the communities. An intensive promotion of the NS mandate, principles, and access was ensured through trusted communication channels.

Lessons Learnt

- Insufficient number of voting booths and poor crowd management resulted in long wait times, which disproportionately affected vulnerable populations. Adequate planning for the expected number of voters and ensuring enough voting stations is crucial for a smoother voting experience.
- Lack of accessible information tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups contributed to confusion and delays. Many did not receive sufficient information about their voting rights, available support, or special voting arrangements, which could have facilitated their participation.
- Setting up clearly marked priority queues for vulnerable groups (e.g., elderly, pregnant women, and people with disabilities) to ensure that they can vote without the need to wait in long lines. Volunteers and staff should be trained to recognize and prioritize these groups.

Challenges

- Overcrowding at polling stations and long wait times due to limited voting booths or delays in the process which may discourage voter participation, particularly among the elderly, pregnant women, and people with disabilities in future.
- Vulnerable groups, including women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and minority communities, faced challenge in participating in the electoral process. The challenges include lack of information tailored to their needs, because they had to wait in the long queues like ordinary people to vote.



Secretariat Services

Budget: CHF 10,207

Targeted Persons: 30,000

Assisted Persons: 250

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# and % of volunteers involved in response who are insured	250	250
# of Lessons Learnt workshop	3	3
IFRC security training for NS staff and Volunteers	1	1

Narrative description of achievements

• There was a coordinated RCRC Movement approach for the election preparedness response since funding was available from IFRC and ICRC. To support the response capacity the IFRC regional office deployed a surge delegate for security for a week to ensure protection needs were understood and mainstreamed. SARCS conducted three monitoring visits to KZN, Western cape and Gauteng. 250 volunteers were insured for this response.

The team was briefed and deployed in a timely manner. The National Society (NS) emergency intervention team received training on fundamental humanitarian principles, the use and misuse of the Emblem, emergency coordination, and communication protocols. Peace, security, and safety trainings were promoted, focusing on safe access and security requirements. Psychological support was provided to



volunteers and staff, and insurance for 250 volunteers was ensured. Stocks for the mobilized and deployed team were procured, and visibility for supervisors and staff was provided. IEC materials were produced to promote messages on social cohesion, the role of NS, and RCRC principles.

Throughout the intervention, general operational support was maintained. Context and risks were regularly monitored and updated. Local leaders were engaged, mobilized, and sensitized on humanitarian principles and the NS mandate and logo. Coordination was ensured with the community, local and national governments, external partners, and the RCRC movement, especially the ICRC. An accountability framework was established to monitor and report in accordance with DREF guidelines and IFRC policies. The Delegation facilitated the Lessons Learned workshop that was successfully coordinated and led by the NS to gather insights from community members and various stakeholders, it also allowed the NS's to introspect on what worked and what didn't and how best they could move forward as an NS and improve themselves with detailed reports compiled.

Lessons Learnt

- Need to fast-track emergency procurement and funds distributions.
- Need for National society to explore overseas sourcing where IFRC can support.
- Involvement in joint operations committee assisted in ensuring easier and safer access to the communities.

Challenges

- The major challenge was the delay of procurements due to delayed distribution of funds.
- Minimal resources and limited funding restricted SARCS from reaching all the identified hotspots.



National Society Strengthening

Budget: CHF 50,045

Targeted Persons: 30,000

Assisted Persons: 300

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of personnel engaged country wide	300	300
% of mobilised staff and volunteers that are properly briefed on risk, Safe access and minimum standards	100	100
Lesson learnt organized and reported	1	1
% of personnel mobilised that received PFA	100	100
# Coordination meetings with ICRC and partners	4	4

