DREF and Early Recovery Fact Sheet

1. Introduction

Early recovery interventions are now eligible for inclusion in a DREF operation. This fact sheet defines early recovery and early recovery programming, and gives examples of early recovery activities for key sectors. It is a supporting document for the DREF procedures and guidelines.

National Societies and IFRC offices can use this fact sheet when they are developing a DREF EPoA in the aftermath of a disaster or crisis, and identify which early recovery activities within their plan may be eligible for funding under the DREF. Such activities will still need to be in line with National Society mandates and capacities, and able to be implemented in a timely way within the standard DREF implementation period of three to six months (six months in exceptional cases).

Any intervention that supports longer-term recovery or reconstruction is not considered early recovery and is not eligible under the DREF. However, DREF funding can be used to provide assistance that bridges the gap between meeting emergency needs, and longer term recovery support.

2. Defining Early Recovery

The new IFRC Recovery Framework (2020) includes the following definitions:

**Early Recovery** is the process of people’s lives and livelihoods starting to recover in the immediate aftermath of a disaster or crisis. It is also a term used by practitioners to refer to the recovery approaches that are employed in the immediate post-crisis period of a humanitarian response.

**Early Recovery Programming** is the part of recovery programming that provides support to people and communities in the earliest stages of a disaster or crisis response, in conjunction with the provision of life-saving and basic assistance. It improves the outcomes of that assistance, contributes to more stable solutions for affected populations, and provides the foundation for longer-term recovery.

**Recovery**, in the context of a disaster or crisis, is a transformative process that results in the restoration or improvement of livelihoods, wellbeing, services, individual, household and community assets, and social cohesion, so that the lives of affected people and communities are not only restored but are more resilient to future crises.

An important distinction to note from these definitions is that recovery programming must always work to improve community resilience, often linked to the build back better concept. This is not usually a feature of early recovery programming, because of the shorter timeframe it covers. However, early

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1 See the revised DREF Application Guidelines Nov-19, Page 8: “When early recovery solutions are shown through appropriate assessment and beneficiary consultation to be the most effective emergency response, they will be considered eligible for support from the DREF.”
recovery assistance does require us to recognise people’s capacity for self-recovery, promote their agency and encourage positive coping strategies.

To provide further illustration of the concept of early recovery as it relates to the DREF, most early recovery activities have at least one of these broad characteristics:

- Complements the provision of life saving or basic needs assistance, by improving its quality and impact.
- Protects livelihoods in order to curb negative coping strategies, thus reducing the risk of further losses for affected populations.
- Reduces the need for ongoing emergency assistance.
- Strengthens local capacities and skills that can be used in future.
- Provides productive inputs and assets as a foundation for future recovery, that can be used again in future.

The points below compliment these characteristics:

- Multi-purpose cash and voucher assistance is considered as early recovery: it meets the needs of affected populations while supporting local markets. Cash assistance ‘top-ups’ can help meet specific sectoral needs on top of a multi-purpose cash transfer, and are a good way to achieve sectoral outcomes as well as meet basic needs.
- ‘Software’ interventions, such as awareness-raising sessions or trainings in communities, which complement distributions of relief items or cash assistance, are also considered as early recovery.
- There is no specific time frame for early recovery. However, the DREF implementation period is between three to four months, with a maximum of six-months only in exceptional cases. Any intervention that cannot be implemented within this period, and that cannot start within the first three months of implementation, will not be an early recovery activity that is eligible under the DREF.

*Any intervention that supports longer-term recovery or reconstruction is not considered early recovery and is not eligible under the DREF.*

3. Examples of Early Recovery activities which are considered as eligible

The following examples of early recovery interventions are eligible for the DREF. This is not an exhaustive list.

**Food Security & Livelihoods:**

- Multi-purpose cash assistance, to meet a range of basic needs (food and non-food).
- Conditional CVA to protect livelihoods activities and/or provide productive inputs or assets. Can also be provided as in-kind distributions (e.g. seeds, fodder for livestock etc). The emphasis is on avoiding negative coping strategies which further damage livelihoods and food security.
- Technical support necessary to carry out these activities e.g. community awareness sessions on drought- or flood-resistant seeds, post-harvest management.

**WASH:**
• Minor repairs to water supply infrastructure that will enable the provision of water temporarily, until more long-term infrastructure is put in place.
• Assistance to repair toilets, either through CVA or in-kind distributions. Unless these needs are covered by others, sanitation activities should target equal numbers as water supply activities.
• Training of communities to operate and maintain these facilities.
• Hygiene promotion.
• Replenishing damaged WASH equipment and supplies for communities.

Shelter & Settlements:
• Transitional shelter assistance, either through CVA or in-kind distributions, to ensure access to basic materials (e.g. roofing). This is especially relevant if cash assistance is provided as a top-up to multi-purpose cash assistance. This complements emergency assistance that may be provided such as shelter tool kits.
• Technical guidance and support that complement emergency and transitional shelter (e.g. community awareness sessions on safer construction, technical support to supervise the construction of temporary shelter structures).
• Rental assistance including advice on security of tenure issues. This assistance could be provided as a cash top-up to multi-purse cash assistance.
• Assistance to temporarily improve living conditions of hosting situations, either for host families or collective centers, through CVA or in-kind distributions.

Health:
• Replenishing damaged health and medical supplies of the National Society to be able to provide first aid and other health services as needed in the operation.
• Refresher training on community-level multi-risk health response capacity
• Enhancing existing health early warning systems (e.g. passive community-based surveillance) while working to detect current health risks (e.g. active community-based surveillance)
• Health promotion & disease prevention activities, and mental health & psychosocial support, including strengthening existing referral pathways

4. Other activities which are considered eligible

As with all operations funded by DREF, it is highly recommended that the National Society carry out a Lessons Learnt workshop to collect findings that will be useful for future similar operations. In the case of DREF operations that include early recovery activities, this is particularly important because any information gathered will be useful for future use in designing preparedness programmes, contingency planning and the like.

In addition to lessons learnt workshops, it is also possible to carry out a review of the operation with an additional focus on an assessment which gathers information to inform the design of recovery planning and longer-term programming which may be required to meet needs beyond the emergency. For more information regarding carrying out such a review, please consult the DREF Reviews Concept note as well as the DREF M&E Framework.
For more information contact the DREF team or Recovery focal point in your IFRC Regional Office, or IFRC Geneva.