

Annual report

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Central Europe (Focus Serbia and Montenegro)

Appeal No. MAA66001

30 April 2009

This report covers the period
01/01/2008 to 31/12/2008.



Photo 1: Red Cross Roma kindergarten in the municipality of Paracin, Serbia. **Red Cross of Serbia**

In brief

Programme purpose: The overall goal for the Red Cross in Serbia and Montenegro was to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. To this end all Federation supported programmes in Serbia and Montenegro were aligned with and contributed to the Global Agenda goals as well as the priorities of the National Societies. The International Federation's support focused on development through long-term programmes within disaster management; health and care; organizational development; and humanitarian values.

Programme(s) summary: With emphasis on development the International Federation aimed to increase the capacity of the Red Cross in Serbia and Montenegro to provide services to the vulnerable population and to strengthen communities' abilities to recognize, assess and address their own needs with the Red Cross as an integral and recognized partner. Sustainability of existing activities and development of a basis for future programmes were priorities and the National Societies have gradually moved from exclusively being a provider of assistance to also being an advocate for the vulnerable. This move has been continued through the societies' role as a partner and driving force behind processes of civil society building at both national and local levels. In 2008 activities have been implemented as planned, allowing for some adjustments. Though the National Societies are at different development stages, with Serbia already working largely independently, both is still in need of Federation support.

In disaster management the definition of the societies' role within disaster management and capacity building including training, simulations and provision of equipment were prioritized areas. Health and care activities were implemented through the home care and social welfare programmes. Within organizational development the societies focused on developing management and information systems, improving its public relations and image and enhancing

strategic planning capacities. The humanitarian values programme focused on migration and vocational training for refugees.

Financial situation: The total 2008 appeal budget for Central Europe (MAA66001) was initially CHF 6,404,721 (USD 5,822,474 or EUR 3,965,772). Following two revisions of the budget for Kosovo the total appeal budget was CHF 6,406,484. The 2008 budget for Serbia and Montenegro was CHF 2,595,521 (USD 2,519,899 or EUR 1,595,477) out of which 100 per cent was covered. Overall expenditure was 74 per of the budget. Some of the funding received in 2008 was earmarked for 2009.

[Click here to go directly to the attached financial report.](#)

No. of people we help:

Annual Report 2008 – Serbia and Montenegro						
Programme	Focus	Target population	People reached	% Male/ Female	% Children under 18	% Elderly
Disaster Management	Disaster management capacity building					
Health and Care*	Home care	11,000	11,490	40/60**	Less than 10	90
	Social welfare	3,000	2,930	50/50**	60	0
Organizational Development	Public relations; Information management; Strategic planning	500	320	85/15	0	0
Humanitarian Values	Migration; Vocational training for refugees	160	300	40/60	N/A	N/A
Total number of people reached		13,660	15,040	-	-	-

Table 1: Federation supported programme and focus areas, and number of people reached by the Red Cross in Serbia and Montenegro in 2008. *Figures included indicates people reached on a monthly basis **Estimations

Our partners: The British and Norwegian Red Cross, and the governmental Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC) contributed as multilateral donors and the Danish Red Cross bilaterally. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), four ministries as well as some 60 local governments and services were active as partners.

Context

Montenegro did not experience any major socio-political or natural changes or events in 2008 affecting the implementation of programme activities. However, needs were increasing among parts of the population as a result of increasing prices and the financial crisis. The Red Cross continued its discussions with various state ministries on priority programmes.

In *Serbia* the Assembly of Kosovo proclaimed independence in February causing unrest and confrontations in Serb populated areas in the north of Kosovo. Demonstrations and attacks on buildings also took place in Belgrade. The events did not lead to population movements, although tensions in the northern part of Kosovo are still very pronounced.

Serbian parliamentary and local elections were held in the first half of May but the government was formed only mid-summer due to political differences between factions. Furthermore, heated parliamentary debates on national policies and further splitting of political parties hindered the adoption of many needed laws, some of them important for the work of the Red Cross. Several of the National Societies' programme activities are dependent on governmental partners at different levels as well as legislation such as a disaster management coordination agency; law on disaster management; law on volunteering; and legislation allowing local governments to sub-contract social-welfare work to non-governmental volunteer-based organizations. While addressing existing

needs, the National Society developed its plans assuming appropriate legislation to be agreed upon in 2009.

