

# OPERATIONS UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO: FLOODS

Appeal no. 05EA008  
25 July 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

### In Brief

**Appeal No. 05EA008; Operations Update no. 1; Period covered: April to June, 2005; Appeal coverage: 67%;** *(Please click [here](#) to go directly to the Contributions List available on the website)*

#### Appeal history:

- Launched on 27 April 2005 for CHF 496,310 (USD 382,255 or EUR 317,520) to assist 4,000 beneficiaries for 6 months.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 100,000.

**Outstanding needs: CHF 163,703 (USD 126,075 or EUR 104,710)**

**Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: Serbia and Montenegro Floods Emergency Appeal (05EA008).** For details, please see the website at [http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf\\_appeals.pl?05/05EA008.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?05/05EA008.pdf)

**Operational Summary:** The heavy rains at the end of April have caused the river Tamis to spill out of its bed on 20<sup>th</sup> of April and flood the Banat region of the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina. The damage to property and land has been high. The affected population first sought refuge in nearby collective centres and at their relatives' in nearby villages, whereas, recently are returning slowly to their houses to salvage property as the situation became more stable.

The Red Cross intervened immediately with the quick assessment done on the following day and the first provision of relief assistance was conducted the same day in the evening, covering 4,000 of the most vulnerable beneficiaries. In the following days, the distribution of relief has continued, and the following DREF allocation and the further assessment of needs lead to the launch of the emergency appeal.

The response to the floods is coordinated by the Crisis Headquarters at local, provincial and state level. The Red Cross has been in permanent contact with Crisis Headquarters ensuring that the response is efficient and well channelled.

Other than the provision of food and hygiene items for 4,000 beneficiaries over the course of six months, as described in the appeal, the mid-term intervention involves psychosocial support as well as forming of mobile technical teams. These teams are a part of the rehabilitation efforts, helping with the dehumidification, cleaning and disinfection of houses, as well as small repairs.

Moreover, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May, another flood (smaller in proportion) occurred in Southern Serbia, hitting five municipalities and damaging almost 3,000 houses. The water withdrew immediately, and the quick assessment done by Red Cross identified the need to assist some 1,400 beneficiaries with basic hygiene items. As the damage in this area is significantly smaller than in Banat, no separate appeal was launched and instead, following the discussion with donors, part of the assistance supplied to cover this appeal was redirected to Southern Serbia.

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## Background

Due to heavy rains in April and melting of snow in the Carpathian Mountains in Romania, the water level of the river Tamis on the Romania/Serbia border rose rapidly. As a consequence, on 20<sup>th</sup> of April at 9 PM local time, the water spilled over the river banks and broke the dike on the Romanian side of the river, flooding the area of Jasa Tomic and Medja villages in Serbia. Most of the houses in the area are made of clay bricks, which contributed to a lot of damage and complete destruction during floods and after water withdrawal. The table below shows the situation in these two villages:

Item	Jasa Tomic	Medja	Total
<b>?. Demographic data</b>			
Population	3,231	1,070	4,301
Number of family houses	1,217	540	1,757
Number of households	1,113	464	1,577
Average number of inhabitants per household	3		3
Number of receivers of state social welfare assistance	48	30	78
<b>B. Flooded houses data</b>			
Total number of flooded houses	655	103	758
Number of flooded houses at the moment	45	14	59
Number of households with destroyed houses	361	8	369
Number of households with heavily damaged houses		23	23
Number of households with medium-level of damage to houses	284	56	340
Number of households with low-level of damage to houses	10	29	39
Number of houses to be rebuilt by government	129	24	153
<b>C. Beneficiaries data</b>			
Number of beneficiaries accommodated in collective centre at the moment	38	0	38
Number of soup kitchen beneficiaries	1,600	100	1,700
Number of families receiving hygiene parcels	622	450	1,072
Number of families receiving food parcels	622	450	1,072

During the night between 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of April, 300-400 persons were evacuated and accommodated with relatives and friends in village Krajisnik, 91 persons in primary school in village Sutjeska, 20 in primary school in Secanj and 40 in hotel in Secanj. Two persons died. The evacuation of inhabitants, which continued on 21<sup>st</sup> of April, was organised by Civil Protection and Army.



