

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Serbia: Floods

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The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of national societies to respond to disasters.

Period covered by this update: 30
November to 14 December, 2007

Summary: CHF 111,080 (USD 99,152 or EUR 67,203) has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Red Cross of Serbia in delivering immediate assistance to some 4,200 beneficiaries and replenish the disaster preparedness stocks.

This update highlights the activities the Red Cross of Serbia has implemented in the immediate response to the situation. The focus is on provision of food, water and hygiene items to families whose households have been damaged by the floods and assistance with mitigation of the damage through provision of water pumps and dehumidifiers. This operation is expected to be implemented over two months, and will therefore be completed by February 2008; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by April 2008).



Water tanks with drinking water provided by the Red Cross in Babusnica

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The situation

After heavy rains on 25 and 26 November 2007, the southern and south-eastern part of Serbia has suffered flash-floods from the rivers of Lužnica, Vlasina, Jablanica, Rogoz, Nišava, Južna Morava, Crvena reka and Pusta reka. The following municipalities reported damage, in both urban and rural parts of their territory: Pirot, Babušnica, Vlasotince, Leskovac, Lebane, Doljevac, Dimitrovgrad and Bela Palanka. The floods destroyed several bridges connecting regional and local roads, but alternative means of communication and commutation still exist and the distribution of goods is still possible.

There were no casualties but there is a lot of damage to property. This part of Serbia is one of the poorest areas with a predominantly older population.

The population was evacuated only in Vlasotince municipality, where the need was identified. A total of 172 Roma people were evacuated from their settlement and 122 of them now temporarily reside in private accommodation while 50 are in a collective centre. In other municipalities there was no need for evacuation as the water level allows for accommodation in flooded areas, albeit with certain risks.

The municipalities of Vlasotince and Babušnica had their authorities declare a state of emergency. The water is receding, but in the Vlasina region there is a problem with underground waters slowing down the recession and keeping the basements of houses flooded.

In response to the situation the government of Serbia has first made a provision of 48,000,000 dinars (approximately 550,000 Euro) to be used to assist the affected areas with infrastructure repairs and other needs of the population and another 15,000,000 for damages.

The response of the Red Cross of Serbia has been immediate and even before the launch of the DREF request and the granting of funds, the Red Cross of Serbia has provided direct assistance in food and hygiene items to the most vulnerable population, following the assessments done jointly with the local crisis headquarters. The extent of the damage in some of the municipalities has in the meantime become apparent, with, for instance the municipality of Babušnica having to repair almost its entire water system. This means there is still a possibility that the Red Cross of Serbia will need to activate its water purification equipment.

Coordination and partnerships

All the affected municipalities have mobilized the existing crisis headquarters, which in all cases involve secretaries of the municipal Red Cross branches. The Red Cross of Serbia coordinates the work of its municipal branches and at the same time coordinates its activities with the Republic Civil Protection headquarters. With the assistance of the Federation's representation in Belgrade, DREF funding has been granted (and provided on 11 December) to ensure appropriate response to the crisis. Two national disaster response and assessment team members have been active in the field since 7 December assisting with the detailed analysis of the needs, monitoring and reporting, as well as with the technical guidelines on the use of the equipment. The U.S. Embassy through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of Defense, European Command (EUCOM) has responded with \$55,000 in immediate assistance, coordinating specific needs and amounts with the local administration, the Centre for Social Work, communal enterprises and the Red Cross of Serbia. These funds have been used to assist the municipality of Vlasotince.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Progress towards objectives

According to the assessment done by the Red Cross of Serbia (in cooperation with the local crisis headquarters) there is an estimated 1,400 families, or 4,200 people, in need of assistance throughout all the municipalities. The particularly vulnerable groups targeted by this intervention are:

- older households,
- bigger/poorer families, and
- families or people with special needs.

This particularly vulnerable population is mostly living in their own houses for the moment, but their houses are damaged by water and their possessions/food reserves have been lost. Moreover, they still have to struggle with the lack of drinking water.

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: The 1,400 vulnerable families in the affected area are provided with canned food to assist them through the first several days of coping with the damage done to their households, until they are able to prepare their own food again.

Activities planned:

- Assessment of needs;
- Creation of beneficiary lists;
- Distribution of food;
- Monitoring.

Progress and impact: Following the assessment done jointly with the local crisis headquarters, lists of beneficiaries and their needs were made. The food distribution was finalized on the week of 10 December in Babusnica, Pirot and Bela Palanka, with the rest of the municipalities to be finalized over the next weeks. The following table describes the distribution:

	Municipality	Canned food			
		Canned meat/ 150g	Canned pate 150g	Canned fish/125g	Ready to eat meals /200g
1.	DOLJEVAC	400	400	400	360
2.	BABUŠNICA	1,950	1,950	1,950	1.800
3.	PIROT	2,925	2,925	2,925	2,700
4.	VLASOTINCE	2,600	2,600	2,600	2,400
5.	LESKOVAC	325	325	325	300
6.	LEBANE	325	325	325	300
7.	BELA PALANKA	370	370	370	300
8.	BOJNIK	65	65	65	60
9.	MEDVEDJA	40	40	40	36
		1,376 families	1,376 families	1,376 families	1,376 families
		9.000	9.000	9.000	8.256
	RCS stock replenishment	600	600	600	-
	RCS stock	400	400	400	1.744
	Total	10.000	10.000	10.000	10.000

The provision of food to the most vulnerable families means that their immediate/mid-term nourishment needs have been met. However, since their whole winter reserves are gone (flour, pickled food, vegetables, etc.), there might still be some food needs down the line.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion

Objective: The risk of waterborne and water related diseases has been reduced through the provision of safe water, through the use of water tanks and jerry cans, as well as hygiene promotion through special leaflets provided to 1,400 families in the affected area, until the existing water infrastructure is safe to use again.