Economically costs of living have been increasing in both countries. Prices for food, telephone and gas have increased steeply and real estate prices in Montenegro have increased dramatically. The recent financial crisis comes on top of these trends and it is likely that poverty will increase with a continued crisis, as will humanitarian needs. Reasonably the development has and will affect the vulnerable population targeted by Red Cross programmes as these are already striving to acquire basic necessities such as food, heating and cooking materials.

Progress towards outcomes

Disaster Management

Programme purpose: Reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters

Disaster management capacity building

In 2008 the *Red Cross of Montenegro* focused on disaster management capacity building and started restructuring its own disaster management system. The National Society contributed significantly to the development of a national disaster management law and a national strategy on disaster management. Thus the National Society has been integrated into the national disaster management structure. The Society has thus become a credible and important partner moving from being a sole receiver of assistance to being a provider. The National Society expects to sign agreements with the authorities that will define the role and responsibilities for the Red Cross at all levels and provide further directions for disaster preparedness and response activities.

An effective disaster management system based on a regional structure consisting of three disaster management centres with disaster management teams was designed and equipped. The Society worked with bilateral partners, authorities and the International Federation in developing the system to its full capacity. Furthermore, with Federation support the National Society established a partnership with the Austrian Red Cross which is expected to contribute to the development of additional regional disaster management centres in 2009.

In order to build up its disaster response teams the National Society conducted training for trainers as well as psychosocial support training. Furthermore, the Society participated in regional training sessions for regional disaster response teams (RDRTs) and on vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) for staff and volunteers. The National Society continued to support and enhance disaster management coordination at municipal level through disaster simulations in the municipalities of Pljevlja and Nikšić.

The *Red Cross of Serbia* has still not adopted standard operative procedures for disaster management and appropriate national and local legislation is still not in place. The National Society nonetheless continued its regular contacts with the authorities at all levels discussing a future national disaster management system and the Red Cross's role and responsibilities. Following an initiative by USAID/DAI and the Standing Conference of Towns¹, the National Society and representatives from the International Federation took part in a disaster management working group meeting which was the first of its kind. The intent in subsequent meetings is to explore the needs for support at municipal level when it comes to disaster management and the roles that different organisations and agencies may play. The Red Cross of Serbia has enhanced its partnership with the Serbian army and participated in exercises where it had responsibility for providing shelter. This indicates a future division of roles in case of emergencies in which the National Society will become main responsible for setting up transitional shelter. Awaited legislation will clarify these roles further.

¹ Association of all cities and municipalities in Serbia

The National Society thus took a proactive role, and took part and supported initiatives to clarify its role within the national disaster management system. Consequently some progress towards clarifying and defining the Red Cross's role in disaster management was achieved. USAID/DAI continued to be an important partner throughout the reporting period.

The National Society started preparatory work on a risk reduction project to be implemented in schools from 2009 on. Negotiations with USAID/DAI are ongoing for funding for piloting a vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) process in one municipality in 2009. The pilot would potentially lead to a nationwide VCA process. During the reporting period the International Federation and the Red Cross of Serbia seized several opportunities to present VCA in public forums including the security council in the city of Kragujevac and for Red Cross staff in Kruševac. Furthermore a memorandum of understanding, which will strengthen the National Society's work in municipal level coordination in emergencies, was signed with USAID/DAI.

The National Society continued its grassroots work to enhance municipal disaster management coordination between stakeholders through disaster simulations following the development of local disaster response plans. Four simulations in Šid, Bačka Palanka Titel and Raca were conducted with 100 participants in total. Furthermore, equipment was provided for totally 11 local branches. In addition several trainings were conducted and attended by the Society:

- Totally 165 branch disaster team members in Čardak and Bogovađa received municipal disaster preparedness trainings.
- In total 10 members of the national disaster response team (NDRT) received water and sanitation training.
- In Kosovska Mitrovica training was organized covering national disaster response guidelines, contingency plans and standard operating procedures.
- The branch secretaries of the provincial Red Cross of Kosovo and Metohija received training in contingency planning and branch team members attended first-aid training.
- Representatives of the National Society participated in training sessions for regional disaster response teams, VCA and Emergency Response Unit (ERU) as well as in a UNICEF organized training on protection of children in emergencies.

Constraints or challenges

In Serbia the current absence of appropriate legislation and a national body to coordinate disaster management activities is a significant challenge. Progress in the government's deliberations and analysis suggests that legislation might be adopted in 2009. The National Society along with other actors has taken a proactive stance in this regard and are currently working to clarify its role during disasters.

Health and Care

Programme purpose: Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.

