

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE IN GASINCI CAMP, CROATIA

*19 August 1996
Information Bulletin no. 1*

emergency appeal no. 01.28/96

Latest events

At the request of the Croatian government, on 1 August UNHCR completed the closure of the Kupljensko camp in Croatia. This meant that between 15 May and 1 August, 4,700 additional refugees were moved to the Gasinci camp -- which is partly run by the International Federation and Croatian Red Cross -- raising the number of residents at Gasinci to 6,068, way above its capacity of 3,400. Amongst the population are 143 babies aged less than a year, 260 children aged between one and three years and 73 pregnant women.

Approximately 2,700 of the newcomers are being accommodated in tents and Rubb Halls, which hold from between six and 180 persons each, but this tented accommodation is totally unsuitable for the harsh winter ahead. When summer storms hit Gasinci on 30 July, many of the tents failed to protect their inhabitants from the torrential downpour and the camp's environs deteriorated rapidly.

The population of Gasinci has previously never risen above 4,700 and the camp's infrastructure is unable to cope with the latest increase in population:

- The capacity of its *water-supply system* is for a maximum of 2,800 beneficiaries, so a water chlorinator is badly needed to provide more safe water for the camp population.
- The capacity of the camp's biodisc *sewage system* is also woefully inadequate to meet present needs. Inadequately-processed human waste is flowing directly into a local river and emergency facilities need to be installed urgently to avoid a serious outbreak of communicable disease.
- This danger is exacerbated by the shortage of *hygiene articles* for the camp residents.
- Gasinci's current *electricity supplies* are also incapable of meeting the needs of the enlarged population.

UNHCR and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) are responsible for the camp infrastructure and they are attempting to respond to the crisis by installing electricity generators, additional water and sanitation facilities and transporting containers to the camp to increase the accommodation available. The ICRC has also provided a water tanker to help provide emergency supplies.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Emergency Transportation Services •

The latest influx of refugees into Gasinci has put the Federation/Croatian Red Cross's transportation and ambulance services to local hospitals and other institutions under severe strain. Currently, a great number of beneficiaries need transportation for urgent medical treatment in hospitals in the area but Gasinci camp is 16 kilometres from the nearest town, Djakovo. Doctors from the Norwegian Refugee Council also refer patients from Gasinci to Djakovo, Osijek, Nasice, Popovaca, Zagreb or other places for specialised medical check-ups and hospitalising.

While transportation needs are increasing rapidly, two of the primary vehicles being used to provide these facilities (an ambulance and van) are virtually incapable of use. Even so, the Red Cross is still transporting approximately 70-100 patients a day to different locations in Croatia. However, only 25 seats are now available each day (in four vehicles) for the emergency transportation of patients from Gasinci. This vehicle capacity needs to be expanded to 45 seats. As no other agency is available to help support this activity, the increased population of vulnerable people at the camp means that the service is likely to become incapable of meeting a sudden need.

Emergency Needs •

Supplies of fresh fruit and vitamins, hygiene items, clothes and shoes are needed by the new group of Gasinci residents. In addition, a water chlorinator is needed to help protect overall levels of health at the camp. The Federation/Croatian Red Cross would like to supply these items as a contribution to the overall response to the emergency situation in Gasinci.

Home Care Team •

The largest vulnerable groups of newcomers in Gasinci consist of babies and pregnant women. A reorganisation by the members of the Croatian Red Cross Home Care Team (HCT) was made in order to provide new types of assistance to these beneficiaries in the most effective way. Identification of the most vulnerable within the new arrivals was quickly made in co-operation with other organisations.

The immediate response of the HCT was to begin regular visits to these people to provide all kinds of advice and assist in the vaccination of pre-school children. In July, the HCT increased to 23 members who assisted 403 babies, pregnant women, elderly, disabled, sick and psycho-social cases. However, to meet the major increase in caseload amongst the Gasinci population the teams need to be expanded further through the addition of three more HCT volunteers and one more professional staff member.

Camp Committee •

Thirty members of the Red Cross-supported Camp Committee were active during July in welcoming the newcomers, helping to establish accommodation for them, resettling the most vulnerable inside the camp, providing general information about the camp and solving problems and easing tensions between the existing beneficiaries and Bosniac newcomers who formerly supported Fikret Abdic in Velika Kladusa. The pressure of the workload imposed by the new influx of refugees means that enormous demands are now being placed on the committee and the Federation delegation recommends that small incentive payments should be made to an expanded committee of 35 members.