**Flooded house in Jasa Tomic**

There were three collective centres in the area, where about 2000 people were accommodated (an additional 1,500 have stayed with relatives in nearby villages or the town of Zrenjanin). Currently, there is only one active collective centre (see table above), housing 30 people in Secanj Hotel in Secanj. The rest of the population has spontaneously returned to their houses before the disinfection has been done. In addition, 80 people evacuated from the Hospital for Lung Diseases in Jasa Tomic who are now in Zrenjanin in the gerontological centre. The 30 people in the hotel will move in July, since the hotel should be free to accept the workers involved with reconstruction of houses and work on the soil.

The electricity is being recovered, as people are returning to their houses. Water is still not convenient for drinking. Military water cistern

trucks distribute clean water to the population. The Red Cross water tanks started to function on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April. The village itself is not flooded at the moment (the water that damaged or destroyed the houses in the village has withdrawn) but the area around the village, including the agricultural land used by villa gers, is still unusable due to the mud.

### **South of Serbia flash floods**

On 7th of May, following heavy rains, five municipalities in the south of Serbia were flooded when the rivers Veternica, Jugbogdanovacka, Morava, Radsina, Ribarska and Nisava spilled out of their beds. Fortunately, these were just flash floods and the damage, although significant, was one-time only. The intervention of the national society was swift and an assessment of needs was conducted on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May. The biggest need identified was hygiene parcels as per the following breakdown:

Nis:	600 parcels
Leskovac:	400 parcels
Kursumlija :	120 parcels
Aleksinac:	130 parcels
Krusevac:	50 parcels
Zitoradja :	100 parcels

Total: 1,400 parcels

### **Immediate intervention**

The National Society's relief assistance provided by the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2005 is as follows:

Nr.	Item	Unit	RC	RC	RC	Total
			Branch Secanj	Branch Zitiste	Branch Plandiste	
1.	Blankets	Pcs.	2,000	1,000	-	3,000
2.	Mattresses	Pcs.	500	700	-	1,200
3.	Jerry cans 15 l.	Pcs.	500	300	-	800
4.	Kitchen	Set	100	200	-	300
5.	Soap	Kg	60	100	-	160
6.	Soap	Pcs.	1,000	-	-	1,000
7.	Candles	Pcs.	3,200	-	-	3,200
8.	Water tank 1,200 l	Pcs.	3	-	-	3
9.	Meat pate (150 g)	Pcs.	4,000	2,800	6,000	12,800
10.	Canned fish (150 g)	Pcs.	2,000	-	-	2,000
11.	Canned fish (180 g)	Pcs.	900	-	-	900
12.	Bread	Pcs.	500	-	-	500
13.	Mineral water	Lit	300	-	-	300
14.	Baby bath	Pcs.	15	-	-	15
15.	Baby Hygiene parcels	Pcs.	15	-	-	15
16.	Hygiene set for Collective Centres	Set	4	2	1	7
17.	Male sweater	Pcs.	100	-	-	100
18.	Rubber boots	Par	12	-	-	12
19.	Rain coat	Pcs.	112	-	-	112
20.	Male shoes	Pair	200	-	-	200
21.	Children shoes	Pair	120	-	-	120
22.	Canned meat (150 g)	Pcs.	-	1,400	3,000	4,400

The warehouse of Zrenjanin Red Cross branch is used as the central distribution point. This not only includes Red Cross relief assistance, but also all other relief items coming to the area, including government assistance. All distribution is technically coordinated by Red Cross of Zrenjanin, with the Crisis Headquarters of Vojvodina province overseeing the activities.

Overall, 4,000 beneficiaries have been assisted by the Red Cross with basic food, hygiene items and clothes.

## Operational developments

According to the assessment done on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April by the Belgrade delegation and national society disaster management managers, the immediate needs of 4,000 beneficiaries were:

- 2,000 hygiene parcels
- 30 Baby parcels
- 5,000 blankets
- 3,000 mattresses
- 500 kitchen sets
- 5,000 jerry cans (15 lt.)
- 100 boots and raincoats

These quantities covered the replenishment of the disaster preparedness stock of the Red Cross of Serbia, the Red Cross of Vojvodina and Serbia and Montenegro Red Cross Society used in the first phase, as well as the estimated needs in the days following the initial floods.

