

**Appeal no: 30/99**  
*2 November 1999*

# ***BELARUS, MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE: WINTER ASSISTANCE 1999-2000***

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 11,940,000 MILLION  
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES  
TO ASSIST 191,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 10 MONTHS***

## ***Summary***

The International Federation has launched Winter Emergency Appeals (WEA) for the last two years. The aim of the last Appeal (No. 30/98) was to provide short-term assistance to more than 215,000 people in Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova and 1,420,000 in Russia. Both years, the appeals targeted the most vulnerable (families with many children, orphans, lonely elderly, handicapped and homeless) through the provision of food, medical and hygiene items and winter clothing.

The appeals were initiated in response to the continued economic and social crisis in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, which resulted in increased poverty, high unemployment, failure of the social assistance system and a deterioration of public health. The collapse of Russia's financial sector in 1998 affected neighbouring countries, which followed into similar socio-economic chaos. The whole region continues to struggle with high inflation rates. The 1998 harvest was among the poorest in 40 years, and this year's harvest is also expected to fall short of earlier expectations. A series of natural disasters such as floods and landslides have exacerbated the situation. Economic and political forecasts indicate that the situation will continue to deteriorate during the next year and this will increase levels of poverty.

This Appeal targets 191,200 of the most vulnerable people among the population in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. These are people which, for various reasons, do not receive governmental support or fall outside the welfare system. They include street children, children from socially disadvantaged families, homeless, the disabled, pensioners living alone with no family support, and prisoners. The Appeal aims to supply clothing, warm footwear, school materials, hygiene parcels, hot meals, and food parcels to the targeted beneficiaries.

The Red Cross Societies in all of the affected countries are important and recognised partners of their respective governments. By acting as auxiliaries to governments which cannot cope with such huge needs, the Red Cross can help to alleviate the human suffering in these countries. The established and well experienced distribution network of the Red Cross branches will receive technical and advisory support from the International Federation throughout the duration of the operation.

## ***The Humanitarian Situation***

It is difficult to foresee any improvement of the current situation in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Most forecasts predict a further worsening of the economic situation in the region, and the forecast for this year's harvest is poor. The economic reforms being implemented towards transition to market economies are going slowly and in many ways resulting in an increase of poverty.

Groups traditionally belonging to the middle-class like government employees, teachers, and doctors now find themselves living below the poverty line, barely able to survive in dignity. This decline in living standards causes new problems as people seek ways to cope with the stress they are facing. The number of alcohol and drug addicts throughout the region is increasing, as are the number of street children and the number of homeless.

### ***Belarus***

As in all the CIS states, the population of Belarus is struggling to survive in dignity. The economic situation is appalling, and is unlikely to improve in the near future.

In July 1999 the GDP was 2% less than in 1990. Production costs are high and non-competitive even in the markets of the CIS states. The recent energy supply crisis may cause disruption of heating and hot water supplies. The lack of foreign investment also adds to the deepening economic crisis.

Food harvests in 1999 are predicted to be poor. For instance, wheat crops totalled 6.4 million metric tonnes (MT) in 1997, 4.8 million MT in 1998, while the prognosis for 1999 is about 3.6 MT. The lack of hard currency in Belarus to import food to bridge this gap could bring about a crisis in the coming winter.

The prevalence of tuberculosis, heart disease, and sexually transmitted diseases associated with the lack of essential medicaments and vitamins, is threatening the well-being of vulnerable groups.

Consumer prices are increasing far faster than salaries and pensions. From July 1994 to July 1999 there was an average annual increase in consumer prices of over 200%. According to the data provided by the Independent Institute for Social, Economic and Political Investigations (Minsk, Belarus), the part of Belarus' population living below the poverty line varies from 49.7 to 73.2 per cent.

Inflation has swallowed up savings and makes survival a permanent challenge for those living on fixed incomes. The number of private companies and entrepreneurs is also decreasing and will result in less income opportunities for the population as a whole.

### ***Moldova***

The government of Moldova, although having made decisions to protect the socially vulnerable, is unable to cope with the difficult economic situation due to the lack of finances. All types of social support to vulnerable people are paid late. Families having many children, invalids, the elderly and other groups are not able to support themselves. Persons who need medical services, but most especially the elderly, invalids and children lack the means to cover the costs of needed medicaments.

On 1 January 1999, the population of the Republic of Moldova was 4.29 million, 0.2 % less than in the previous year. A decline in population has been observed for the last five years, the main reasons being increased migration to other countries, a decrease in the birth rate and an increase in the mortality rate.

