

# DREF 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

## SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO/KOSOVO: WINTER ASSISTANCE

ME no: 05ME064  
Update No.1  
23 February 2006

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 183 countries. For more information: [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

### In Brief

**CHF 123,879 (USD 94,762 OR EUR 79,415) WAS ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO ASSIST 1,300 ELDERLY BENEFICIARIES FOR 3 MONTHS.**

### UNEARMARKED FUNDS TO REPAY DREF ARE ENCOURAGED

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For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

### Introduction

The Federation Office in Kosovo has requested an extension of three months (time frame from 26 February to 25 May 2006) for spending the allocated money from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) for winter assistance in Kosovo. The extension is required to continue and finalize the activity of minor repairs of houses of elderly people. The activity could not be completed due to heavy snowfalls and inaccessibility to remote areas. The extension of the minor emergency period would allow the completion of this activity once the villages are accessible again. The implementation of these works will be closely monitored by the Federation and both Red Cross organizations in Kosovo.

## The situation

Severe winter with heavy snowfalls, especially in the remote mountain areas, is one of the major problems that affects many households in Kosovo. During winter, a large number of people are cut-off from the outside world for weeks. This affects in particular the elderly people living alone - with limited food and non-food supplies, poor living conditions and inability to prepare for the heating requirements (wood, coal, etc) in the winter. Therefore, they are particularly vulnerable with no proper support and services being offered to them.

Another factor that makes the elderly more vulnerable during the winter is the problem of being left alone by their family members. The reason for this is the bad economic situation in Kosovo and the need for the younger people and families to migrate from rural and remote areas in order to find work. As a result, they have to leave the elderly behind without the traditional family support network.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action taken so far

The branches of both Red Cross organizations have been providing winterization assistance to the most vulnerable elderly people living alone. Following an assessment conducted by the local Red Cross during the autumn of 2005, all activities were planned, carried out and monitored by the branch Secretaries and the Red Cross volunteers.

Some 1,300 elderly beneficiaries were identified during the assessment, based on specially designed criteria to determine the needs and actions to be undertaken in order to assist vulnerable elderly persons. The following activities were identified:

- Provision of firewood and wood stoves (traditional and readily available heating source)
- Small winterization repairs of houses
- Assistance in domestic tasks, lime chopping of firewood, etc.
- Provision of food and non-food items, mattresses and blankets to the most severe cases in limited quantities
- Basic medical and psycho-social assistance



### Minor repairs

**120** beneficiaries were identified in the assessment for minor necessary house repairs. During the assessment, Red Cross branches identified houses that would need repairs such as covering the holes in roofing and walls, repairing broken windows (covered by plastic sheets), plastering and other minor works. Due to heavy snowfalls and difficulties to access the remote areas, it was not possible for the branches to carry out all minor repairs of the houses.

### Distribution of wood stoves and wood for heating

The distribution of wood stoves and wood for heating is completed for 98% of the cases. Due to the inaccessibility in some remote villages, the branches were not able to provide fire-wood for some beneficiaries. It is foreseen that the remaining distribution will be finalized by the end of this month. So far, **286** beneficiaries received a total of **572 m<sup>3</sup>** (2m<sup>3</sup> each) of firewood and **141** beneficiaries received wood stoves. The branch volunteers also assisted in chopping the fire-wood and placing them in dry places.



### Food distribution

**252** elderly people received assistance with food parcels procured locally. The parcels were prepared based on the needs of the elderly and Federation standard food parcels. The local Red Cross organizations are monitoring the needs closely, in order to cover other gaps in food and hygienic items.

**Medical assistance (basic medication)**

Basic medication is being provided only to a limited number of elderly people, upon an individual assessment of a local doctor. A total of **416** beneficiaries were initially assessed as needing medical assistance. This number had to be decreased to **210**, due to the fact that some beneficiaries need medicines for a longer term and that could not be covered by this operation due to high prices. These cases are registered by branches and referred to the local health institutions.

**Domestic tasks**

Volunteers have also been very active in offering their time for some domestic tasks for elderly. Many of these people live alone and in many houses the hygienic conditions were minimal.

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