



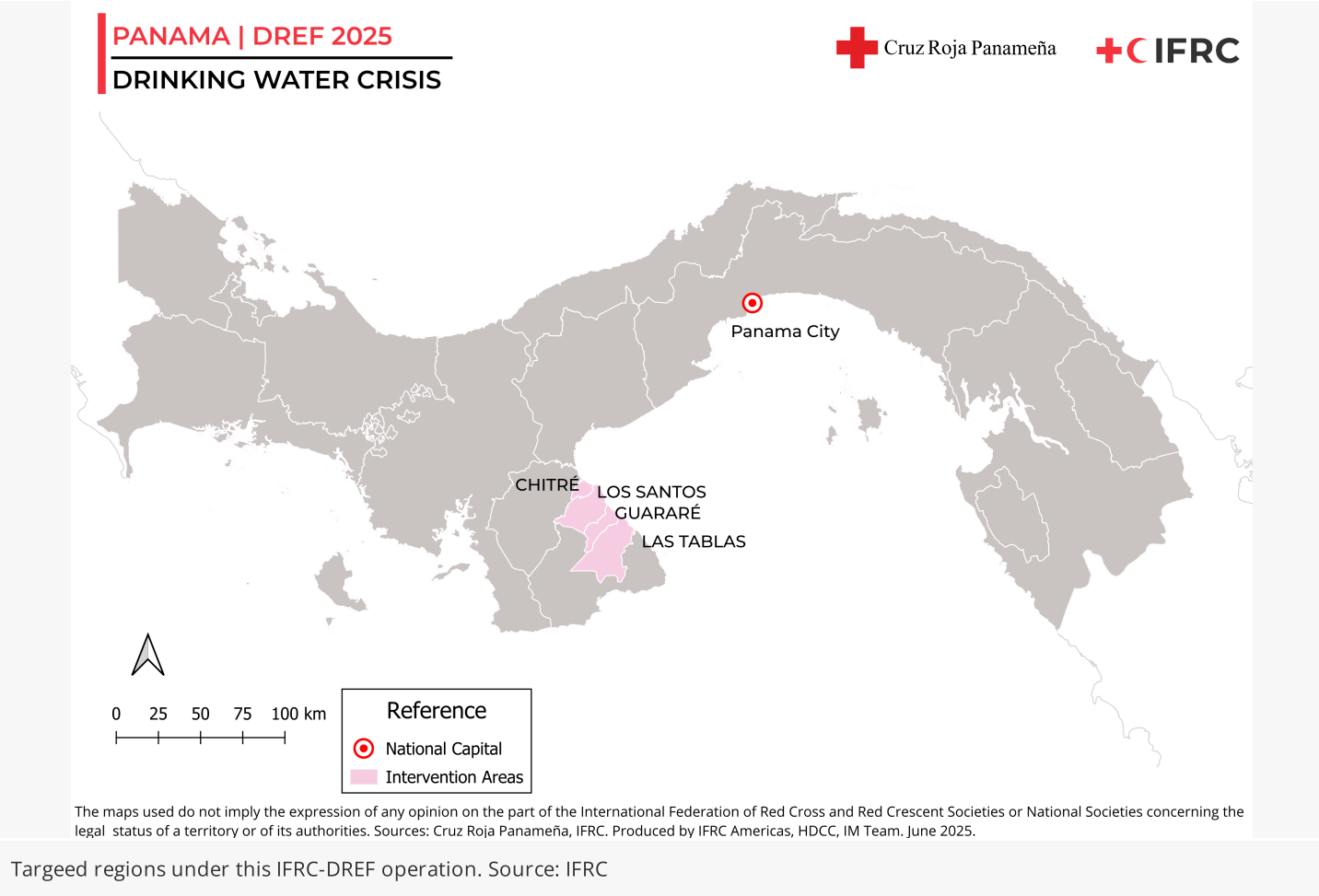
La Villa River in the provinces of Los Santos and Herrera. June 2025

Appeal: MDRPA021	Country: Panama	Hazard: Biological Emergency	Type of DREF: Response
Crisis Category: Yellow	Event Onset: Sudden	DREF Allocation: CHF 349,720	
Glide Number: -	People Affected: 106,000 people	People Targeted: 30,000 people	
Operation Start Date: 24-06-2025	Operation Timeframe: 3 months	Operation End Date: 30-09-2025	DREF Published: 26-06-2025
Targeted Regions: Los Santos, Herrera			

Description of the Event

Date of event

10-06-2025



What happened, where and when?

Since the end of May 2025, the La Villa River — the main water source for the provinces of Herrera and Los Santos — has been facing a critical situation due to severe contamination. A technical operation carried out by the Ministry of Environment (MiAmbiente) between 27 May and 6 June identified at least 23 critical contamination points along the watersheds of the La Villa and Estibaná rivers.

