

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

ROMANIA: FLOODS

Appeal No. 05EA009
11 May 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. 05EA009;
Operations Update no. 1;
Period covered: 29 April to 9 May, 2005;

Appeal history:

- Launched on 29 April 2005 for CHF 1,055,000 (USD 884,985 or EUR 684,735) for 6 months to assist 4,500 beneficiaries.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated CHF 160,428 (USD 134,590 or EUR 104,140).

Related Appeals: Central and Southern Europe Annual Appeal 2005 [<click here>](#)

Operational Summary: Romania is in the grip of severe floods, the worst for 100 years. Water inundated land as far as the eye could see in the affected area around the Bega, Timis and Barzava rivers. Water levels reached 11 metres in parts. 4,000 houses have been destroyed and 3,500 people evacuated. About 52,000 hectares of farming land is flooded. Latest reports indicate four villages – Ionel, Otelec, Foeni and Cruceni – are completely underwater. Many other settlements are badly affected. Donor response so far has been very slow, hampering the efforts of Romanian Red Cross, supported by the Federation, to meet immediate needs. At the same time, reports indicate that flash floods are affecting other areas, stretching the capacity of authorities and the Red Cross to respond. The government, through the European Union, has allocated EUR20 million for reconstruction but this money will not be available for relief needs. Separate support for this is being sought.

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Background

Two weeks after heavy rains in the Romanian counties of Timis and Caras Severin caused extensive flooding and destruction to homes, agricultural land and livelihoods, the situation remains critical. Flash floods continue to hit some localities, and more rain is forecast. Flood waters have not yet receded and are unlikely to given the land depression in which the waters are lying. According to latest information gathered by the three regional disaster management team (RDRT) members deployed to the affected regions on 5 May, the situation is as follows:



First to react: Red Cross volunteers work speedily to help those affected by the floods.

The three rivers – Bega, Timis and Barzava – flooded a total of 52 000 hectares of agricultural land, destroying almost 4,000 houses, and resulting in 3,500 people being evacuated, and affecting infrastructure – roads, bridges, electricity, and water supply systems. At its peak the water level reached 11 meters higher than normal – the highest recorded level for 100 years. Most of the destroyed houses were made in the traditional clay brick fashion and could not resist the power of the flood waters. Houses still standing may have suffered irreversible damage to clay foundations and may collapse once the waters recede.

On 5 May water levels remained at critical levels and many areas were still under water. It is expected that flood waters will remain for at least

one month due to the soil composition and the fact that there is no natural drainage possibility with the flooded land lying in a depression. On 7 May four villages were still completely under water – Ionel, Otelec, Foeni and Crueni – and San Martin Magyar still 35% flooded, with access possible only by boat.

Three members of the Central European Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) completed an initial five day mission to Romania on 9 May. They have worked with the Romanian Red Cross (RC) to assess the extent of the flooding and the Red Cross response. Further flash flooding of the Ialomita river hit 20 localities around the city of Targoviste, the capital of Dambovita county on 7 May 2005, leaving one person dead, killing livestock, destroying roads, agricultural land and some 180 homes. Twenty volunteers of the disaster intervention team at the Romanian Red Cross branch in Dambovita distributed blankets, mineral water, and bread. They also gave the premedical first aid and psychological first aid to the affected people.

The Regional Disaster Management Coordinator will be visiting the affected regions from 11 May.

Crisis Management Team

According to the regulations in a disaster situation, the Prefect/ Governor has main responsibility for overall coordination, as head of the crisis management team. In Timis this team comprises 41 members from different institutions: health, transport, police, civil protection, and communal services. The local Red Cross is the only NGO represented on the team – through the president of the RC branch – giving it a unique role and direct and up to date information on the development of the situation. Two weeks into the operation, the expectation from the Timis county prefect is that the Red Cross will supplement government initiatives with food and hygienic items over a mid-term period - up to 6 months. At a governmental level there is coordination through regular meetings between authorities in Romania and Serbia & Montenegro regarding water management and joint actions.

