

BULGARIA: SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISLOCATION

**Appeal No: 02/97
5 February 1997**

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 2,202,000
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES
TO ASSIST 41,900 BENEFICIARIES
FOR 11 MONTHS***

Summary

In October 1996 the International Federation launched an appeal seeking CHF 659,000 in cash, kind and services to assist 24,500 people severely affected by the socio-economic crisis in Bulgaria. The situation has worsened dramatically over recent months, characterised by continued financial instability and severe impoverishment. By the end of 1996 the rate of inflation had reached 311 per cent, and the value of the Bulgarian Leva against the US Dollar had fallen more than threefold. Hikes in prices for heating, electricity, fuel and basic food products are hitting a population which is unable to respond, as unemployment continues to rise and pensions and salaries remain unchanged: the average pension is approximately USD10 and the average salary approximately USD15-20. The price of a loaf of bread doubled during 1996, while prices for dairy and meat products tripled. Baby-food prices are beyond the reach of 90 per cent of families with young children.

The response so far

Government/other agencies' action •

Due to the collapse of the state social welfare system many social institutions, schools, hospitals and even local authorities have contacted the Bulgarian Red Cross directly asking for help. NGOs in Bulgaria are comparatively new, and do not yet have well organised structures. They are unable to provide an immediate and adequate response to constantly increasing social needs due to a lack of human and financial resources.

Red Cross Action •

The key to the International Federation approach is to work through the Bulgarian Red Cross, a strong and professional National Society with an effective network of branches nationwide.

In November the Bulgarian Red Cross began implementation of a programme of humanitarian assistance, with three main relief programmes as set out in the Federation Appeal N° 18/96.

- 19 soup kitchens are providing food for about 1,500 of the most vulnerable people all over the country;
- Since the start of the new school term, 1,000 pupils from the neediest families receive coupons entitling them to one free meal a day in school canteens;
- Bulgarian Red Cross is providing food parcels to 4,000 of the most poverty-stricken families.

Additional Needs to be met

During the implementation of these programmes Bulgarian Red Cross has identified major additional needs among the population arising from the severe socio-economic crisis which has necessitated this new Appeal.

The number of potential beneficiaries of the Bulgarian Red Cross's programmes has dramatically increased since the first Appeal was launched in October 1996. The number of weak, hungry and vulnerable persons using Bulgarian Red Cross soup kitchens has risen threefold since the programme launch, but the capacity of the kitchens remains limited.

In order to implement an expanded programme for 11 months the Bulgarian Red Cross will need to upgrade its equipment and replace some of its vehicle fleet.

Red Cross Plan of Action

More and more people are falling into the category of the "most vulnerable". Through this new Appeal the Bulgarian Red Cross seeks to increase its relief activities and social programmes to cover a larger number of beneficiaries for a longer period (until the end of 1997) in response to growing needs. This will involve:

- increasing the distribution of family parcels to 6,000 families (33,000 beneficiaries) from the original target of 4,000 families (22,000 beneficiaries) and extending this assistance for a further eight months (May to December).
- increasing the number of vulnerable people assisted with food assistance from 1,500 to 2,000 and extending this assistance for another eight months (May to December).
- increasing the distribution of food coupons for free lunches for up to 3,000 children (from the previous figure of 1,000) to the end of the 1996/97 school year and to provide the same assistance for the first three months of the 1997/98 school year (October to December 1997);
- assistance to the poorest families through the provision of food for 1,400 babies for 11 months (February to December);
- distribution of hygiene materials to 2,500 vulnerable beneficiaries, including washing powder, soap and disinfectant 11 months (February to December);

Soup kitchen equipment •

The Bulgarian Red Cross soup kitchens face difficulties in increasing their capacity because of a lack of proper equipment for food processing and production. Available equipment is often very old and inefficient. (In one instance the Bulgarian Red Cross receives free facilities to run a kitchen for more than 300 people in the town of Burgas, but 70 per cent of the equipment does not work.) Therefore Bulgarian Red Cross plans to

purchase kitchen equipment for three soup kitchens, which also require additional resources in the form of fuel, coal and electricity.

Transportation •

Bulgarian Red Cross owns three trucks, which are not only insufficient to ensure the distribution of humanitarian relief countrywide, but also in need of considerable repair and new winter tyres. Road maintenance in Bulgaria is generally poor and the particularly harsh winter is causing additional difficulties. Some regions are inaccessible. This winter the regions of Smolyan and Veran have suffered floods, with difficult conditions compounded by a widespread freeze.

Operational support •

During implementation of the first stage of the operation, the need was identified for a computerised system to monitor stock availability, distribution and overall control of the operation. At present communication equipment is inadequate, outmoded and urgently in need of replacement. This limits the Bulgarian Red Cross's ability to respond to the current crisis and ensure an efficient humanitarian relief network

Information •

The Bulgarian Red Cross's operation, supported by the International Federation and sister National Societies is covered by the media at all levels. Government ministries, embassies, UN structures in the country, the World Bank office and NGOs have displayed considerable and growing interest in Red Cross activities, particularly in view of the need for information and co-ordination of efforts in the humanitarian field. The Bulgarian Red Cross has started to produce a weekly Newsletter which is distributed to donors, the International Federation, the media and other interested bodies.

Monitoring/Reporting/Evaluation •

An agreement has been signed between the Bulgarian Red Cross Society and the International Federation, giving the Bulgarian Red Cross responsibility for the implementation of the programme. At all times, the Bulgarian Red Cross will avail of the support of the Regional delegation for Central and Eastern Europe in Budapest. The National Society will monitor and report on the programme during its implementation, and the Federation will evaluate the programme on completion.

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BUDGET SUMMARY

APPEAL No. 02/97
IN CHF

ANNEX 1

NEEDS IN KIND (OR CASH)

Family parcels for 33,000 beneficiaries	660,000.00
Food for soup kitchens: 2,000 beneficiaries	588,000.00
Baby food for 1,400 beneficiaries	216,000.00
Hygiene items for 2,500 beneficiaries	110,000.00
Soup kitchen equipment for 3 kitchens	36,000.00
1 "8MT" truck	50,000.00
3 "4WD" vehicles	75,000.00

TOTAL NEEDS IN KIND (OR CASH) 1,735,000.00

NEEDS IN CASH

Food coupons for 3,000 beneficiaries	282,000.00
Capital equipment	75,000.00
Transport, storage & vehicle costs	128,000.00
Personnel (monitoring by Budapest Regional Delegation)	82,000.00
Personnel (local staff)	60,000.00
Travel & communications	20,000.00
Information/reporting	15,000.00
Administrative, office & general expenses	52,000.00
Secretariat operational support	53,000.00

TOTAL NEEDS IN CASH 767,000.00

TOTAL APPEAL CASH & KIND 2,502,000.00

LESS CASH ON HAND **-300,000.00**

NET REQUEST CASH & KIND 2,202,000.00

Note: The prices of all items required have been calculated on the basis of local purchases