The main sources of pollution include pig farms, industrial discharges, and a municipal landfill in the district of Macaracas. These have contributed to the presence of animal fecal matter, sediments, and other solid waste in the river, significantly deteriorating water quality (1).

During the inspection — which covered 20 km of the La Villa River and 19 km of the Estibaná River — a substantial decline in both physical and biological water parameters was documented, posing a direct threat to public health and the well-being of local communities (2). In response to this environmental emergency, the National Government declared a state of emergency on June 10, through Resolution No. 69-25, covering both provinces. This measure led to the temporary suspension of water treatment plant operations due to high levels of turbidity and organic matter in the river (3).

The most affected districts are Chitré, Los Santos, Las Tablas, and Guararé, where thousands of people rely directly on the La Villa River for access to drinking water. The situation has generated growing concern among the population, which is now facing water supply restrictions and increased health risks.

Authorities continue to monitor the situation closely, and additional measures are expected to be announced in the coming days to mitigate the impacts and gradually restore water quality in the region.





Development of key messages. June 2025.
Source: RCSP



Installation of safe water storage tanks.
June 2025. Source: RCSP



Distribution of drinking water for daily consumption. June 2025. Source: RCSP

Scope and Scale

The water crisis affecting the Azuero region of Panama continues to escalate, following the contamination of the La Villa River — the main source of drinking water for the provinces of Herrera and Los Santos. Due to high levels of turbidity and organic matter, the National Institute of Aqueducts and Sewerage Systems (IDAAAN) has suspended operations at four water treatment plants (La Villa, Macaracas, Llano de Piedra, and Chitré).

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), an estimated 106,000 people rely on the La Villa River for their drinking water. The river basin covers approximately 1,446 km², highlighting the broad geographical extent of the crisis. Eleven communities are affected, with the most impacted areas including Chitré, Las Tablas, Guararé, La Villa de Los Santos, Macaracas, and other rural zones.

The Red Cross Society of Panama, based on coordination with national authorities, plans to assist 30,000 people through this DREF operation. This target prioritizes communities not currently covered by government response efforts, particularly those in vulnerable and hard-to-reach areas, ensuring a complementary and equitable humanitarian response.

The Ministry of Health (MINSa) has confirmed the presence of nematodes—hazardous microorganisms found in untreated water—alongside organic waste from domestic sewage, agricultural runoff, and leachates from the municipal landfill in Macaracas, all exacerbated by recent rainfall.

This has triggered a health, environmental, and social crisis. The river water is no longer fit for human consumption due to the presence of animal fecal matter, sediments, nematodes, and other contaminants, forcing the shutdown of treatment plants and disrupting access to safe water for thousands.

The deterioration of water quality poses serious public health risks, including gastrointestinal illnesses, parasitic infections, and other sanitation-related diseases. The cost of water treatment has also increased significantly, requiring more advanced processes to ensure water safety and appropriate public communication.

Agricultural activity is also at risk, as the contaminated water affects irrigation, potentially impacting food production and local food security.

As a preventive measure, the Ministry of Education (MEDUCA) suspended in-person classes in all public and private schools in the districts of Los Santos, Guararé, and Las Tablas as of 9 June, until further notice. Classes are being held virtually while the water supply is restored (4).

Additionally, community events—such as the traditional Mañanita Sanjuanera organized by the San Juan Bautista parish in Chitré—have been canceled due to water shortages.

The current crisis not only threatens public health and the environment but also undermines public trust in the capacity of authorities to ensure safe and reliable water supply systems.

Source Name	Source Link
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1. TVN – Water Crisis in Azuero	https://www.tvn-2.com/nacionales/falta-de-agua-azuero-turbiedad-río-la-villa-río-estibana-plantas-potabilizadoras-idaan_1_2193075.html
2. National Government – Cabinet Council Declares State of Emergency in Herrera and Los Santos	https://www.presidencia.gob.pa/publicacion/consejo-de-gabinete-declara-estado-de-emergencia-en-herrera-y-los-santos
3. TVN – In-person classes suspended in three districts of Los Santos due to water crisis	https://www.tvn-2.com/nacionales/suspenden-clases-presenciales-tres-distritos-los-santos-crisis-del-agua_1_2193146.html
4. La Estrella de Panamá – Feces and Agrochemicals in the La Villa River	https://www.laestrella.com.pa/panama/heces-y-agroquimicos-en-río-la-villa-autoridades-responden-en-azuero-D113396731

About Support Services

How many staff and volunteers will be involved in this operation. Briefly describe their role.

For this operation, the Red Cross Society of Panama plans the active mobilization of 100 volunteers, who will be organized into three key sectors according to the operation's components:

WASH Volunteers (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene): Support in installing water storage tanks, distributing jerrycans, conducting community-level water quality monitoring, and leading cleanup campaigns.

