

***BELARUS, RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
MOLDOVA, UKRAINE:
Winter Emergency 1998-1999***

29 June 1999

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period covered: 29 April - 23 June 1999*

The Winter Emergency programme, launched in September 1998 to assist 1,600,000 beneficiaries in Russia, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, is in the final process of delivering the intended assistance. The programme was extended until end-June, 1999, and monitoring indicates that the most basic needs of the vulnerable groups in the four countries have been or soon will be completely met.

The context

Responding to a potential humanitarian disaster potentially affecting millions of people in the countries of Moldova, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine faced with critical risks provoked by harsh climatic, social, and economic conditions, the Federation and respective National Societies launched an Appeal in September 1998 intended to:

- { alleviate the impact of cold, malnutrition, disease, stress, and to protect the dignity of 1.6 million beneficiaries;
- { maximise the use of local resources (human, goods and services);
- { strengthen local capacities by providing sustainable infra-structural support and training to the national headquarters and branches of the local Red Cross societies and collaborating social welfare institutions; and
- { promote partnerships between the Operating National Societies and the Participating National Societies.

{ More specifically, the Winter Emergency Appeal (WEA) operation is designed to tackle the most basic needs of the target population by supplying warm winter clothing and footwear for children and adults, and supplementary parcels of basic food and hygiene items. Soup kitchens have been established to provide beneficiaries in urban areas with more than one

million hot meals in a six-month period. Institutions catering for children, the handicapped and the elderly also receive basic medicaments (nursing kits).

{ The priority beneficiaries include families with many children, single parents, orphans, single and other pensioners, severely handicapped adults and children — living both at home and in institutions which the authorities are struggling to support -- unemployed and homeless, remote health posts and street children (unofficial estimates suggest there are at least one million people roaming across Russia, with proportionally similar figures in Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova.

{ The Federation is also implementing out two complementary relief operations in conjunction with this programme:

{ The Far North-eastern Appeal for Magadan, Kamchatka, Chukotka (Anadyr); and

{ The TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs programme in Russia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus.

Latest events

Belarus

People's real income dropped by 14% in the first quarter of the year; real monthly salaries reportedly fell by 13.3% and real pensions by 28%.

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis, consumer prices rose by 7.2% in Belarus in the first three weeks of May and by 71.1 percent from the beginning of the year.

Forty-one summer camps in the Brest region are ready to accommodate about 36,000 children this year. Over 2,000 trips to camps will be offered free of charge to disabled children and orphans. Over 30,000 high school students will be offered trips to recreation camps. Allocations from the regional budget for children's recreation are expected to total BR 20 billion.

On 24 May, the Mogilyov City Executive Committee, Employment Service and Employment Centre launched a "Resettlement Week" campaign. Unemployed men aged 18-60, women between 18 and 55 and their families residing Mogilyov will be offered jobs and housing in other parts of Belarus. In the Mogilyov region alone, skilled workers are required at 39 farms. Since the beginning of the year, six families have moved with the help of the Mogilyov Employment Centre.

Moldova

The Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family of Moldova participated in the talks with the World Bank representatives in Washington to finalise the agreement relating to the allocation of a USD 13 million credit to Moldova. It is planned to use these funds for the implementation of the project for the Management of Social Protection in Moldova, which will be conducted during the next 5 years. The plan envisions a number of radical measures for changing the management and the very structure of social protection in the country.

With a grant provided from the Netherlands Red Cross Society, a consignment of leather footwear was manufactured by the metropolitan Stock Corporation "Zorile" for the pupils of the children's boarding houses in Hicesti and Belti.

Ukraine

Bread prices, which were stable during the first quarter of the year, rose in the Zaporizhia, Odesa and Cherkasy oblasts by 3.3%-10%, and prices for butter rose by 5.3%-8.3% in Volyn, Donetsk, Lviv, Kharkiv and Chernivtsi oblasts and Sevastopol.

On 3 May the Cabinet of Ministers issued a resolution assigning executive government bodies to take additional measures necessary to improve the social policy of the country. Measures include improved legislation dealing with the poverty line, intensifying control over the clearance of wage arrears, and ensuring that social payment arrears and necessary deductions to social funds are paid on time and in full. The resolution also includes a number of measures to speed up the clearance of wage, pension, scholarships and other social payment arrears. The government drafted a number of measures to be taken to improve environmental protection programmes and development of the labour market to speed up reforms in legislation dealing with pensions and to strengthen the social protection of elderly and disabled people. In addition, a number of measures were worked out to improve the system of special-purpose social assistance to those who do not receive social protection at all.

President Kuchma ordered intensified controls over the import of products to Ukraine, in particular raising the import duty for specific types of products, introducing amendments in procedures for importing products as humanitarian aid, and re-enforcing anti-dumping measures to protect Ukrainian producers. In the first quarter of the current year, the volume of products imported into the country amounted to USD 182.6 million, which is USD 10 million higher than during the same period last year.

