

CROATIA: EARTHQUAKE IN DUBROVNIK REGION

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Latest events

Following the series of earthquakes (measuring up to six points on the Richter scale) which struck the southern Croatian Adriatic coast between 5-17 September, tremors have continued to affect the worst-hit areas of Slano and Ston, further undermining the local infrastructure. The local emergency committee and the Croatian Red Cross are becoming increasingly concerned that although the emergency situation has passed, and those affected by the quakes were quickly and effectively assisted, the accommodation and other support systems currently in operation are totally inadequate for the upcoming Croatian winter.

Ston, with around 90% of houses ruined or hazardous for living, has been declared a prohibited area and the majority of the 420 residents evacuated to two camps comprised of caravans. The Slano hinterland is also badly affected, with 19 villages suffering damage of varying degrees and between 70-80% of the houses beyond use. Altogether, 1,600 persons were evacuated from their homes and are accommodated in nearby hotels (325), caravans (489 persons) or with host families (786).

Food distributions are being organised centrally and take place from points in Ston and Slano. The micro distribution of food to most of the villages is organised by the Croatian Army. Food supplies are generally sufficient, but stocks of flour, rice and potatoes are expected to become depleted in the next few days.

Water and sanitation conditions are under control, with the two caravan camps in Ston connected to electricity, water and sewerage systems. Additional sanitary units are required in the camps in Ston, as the two existing containers are inadequate for the winter. The 25 water tanks of 2,100 litres donated by the Red Cross were distributed to the villages and have proved immensely useful. Water trucking is organised by local fire brigades and no outstanding needs are reported at the moment.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Croatian Red Cross/International Federation supplied 7.3 mt of relief goods within 24 hours of the earthquake — the first aid that reached the area. In addition, the joint Red Cross assessment teams provided the essential link between the two emergency headquarters established in Ston and Slano. The later supply of 25 water tanks (2,100 litre capacity) and 180 jerry cans, caravans from Stobrec and Pula, as well as tents and a Rubb Hall warehouse covered most of the outstanding needs in the early stage of the crisis.

A Red Cross truck sent from Knin has been providing continuous support to local Red Cross branches and emergency headquarters in the micro distribution of relief items, whilst also playing a key role in towing the caravans to the villages and distributing water tanks.

Outstanding needs

The prognosis from local seismologists is that the continued tremors and shocks will occur throughout October before the situation stabilises, delaying any reconstruction and ensuring that most people will not be able to return home before the forthcoming winter. There is an outstanding need for the provision of winter-proof shelter for around 200 people, preferably housing containers as they enable beneficiaries to stay close to their homes and begin repairs as soon as possible. There is also a need to provide heating for the caravans, as their weak construction will provide little shelter from the bitter winter weather which is a feature of the region. The Federation would therefore like to provide:

- Twenty-five housing containers and two sanitation containers to cover 50% of the outstanding needs in the area. The containers should be easily dismantled so that after they are no longer needed in Dubrovnik, they could be stored in the Croatian Red Cross warehouse as a useful disaster preparedness asset for the National Society.
- Approximately 130 electrical heaters for the caravans and containers.
- Support to the local Red Cross representative in Ston, who receives no external support yet is a permanent member of the local emergency headquarters and covers a large geographic area. This would involve support for basic costs related to transport and a financial incentive for this Red Cross volunteer.
- Support to the most vulnerable villagers in carrying out minor repairs of stables and homes in need of small repair. This would enable some of the villagers to stay in the villages throughout the winter, providing them with basic facilities for their livestock. Priority beneficiaries would be identified by the local Red Cross personnel, the assistance organised and supervised by technicians from the Federation's field office in Split and implemented by the Stobrec maintenance team.

Outstanding needs can therefore be identified as follows:

	Quantity	CHF
Accommodation containers	25	145,000
Sanitary containers	2	17,000
Electrical heaters (2 kW)	130	12,000
Operational support for Red Cross activity in Ston	3 months	2,540
Operational costs for Stobrec maintenance team	30 days	1,230
Various construction material for minor repairs		15,000
TOTAL		192,770

Conclusion

The longer-term implications of the earthquakes in the Dubrovnik region appear to be much more threatening for its victims than the immediate emergency, as they face a long winter in temporary housing ill-suited to withstand sub-zero temperatures while at the same time trying to establish their homes and livelihoods. Continued Red Cross support will provide vital assistance in these efforts, whilst also building vital future disaster preparedness capacity for the Croatian Red Cross. We commend these initiatives to Federation donors.

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