PGI Volunteers (Protection, Gender, and Inclusion): Provide personalized assistance to vulnerable individuals, promoting safe, equitable, and inclusive access to water distribution points.

CEA Volunteers (Community Engagement and Accountability): Assist in conducting pre- and post-distribution surveys, facilitating community meetings, disseminating key messages, and managing feedback mechanisms.

These volunteers, affiliated with the National Society local branches in Chitré, La Villa, and Las Tablas, have been actively engaged in previous response efforts in the region. Therefore, ensuring their continued involvement is essential for maintaining a localized, efficient, and people-centered emergency response.

Additionally, the National Society will hire dedicated personnel to support the technical and operational aspects of this response:

Local WASH Coordinator: Responsible for planning and implementing WASH activities, coordinating with local authorities, and providing field oversight.

Finance Officer: In charge of budget control, financial execution, expenditure tracking, and ensuring compliance with both internal and IFRC financial regulations.

Water Quality and Supply Monitoring Officer: Oversees the technical functioning of the water distribution system (including tankers, storage tanks, and jerrycans) and conducts daily water quality testing to ensure safety standards are met.

Does your volunteer team reflect the gender, age, and cultural diversity of the people you're helping? What gaps exist in your volunteer team's gender, age, or cultural diversity, and how are you addressing them to ensure inclusive and appropriate support?

The Red Cross Society of Panama has an active volunteer team that reflects the gender, age, and cultural diversity of the communities affected in the provinces of Herrera and Los Santos. For this operation, priority has been given to engaging volunteers from the local branches in Chitré, La Villa, and Las Tablas. These individuals have previous response experience in the area and have received targeted training in key sectors and approaches, including Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI), and Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA).



The team is composed of both men and women from diverse age groups, with a focus on ensuring that volunteer profiles are well-suited to address the differentiated needs of the population—particularly in rural settings. However, some gaps remain, particularly regarding the participation of youth, persons with disabilities, and individuals from indigenous communities. These gaps are being addressed through awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives, ensuring that inclusion remains a cross-cutting priority throughout the operation.

If there is procurement, will it be done by National Society or IFRC?

The Red Cross Society of Panama will carry out procurement processes directly, in accordance with its internal procedures and with technical support from the IFRC logistics team. The only exception will be the procurement of jerrycans, which will be managed through the IFRC Regional Logistics Unit to ensure timely availability of these supplies.

All procurements will be intended for direct distribution to affected communities and not for replenishment purposes.

Key items to be procured include: water storage tanks, cleaning kits and personal protective equipment (PPE), tools for the installation of temporary infrastructure, signage with accessible messaging, and context-appropriate informational materials.

It is estimated that procurement and contracting processes will take between 2 to 4 weeks on average, depending on the type of product or service and the availability of local suppliers.

How will this operation be monitored?

Operation monitoring will be carried out continuously and in coordination across national, provincial, and community levels. A designated specialist will conduct daily technical follow-up on the quality and quantity of distributed water, overseeing supply points and related logistics processes. In addition, field visits will be conducted by technical staff and volunteers to verify proper implementation of activities, including the installation and functionality of water tanks and distribution points.

As part of the Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) strategy, post-distribution surveys will be conducted in target communities to assess perception, access, and satisfaction among the affected population.

At the operational level, periodic reports will be prepared, consolidating data on progress, achievements, and necessary adjustments, under the coordination of the Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (PMER) team. At the end of the operation, a lessons learned workshop will be held in person, bringing together technical teams, volunteers, and key local stakeholders, and will be facilitated by the IFRC.

The IFRC will provide remote technical support through follow-up meetings, report reviews, and, if needed, participation in strategic field visits, ensuring accountability and quality throughout the operation.

Please briefly explain the National Societies communication strategy for this operation

The communication strategy of the Red Cross Society of Panama in the context of this emergency response operation is built around a comprehensive campaign focused on information, visibility, and institutional positioning. This strategy will be implemented through social media, traditional media outlets, and radio campaigns, with the aim of keeping the population informed about ongoing activities, highlighting the auxiliary role of the National Society, and promoting its Fundamental Principles—especially Neutrality and Impartiality.

In parallel, specific actions will be carried out under the Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) approach, targeting the community level. These actions will focus primarily on the use of local radio and other accessible media to deliver clear and culturally appropriate messages about safe water use, household hygiene, and the prevention of waterborne diseases, in alignment with guidance from the Ministry of Health. These activities aim to promote community participation, ensure access to reliable information, and enable feedback mechanisms.

It is important to emphasize that CEA activities do not replace institutional communication efforts but rather complement them. While CEA fosters direct dialogue with affected communities, the institutional communication strategy will include field visits by the communications team, media coverage, social media publicity campaigns, the production of special content, and training on emergency communication and spokesperson roles. These efforts will be supported by the technical expertise of the IFRC, ensuring transparent, effective communication that prioritizes both people and institutional accountability.



