

# ***BELARUS, MOLDOVA, UKRAINE: WINTER ASSISTANCE 1999-2000***

*14 April, 2000*

*appeal no. 30/99*

*situation report no. 1*

*period covered: November, 1999 - March, 2000*

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*Implementation of the Winter Assistance activities were delayed due to the late arrival of funds. Despite the funding constraints, relief activities are now being implemented, though at a reduced level primarily focusing on food assistance. The respective National Red Cross Societies, with support provided by the Federation, are actively undertaking efforts to complete the operation in accordance with the established plan, the needs, and the timetable.*

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## ***The context***

The International Federation's Winter Emergency Appeal (the third in three years) aimed to provide short-term assistance to more than 215,000 of the most vulnerable people in Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova through the provision of food, medical and hygiene items and winter clothing.

The appeal was initiated in response to the continued economic and social crisis in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, which resulted in increased poverty, high unemployment, failure of the social protection system, and a critical deterioration of public health. The collapse of the financial sector in Russia in August, 1998, affected almost all the CIS countries, provoking further socio-economic distress. The entire region continues to struggle with high inflation rates. In 1999 the harvest was one of the poorest in the last decades, and a series of natural disasters such as floods and landslides have exacerbated the situation in parts of the region. Economic and political forecasts indicate that the situation will continue deteriorating during the current year and this will increase the levels of poverty. Under these conditions, it is difficult to foresee any improvement of the current situation in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. The economic reforms being implemented towards market economies are proceeding slowly, and in many ways resulting in creating further hardships to many groups of the population. The decline in living standards causes new problems as people seek ways to cope. The

result is that levels of alcohol and drug abuse throughout the region are increasing, as are the numbers of street children and homeless.

The targeted beneficiaries are people who, for various reasons, do not receive regular governmental support or fall outside the social support system.

More specifically, the activities envisioned under the appeal are:

- supplying winter clothes and footwear to the children and elderly;
- providing hot meals or sandwiches to street children and homeless;
- distributing food parcels and hygiene parcels to disadvantaged families;
- distributing school kits for children;
- supporting young people living in juvenile custody;
- supporting, in collaboration with UNHCR, internally displaced persons and refugees.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

The worsening economic, agricultural, and industrial situation in all three countries has provoked a further downward spiral in basic living conditions for the most vulnerable, and the Federation has responded, in collaboration with the respective National Societies, by implementing the following activities in the respective countries:

### ***Belarus***

Some 8,950 of the most vulnerable beneficiaries are being provided with 26,850 food parcels through ECHO support). Procurement tenders are in process, and distribution plans have been prepared. The provision of meals to 50 persons a month is also being arranged. The beneficiaries include released prisoners, homeless persons, army veterans, and people older than 80.

On February, 15, a workshop for Red Cross Activists from the 17 Rayon Railway Red Cross Committees was held, addressing issues of selection and targeting of the most vulnerable, reporting requirements, reporting and evaluation of the project, and working with the media.

On February, 21-22, a workshop for the Chairpersons and Head Accountants from the four operating regional Red Cross branches (Vitebsk, Grodno, Brest and Minsk Oblasts) was organized. The following main issues were covered: selection and targeting of the most vulnerable; reporting requirements; reporting and evaluation of the project; working with the media. In March the knowledge obtained from the seminar was disseminated at four new workshops in the four oblasts among the staff of Oblast Red Cross Committees.

In a first round of food distribution, 2,400 food parcels were purchased and delivered. 100 food parcels were distributed to refugees assisted by the Belarus Red Cross. The procurement tender for food parcels for the second round of the program has been completed. In total, 7,200 food parcels will be distributed in three rounds.

With support from the British Red Cross, procurement tendering for food parcels, hygiene kits, and the organizing of hot meals distribution is underway. Preparations to purchase 1,000 kits of school writing-materials for children from single-parent and multi-children families is underway. The programme also entails the purchase and distribution of 3,355 food parcels in two rounds, as well as 3,000 hygiene kits. Hot meals are being provided to 300 orphan children and people with low income 24 times a month in a three month period. Second-hand clothes and footwear were received by the Oblast Red Cross Committees, and distribution has started.

### ***Ukraine***

Procurement tenders for purchase of food parcels for distribution in four Oblasts were started, and some 30,000 food parcels are being procured for distribution among the beneficiaries in four Oblasts of

Ukraine. Hot meals are being distributed to 300 people in five oblasts, 21 times a month in a three-month period. The total number of hot meals to be provided is 94,500. 3,600 sandwiches will be distributed to street children in a three-month period. Distribution of the sandwiches, food parcels and hot meals assistance will take place in the following places:

- Food parcels: Dnepropetrovsk, Zaporozhye, Lugansk, Kharkiv Oblasts;
- Hot meals: Republic of Crimea, Dnepropetrovsk, Zaporozhye, Lugansk, Kharkiv Oblasts;
- Sandwiches for street children: Lugansk and Ternopil Oblasts.

The procurement of food for sandwiches for street children in 2 Oblasts and the organization of hot meals distribution in 5 Oblasts continues. With the signing of a contract between the Federation and the Ukrainian Red Cross, preparations are also underway to provide 95,000 food parcels (with British Red Cross Support) to vulnerable groups in 19 Oblasts, as well as hot meals in 13 Oblasts to 200 elderly person living alone.

### ***Moldova***

The procurement of some 6,000 hygiene kits is underway, to be distributed to TB-infected people, large families, people with low incomes, lonely elderly, and pensioners. The National Society operates an existing programme for the procurement and distribution of food parcels and hot meals.

## ***Outstanding needs***

Implementation of the Winter Assistance activities was delayed due to the late arrival of funds, and further cash support is needed to implement the scaled-down programme. The operation has been hampered by the lack of a relief delegate. A local Red Cross staff member of the Delegation now supports the programme implementation, as well as monitoring, supervision and evaluation.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

On January, 21, 2000, the Head of the Liaison Bureau in Chisinau participated in a co-ordination meeting at the TACIS Branch Office.

Visits to a number of Embassies and to EU offices in all three countries have been arranged to articulate the Appeal needs. In March, follow-up letters, aimed to highlight current Winter Assistance activities, were sent to a number of foreign embassies in Minsk and Kyiv. Coordination activities with UN agencies are ongoing.

In March, the Federation Delegation in Minsk produced and distributed a newsletter providing details on various allocations from abroad to Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. Similar information appeared in the Moldavian News Agency Interlik reports on March, 15.

Agreement has been reached with the editorial staff of the departmental newspaper "Railwayman of Belarus" concerning highlighting the progress of the program and it's activities, giving information about donors and beneficiaries.

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