Renovation of Existing Netherlands Red Cross Houses •

The organised care of bed-ridden elderly refugees in the Gasinci camp is currently provided by two facilities: a former army barracks renovated by UNHCR with around 80 beds, and two Netherlands Red Cross-built pre-fabricated structures with around 30 beds. These two structures have been used earlier for social activities and have not been repaired since they were built, deteriorating significantly in the meantime. They, too, leaked during the recent summer storms.

Substantial reconstruction work is needed to prepare these two buildings for winter, as at least 125 persons are bed-ridden and in need of constant medical care at the moment -- a figure which is expected to increase considerably in the near future. Technical assessments have already been made and while complete repairs would cost CHF 125,000 for both houses, the most urgent involve the replacement of the floors and repairs of the roofs in the two buildings, costing CHF 59,800.

Social Welfare Activities •

The Croatian Red Cross and Federation run a variety of Social Welfare programmes at Gasinci, including sport, cultural and craft activities. These could be expanded to cater to the needs of the new arrivals, who require particular help to assist them in settling into their new environment. More seminars are needed for both the professional and volunteer staff to train them to respond adequately to these new demands.

Thanks to a donation from the Pindoff Foundation, a Red Cross children's holiday home situated in Orahovica, 50 km from Djakovo, is now fully operational. It contains 84 beds, a renovated kitchen, restaurant and play rooms. Refugee children from Gasinci spend 14 days during school holidays in the home, where experienced social workers take care of the children and organise educational and recreational activities. Approximately 50 children can be included in 14-day shifts at a daily cost of 39 Kuna (CHF 8.8) per child. The total cost for one shift is, therefore, approximately CHF 6,000. With the latest influx into Gasinci camp, the Federation/Croatian Red Cross would like to support holidays for another 600 children in 12 sessions at Orahovica.

Outstanding needs

The following are the needs for *additional* support to the Gasinci camp for September 1996 to February 1997:

Item	CHF
<i>Emergency Transportation</i>	
1 New Ambulance	45,000
2 New Passenger Vans (CHF 35,000 each)	70,000
Additional Vehicle Costs (Van Rental -- if necessary, Vehicle Repair and Maintenance, Spare Parts and Fuel)	50,000
<i>Emergency Supplies</i>	
Fresh Fruit and Vitamins	10,000
Water Chlorinator	40,000
<i>Social Welfare / Homecare Activities</i>	
Additional Personnel, Equipment and Training	53,250
Orahovica Children's Home	12,000
<i>Renovation of Red Cross Buildings</i>	59,800
<i>Camp Committee Incentives</i>	8,750
TOTAL	348,800

In addition, the following items are required (cash or in-kind donations are welcome) each month. The most urgent needs are marked with an asterisk.

<i>Article</i>	<i>Need/ month</i>	<i>Article</i>	<i>Need/month</i>
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Children's Diapers (4-6kg)	1,000 pcs*	Liquid for clothing disinfection	6,000 litres
Children's Diapers (9-18kg)	1,000 pcs*	Lice shampoo	1,000 litres*
Soap (for babies)	500 boxes	Lysoform liquid (disinfection of sanitation facilities)	2,000 litres*
Shampoo (for babies)	500 boxes	Cleaning powder (sanitation facilities)	6,000 kg*
Powder (for babies)	500 boxes	Baby food Formula I & II	2,000 kg*
Towels (for babies)	500 boxes	Humana 9 / HN 25 / Milupa GES 45	200 pcs*
Earsticks (for babies)	500 boxes	Winter baby clothes	200 babies
Toilet Paper	12,000 rolls*	Winter adult clothes	6,000 persons
Hand soap	6,000 pcs	Shoes	6,000 persons
Razors	2,000 pcs		

Conclusion

Due to the massive overcrowding in Gasinci, present conditions in the camp are extremely poor. The Federation and Croatian Red Cross are determined to help other agencies meet the immediate needs of the newly-arrived refugees from Kupljensko, whilst expanding their levels of support in existing programmes to cover the larger caseload. They hope that National Societies and other donors will support these initiatives.

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