To ensure alignment and consistency between community-level and public communication, the CEA focal point will actively participate in the joint development of messaging alongside the institutional communications team.

Previous Operations

Has a similar event affected the same area(s) in the last 3 years?	No
Did it affect the same population group?	-
Did the National Society respond?	-
Did the National Society request funding form DREF for that event(s)	-
If yes, please specify which operation	-

If you have answered yes to all questions above, justify why the use of DREF for a recurrent event, or how this event should not be considered recurrent:

-

Lessons learned:

In 2014, the La Villa River was contaminated with atrazine, a herbicide, which led to the suspension of the drinking water supply and the declaration of a national emergency. At that time, the Red Cross Society of Panama provided humanitarian assistance with support from the IFRC-DREF emergency fund (MDRPA010). Several key lessons were identified during that intervention.

One of the most important was the need to strengthen coordination mechanisms with local, departmental, and national authorities to ensure an integrated and complementary response, avoiding duplication of efforts—especially in contexts where multiple actors are involved. It was also evident that procurement processes for critical supplies could cause delays in the delivery of assistance. Therefore, it was recommended to channel strategic purchases through the IFRC Regional Logistics Unit, which allows for faster procurement and timely availability of essential materials. The importance of ongoing training for staff and volunteers was also highlighted, particularly in technical areas, protection, community engagement, and operational safety. Another lesson was the need to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) and visibility items to ensure the physical safety of personnel and volunteers and to facilitate identification in the field. Additional lessons included the importance of agile community communication mechanisms, advance planning of logistics routes in hard-to-reach areas, and timely documentation of actions to support monitoring and accountability processes. These lessons have directly informed the planning of the current IFRC-DREF request.

Did you complete the Child Safeguarding Risk Analysis in previous operations, what was risk level?	No
What was the risk level for Child Safeguarding Risk Analysis?:	The risk level has been classified as low, as the actions planned by the Red Cross Society of Panama under this IFRC-DREF operation do not involve direct engagement with children or adolescents. However, in line with its institutional commitment to protection and safeguarding, the National Society has integrated preventive measures to ensure a safe and risk-free environment for all individuals involved in the operation. These measures include training and awareness sessions for staff and volunteers on the Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy, as well as the signing of a commitment to uphold the policy's principles. These actions not only mitigate potential risks but also reinforce a strong organizational culture of protection and accountability within the Red Cross Society of Panama.



Current National Society Actions

Start date of National Society actions

12-06-2025

Water, Sanitation And Hygiene	Support for the distribution of safe water has begun in coordination with the local branches of Chitré, La Villa, and Las Tablas, through the installation of community water tanks, some of which were previously used during the atrazine-related emergency in the region 10 years ago. In parallel, water quality testing is being conducted, and collaborations have been initiated with nearby well owners to assess the safety of their water sources for potential use as community collection points. The storage tanks have a capacity of 5,000 and 4,100 liters. Volunteers from the local branches are conducting daily pH and chlorine level tests and maintain ongoing coordination with the Ministry of Health, ensuring that the water distributed meets the required quality standards for human consumption.
Community Engagement And Accountability	The installation of informational signage and the conduct of technical assessments for the strategic placement of water tanks have begun, with a focus on accessibility and equity. These efforts aim to ensure that all individuals—particularly those in vulnerable situations—have safe and effective access to distributed water, while also encouraging community participation in the response process. The Red Cross Society of Panama, supported by its established community engagement and feedback mechanisms, has received multiple messages through its MATILDE WhatsApp line, reflecting community concerns, questions, and complaints. In response, targeted communication and inclusion actions have been initiated, reinforcing the National Society commitment to a people-centered humanitarian response.
Environment Sustainability	The Red Cross Society of Panama, in coordination with its local branches, has launched recycling initiatives as a measure to mitigate environmental impact, in response to the large volume of plastic waste generated by the mass distribution of bottled water by government agencies. These actions aim to promote sustainable practices during the emergency and help reduce the environmental footprint of the humanitarian response.
Coordination	Regular inter-institutional coordination meetings are being held at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the provinces of Los Santos and Herrera to ensure an integrated response to the emergency. This coordination platform is composed of the Ministry of Health (MINSa), the Governor's Office, the National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC), the National Council for Sustainable Development (CONADES), the National Institute of Aqueducts and Sewerage (IDAA), and the Red Cross Society of Panama. These meetings aim to ensure the effective coordination of interventions, promoting complementarity of actions within communities and preventing duplication of efforts among responding actors.
National Society Readiness	The Red Cross Society of Panama has mobilized its National Intervention Team (ENI) from Region 2, specialized in water and sanitation, to provide technical support to the inter-institutional response efforts. In addition, local branch volunteers include professionals in biology and chemistry, who have been actively supporting the installation of water storage containers, contributing their technical expertise to ensure the appropriateness and effectiveness of the implemented solutions.
Assessment	The Red Cross Society of Panama has deployed its water and sanitation specialist to the Azuero region to carry out an on-site technical assessment, aimed at ensuring the operational feasibility of planned actions and determining the necessary requirements. As a result of this assessment, the team has identified areas with the greatest need for safe water supply and strategic locations for the installation of community water storage containers.



