

# ***CENTRAL EUROPE: FLOODS***

19 November 1998

## **Information Bulletin N° 1**

### ***The Disaster***

Following above average rainfall during the last two months, and particularly heavy rains recently, large areas of Slovenia have suffered serious flood damage, and local communities in the north-eastern region of Hungary have been working around the clock to reinforce dikes along the swollen Tisza river. Areas in the north-western part of Romania have also been damaged by the recent incessant rains.

Following inundations in the west of Hungary, beginning on 3 November heavy rain also fell in most parts of Slovenia. The first cases of flooding were reported in the coastal cities of Koper and Piran. The worst situation was reported along the Savinja river and in the towns of Celje and Lasko. Both cities were completely flooded, with electricity and drinking water supplies cut, and with roads and bridges destroyed in surrounding areas. The most affected regions were Oz Rk Lasko, Celje, Ljutomer, Ptuj, Zagorje, Murska Sobota, Slovenska Bistrica, Litija, Domzale and Zalec. In most places the basic supplies have been reconnected, and, with one exception, access to communities which had been cut-off has been now been restored.

The highest level of flood alert was declared in the Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg and Borsod-Abauj- Zemplen regions in north-eastern Hungary ten days ago. The swollen waters of the Tisza and Bodrog rivers threatened some 65 communities with a combined population of 70,000 people. Local communities have been working around the clock with specialists and volunteers from outside the region to reinforce and monitor dikes along the river, and preparations are under way in the threatened villages also in the southern part of the Tisza river to protect against the anticipated flooding. Over one thousand people have been evacuated. A few hundred of them will not be able to return to their homes before next spring. The influx of initially 2,000, later 12,000 persons helping with the relief activities has placed a significant strain on the capacities of the local authorities to provide food and shelter. Food reserves need constant replenishment.

In the same geographical area, the constant rains have flooded five villages in the Mara-Mures region in the north-western part of Romania. Some 3,800 people have been severely affected, many houses have been damaged, several hundred people have been evacuated and are accommodated in local community facilities. There has also been damage to crops in the area.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

In response to the floods, the Slovenian Red Cross has launched a national appeal for support and on 5 November began distributing emergency aid in the form of food parcels, hygiene items, warm clothing, shoes, blankets and bedding to the affected communities. To date some 6 million Sit (approx. CHF 50,000) has been released by the National Society for emergency support to the victims. A further CHF 7,000 has been released by the Federation's Regional Delegation in Budapest to contribute to the operation.

The Hungarian Red Cross is targeting its assistance to those communities involved in reinforcing dams, and seeks to provide food assistance to 2,000 schoolchildren in the villages of Tizsakorod, Milota, Tizsabecs, Tizzacsecse, Konya, Gyure, Kisvarsany, Nagyvarsany, Tizsakerecseny, Tizszazalko, Tizsavid and Tizsadb, each with a population of less than 1,000 persons. CHF 12,000 has been released from the Federation Regional Delegation in Budapest to support the operation.

In Romania, the Romanian Red Cross first reacted by sending a truckload of blankets, bed linen, food items and mineral water to flood victims to meet the immediate needs. To date, the National Society has distributed blankets, warm clothing, food items and bed linen for those who are in need, a total value of 400 million Lei (approximately CHF 56,000). The crisis has mobilised the Red Cross branches and many private individuals all over the country.

## *Needs*

Outstanding needs in Slovenia are significant due to the high number of families affected. Financial support or in-kind assistance (food products consisting of tinned fruit, vegetables, and fish, oil, rice, pasta, sugar and flour; and hygiene items consisting of detergents and washing powder) is sought to respond to the continued needs of the affected population as winter weather conditions set in.

The Hungarian Red Cross is seeking financial and/or in-kind support to provide further food assistance to the affected people in Sarospatak and Satoraljaujhely, and to refill their emergency stocks and to provide gas stoves, torches, generators, candles, raincoats and petroleum lamps to the communities in need.

Provided funding will be available, the Romanian Red Cross plans to continue to offer basic assistance to 3,800 people by supplying food, clothing and household items during the winter period, as many of the victims will not be able to return to their homes before next spring.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Director  
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Renny Nancholas  
Director  
Europe Department