

KOSOVO REFUGEES

RELIEF AND PREPAREDNESS ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, AND FYR MACEDONIA

CHF 5,225,000
20,000 beneficiaries

Programme no 01.39/99

The Context

Following the intensification of fighting between Serbian forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army in Kosovo in May 1998, an estimated 250,000 people became internally displaced within Kosovo, 45,000 travelled into Montenegro, and an estimated 40,000 refugees fled from Kosovo into Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and the Former Yugoslav Republic (FYR) of Macedonia.

In June 1998 the International Federation and the ICRC signed an operational agreement which made the ICRC the lead agency for the co-ordination of relief assistance by the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement to victims of the Kosovo conflict inside the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Kosovo, other parts of Serbia, and Montenegro); and the International Federation the lead agency in Albania (and subsequently FYR Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina). This appeal therefore covers funding required to meet the Federation's obligations.

In Albania, by late 1998 there were about 20,000 refugees from Kosovo. The first refugees arrived in the northern district of Tropoje - one of the remotest and poorest in Albania - in May 1998, and were accommodated by host families. However, as the burden on host families increased and living conditions continued to deteriorate with new arrivals, the number of refugees moving further south to Tirana, Durrës, Shkodra and other districts increased considerably during the autumn of 1998. The Albanian Red Cross (ARC) emergency relief operation, supported by the Federation, began in June. As emergency stocks were in place, the ARC/Federation were able to provide immediate relief assistance when the refugees first arrived. The Federation launched an Emergency Appeal in June; assistance focused on the distribution of food and hygiene parcels, blankets, mattresses, and towels to 10,000 refugees for four months. This assistance was extended through a revised appeal which provided assistance to 15,000 refugees in November and December 1998.

As of late 1998, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an estimated 10,000 people have sought refuge from the fighting. Local Red Cross branches provided limited relief assistance to the refugees,

and from November 1998 a new programme of assistance started, providing food and non-food items in four collective centres, each hosting approximately 1,000 refugees.

In FYR Macedonia, as of late 1998, there were an estimated 5,000 “visitors” from Kosovo. The Red Cross has been providing limited food and non-food relief items to about 200 of the most vulnerable refugees.

The Operation

In 1999, the Federation plans to continue its assistance to the Kosovo refugees in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and FYR Macedonia. Assistance is initially planned for the first four to six months of 1999.

It is extremely difficult to know how many refugees will remain outside Kosovo in 1999; however, it is unlikely that the refugees will all be able to return home quickly. The Federation is constantly monitoring the situation, and is ready to revise its operations should needs change.

Objectives of the Operation

- In Albania, to provide basic food and non-food relief items for 15,000 refugees for six months.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, to provide food and non-food relief items to 4,000 refugees in four collective centres for four months.
- In FYR Macedonia, to continue to provide limited relief assistance to the most vulnerable refugees, as needed, for four months.

Plan of Action

- Albania Relief and Social Welfare

Assistance is initially planned for a six-month period beginning January 1999, and will be reviewed depending on needs. It will involve distribution of monthly food parcels and hygiene parcels for 15,000 refugees, distribution of blankets, mattresses, towels and bedlinen sets for 5,000 refugees, and monthly distribution of milk powder to 400 babies up to 12 months of age. Additional assistance, for example social welfare activities such as psychological support and first aid training, will also be provided for the refugees.

- Bosnia and Herzegovina Relief

Assistance will be provided for 4,000 refugees accommodated in four collective centres (1,000 in each centre) for four months. The assistance will include the provision of food for the most vulnerable (children up

to the age of five, and pregnant or lactating mothers), hygiene articles, soap and baby kits. All refugees will be given a blanket, and each refugee in the most vulnerable category will also receive a sleeping bag. The Federation will also provide technical assistance for the building of latrines.

- FYR Macedonia Relief

Limited relief assistance (food, hygiene items, blankets, and winter clothes) will be provided as needed to the most vulnerable among the refugees (likely to be only small numbers in 1999).

Resource Planning

PNS/Government response to the Emergency Appeal launched in June 1998 for Kosovo Refugees in Albania has been generous. The Federation has also been able to provide limited funding for Kosovo refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina and FYR Macedonia. While late in 1998, it is impossible to predict how many Kosovo refugees will remain outside Kosovo in 1999, the Federation is constantly monitoring the situation, and is ready to revise this Appeal as needed, depending on the numbers of refugees remaining outside the territory.

Capacity

- The Operating National Societies

The Albanian Red Cross, with its network of 36 branches throughout Albania, has showed in 1998 that it has good capacity to provide efficient assistance to the Kosovo refugees. In FYR Macedonia, the Red Cross, with 34 branches throughout the country, has been able to provide assistance to Kosovo refugees in 1998, and has been on standby to assist larger numbers in case more refugees arrived. For details on the two entity Red Cross structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina, see the appeal for that country.

In all three countries, the experience gained through the assistance programmes for Kosovo refugees will enable the National Societies to strengthen their disaster preparedness capacities.

- The Federation

In Albania, the Federation has a delegation of three persons; the size of the delegation will be reviewed early in 1999, and will be adjusted depending on the size of operations. For details on the Federation delegation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, please refer to appeal for Bosnia and Herzegovina. In FYR Macedonia, the Federation has had a Representative in place in 1998 to assist the Macedonian Red Cross in planning the assistance to the Kosovo refugees. A

decision will be made in late 1998 as to whether the Federation Representative will remain in FYR Macedonia for the first part of 1999.

Co-operation

The Federation enjoys excellent co-operation with the ICRC, the Albanian Red Cross Society, with the two entity Red Cross structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and with the Macedonian Red Cross. In addition, the Federation has regular contacts with the UNHCR, WFP and other agencies providing assistance to the Kosovo refugees, and with the government authorities in the three countries. The Federation is committed to continue to provide assistance to the refugees of Kosovo until durable solutions are found.