National Society EOC	The Red Cross Society of Panama activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) following a formal request from the National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC). In addition, the local branches in Las Tablas, Chitré, and La Villa are actively participating in the Provincial Emergency Operations Centers, under the coordination of the governor's offices of Herrera and Los Santos, and with the support of the Technical Board, contributing to the coordination and implementation of the response within their respective areas.
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IFRC Network Actions Related To The Current Event

Secretariat	The Red Cross Society of Panama has received technical support from the IFRC Central America Country Cluster Delegation (CCD) to strengthen its response to this emergency. Additionally, the Regional Logistics Unit (RLU), based in Panama, has been made available to manage specific procurements that require longer lead times, ensuring the timely availability of essential supplies. The National Society also foresees continued support from the IFRC Central America CCD throughout the implementation and closure of this operation, to ensure both technical and administrative compliance with the operational plan.
Participating National Societies	The Spanish Red Cross, in coordination with the Red Cross Society of Panama, has issued a situation report to raise awareness and identify potential areas of support at the national level in response to this emergency. At present, the National Society does not foresee any additional support from the Spanish Red Cross for this operation.

ICRC Actions Related To The Current Event

The Red Cross Society of Panama does not foresee any specific support from the ICRC for this operation.

Other Actors Actions Related To The Current Event

Government has requested international assistance	No
National authorities	Panama's national authorities have implemented a series of actions to address the crisis caused by the contamination of the La Villa River. The National Institute of Aqueducts and Sewerage (IDAAN) temporarily suspended operations at the Roberto Reyna water treatment plant (in Herrera) and the Rufina Alfaro plant (in Los Santos) following the detection of anomalies in the raw water sourced from the river. As part of the immediate response, over 1,100,000 gallons of water have been distributed in the affected region using 20 water tankers, 45 wells, and 143 vehicles, with priority given to hospitals and health centers. Additionally, 466,800 bottles of water have been distributed in Los Santos and 541,644 in Herrera. The Ministry of Environment (MiAMBIENTE) has intensified river monitoring, conducting streamflow measurements at strategic points to assess the river's condition and ensure water quality. At the judicial level, the Public Prosecutor's Office has launched investigations into potential environmental crimes linked to the river's contamination. The National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC) has also supported the distribution of bottled water; however, this measure is recognized as temporary due to limited availability and environmental concerns.
UN or other actors	On 13 June 2025, technical staff from the WASH sector of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were deployed to the area in coordination with the National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC), with the objective of providing technical guidance to



stakeholders at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). At this time, UNICEF has not indicated plans to provide direct assistance and is currently limiting its involvement to advisory support.

Are there major coordination mechanism in place? -

Needs (Gaps) Identified



Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

The Red Cross Society of Panama has identified multiple structural and operational gaps in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector at the provincial level, particularly in areas affected by the contamination of the La Villa River. One of the main concerns observed at the community level is the growing perception of distrust toward institutions responsible for water management and oversight, particularly the Ministry of Health (MINSA) and the National Institute of Aqueducts and Sewerage (IDAAN). This perception has been exacerbated by limitations in inter-institutional coordination and the circulation of unverified information, which has contributed to uncertainty about the safety of the water being distributed.

Furthermore, notable differences in risk perception have been identified among communities, seemingly influenced by previous experiences with water-related crises. These perceptions influence community behavior in response to official recommendations and may affect the acceptance of measures implemented during the current emergency.

From a technical-operational perspective, communities report deficiencies in water supply infrastructure, housing conditions that hinder hygienic water storage, and the lack of standardized water distribution, which compromises equity and consistency in access to basic services.

Although the MINSA has not officially reported any epidemiological outbreaks in the current context, it has emphasized that prolonged exposure to non-potable water can trigger the rapid spread of waterborne diseases. Among the most common in the Panamanian context are acute diarrheal diseases, gastroenteritis, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, and intestinal parasitosis. These illnesses pose a significant risk, particularly to vulnerable groups such as children, older adults, and individuals with compromised immune systems.



Protection, Gender And Inclusion

In the affected provinces, women—particularly those heading single-parent households—and groups in situations of vulnerability, such as girls, boys, adolescents, persons with disabilities, and older adults, face differentiated impacts in the context of the current emergency. Existing data reveal persistent gender inequalities in Panama, with a 72.4% gap between men and women even under non-emergency conditions. These disparities are further reflected in barriers to accessing humanitarian assistance, including difficulty collecting water for individuals unable to carry heavy loads, limited mobility among persons with physical disabilities, and lack of accessible information adapted to different needs (e.g. visual, auditory, or cognitive impairments).



