

HUNGARY, ROMANIA

UKRAINE: FLOODS

Preliminary Appeal

no: 13/01

9 March, 2001

***THIS PRELIMINARY APPEAL SEEKS CHF 1,574,048
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES
TO ASSIST 53,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 2 MONTHS***

Summary

Rapidly melting snow and heavy rain caused the Tisa river and its tributaries to rise to record levels, provoking some of the worst flooding in Central Europe in decades. Wide areas of Hungary, Romania and Ukraine have been affected, forcing whole communities from their homes and seriously impacting upon the future well being of the population. Red Cross National Societies in all three countries have responded and seek to consolidate and strengthen their relief operation. CHF 150,000 was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), with CHF 50,000 for each country.

The Disaster

Tens of thousands of people in northeastern Hungary, northwestern Romania, and western Ukraine have been uprooted as Central Europe faces serious floods. Forced to flee for safety in a sudden exodus, many fled their homes with little more than they could carry. Most have found shelter in other communities, but much of it is basic or overcrowded, and the hardship is expected to last for weeks to come. With the floods centred on deprived and underdeveloped regions -- which reflect the social cost of structural adjustments in the transition to free market economies -- the impact could also be a long-term one.

Hungary

In Hungary, close to the Ukraine border, the authorities reported the highest water levels level ever recorded. Farmland and communities have been overwhelmed, and dykes have broken, exacerbating the situation. Fleeing the approaching water, families have resorted to using anything mobile, taking their most precious livestock with them. Some Hungarian villagers who possess very little, and are determined not to abandon it, have refused to leave their homes,. In the village of Tarpa in Szabolcs county, 1,500 people sought safety on nearby high ground but soon found themselves cut off, surrounded by flood water. Red Cross rescue teams ferried in food, drinking water and hygiene supplies by boat.

By Wednesday night 50 square km of Szabolcs had been inundated, but although the rivers had stopped rising the water still spread, finding its way through breached river defenses. By Thursday night closer

to 80 square km were flooded, and a far greater area -- 35 km long and 20 km across at its widest points -- lay abandoned between the Tisa and the Ukrainian border. Somewhere between 25,000 and 30,000 people had fled, and 20 Hungarian villages had been evacuated.

Romania

Romania has not fared better. Heavy rainfall and melting snow in Romania precipitated the disaster, swelling the Tisa river and its tributaries, and leaving water levels in some rivers six meters above normal. From March 3 to 8, the floods swept over 11 districts, again in one of the poorest corners of the country. Some 175 communities were affected, close to 4,000 families, and 13,000 fields. Infrastructure was severely disrupted, and 365 bridges were out of use. Of those evacuated, some were still living in tents Thursday night because no other accommodation was available. The situation, the Romanian Red Cross reported, was deteriorating.

Ukraine

In Western Ukraine, 100,000 acres of the important agricultural region of Zakarpatska was reported under water. A mainly mountainous area with a total population of 1,128,000, 191 communities were flooded, and by Tuesday night six people were reported killed with 11,000 people evacuated. Some 50 km of roads were out, rail transport had come to a halt in places, and many populated areas were without electricity, gas and telephone. The water level is still raising.

The Response so far

CHF 150,000 was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), with CHF 50,000 intended to support action in each country.

Government Action •

Hungary

The Hungarian Government declared a state of emergency and the national disaster management body began to implement planned emergency measures with the civil defense, the Hungarian Red Cross, fire brigades and others co-ordinating agencies. Evacuees are being accommodated in host families in neighbouring villages and towns, and in community buildings.

A reported 13,000 people were mobilized to reinforce flood defenses, and the government said it was spending between 20 and 30 million forints a day on the fight against the water. (CHF 1 = 1.70 forints, EUR 1 = 266.55 forints). President Ferenc Madl appealed for volunteer flood fighters and for public donations to assist flood victims. To ease the flood threat, parts of a main dyke road between two inundated villages in Szabolcs were torn up on Wednesday night so water would run to low-lying areas where harm would be minimal.

Romania

The Government has allocated 7 billion lei (27000/1 USD) to the affected areas. The funds are mainly intended for the restoration of houses and for some non-food assistance, including clothing. Reports indicate that no other organizations are operational in the districts apart from the Romanian Red Cross.

Red Cross Action •

Hungary

The Deputy Secretary General of the Hungarian Red Cross is co-ordinating Red Cross action from the disaster area. Three rescue teams are operating by boat, integrated into the government's national disaster response, and the Red Cross is assisting evacuees, distributing food, bottled drinking water, hygiene articles, blankets and bedding material. Three Red Cross psycho-social support teams are visiting evacuees and others affected. Red Cross relief supplies are being transported to the north-east from branch stocks around the country, and Red Cross volunteers have converged on the north east

from throughout the country. The Hungarian Red Cross has appealed to the public for donations of cash and kind.