Narrative description of achievements

• In response to the national elections, SARCS activated 300 personnel, including its Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), which was coordinated by the National Response Team (NRT) the whole team was given a brief on risks, safe access and minimum standards making it 100% of the mobilized and deployed staff. This activation enabled SARCS to centralize command and control, enhancing coordination and communication across all levels of the National Society. The EOC served as the hub for all operations, including election preparedness, providing real-time monitoring of situations and rapid dissemination of information to facilitate swift decision-making and deployment of resources. This ensured that SARCS effectively managed and responded to any incidents that arose during the elections. The EOC was equipped with advanced communication tools and staffed by trained personnel who were well-versed in emergency management and operational procedures. By leveraging these capabilities, SARCS aimed to maintain a state of readiness, ensure the safety of volunteers and staff through the Safer Access Framework, and provide efficient and effective humanitarian assistance throughout the election period.

- While SARCS exceeded most of its key targets, it is noted that 250 volunteers were ultimately deployed instead of the initial target of 500, as the elections did not generate the level of threat initially anticipated. Consequently, the overall target of reaching 30,000 people was not fully met, as Health services were provided strictly on a needs basis.
- The National Society participated in 4 meetings coordinating with ICRC and other government departments to ensure they were well coordinated and were familiar with the Movement's humanitarian principles, the NS's auxiliary role, and logo. The Procurement of supplies including visibility and IEC materials, and PPEs was done at SARCS headquarters the same with the disbursement of cash to all SARCS Provincial offices in the target provinces to carry out the different planned training including First Aid, PSS, and CEA. PSS for staff and volunteers was also prioritized to ensure that they were in a good space to help other people as well and even after the election PFA was offered to all the personnel that were deployed making it 100%.
- The NS made sure that transparency and accountability was mainstreamed throughout implementation, there was a good reporting structure implemented which made it easier to communicate and make informed decisions.
- A Lessons learned workshop was organized and well attended, giving some beneficiaries and stakeholders a platform to provide a structured space for teams to reflect on past projects, identifying both successes and failures, extracting valuable insights, and using those learnings to improve future endeavors, ultimately leading to increased efficiency, better decision-making, and a culture of continuous improvement within the NS. • •

Lessons Learnt

- SARCS should include distribution of water bottle for future election response intervention for volunteers as well to keep them hydrated.
- Where possible, SARCS should advocate for people with disability when polling stations are being selected to, ensure that buildings and areas chosen are accessible to people with disabilities, including wheelchair users. Temporary infrastructure, like ramps, can be deployed in locations where permanent solutions are not feasible.

Challenges

- Many polling stations did not provide or have access to necessities like drinking water for voters and volunteers.
- Many polling stations were not equipped with accessible infrastructure, such as ramps, handrails, or wheelchair-friendly pathways, making it difficult for people with disabilities and the elderly to navigate the voting process.

Financial Report

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DREF Operation

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

MDRZA017 - South Africa - Election readiness

Operating Timeframe: 10 May 2024 to 31 Jul 2024

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	*	Operation	MDRZA017
Budget Timeframe	*	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 29/May/2025

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

I. Summary

Opening Balance	0
Funds & Other Income	167,795
DREF Anticipatory Pillar	167,795
Expenditure	-136,493
Closing Balance	31,302

II. Expenditure by area of focus / strategies for implementation

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
AOF1 - Disaster risk reduction		-8,617	8,617
AOF2 - Shelter			0
AOF3 - Livelihoods and basic needs			0
AOF4 - Health	87,492	71,691	15,801
AOF5 - Water, sanitation and hygiene			0
AOF6 - Protection, Gender & Inclusion	9,721	13,226	-3,504
AOF7 - Migration			0
Area of focus Total	97,213	76,300	20,913
SF11 - Strengthen National Societies	60,374	57,330	3,044
SF12 - Effective international disaster management			0
SF13 - Influence others as leading strategic partners			0
SF14 - Ensure a strong IFRC	10,207	2,864	7,344
Strategy for implementation Total	70,582	60,194	10,388
Grand Total	167,795	136,493	31,301

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

Please explain variances (if any)

IFRC-DREF allocation for this South Africa Election readiness intervention was CHF 167,795. By the end of the 2 months response timeframe, the expenditures were CHF 136,493. The closing balance of CHF 31,302 will be returned to the DREF pot following the publication of this report. Variances explanations are as follows:

There was an 18% under expenditure on Health because at the time of implementation of the DREF, SARCS already had an existing DREF and other funding that overlapped on the same activities and as a result there was no need of duplication of the same activities under a different budget line.