Shelter

The crisis management team organized timely evacuation from the affected area for those people who wished to leave, providing shelter in collective centres, schools, kinder gardens and private houses. There are 3,000 displaced persons from the affected localities of Foeni, Cruceni Otelec and Ionel. Some 920 persons refused to leave the area, fearing for their surviving livestock and property. Plans to relocate those evacuated to hotels in neighbouring towns have also met problems as people are not willing to move further from their homes and land and places of work. Of possible longer term solutions for the problem of shelter, providing each family with a tent is the preferred option, enabling people to stay closer to their homes during the reconstruction phase, rather than establishing larger camps. It has been reported that the government has allocated 20 million Euros for the re-building and reconstruction of 1,000 destroyed houses, made available through the European Union.

Food and Water

The immediate local response to the disaster has been good, with basic needs covered by local sources: private donations, relatives, companies and direct distribution in the field. However the goods on stock are depleted, and there may be a need for additional support, including for hygiene materials and disinfectants. Drinking water needs are covered at present, from local sources, with distribution of mineral water taking place on a daily basis according to need by three five tonne trucks. Local community kitchens in Peciu Nou municipality are providing three meals a day to 124 people in collective accommodation.

Health and sanitation



Aftermath: the devastating floods wrecked many homes such as this.

According to information from the public health institute and Ministry of Health representatives, vaccines have been provided to 1200 people out of 4,000 needed (typhus and hepatitis A), and disinfection of the flooded area is in progress - 104 flights with anti mosquito agents have so far been carried out, covering 2,080 hectares of a total of 52,000 flooded. However, the authorities expect more problems once the water withdraws, especially with the water supply system, as wells are polluted, and disinfection of public institutions and private houses will have to be carried out. There is a lack of water pumps and generators. The health authorities are involved in a campaign to raise awareness among the population about how to treat the wells once the water recedes. The collection of

dead animals continues but remaining corpses are a further health threat. Public health authorities are in charge of testing the quality of water. An assessment of the health situation in the affected area is in progress and more precise data is expected within a few days. Medical doctors, mostly RC volunteers, are on permanent duty in the affected area.

A small quantity of chlorine has been distributed among the population. The lack of toilets available in collective accommodation centres was a cause for concern. The authorities have provided toilets in the most needed places. For distribution and use of water there is a need of jerry cans, which is included in the appeal.

Flash Floods

Following heavy rains in Dambovită county, on 7 May, the Ialomita river burst its banks and flash flooding hit 20 localities around Targoviste city, the county capital. One person died, and over 180 houses and stables were

affected, wells polluted, agricultural land flooded, roads destroyed and livestock killed. Although the waters passed quickly, the localities now face the silt and mud residue of the flooding.

Operational developments

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Water and Sanitation (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: To provide potable water for 10,000 people in the affected areas for 2 months

Relief: Distribution of food and basic non-food items

Objective 1: To provide humanitarian assistance to 4,500 evacuated people and severely affected persons, consisting of food parcels, blankets, sleeping bags, rubber boots, underwear, T-shirts, bed linen, plastic sheeting, hygienic parcels, jerry cans and tents.

Objective 2: To promote activities of the Red Cross and strengthen the Romanian Red Cross image

Shelter:

Objective 1: To provide housing in tents for 500 evacuated people for 2 months

Progress/Achievements

The local Red Cross was the first organization distributing humanitarian aid to the affected population in the field. The whole operation was done in coordination with the headquarters of the Romanian Red Cross and neighbouring RC branches and using pre-placed disaster preparedness stocks and contributions from the local population. The first assessment and distribution was made by the crisis intervention team of the RC branch of Timis, comprising 16 volunteer members. To date, blankets, rubber boots, clothing and bed linen have been distributed, from the existing disaster preparedness stocks of the Romanian Red Cross, in the most affected villages - Gataya, Denta - and in places where those evacuated from the affected area have been placed - Peciu Nou and Giulvastext.

Water purification equipment belonging to the Romanian Red Cross is in place and functioning in the field, providing water to the local communities.

With the initial DREF allocation, goods are being procured for further distributions, according to the plan of action, set out in the emergency appeal.

Following flash flooding in Dambovita, the Romanian Red Cross branch with 20 volunteers members of the disaster intervention team, distributed blankets, mineral water and bread. They also gave premedical first aid and psychological first aid to the affected people.

