INFORMATION BULLETIN

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

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: DROUGHT

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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 180 countries.
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In Brief

This document is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

The Situation

Several communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) are bracing themselves for a difficult winter after a bruising 2003. Already vulnerable communities have been hit by a four-month drought and a series of storms that have caused an estimated EUR 200 million damage to agriculture.

There are fears that up to 200,000 inhabitants could be affected this winter and spring, the worst situation since 1995, when war ceased. Many people in BiH live below subsistence level. Groups of displaced people, refugees, returnees, retired people, elderly, handicapped and unemployed are especially vulnerable. Many will be in need of food, hygiene items, cattle food, seeds and fertilisers for autumn and spring sowings.

The Republika Srpska entity and Posavina Canton in the BiH Federation entity have been badly hit. The authorities undertook measures to alleviate suffering. These included: repealing taxes on those affected; repair of roofs damaged; distribution of food parcels; and distribution of drinking water (8,000 litres). However, overall poor economic conditions and the extent of the problem meant all needs were not met.

The south (Herzegovina) has been particularly been prone to water shortages. In many villages, people, including the elderly, rely on local wells and cisterns (rain collectors) for their supply but these have dried up in several places.

Many people have been forced to travel many kilometres to find water. The cost of trucking water into communities is too expensive for most villagers.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

In August 2003, the International Federation gave EUR 6,000 to the Red Crescent Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina's (RCSBiH) action in water distribution. RCSBiH, along with the Civil Protection, local authorities

and fire-brigades, organised distribution of drinkable water to 1,745 families (5,235 inhabitants) in the remote villages of Trebinje, Ljubinje and Ravno municipalities. The distributed water was 1,560 m3, or 315 litres per inhabitant (approx. 10 litres per day). Water-cistern trucks were rented from the fire brigades. The fuel was paid by the Red Cross. The municipality authorities gave the water free. Unfortunately, the drought continued. Forest fires in mid-July and August worsened the situation. The municipalities most affected by forest fires were Trebinje, Ravno, Bileca, Neum, Gacko, Ljubinje and Mostar in the south, as well as Banja Luka region in the north.

A lot of water was used to extinguish the fires and water-cistern trucks were not always available. More people in remote villages whose water wells dried up turned to the Red Cross for help. The situation now looks as follows:

- 3,600 families (13,350 inhabitants) from Trebinje, Ljubinje, Bileca, Nevesinje and Berkovici (five municipalities of Eastern Herzegovina Region – Republika Srpska entity)
- 12,175 families (49,225 inhabitants) from Mostar West, Mostar East, Capljina, Konjic, Stolac, Citluk, Jablanica, Neum, Prozor-Rama and Ravno (ten municipalities of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton – Federation BiH entity)

  Efforts are being made to secure funding (estimated at EUR 85,000) to meet needs.

To complicate matters, strong winds and hail in July 2003 caused damage to crops, buildings and infrastructure. It affected mainly:

- Tuzla and Zenica-Doboj Cantons in Federation BiH entity
- Prijedor, Zvornik, Doboj and Banja Luka regions in Republika Srpska entity

The main storms occurred as follows:

- On 4 July, damage to crops and infrastructure seven municipalities in the Region Prijedor estimated at EUR 1 million.
- Three separate storms in Region Zvornik, damaging crops and buildings, estimated to be EUR 40,000.
- On 4 and 23 July, damage to crops, buildings and infrastructure estimated at EUR 800,000 in four municipalities of Doboj region.
- On 4 and 23 July, damage to crops (EUR 1.5 million) and infrastructure (EUR 750,000) in four municipalities of Banja Luka region.
- On 23 and 25 July, damage to crops (EUR 1.5 million), buildings (EUR 135,000) and infrastructure (EUR 39,000) in four municipalities of Tuzla Canton.
- On 23 July, damage to crops (EUR 150,000) and buildings (EUR 175,000) in Zenica-Doboj Canton.

The cantons and regions ravaged by the hail storms were in regions where the main economy is agriculture and whose inhabitants mainly live from the land. The crops, already damaged by drought, were destroyed by the hail storms.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

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For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.