The average monthly wage is MDL 260 (approximately 24 USD) or about 50% of the minimum consumer basket and the average pension is MDL 82 (7 USD) or about 15%. Both salaries and pension payments are in arrears of eight to nine months. Consumer spending has sharply declined as a result.

## ***Ukraine***

The pace of transition to a market economy is slower in Ukraine than in the other CIS countries. Moreover, among transitional economies, the economy of Ukraine ranks last with a 62% decline in GDP since regaining sovereignty.

The state also has a significant burden of various social commitments which are incompatible with the current economic level of development. In a population of 50.1 million, a decrease of 1.7 million from 1989, there are some 12 million pensioners among them 3.7 million disabled. The average pension is only USD 13.4, while more than 50% of the population now lives below the poverty line.

An average salary in Ukraine is about UAH 180 (approximately USD 40). An average pension is generally extremely low, between UAH 40 and UAH 60. Pensions are also paid with considerable delay, usually more than six months. In some *oblasts*, like Kirovogradska, pensions are delayed even up to one year.

The average mortality rate in the country is now double that of the birth rate, while the average life expectancy has fallen to 66 years. Children between the ages of 0-15 years account for slightly more than 21% of the country's population. Population of the working age constitutes only 56%, whilst pensioners account for almost 23%.

## ***The Response so far***

### **Government Action w**

Funding of social welfare services continues, but official statistics show that only 40-60 % of the national budgets are covered. Food and humanitarian assistance is provided, as well as limited social programmes for the elderly and disabled. People living in institutions are generally better cared for than people living alone, both because the institutions have priority when the national budget is allocated, and due to the efforts made by the staff in these institutions.

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

The Winter Emergency Appeal launched by the Federation in October 1997 was the first operation of its kind. The WEA 1998-99 raised more than CHF 3.2 million in cash and in kind. This has meant large operations in the three countries, mobilising the entire Red Cross network and resources over several months.

In Ukraine and Belarus, substantial assistance in kind and in cash has been raised locally, and new fund raising activities are planned for the future programmes.

Thanks to the last two years' experience in implementing large programmes the capacity and competence levels of the Red Cross Societies in this region both at the headquarters and local levels have increased.

## ***The Intended Operation***

### **Assessment of Needs •**

An assessment of the WEA 1998-1999 was conducted in August this year. The objectives were to assess the implementation of the WEA according to the original programme objectives and to

provide an overview aimed at improving the Red Cross' understanding of needs, local coping mechanisms and programme options with a view to assisting the Red Cross in designing future humanitarian programming.

*Findings/recommendations:*

- A two-year implementation of the WEA showed this programme to be an important operation not only from quantitative and relief viewpoints, but that it also conveyed human values. State administrations in the *oblasts* and especially the beneficiaries stressed they felt they had received international support.
- The assessment recommends to continue the humanitarian assistance by the Red Cross in all three countries. However, the support should be more closely targeted at beneficiaries falling outside the governmental social welfare system, the number of beneficiaries should be reduced, and the areas where the programme will be implemented should be carefully chosen. The local branches of the Red Cross have to make more thorough need assessments when selecting the beneficiaries. The Federation, in co-operation with the local Red Cross' headquarters, should provide more training on how to select beneficiaries, how to perform assessments and how to evaluate the impact.
- Food parcels should be of two types – individual and family parcels for families consisting of three-four members. It is recommended that there should be at minimum three rounds of distribution.
- Hygiene parcels should also be for individuals and families. Three rounds of distribution are highly recommended.
- Soup kitchens should be located at existing canteen sites. The meals, although simple, should be nutritional and consist of one course. Invitations to attend could be distributed to beneficiaries in advance, or they could be registered on the spot.
- Footwear especially appropriate to winter conditions should be included and distributed through the special Red Cross second-hand clothes banks.
- No medicines should be included in the WEA 1999-2000.
- More emphasis should be put on the development part of the programme. Further training is needed in regard to project management, assessment, reporting, and fund raising.

**Immediate Needs •**

The Emergency assistance programme will tackle the most basic needs of the target groups by:

- supplying winter clothes and footwear for children and elderly;
- providing hot meals or sandwiches for street children and the homeless;
- distributing food parcels to disadvantaged families with children and elderly living alone;
- distributing hygiene parcels to disadvantaged families with children and elderly living alone in rural areas;
- providing school supplies for children;
- supporting youths living in juvenile custody;
- in collaboration and agreement with UNHCR, supporting internally displaced persons and refugees.