Russia

According to the acting Minister of Finance, inflation in Russia was 2.5% during May. This is seen as a considerable success for the government, because inflation in January stood at 8.5%. The revenues increased gross domestic product by 1.5%, resulting in an increase in average gross domestic product of 12.2%, considerably higher than in 1998.

Federal tax revenues for the first four months of the year were RR 78.6 billion (USD 3 billion), 70% more than the figure for the same period last year, according to the Tax Ministry. As a result the ratio of revenues to GDP increased from 4.5% in October 1998 to 7.8% in January and 8.3% in April this year.

A proposal was launched for a company-backed money fund to support regional economies, starting with Kemerovo and Yekaterinburg. According to his proposal all industrial enterprises should pay 2% of the value of their gross output to the fund. The money should be used to develop coal mining at two companies in Kemerovo and upgrade production facilities in the West Siberian Metal Combine.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Belarus

The Belarusian Red Cross' procurement of 17,200 food parcels is underway, but rampant inflation and food shortages have led to an increase of the cost of a food parcel (USD 10

compared to USD 8 at the beginning of the operation), and caused delays in procurements. Red Cross vehicles ensured a timely delivery of the procured items to the Oblast committees.

Second-hand clothing delivered to Vitebsk Oblast is now cleared from customs and distributions started in mid-May. In April alone, 4,500 beneficiaries were provided with shoes and 31,527 vulnerable individuals received clothing.

On 20-21 May, a workshop was held for the Belarus Red Cross chairpersons, chief accountants and the Headquarters staff involved in the relief operations. The main issues on the agenda dealt with the implementation of the Winter Emergency Appeal (WEA) in Belarus and preparations for the final report. The participants were provided with copies of Project Formats (recently introduced by the Federation as part of Country Assistance Strategies), a checklist for a needs assessment, and rules on distribution of relief items (all translated into Russian). The following achievements of the WEA were highlighted by the workshop (all figures are preliminary):

FFPs: 45,562 were distributed instead of 38,600 planned under the appeal;

Soup Kitchens: 2,354 beneficiaries assisted instead of 2,000. The re-integration of the homeless and former prisoners into society achieved good results. Out of the 2,354 beneficiaries, 1,124 were people without income (homeless, unemployed, former prisoners). All of them received medical check-ups, 354 persons received passports, and 80% were provided with jobs. Hot meals were brought by Red Cross nurses or volunteers to the homes of bedridden people;

Hygiene & Nursing kits: soap and washing powder were distributed as planned, as well as 8,819 bottles of shampoo. The procurement of 400 nursing kits is progressing, but only three suppliers out of 10 were able to offer all items required for the kit.

Three vehicles were procured for the Red Cross regional branches and BUR 6 billion were raised locally.

Moldova

Some 3,960 food parcels were received in 33 local Red Cross committees. About 500 hygiene parcels were distributed in May and the distribution of the remaining 2,200 parcels should be completed during June.

Soup kitchens continued to function, serving the most vulnerable people with 33,600 hot meals instead of the planned 24,000.

Ukraine

Some UAH 1,788,750 were transferred to the regional Red Cross committees earmarked for food parcels and UAH 85,705 for hygienic kits. Distribution is carried out according to the lists of beneficiaries, which were made following regional assessments. Each food parcel contains flour, macaroni, sugar, cereals, canned meat or fish, and margarine, with an average price per food parcel of UAH 17.85. The price of a hygiene kit is about UAH 3.55, consisting of a box of washing powder and two soap bars. (1 CHF = 2,56 UAH).

Some 99,910 beneficiaries, including 29,848 elderly, 18,840 disabled, 21,417 chronically ill persons, 11,658 multi-child families, 8,820 single parents and 9,327 orphans received 99,910 food parcels in 524 districts (27 regions).

A total of 29,265 hygiene kits were provided to 29,265 beneficiaries, including 8,639 elderly, 5,399 disabled, 5,541 chronically ill persons, 4,122 multi-child families, 2,483 single parents and 3,081 orphans in 215 districts (20 regions).

The Ukrainian Red Cross raised 218 tons of food, 128,000 units of clothes, 16,800 hygienic items, 70,000 other items and UAH 166,500 locally, and provided additional assistance to 115,600 people from the most vulnerable population groups.