There was an 36% under expenditure on PGI because at the time of implementation of the DREF, SARCS already had an existing DREF and



other funding that overlapped on the same activities and as a result there was no need of duplication of the same activities under a different budget line.

IFRC has a 71% under expenditure because the initial plan was to have a workshop hosting participants from 9 provinces. But this plan was changed to having a workshop in 3 provinces only, hence the lower expenditure.

Contact Information

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

National Society contact: Ireen Mutombwa-Shumba, National Programs Manager, imutombwa@redcross.org.za, +27719360221

IFRC Appeal Manager: Kopano Masilo, Head of Delegation, Pretoria Country Cluster Delegation, kopano.masilo@ifrc.org

IFRC Project Manager: Bongeka Mphike, Senior Disaster Management Officer, bongeka.mpinke@ifrc.org, +27 74 792 0279

IFRC focal point for the emergency: jimmy Ngobeni, Disaster Management Assistant, jimmy.ngobeni@ifrc.org, +27664868432

Media Contact: Susan Nzisa Mbalu, Communications Manager,, susan.mbalu@ifrc.org, +254733827654

National Societies' Integrity Focal Point: Khutso Sadiki, National PMER Officer/CEA Focal person, ksadiki@redcross.org.za, +782354144

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DREF Operation

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	*	Operation	MDRZA017
Budget Timeframe	*	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 30/May/2025

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRZA017 - South Africa - Election readiness

Operating Timeframe: 10 May 2024 to 31 Jul 2024

I. Summary

Opening Balance	0
Funds & Other Income	167,795
DREF Anticipatory Pillar	167,795
Expenditure	-136,493
Closing Balance	31,302

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	87,492	71,691	15,801
PO05 - Water, Sanitation & Hygiene			0
PO06 - Protection, Gender and Inclusion	9,721	13,226	-3,504
PO07 - Education			0
PO08 - Migration			0
PO09 - Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery		-8,617	8,617
PO10 - Community Engagement and Accountability	10,329	13,364	-3,035
PO11 - Environmental Sustainability			0
Planned Operations Total	107,542	89,663	17,879
EA01 - Coordination and Partnerships			0
EA02 - Secretariat Services	10,207	2,864	7,344
EA03 - National Society Strengthening	50,045	43,966	6,079
Enabling Approaches Total	60,253	46,830	13,423
Grand Total	167,795	136,493	31,301

DREF Operation

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

MDRZA017 - South Africa - Election readiness

Operating Timeframe: 10 May 2024 to 31 Jul 2024

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	*	Operation	MDRZA017
Budget Timeframe	*	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 30/May/2025

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

III. Expenditure by budget category & group

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
Relief items, Construction, Supplies	6,846		6,846
Medical & First Aid	6,846		6,846
Logistics, Transport & Storage	9,014		9,014
Transport & Vehicles Costs	9,014		9,014
Personnel	86,146		86,146
National Society Staff	9,128		9,128
Volunteers	77,018		77,018
Workshops & Training	30,579		30,579
Workshops & Training	30,579		30,579
General Expenditure	24,970	2,736	22,233
Travel	3,651	2,489	1,162
Information & Public Relations	8,900		8,900
Office Costs	2,738		2,738
Financial Charges		247	-247
Other General Expenses	9,680		9,680
Contributions & Transfers		125,427	-125,427
National Society Expenses		125,427	-125,427
Indirect Costs	10,241	8,331	1,910
Programme & Services Support Recover	10,241	8,331	1,910
Grand Total	167,795	136,493	31,301