Romania

The Romanian Red Cross released disaster reserve funds for an immediate response from its local branch, and local purchase of food and mineral water was made. It also dispatched a water purification unit and a truckload of food, blankets and clothing to the stricken area. By Thursday, sugar, vegetable oil, rice, canned meat, clothing, blankets, detergents and soap had been distributed to 1,600 victims.

Ukraine

The Ukrainian Red Cross branch in Zakarpattia supported by the Headquarters representatives and the Federation Head of Office in Kiev have conducted the assessment and are co-ordinating the operation in the area. The Ukrainian Red Cross is providing hot meals at evacuation points. 100 food parcels, 300 medical kits, and 288 hygiene parcels were distributed.

Co-ordination

The Red Cross is co-operating closely with local and national administrative and health authorities in the three countries. The Red Cross operation is co-ordinated by the Federation's delegations in Budapest, Minsk, and the office in Kiev.

The Intended Operation

Assessment of Needs •

The immediate assessments were conducted by the Red Cross branches in the affected areas, in Hungary in the Tarpa and Szabolcs branch, in Romania in the Oradia branch, and in Ukraine's Zakarpatska branch. Assessments are ongoing. The need is for vigilance as the full impact of the floods remains unknown. There is considerable psychological trauma in all three affected countries.

Immediate Needs in all three Countries •

- Food parcels to replenish depleted Red Cross relief stocks.
- Hygiene parcels.
- Clothes and foot wear for adults and children.
- Basic supplies for baby care.
- Blankets and bed linen.
- Cash to purchase locally wherever possible.

Anticipated Later Needs •

It is unclear how long the water will remain, and more rain will exacerbate the already grim conditions. Many flood victims will clearly be unable to return home for some weeks to come. There is a risk of contagious disease due to a shortage of purified drinking water. Assistance through this period is essential.

The Federation in co-operation with the Red Cross Societies in Hungary, Romania and Ukraine, will continue the assessment and report on further needs and developments.

Red Cross Objectives •

- Continue the distribution of relief items to 25,000 beneficiaries in Hungary, 15,000 in Romania, and 13,000 in Ukraine.
- Monitor growing and changing needs, and respond accordingly.
- Monitor the conditions for a return to homes, and assist flood victims to return.
- Strengthen Red Cross capacities and programmes to assist the poor and marginalized being left behind in the transition from command to free market economies

Capacity of the National Societies •

All three National Societies have strong branches in the stricken region, experience in flood response, and are familiar with the specific vulnerabilities of their communities.

In all three countries there are ongoing disaster preparedness programmes, with disaster preparedness coordinators located in each headquarters. The central warehouse in Romania has released disaster preparedness stock. In Hungary, the disaster preparedness department was involved in supporting the national societies action, building on experience gained from the 1998-1999 and 2000 floods. In the Ukraine, the disaster preparedness coordinator was involved in the response to ice storms in November which occurred in the same area.

Present Capacity of the Federation in Central Europe •

The Budapest Regional Delegation supports both the Hungarian and the Romanian Red Cross in Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Management, health, organizational development, logistics, and communication. The Ukrainian Red Cross is supported by the Federation Kiev Representative Office which works under the Delegation in Minsk and Belarus.

Budget summary

See Annex 1 for details. The confirmed appeal budget will be issued shortly.

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Secretary General

This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

				ANNEX 1
<u>BUDGET SUMMARY</u>				
Hungary, Romania and Ukraine Floods				
APPEAL No. 13/2001				
RELIEF NEEDS	Hungary	Romania	Ukraine	TOTAL
	25.000 beneficiaries	15.000 beneficiaries	13.000 beneficiaries	53.000 beneficiaries
Clothing & textiles - Blankets	100,000		61,200	161,200
Food Parcels	390,000	170,000	119,500	679,500
(Disinfectants/Chlorin tablets)	15,000		11,050	26,050
Medical & first aid (Hygienic kits)			105,400	105,400
Other relief supplies (Sleeping bags/Footware)	100,000	50,000	102,000	252,000
TOTAL RELIEF NEEDS	605,000	220,000	399,150	1,224,150
PROGRAMME SUPPORT				
Programme management	49,685	20,518	35,935	106,138
Technical support	14,873	6,142	10,757	31,772
Professional services	16,494	6,811	11,930	35,235
TRANSPORT STORAGE & VEHICLE COSTS	13,350	17,800	40,000	71,150
PERSONNEL				
Expatriate staff	10,000	15,000	10,000	35,000
National staff	2,000	2,000	5,000	9,000
ADMINISTRATIVE & GENERAL SERVICES				
Travel & related expenses	5,340	7,120	5,340	17,800
Information expenses	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,000
Administrative & general expenses	19,101	7,888	13,815	40,803
TOTAL OPERATIONAL NEEDS	131,844	84,278	133,777	349,898
TOTAL APPEAL	736,844	304,278	532,927	1,574,048
LESS AVAILABLE RESOURCES (-)				
NET REQUEST	736,844	304,278	532,927	1,574,048