Home Care and Social Welfare Programme

Within health and care the two Red Cross Societies implemented the *home care programme* and the *social welfare programme*. The latter programme consisted of two sub-programmes, the Roma Kindergarten project and a project supporting children and youth with disabilities. The National Societies reached almost 11,500 vulnerable elderly people through home care services on a monthly basis and almost 3,000 children, youth and parents through the social welfare programme during the reporting period.

The home care programme provides direct household assistance to vulnerable elderly people and advocates on behalf of the target group. Various advocacy activities were carried out in 83 municipalities in Serbia and in 12 municipalities in Montenegro. The Societies' work through direct

assistance and advocacy has provided thousands of elderly with much needed help and contributed to an improved image and understanding of the Red Cross in the communities reached. In total 28 local Red Cross branches² received additional developmental funds and developed services missing in the communities including health and social welfare support to rural communities in Nikšić; the establishment of a municipal task force consisting of a coordinated group of stakeholders working to the benefit of elderly people in Kragujevac; and a new telephone helpline.

In many cases the Red Cross has acted as a catalyst in creating new capacities to support elderly people. Also elderly people are themselves more involved in the activities, particularly through establishing focal points for coordinated implementation of the National Strategy of Ageing.³ The Red Cross furthermore contributed to a better understanding of and more concrete planning at local level in line with the strategy.

The HumanaS network, consisting of 15 NGOs working with elderly people and chaired by the Red Cross of Serbia continued supporting the National Strategy of Ageing through mapping of local resources and stakeholders. The information is fed into a newly created database. A campaign against discrimination, neglect and abuse of elderly people was organized to raise the awareness and sensitivity to these issues among the public.

Activities within the *social welfare programme* covered 69 municipalities⁴ through the Roma Kindergarten project and the project targeting children and youth with disabilities. The activities included preschool preparations, preschool socialization classes, homework support, social inclusion and support to parents. In addition the programme facilitated training for teaching staff in active teaching, and training in fund-raising, writing of project proposals and reporting for the field coordinators of the programme. More than 1,000 vulnerable Roma children were supported in their primary school enrolment and preparation or in continuing primary education. Additional 900 young people with disabilities were involved in group activities with peers, increasing their mental well-being and providing them with skills necessary for everyday life. Some 950 parents of both groups were supported through direct assistance and knowledge sharing. Public awareness of the needs of the population and underlying social issues was increased through socio-inclusive activities, advocacy and information sharing.

In the kindergarten project attendance rates have remained satisfyingly high and results in terms of enrolment into schools and sustained school attendance are positive with 97 per cent. This figure is substantially higher than among the general Roma population. It should be noted that the efficiency of the project in terms of enrolment into the elementary school has shown constant and significant increase since the beginning of the programme five years ago.

Implementation of local projects has ensured the access of young people with disabilities to community services. Enhanced everyday skills has resulted in improved self-confidence and reduced impairment. Family members, mainly parents, have acquired knowledge and skills to support family members living with disabilities through participation in psychosocial support workshops.

A peer review workshop of the social welfare programme was conducted and attended by numerous actors. Following the review the Red Cross of Serbia, the Montenegro Red Cross, the International Federation, the Danish Red Cross and the Spanish Red Cross jointly prepared a concept paper for programme implementation and mutual cooperation on the programme for the next three years. The subsequent application to the SDC for future funding was based on the paper. Currently the programme is funded until the end of 2009 with possible extensions.

² 27 municipalities in Serbia and 1 in Montenegro.

³ As many focal points are representatives of pensioners' associations.

⁴ 60 municipalities in Serbia and 9 in Montenegro.

Constraints or Challenges

Both National Societies continue to be very dependent on external funding. Discussions with relevant state ministries are currently ongoing addressing constraints such as lack of appropriate legislation. Programme implementation and sharing of responsibilities among stakeholders and partners need to become more effective given the amount of children in need. In some cases work is also being duplicated. These issues were partly addressed during the planning process in 2008 and will be pursued in 2009. The International Federation will work to ensure better programme design and planning locally for local Red Cross branches to become more independent. Training and development of easy-to-use toolkits for programme design and management will be taking place in 2009.

Organizational development

Programme purpose: Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability

Public Relations

The Red Cross of Serbia works to make sure that its activities are recognized among the public as well as the Movement's principles and values. In turn this is likely to generate more support to the Society. To this end the Society propagates its essential messages and ensures a systematic and comprehensive promotion of Red Cross activities in cooperation with media.