The operation will be conducted throughout the next ten months. Winter clothes and footwear will be distributed in December, January and February. Hot meals and sandwiches will be distributed from December to June. Food parcels will be distributed in three rounds; January, March and May. Hygiene parcels will be distributed in two rounds; in January and April.

Food and hygiene parcels will be purchased locally in order to assist the local economy. The National Societies of Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine will conduct fund raising campaigns at the local level collecting food and hygiene items, which will be added to the parcels.

The National Societies have established clothes banks for distribution of new and second hand clothes in all *oblasts* and most *rayons* in the three countries. These existing centres will be expanded to include footwear and school supplies. Sewing machines will be available in the centres, and training courses in sewing will be offered to the beneficiaries.

The soup kitchens will provide hot meals to homeless and street children. Distribution points will be set up in railway and metro stations, to provide sandwiches for the children. The children will also be offered advice and support from trained Red Cross personnel on how to improve their situation, through information about who to address for assistance, and where to find youth centers. As a pilot project, the Red Cross will provide assistance to youth living in custody by offering psychological support, training and advice. Also second hand clothes and school supplies will be provided through Red Cross Youth sections. A recruitment campaign specially designed for this appeal will be launched in schools. A campaign called *Youth Helping Youth* will train youth in assisting street children and youth in custody. The Federation will conduct seminars in leadership training, project management, fund raising and youth work to enhance the capacity of the National Societies.

#### **Co-ordination •**

At the beginning of the operation, traditionally strong ties between the Red Cross and the local authorities should ensure both efficient delivery of and properly targeted assistance. However, the Red Cross will aim to catch beneficiaries falling outside the governmental welfare system to increase the living standards for these unprotected groups. The Red Cross will seek to obtain support from local authorities in using warehouses free of charge and assisting with transport and distribution. Close co-operation between the Federation's offices in Minsk, Kiev and Kishinev will contribute to regional co-ordination of the operation.

#### **Personnel •**

A relief co-ordinator from the Federation will be recruited to support the implementation of the programme. The co-ordinator will monitor, supervise and evaluate the operation. Each of the Federation's delegations and offices in the region will assign one national staff member to the programme to work closely with the implementation team in the respective National Society.

#### **Transport, communications •**

The local Red Cross will use their own vehicles or locally available vehicles for transporting commodities to the operational area. Each *oblast* Red Cross organisation will expect to receive transport and warehousing support free of charge from the local authorities.

#### **Logistics support •**

The headquarters of each National Society will assist the districts in their efforts to formalise agreements with local authorities in regard to warehousing and transport. In places where this support is not available, the headquarters will support the local Red Cross committees with funds to rent vehicles to ensure timely and efficient distribution of relief items.

#### **Red Cross Objectives •**

- to alleviate the impact of poverty, malnutrition, disease, and stress, and to protect the dignity of 191,200 beneficiaries living without support from existing governmental welfare structures;
- to maximise the use of local resources: human resources, goods and services;
- to strengthen local capacities by providing sustainable structural support and training to national headquarters and branches of the local Red Cross societies and social welfare institutions collaborating with the Red Cross; and,
- to promote partnership between the local Red Cross in the region and the donor Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

## ***National Society/Federation Plan of Action***

### ***Belarus***

**November:** elaboration and conclusion of operational contracts; press-conference to launch the Appeal in Minsk; set up and opening of soup kitchens; activities organised for children along with

hot meals; training workshops for the Belarusian Red Cross staff involved in the operation; purchase of school materials.

**December:** continuation of soup kitchens; psycho-social support training for Red Cross volunteers; delivery and distribution of clothing; re-equipping clothes banks.

**January:** monitoring of beneficiaries; purchase and distribution of food and hygiene parcels; distribution of clothing; set up sewing machine projects.

**February:** monitoring of soup kitchens; continued operation of clothes banks; preparations for the second round of food parcel distribution;

**March:** impact analysis of the soup kitchen operation on the beneficiaries; purchase and distribution of food parcels.

**April:** continuation of soup kitchens; purchase and distribution of hygiene parcels; support with domestic chores for the elderly living alone and invalids.

**May:** continuation of soup kitchens; monitoring of financial reporting; preparations for the third round of food parcel distribution; local fundraising events.