Russia

FFPs: Two rounds of production and distribution are over, assisting the most vulnerable beneficiaries in the targeted regions with 203,645 FFPs, each containing 4 kg of flavour, 1 kg of sugar, 2 kg of macaroni, 1 kg of vegetable oil, 4 cans of beef, 2 tins of condensed milk, 200 g of tea and 40 g of dry yeast. The third round of food parcel production (77,500) was approved by the Federation Secretariat in Geneva, and procurement contracts with the suppliers were signed in the regions. The production of FFPs is as follows:

	Region	Amount Planned	Amount Produced
Europe an region	Ivanovo	4 000	2 000
	Kaliningrad	4 500	0
	Kostroma	3 500	2 000
	Penza	4 500	4 500
Ural region	Bashkortostan	4 000	4 000
	Orenburg	8 500	3 400
	Perm	9 500	6 500
	Chelyabinsk	10 000	10 000
Siberia region	Byryatia	4 500	0
	Irkutsk	8 000	3 024
	Chita	3 500	0
	Kemerovo	8 500	3 000
	Khakassia	4 500	2 250

All the regions that have started production have also begun distribution, but reports on the number of assisted beneficiaries are not yet available. Regional Red Cross committees are planning to complete distribution not earlier than 12 July.

Soup Kitchens: Soup kitchens closed at the end of May. There were 892 hot meal points during this year's programme in the targeted regions. Some 173,000 vulnerable individuals were assisted with 1,184,000 hot meals.

Second hand clothes: Some 561,000 individuals (162,898 vulnerable families) were assisted with 43 containers (32,911 bags) of second hand clothes during the WEA -- twice as high as last year's programme when only 18 containers of second hand clothes were procured and distributed.

New Clothes in Siberia: The Singapore Red Cross Society made an earmarked donation for Siberian children, consisting of new clothes: 232 sets for Buryatia, 200 for Irkutsk and 180 for Chita.

Seeds: All seed sets were distributed during May, but reports are not yet available from the regions.

Donations in-kind: Some 526 tons of capelins and 175,000 tins of herrings were received from the Icelandic Red Cross and distributed in the western and north-western parts of Russia as follows:

	Region	Delivered	Distributed	Number of beneficiaries
Capelins (kg)	Moscow	72 576	72 576	39 000
	Saint-Petersburg	199 584	107 685	Not reported
	Saint-Petersburg region		55 019	39 809
	Octiabrski Dorcom		36 880	Not reported
	Novgorod	126 989	72 595	57 412
	Yaroslavl		18 495	8 617
	Tambov		18 486	12 852
	Tver		17 413	8 075
	Pskov	127 005	90 064	21 798
	Smolensk		18 445	7 101
	Briansk		18 496	6 813
		Total	526 154	526 154
Herrings (tins)	Arkhangelsk	175 000	112 100	10 978
	Vologda		31 900	4 507
	Riazan		31 000	3 401
		Total	175 000	175 000
	Grand total			220 363

Almost 41 tons of bakery equipment and items donated by the Pillsbury company were distributed to more than 43,000 beneficiaries in Tatarstan. Additionally, Johnson and Johnson (Russia) donated over USD 1 million-worth of hygiene products for operations in Siberia and the Far Northeast, while the Swedish firm Oriflame has given 600,000 bottles of shampoo/liquid soap.

The Moscow City Red Cross committee donated 140 sacks of second hand clothes to the RRC earmarked for the WEA programme. Some 30 sacks were already distributed among the Bryansk Red Cross, Elets Red Cross, and Schyolkovo Red Cross committees, the Moscow Women guardianship committee, and the Moscow regional pensioners union.

Bulk food and bilateral programmes

Twenty two containers (out of 725) of the first 12,240 MT of USDA/American Red Cross bulk food supplies arrived and were unloaded in the Siberian region of Kemerovo. The remaining containers are expected to arrive in June and the following months.

Preparations are currently being made to obtain clearance from the Federal Humanitarian Commission for duty free importation rights on the second shipment of 12,240 MT of food.

The support to orphanages throughout the Moscow region and the operational areas in Siberia continues. In total, some USD 20,000 per month will be provided to 11 orphanages. Aid will be used primarily for food support and other material needs and repairs. The Russian Red Cross branches are taking the responsibility for monitoring of the activities.

Outstanding needs

Despite the late arrival of anticipated unearmarked contributions which hampered the planned time-frame of the operation, at this time there are no further outstanding needs.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

On the eve of the World Red Cross/Red Crescent Day, the winter operation received wide spread mass media coverage in Russia and elsewhere. The Belarus Red Cross Headquarters initiated a round-table discussion and a series of TV and radio programmes, similar activities were organised by the Red Cross regional branches. Press-conferences, extended task force meetings, and sessions with other NGOs are also planned by the Oblast Committees upon the completion of the operation.

On 8 May, Catalan TV (Chisinau), broadcast an interview with the relief delegate during which information about ongoing programmes (including WEA) was presented in detail.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The WEA operation will soon be completed. Despite the many obstacles encountered, Red Cross assistance in the form of food parcels, soup kitchens, seeds, hygiene items, shoes and clothes has achieved the objectives of delivering key assistance to the most vulnerable groups of beneficiaries during a crucial period of the year.

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