Community Engagement And Accountability

The Red Cross Society of Panama has identified several community-level needs related to communication, trust, and access to information. A primary concern reported by community members is the lack of trust in the safety of the water being generated and distributed, which is not perceived as suitable for human consumption. This perception has led to increased financial burdens for many households, who are compelled to seek alternative sources of water. In addition, some individuals have reported feeling unheard and insufficiently informed about where and how to access safe water for their homes.

Any identified gaps/limitations in the assessment

The Red Cross Society of Panama has not encountered any significant limitations or restrictions in accessing data and information related to the emergency, as much of this information is publicly available. Additionally, the National Society local branches have established coordination mechanisms with local authorities, which has facilitated the exchange of information and timely access to relevant data for operational planning and response.

Operational Strategy

Overall objective of the operation

The Red Cross Society of Panama will contribute to the national response to the contamination of the La Villa River by addressing the most immediate needs of the affected population through interventions in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI), and Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA). The operation targets 6,000 families (approximately 30,000 people) in the provinces of Herrera and Los Santos, over a period of three months.

Operation strategy rationale

The strategy has been designed to address the immediate needs arising from the contamination of the La Villa River through a coordinated, efficient, and people-centered response. The implementation is structured around five complementary lines of action, aligned with the operational capacity and territorial presence of the Red Cross Society of Panama.

1. Interinstitutional and Territorial Coordination

The operation is being implemented in close coordination with Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) at both national and provincial levels, ensuring alignment with public policies and avoiding duplication of efforts. At the territorial level, the local branches of the Panamanian Red Cross in Chitré, La Villa, and Las Tablas have been activated and serve as focal points for identifying priority needs, organizing activities, distributing supplies, and conducting community follow-up. This coordination facilitates joint action between the National Society and government institutions such as the National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC), the Ministry of Health (MINSA), the National Institute of Aqueducts and Sewerage (IDAAN), and local authorities.

2. Community Training

A capacity-building component will be implemented at two levels:

Community Volunteers: Volunteers will be trained to act as multipliers of key messages. Training will focus on hygiene promotion, safe water use, and prevention of waterborne diseases to strengthen community resilience.

General Population: Informative and demonstrative sessions will be conducted in communities to promote safe practices related to water conservation and hygiene. These sessions will include key messages on responsible water use and the prevention of acute diarrheal diseases.

3. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Interventions

To ensure immediate and safe access to drinking water, a comprehensive technical intervention will be carried out in the WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) sector, including:

Installation of water storage tanks with elevated collection points to enable hygienic filling of household containers (jerrycans).

Distribution of jerrycans (two per household) to ensure safe water storage in homes.

Water supply through tanker trucks to refill the tanks as a logistical support measure to the institutions responsible for water services.

A logistics plan tailored to the rural and urban areas of the interior provinces, ensuring safe and efficient water delivery routes from verified wells—approved by MINSA—to the targeted communities.

4. Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA)

The CEA approach will be integrated through the Red Cross Society of Panama standardized institutional mechanism, ensuring that affected people are informed, actively participate in decision-making, and can provide feedback. This component includes:

Monitoring community satisfaction regarding the quality, quantity, and accessibility of water provided.

Mass community information campaigns to increase visibility, build trust, and enhance transparency around the operation.

Accessible feedback channels—such as the MATILDE WhatsApp line, suggestion boxes, and surveys—allowing people to express concerns, questions, or complaints and enabling the adaptation of interventions based on community needs.



5. Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI)

A cross-cutting PGI approach will be applied to ensure dignity, safety, and equity for all individuals, with particular attention to people in vulnerable situations. Specific actions include:

Installation of inclusive and informative signage at water distribution points, accessible to people with diverse needs.

Inclusive design of temporary infrastructure, such as water tanks, considering the needs of older adults, persons with disabilities, and pregnant women.

Deployment of volunteers to provide personalized assistance to individuals who cannot reach the collection points, ensuring that no one is excluded from access to services.

It is important to highlight that the budget distribution allocates 57% to operational costs and 43% to support costs. This proportion reflects the need to conduct daily water quality monitoring at distribution points—an activity that requires continuous mobilization of technical staff and volunteers in the field. As a result, there is an increase in logistical costs related to transportation, supervision, and technical analysis.

Finally, the prioritization of WASH sector, CEA, and PGI cross-cutting approaches by the Red Cross Society of Panama is based on a contextual analysis identifying these areas as those where the National Society can provide the most added value, in line with its humanitarian mandate, technical expertise, and operational capacity. Other sectors, such as health, have not been directly included in the strategy, as they are currently being led by the relevant government authorities—particularly the Ministry of Health (MINSA)—with whom close coordination is maintained to ensure complementarity.