Impact:

The immediate response from the Romanian Red Cross, with subsequent distributions supported by the DREF allocation, has met the basic needs of the affected population, complementing local municipality initiatives. The findings of the RDRT mission to the affected region from the 5-9 May confirmed the initial plans of the Emergency Appeal launched on the 29 April and the urgency of situation. The outstanding needs remain:

Food and hygienic parcels for 1,000 families for period between three to six months
1,000 parcels x 3 months, followed by re-registration of beneficiaries and possibly under 1,000 parcels x 3 months.

Disinfectants and cleaning materials (brushes) for public buildings, private houses and wells

Water purification pills

Jerry cans

Dehumidity dryers

Small truck (3.5 MT) for local short distance distribution in Timis area. Two trucks owned by RRC are too large for the small and narrow country roads in the affected area.

Bed linen and blankets and underwear – 4,000 persons
 Beds 2,000 pcs.
 Mattresses 2,000 pcs.
 Clothes (raincoats, vests, T-shirts) and rubber boots (for RC volunteers and affected people).
 Plastic basement for latrines - 600
 Water pumps for cleaning the wells -15 motor pumps
 Electric generators/ diesel / high power engine- 2 pcs.
 Training for RC volunteers in Psycho Social Support
 School materials for children
 Agricultural tools and seeds (to be confirmed by authorities in 1 month period)

The beds, mattresses, school materials and training for volunteers in psycho-social support have not been included in the original appeal.

The local Romanian RC volunteers, active in the crisis intervention team and distributions, continue to play a key role in the operation, with their standing in and knowledge of the communities in which they work, the coping mechanisms and their relationships with other key actors.

Constraints:

At present the amount of funding made available for the operation through the appeal is limited and can only meet immediate basic needs. The livelihoods of whole communities have been affected by the flooding. Coming in the middle of the planting season, it is unlikely the area will see much agricultural production this year. The consequences of the flooding on communities may only really become evident as winter approaches and private food stocks and stores are insufficient.

Federation Coordination

The RDRT mission was joined by a German RC colleague who took part in discussions with the local public health institute, Ministry of Health representatives and Timis prefecture. Discussions were also held with a visiting Swiss Red Cross colleague.

The Federation's Regional Disaster Management Coordinator will be visiting the affected regions and Romanian RC branches and headquarters on 11 May, to support the Red Cross disaster management staff and volunteers with further operational planning and management. The necessity for a follow-up RDRT mission will be discussed in the coming days/weeks.

The Swedish RC has responded to the Emergency Appeal with a donation of approx. EUR 20,000 for relief items.

The Hungarian government is providing an in-kind donation (blankets and boots) to the appeal through the Hungarian Red Cross, with the items set to arrive in Romania in the coming days.

The German Red Cross has announced a possible contribution of in-kind donation of food parcels, hygiene parcels and kitchen sets. The Slovenian RC has also announced an in-kind contribution of food parcels, hygiene items and beds.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement -- Principles and initiatives

The Romanian Red Cross has been undergoing a planned change process over the past three years, with an organisational development programme and plan financially supported by the Secretariat Capacity Building Fund. With this programme coming to an end in the summer 2005, the Federation has been discussing with the Romanian Red Cross the possibility of initiating a Cooperation Agreement Strategy (CAS) process in the country, to support the national society to manage its relations with current and potential donors according to its priorities and strategies and within agreed standards. This operation will be implemented against this background, and with the intention of improving key partner relationships and cooperation, including those of RC branches with authorities on the local and municipal level.

National Society Capacity Building

The planned change process and 3-year organisational development programme has focused on building national society capacity in four key areas: financial development and management, resource development, image and communication and human resources. A new and committed leadership have made significant progress in building the capacity of the national society and its profile and image both nationally and internationally amongst donors. In its third and final year according to the current plan, this process is focusing on consolidating the branch / headquarters relationship in 2005. This operation will be an opportunity to further improve branch / headquarters relationships as well as to increase operational disaster management experience at different levels of the national society.

Communications – Advocacy and Public Information

The Romanian RC PR coordinator has been in regular contact with media partners, and a press release has been issued, outlining the Romanian RC's response in the affected area. Information is available to the general public through the national society's website in Romanian and English.

The Romanian RC ran a very successful fundraising campaign following the tsunami in South East Asia at the beginning of the year, collecting over CHF 1 million for the Federation appeal. This operation will be an opportunity and a challenge for the national society to consolidate its fundraising initiatives and to work with the new donors it developed during the tsunami campaign but for the benefit of affected population in Romania – very much closer to home.