Activities planned:

- Assessment of needs;
- Provision of safe water to 1,400 families in the affected area;
- Provision of potable water and hygiene promotion for 1,400 families in the affected area.

Progress and impact: Drinking water is being provided to the affected population through the use of water tanks. The Red Cross of Serbia has, in coordination with the local authorities, provided its mobile and

stationary water tanks, filled by the fire brigade in Pirot and used either on trucks or stationed in schools (Babusnica) or kindergarten (Bela Palanka).

To ensure correct hygienic behaviour among the affected population and prevent outbreaks of waterborne and water related diseases, the Red Cross of Serbia has produced a leaflet, its contents provided by the Institute for Public Health, with guidelines to the population relating to water, food and the most common water related diseases. An increase in hepatitis-A was detected in the municipalities of Nis, Leskovac, Bela Palanka and Pirot approximately one month before the floods and the Red Cross of Serbia has responded with the timely distribution of family hygiene parcels. The health promotion leaflet has been printed in 25,000 copies and the following table shows its distribution as well as the use of water tanks to provide safe water:

	Municipality	Hygiene leaflet	Water tanks
1.	DOLJEVAC	1,000	
2.	BABUŠNICA	3,000	5
3.	PIROT	3,000	
4.	VLASOTINCE	3,000	
5.	LESKOVAC	3,000	2
6.	LEBANE	1,500	2
7.	BELA PALANKA	1,500	2
8.	BOJNIK	500	
9.	MEDVEDJA	500	
10.	NIŠ	5,000	4
		22,000	
	RCS stock replenishment	-	
	RCS stock	3,000	
	Total	25,000	15¹

Provision of hygiene items

Objective: The risk of an outbreak of infectious diseases is reduced through provision of hygiene parcels to 1,400 families in the affected area.

Activities planned:

- Assessment of needs;
- Creation of beneficiary lists;
- Distribution of hygiene parcels;
- Monitoring.

Progress and impact: Following the assessment done jointly with the local crisis headquarters, lists of beneficiaries and their needs were made. The distribution was finalized on the week of 10 December. The following table describes the distribution:

	Municipality	Family hygiene parcels	Disinfectant/ litres	Rubber boots
1.	DOLJEVAC	60	60	30
2.	BABUŠNICA	300	400	130
3.	PIROT	400	600	170
4.	VLASOTINCE	200	-	170
5.	LESKOVAC	50	50	20
6.	LEBANE	-	50	20
7.	BELA PALANKA	100	50	30

¹ The water tanks used are all from the warehouses of the Red Cross of Serbia, and another seven are being procured from the DREF funds.

8.	BOJNIK	20	10	20
9.	MEDVEDJA	12	10	10
10.	NIŠ	-	270	-
		1,100 families	1,500 families	1,500 families
		1,142	1,500	600
	RCS stock replenishment*	858	-	630
	RCS stock	-	-	270
	Total	2,000²	1,500	1,500

While hygiene parcels help the affected population take care of their personal hygienic needs and ensure that the risk of infectious outbreaks is kept at minimum, the provision of disinfectant and rubber boots is to assist the families with working in their still flooded houses/basements and disinfecting the rooms where the water has receded from. The fact that in many cases the basements of houses were flooded with water that washed out the nearby cesspools, means that it is necessary to ensure thorough disinfection prior to future use of these facilities.

Assistance with draining water

Objective: To assist with the mitigation of damage made to the houses, the houses where the basements are still filled with water are equipped with electrical water and mud pumps.

Activities planned:

- Assessment of needs (involving an expert to advise on the use of pumps);
- Creation of priority lists;
- Provision of pumps;
- Monitoring.

The provision of water pumps to the still flooded houses and the provision of electric dehumidifiers to the houses where the water has receded are described in the following table:

	Municipality	Electric water pump			Electric dehumidifier		
		Number of pumps	Total hours	Total houses	Number of machines	Total hours	Total houses
1.	Bela Palanka	5	356	48			
2.	Lebane	5	40	4			
3.	Leskovac						
4.	Vlasotince				5	654	7
5.	Pirot	5	30	3	5	876	7
6.	Babusnica	5	10	1	2	65	2
7.	Doljevac	5	355	5			
8.	Bojnik						
9.	Medvedja						
Total:		25	791	61	12	1,595	16

The use of pumps is essential for assisting the population whose houses (mostly basements) still have water in them. The use of dehumidifiers is to accelerate the process of drying and serves to help the houses become habitable and hygienically safe in the shortest time possible.

² The replenishment of parcels already distributed before the DREF allocation.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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