MINSA has begun implementing mental health support activities, such as stress management and team-building sessions in the affected communities. However, the Red Cross Society of Panama plans to include specific Psychosocial Support (PSS) sessions funded with its own resources, aimed at volunteers actively involved in the operation, in line with the organization's institutional commitment to the well-being of staff and volunteers.

Targeting Strategy

Who will be targeted through this operation?

The Red Cross Society of Panama will implement its emergency response in selected communities within the provinces of Herrera and Los Santos, whose main source of water is the La Villa River.

Based on coordination with the National Emergency Operations Center (COE) and information provided by its local branches, the National Society plans to assist 6,000 families (approximately 30,000 people) through this IFRC-DREF operation. The target population has been prioritized according to criteria such as vulnerability, limited access to basic services, and lack of coverage from governmental entities. This approach aims to ensure a complementary, equitable, and people-centered humanitarian response, focusing on those facing the greatest barriers to accessing safe water.

Explain the selection criteria for the targeted population

The Red Cross Society of Panama has established a set of technical criteria for identifying and prioritizing the affected population to be assisted through this operation. These criteria may be adjusted during implementation, based on community validation processes, emerging needs, and the evolving nature of the emergency.

The selection criteria include:

- Families directly affected by the disruption of safe water supply.
- Households that have not received humanitarian assistance from the government or other actors.
- Communities located in hard-to-reach areas that face logistical barriers to water distribution.
- Areas with low socioeconomic conditions that limit the capacity for response and recovery.

Presence of groups in vulnerable situation, including:

- Single-parent households
- Older adults
- Pregnant women



- Children under five
- Persons with disabilities

This prioritization approach aims to ensure timely and equitable assistance to those facing the most significant structural barriers to accessing basic services. It also helps channel available resources more effectively toward populations with higher levels of exposure and lower coping capacity during the ongoing emergency.

Total Targeted Population

Women	14,298	Rural	70%
Girls (under 18)	1,243	Urban	30%
Men	13,445	People with disabilities (estimated)	7%
Boys (under 18)	1,014		
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?	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
Adverse weather conditions (heavy rains, flooding) hindering access to rural communities or delaying supply deliveries.	Design alternative logistics routes and contingency plans that account for adverse weather scenarios. Maintain constant monitoring of weather conditions in coordination with the National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC). Utilize all-terrain vehicles and adjust delivery schedules as necessary to ensure operational continuity.
Road closures or civil unrest due to water scarcity or delays in distribution.	Establish ongoing coordination with local authorities, community committees, and security forces to ensure safe access and movement of personnel and vehicles. Strengthen the Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) approach to ensure clear and transparent communication regarding the progress of the operation. Identify and validate alternative access routes to mitigate potential blockades or unforeseen closures.
Misinformation or community resistance affecting the acceptance of the intervention.	Apply the Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) approach from the outset of the operation, ensuring information is clear, timely, and provided in accessible formats. Engage



community leaders, local volunteers, and key actors to foster trust, open dialogue, and active participation in the design and implementation of activities.

Please indicate any security and safety concerns for this operation:

The implementation of activities in areas affected by the water crisis may increase community tensions, potentially leading to road blockades, protests, or confrontational situations resulting from water scarcity. These scenarios pose safety risks for both staff and volunteers operating in the field.

To mitigate these risks, the Red Cross Society of Panama will maintain close coordination with local authorities, community leaders, and security actors to ensure safe access and reinforce community acceptance of the operation. Contingency routes and rapid communication mechanisms will be established to enable timely response to any emerging security incidents.

All personnel involved in the operation will wear official National Society uniforms and visibility items to enhance their safety and reinforce the legitimacy of the response in high-risk areas. The National Society is committed to implementing strict operational security protocols and adhering to the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, maintaining a neutral, impartial, and humanitarian approach at all times.

Has the child safeguarding risk analysis assessment been completed?

No

Planned Intervention



Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

Budget: CHF 258,374

Targeted Persons: 30,140

Indicators

Title	Target
Number of households in prioritized communities with safe and regular access to drinking water during the intervention (safe water distribution, jerrycan distribution).	6,000
Number of people trained (volunteers, government staff, and community members) in safe water management and hygiene practices.	440

Priority Actions

- Needs assessment in the most affected prioritized communities.
- Installation of 12 elevated water tanks for safe water storage in rural and urban areas.
- Distribution of 12,000 jerrycans (two per family) to promote hygienic household water storage.
- Delivery of safe drinking water via water trucks in coordination with local authorities.
- Verification and joint planning of safe water distribution routes with the Ministry of Health (MINSA).
- Daily monitoring of water quality and distribution points.
- Training of 100 community volunteers in safe water and hygiene practices.
- Training of 40 government staff in safe water management.
- Training of 300 community members on safe water handling and hygiene.
- Implementation of a community information campaign on proper water use, hygiene, and recycling.
- Procurement of water sampling kits and installation tools.
- Organization of community clean-up campaigns near the water tank areas.
- Hiring of a WASH Coordinator.