## Emergency relief

**Objective 1: The most vulnerable beneficiaries' food needs within the first 48 hours are met with the provision of emergency food assistance (meat cans and meat paste).**

### Progress/Achievements

To meet the basic nourishment needs of the 4,000 beneficiaries, 16,000 meat paste cans and 8,000 meat cans were purchased and distributed. The following table highlights the distribution:

	Item	Unit	Distributed	Distribution per branch		Left in stock
				Secanj	Zitiste	
1.	Meat paste 150 g	Pcs.	13,200	11,800	1,500	-
2.	Canned meat 150 g	Pcs.	6,600	4,500	500	1,600
3.	Collective centre hygiene set	Set	8	3	-	5

### Impact:

The basic food needs of 4,000 flood victims were met. With the distribution of cooked and non-cooked food from other agencies, this served as the safety net to ensure healthy and appropriate food intake. The cooked food, provided by the government and prepared by the army, was covering only one meal and the canned food provided by the Red Cross was used for the other two meals.

At the moment, most of the food distributed in the area comes through government (state food reserves as well as international/ local donations).

### Constraints:

The agricultural land will be useless for the current season, potentially creating longer term food shortage, as well as new poverty for the affected population. In order to alleviate this problem, the government will financially compensate those people who can prove they have been working on their land. The amount will vary between 350 and 400 Euros per acre, depending on the degree of work that has been invested.

### Federation Coordination

The Federation Disaster Management programme manager and the national society Disaster Management coordinator have met with the Provincial Executive Council and discussed the relief operations to ensure good coordination and maximum efficiency of all available resources.

At the same time, the Federation representatives have had regular meetings with the United Nations (UN) agencies involved with the response to the floods, sharing information, comparing assessment data and discussing the most efficient way to advocate with the government for the most vulnerable of the flood victims.

**Objective 2: The most vulnerable beneficiaries' hygiene needs are met through the provision of hygiene sets for collective centres, family hygiene parcels and baby hygiene sets.**

### Progress/Achievements

For the needs of 2,000 beneficiaries in collective centres, 14 hygiene sets for collective centres were procured. Seven of these sets have been used so far. The rest are currently in stock, since the collective centres are closed, except one, as mentioned above. Depending on the duration of time that the remaining beneficiaries spend in this collective centre, the rest of the sets will be used.

Individual hygiene parcels will be used over the six months period. Initially, 2,000 family parcels were distributed. Another 1,400 were distributed in Southern Serbia, to meet the needs of the flash floods victims. By the end of the intervention, another 6,000 will be distributed in Vojvodina and another 1,400 in Southern Serbia, as per the needs assessment.

Procurement and distribution of 15 baby sets to cover 15 families was conducted and there is no further need as these beneficiaries have left the area for the time being.

### **Impact:**

The basic hygiene needs of 4,000 families are consistently met, thus preventing the deterioration of their health due to the bad hygienic conditions in the villages. Furthermore, another 1,400 families in Southern Serbia have been able to satisfy their basic hygiene needs and preserve their health, endangered by flash floods. Epidemics are one of the common floods-related problems and avoiding outbreaks of any kind of epidemics in Banat is a clear success.

### **Constraints:**

There are no apparent constraints in terms of satisfying basic hygiene needs of the people in the flooded regions, despite the floods, destruction of property and population movement.

### **Federation Coordination**

As described above, the Federation Disaster Management programme manager and the national society Disaster Management coordinator have met with the Provincial Executive Council to ensure good coordination and maximum efficiency of all available resources in the relief operation.

At the same time, the Federation representatives have had regular meetings with the UN agencies involved with the response to the floods, sharing information, comparing assessment data and discussing the most efficient way to advocate with the government for the most vulnerable of the flood victims.