**June:** continuation of soup kitchens; purchase and distribution of food parcels and school materials; workshop for the RC staff on final reporting.

**July:** monitoring; impact assessment.

### ***Psychological Support Programme***

RC activists and volunteers will be increasingly involved in the programme implementation. It is important to underline that the Red Cross staff are often undergoing the same stress as their clients. Psycho-social support training will be conducted in order to provide coping skills and to strengthen problem solving through simple, reliable tools such as counselling and active listening. It is planned to hold two such workshops in Minsk and Mogilev.

### ***Moldova***

**November:** Conclusion of Framework agreements with the Moldovan Red Cross, conclude needs assessment and identification of beneficiaries, preparation in the field; reorganise and improve the facilities of the secondhand clothes banks, set up soup kitchens, identify suppliers of food and hygiene items, transport of clothes, winter shoes and school supplies to the operational area for distribution.

**December:** open soup kitchens, distribution of second hand clothes, boots and school supplies.

**January:** first round distribution of food and hygiene parcels, continuation of the ongoing programmes, monitoring of beneficiaries.

**February:** prepare the purchase of the second round of food parcels, continuation of the programmes, monitoring of beneficiaries.

**March/April:** second round distribution of food parcels, continuation of the programmes, monitoring.

**May:** third round distribution of food parcels, continuation of the programmes.

**June:** closing of soup kitchens, assessment/evaluation of the programmes.

**July/August:** second round of planned distribution of clothes and school supplies to children, monitoring and assessment report.

### ***Ukraine***

**November:** conclude assessment of needs; finalise plans of actions with the Ukrainian Red Cross (URC); sign framework agreement between the URC and the Federation; define and organise soup kitchens; conclude agreements with the public canteens on preparing hot meals and sandwiches for the targeted groups; make ready Red Cross clothes banks for receiving, storing and distributions of international humanitarian donations; identify youth custody centres and finalise agreement of the corresponding departments at the Ministry of Internal Affairs; organise training seminars for the Red Cross youth and Visiting Nurse programme volunteers to be carrying out social activities at the youth custody centres.

**December:** open soup kitchens; open the Red Cross clothes banks; monitor and provide consultations to the local Red Cross organisations.

**January:** pack and distribute food and hygiene parcels; monitor and provide consultations to the local Red Cross organisations.

**February:** operational analysis of the programme implementation in January 2000; conduct necessary preparatory work for the second round of distribution of food parcels.

**March:** organise the second round of packing and distribution of food parcels; monitor and provide consultations to the local Red Cross organisations.

**April:** organise the second round of packing and distribution of hygiene parcels; monitor and provide consultations to the local Red Cross organisations.

**May:** organise the third round of compiling and distribution of food parcels; analyse and evaluate the URC's work on realisation of the "Social assistance to juveniles in custody centers" humanitarian action.

**June:** close the soup kitchens; analyse and evaluate programme implementation.

**July - August:** finalise the work of the Red Cross clothes banks.

## ***Budget summary***

See Annex 1 for details.

## ***Conclusion***

The situation facing people in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine has accurately been referred to as "a silent disaster". The continuous deterioration of the situation throws a rapidly increasing number of people into poverty as the governments of these countries have insufficient means to cover the most pressing needs. Although the International Federation can neither solve all the problems in this region nor assist all the people in need, it can help to alleviate the suffering of those particularly vulnerable individuals by providing immediate assistance for the coming winter.

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***Belarus/Moldova and Ukraine  
Winter Emergency 1999/2000***

**IN CHF**

**RELIEF NEEDS**

**Food items**

Food parcels	5,216,050.00
Hot meals/sandwiches	670,000.00

**Non food items**

Clothing	1,402,000.00
Winter shoes	734,000.00
Hygiene	655,200.00
Medical equipment	52,500.00
School materials	1,087,500.00

**TOTAL RELIEF NEEDS** **9,817,250.00**

**Capital expenditures** 100,500.00

**Transport, storage & vehicles costs** 512,500.00

**Personnel** (expat/national staff/Training) 517,500.00

**Administrative, office & general services** 295,000.00

Logistic costs (Support Upgrade second hand clothes) 337,500.00

Secretariat operational support 359,750.00

**TOTAL OPERATIONAL NEEDS** **2,122,750.00**

**TOTAL APPEAL CASH & KIND** **11,940,000.00**

LESS PLEDGES ANNOUNCED **0.00**

**NET REQUEST CASH & KIND** **11,940,000.00**

All items are to be purchased locally