Protection, Gender And Inclusion

Budget: CHF 24,452

Targeted Persons: 400

Indicators

Title	Target
Number of people in vulnerable situations (including persons with disabilities, pregnant women, older adults, etc.) who have received assistance to ensure access to safe water.	400
Number of volunteers and operational staff updated on the Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy, who have signed the commitment to compliance.	100

Priority Actions

- Conduct update sessions on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy for 100 volunteers involved in the operation, including a detailed explanation of the policy and the signing of the compliance commitment.
- Design and disseminate key messages tailored to different population groups (older adults, women, persons with disabilities, among others), ensuring cultural relevance, accessibility, and clear understanding.
- Facilitate water distribution in hospitals and communities in vulnerable situation through strategically placed tanks and containers, incorporating minimum standards for Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI).
- Ensure access to clear and visible information for all affected people through inclusive signage, guidance points, and informational materials that promote equitable and safe access to assistance.
- Mobilize volunteers to support water distribution and provide assistance at list to 400 individuals in vulnerable situation, promoting inclusion and a person-centered approach.



Community Engagement And Accountability

Budget: CHF 20,725

Targeted Persons: 600

Indicators

Title	Target
Number of pre- and post-distribution surveys conducted to assess community perception and satisfaction regarding the assistance received.	600
Number of people reached through information and feedback mechanisms (community meetings, informational materials, feedback boxes, etc.).	600

Priority Actions

- Implementation of 600 pre- and post-distribution surveys to assess the effectiveness of the intervention and community acceptance.
- Design, printing, and dissemination of informational materials on feedback mechanisms and the Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) policy.
- Organization of community meetings to explain the operation, listen to concerns, and collect feedback.
- Launch of a radio campaign to raise awareness about safe water practices, hygiene, and community rights.
- Refresher sessions for volunteers and operational staff on effective community communication and listening mechanisms.
- Establishment of accessible channels for receiving complaints, suggestions, and feedback from the community.





Secretariat Services

Budget: CHF 2,982

Targeted Persons: 0

Indicators

Title	Target
Number of field monitoring visits conducted during the operation.	1

Priority Actions

- Conduct of field monitoring visits and facilitation of a lessons learned workshop.
- Financial costs related to the operation.



National Society Strengthening

Budget: CHF 43,187

Targeted Persons: 100

Indicators

Title	Target
Number of volunteers and operational staff equipped with visibility kits.	100
Number of lessons learned workshops conducted at the end of the operation.	1

Priority Actions

- Distribution of 100 visibility kits (vests, caps, and ID badges) for volunteers involved in the operation.
- Procurement of office supplies and promotional materials related to the operation.
- Provision of personal recognition kits for volunteers in appreciation of their contribution to the operation.
- Logistical support for the mobilization of 100 volunteers over a period of three months.
- Development of a lessons learned workshop at the end of the operation.
- Recruitment of a Finance Officer and a Water Quality and Supply Monitoring Officer.



Budget Overview



DREF OPERATION

MDRPA021 - Red Cross Society of Panama Panama: River Pollution

Operating Budget by Output Codes

	Total
Planned Operations	303,551
Shelter and Basic Household Items	0
AP005 Shelter assistance to households	0
Livelihoods	0
AP007 Improvement of income sources	0
Multi-purpose Cash	0
AP081 Multipurpose cash grants	0
Health	0
AP107 NS health capacity	0
AP108 Health services	0
AP109 Health services in emergencies	0
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	258,374
AP110 WASH	0
AP111 WASH in emergencies	258,374
Protection, Gender and Inclusion	24,452
AP114 Humanitarian values and principles	0
AP116 Protection/gender/inclusion services	0
AP117 Protection/gender/inclusion capacity	24,452
Education	0
AP115 Access to education	0
Migration	0
AP112 Support to migrants and displaced	0
AP113 NS Migration & Displacement Capacity	0
Risk Red., Climate Adapt. and Recovery	0
AP101 Climate change adaptation	0
AP103 Comm. risk reduction and resilience	0
AP104 Assistance to people affected	0
AP105 NS DM Capacity	0
AP106 Disaster Law	0
Community Engage. and Accountability	20,725
AP129 Community engagement/accountability	20,725
Environmental Sustainability	0
AP102 Climate change mitigation&greening	0
Enabling Approaches	46,169
Coordination and Partnerships	0
AP049 IFRC coord. in humanitarian system	0
AP118 Engagement w. stakeholders	0
AP119 Influencing and hum. diplomacy	0
AP120 Innovation	0
AP121 Digital Transformation	0
AP127 Membership Coordination	0
AP128 Movement Cooperation	0
Secretariat Services	2,982

Internal

25/6/2025

V2022.01

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