### **Psychosocial support**

**Objective: The beneficiaries are, through assistance and support empowered to better cope with the situation and take an active participation in the relief and reconstruction efforts.**

So far, no progress has been made. Most Red Cross resources have been used to ensure the distribution of relief assistance and the preparation for the rehabilitation phase. Vojvodina Red Cross designed a psychosocial support project for Medja and Jasa Tomic villages, to start in August and end in October. The focus of the project will be on working primarily with female part of the vulnerable population in order to lessen the stress and reinforce their coping abilities.

### **Technical Mobile Teams**

**Objective: The most vulnerable beneficiaries are assisted in reconstruction of their households by teams of skilled professionals over the six months period.**

The government has committed to building 97 houses and 32 apartments (in two buildings) which amounts to 129 accommodation units, all in Jasa Tomic village. The apartments are to be used by elderly. The work has already started. In the village of Medja, another 23 houses will be built. Expected deadline for the families to move in to these new accommodation units is “before the winter”.

Provincial executive council was tasked with disinfection of streets and yards and then houses. Hungarian teams of experts carried out these activities. The work started on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June and was finished in five days, thus enabling reconstruction activities to start.

The assessment of houses in Jasa Tomic was done by a joint technical commission consisting of one person from the provincial executive council, one person from Secanj and one from Jasa Tomic (both representatives of local governments). It was completed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June. Out of 655 flooded houses, 361 of them have been destroyed by water or intentionally destroyed after the withdrawal, due to the excessive damage. The remaining 294 houses are marked for reconstruction.

As described in the Appeal, the Red Cross formed technical mobile teams whose task is assistance with the reconstruction efforts. These teams are not to provide heavy construction work, but to assist with dehumidifying/cleaning the houses and small repairs. In Jasa Tomic, Secanj Red Cross branch has formed two mobile teams with three members each. Since 6<sup>th</sup> of June, these teams have been active in the area, using dehumidifying equipment. These two teams have 50 dehumidification machines which enables them to work on 7-10 houses simultaneously. Depending on the number of rooms and the level of humidity, the work on one house takes between two to five days. Due to the fact that the houses are made of clay, it is very important to do the dehumidification slowly; otherwise the dry walls could collapse. After the dehumidification is done, the teams will use cold water high-pressure cleaning machines to remove the mud from the external and internal walls and floors of houses. After this, they will help with installations repairs (electricity, water, sewage). This work is expected to be completed by the end of October and the pace will depend on the withdrawal of water from the remaining houses.



**House marked for destruction**

In Medja village, eight houses have collapsed and another 23 have been marked for destruction due to excessive damage. Three houses, out of fifty planned are already under construction. Reconstruction is about to start on 85 houses, as the assessment has just been finished. A mobile team has been formed by the Medja Red Cross branch. The dehumidification will start in the next couple of days, following the arrival of dehumidifying equipment. The subsequent activities will follow the same procedure as described for Jasa Tomic.

The mobile teams have been equipped with uniforms and basic sets of tools. The members of teams will be replaced as necessary, depending on the nature of the work to be done in damaged houses. Also, additional sets of tools and necessary equipment will be provided when the exact needs for repairs are identified.

#### **Impact:**

Due to the slow withdrawal of water from the affected area, the reconstruction efforts have barely begun. No specific impact is reported at this point.

#### **Constraints:**

Even though the government committed to building new houses as explained above, it is worth noting that most of these houses will be paid for by the flood victims through long-term credits with extended grace periods. This might prove to be a significant additional burden since most of the population in this area is poor.



**Mobile team assessment**

Another constraint is the unclear situation related to the larger repairs and reconstruction. The Red Cross teams will provide small repairs but there are currently no signals from the government whether it will cover the expenses of more extensive repairs and reconstruction.

### **Federation Coordination**

The Federation and national society Disaster Management programme heads as well as the local Red Cross branches representatives have had regular meetings with the officials in Jasa Tomic village, making sure that the reconstruction effort is well coordinated and efficient.

### **Communications – Advocacy and Public Information**

The national society has had several press conferences, informing the public of the work being done. One of these events was extensively covered as it involved the American ambassador publicly signing the agreement with the Federation. In addition, the website of the Red Cross of Serbia has been regularly updated, offering the latest information.

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