The Red Cross of Serbia designed and produced tools for disseminating the Movement's principles and values and information about its activities. An interactive game package for children aged 8-12 and a website covering the 17 branches of the Belgrade Red Cross have been created. The game package is assumed to be a springboard for further work with schools and children. The tools represent an important step in terms of organizational thinking within the National Society and have contributed to improving the image and public relations of the Red Cross.

The National Society also produced a short educational film. The film, *The Boy Who Was Shy*, served as a cornerstone for a one-year long campaign on raising awareness on HIV and AIDS issues. The campaign, which lasts until late 2009, includes a series of workshops for peer educators in Serbian regions, accompanied by large scale media coverage locally and regionally. The film has been showed in secondary schools, discotheques and cafés. The campaign is the first of its kind for the Red Cross of Serbia and is intended to be a learning experience and a blueprint for future promotional work. In 2008 a first round of training was done with 25 young volunteers from Kraljevo region.

Also the Red Cross of Serbia participated in public events such as the International Book Fair in Belgrade and the national Book fair in Tršić, presenting its publications and interactive media.

Information Management Systems

Both National Societies now uses the HUBIE-Erp management software package which makes the Societies more efficient and transparent in planning, reporting, warehouse management and accounting. The package continues the societies' transition from previous management tools. In Serbia the process has been supported by a full-time software engineer who has ironed out software problems and ensured its functionality. The National Societies now own the software and can freely develop it in accordance with their own needs. Recently a new module dealing with distribution of lottery money was developed internally. In total 70 branches regularly use the software in Serbia while in Montenegro the headquarters and three branches use it regularly. Moreover in Montenegro an updated version of the package along with a new universal database module was created. The National Society's IT officer received necessary training to this end. Since the former half of 2008 the work on the software as well as its application has contributed to making it more stable and thus more effective.

Strategic planning

The International Federation supported the Red Cross of Montenegro in conducting an organizational development workshop, outlining activities to reach strategic developmental goals in the coming period. The seminar featured 22 out of 23 branch secretaries, 10 staff from the headquarters, the president, the president of the commission for organizational development and the secretary general. Following the workshop a plan of action was developed addressing the identified priorities of the Society including property and legal base, funding, communication, human resources development and priority programmes.

Constraints or challenges

A dramatic decline in funding for the Red Cross of Montenegro's organizational development activities required changes of programme plans. Considering the significance of organizational development as the foundation for further management development work the Society risks not being able to integrate all management components, resulting in isolated activities which individually can be useful in the short term, but not ultimately producing long-lasting effects. Furthermore the successful home care programme basically came to an end in 2008.

Humanitarian Values

Programme purpose: Promote respect for diversity and human dignity, and reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion

Migration⁵

Detained irregular migrants in Serbia, waiting for repatriation, are the main target group for the migration programme implemented in Serbia. In 2008, 323 irregular migrants have been accommodated in the detention centre for irregular migrants. The Red Cross of Serbia visited the migrants once a month to monitor their situation as well as provide hygiene items. Furthermore the staff at the centre received first aid training. Almost 100 detained irregular migrants asked for asylum after being brought to the centre out of all were transferred to the asylum centre in Banja Koviljača for the final decision. So far none were granted refugee status or political asylum by the Ministry of Interior.

Assistance to rejected asylum seekers returning from Western Europe through the readmission procedure continued throughout 2008. The Red Cross of Serbia regularly cooperated with the Agency for Minorities and Human Rights to assist returnee families and links have been established between the agency and local Red Cross branches with a view to deal with future challenges. Furthermore the National Society participated in a round-table discussion on readmission and return experiences in April.

To advance its activities targeting returnees, the Red Cross of Serbia initiated bilateral contact with sister National Societies in EU countries from which the returnees return. The result has so far been mixed as only a few Societies responded positively. Returns from Germany remained an unresolved challenge, as Germany's 16 districts apply different return practices. This implies that some 100,000 returnees from Germany receive different treatment relative to the district they are returning from. This affects the Red Cross of Serbia's ability to render support and further highlights the importance of establishing cooperation with sister National Societies.

The number of returnees to Serbia decreased in 2008 though and merely 20 people in average returned monthly. Moreover most returnees have opted for voluntary return, which implies financial support from the country they return from. The government has established a readmission service at the Belgrade airport which means that currently there is no need for the Red Cross of Serbia to include airport presence in its programme.

⁵ Referred to as *asylum seekers* and *rejected asylum seekers* in the programme update for 2008.

At the international level the Red Cross of Serbia continued its active engagement within the European Council for Refugees and Exile (ECRE), indirectly supporting the implementation of ECRE projects in the whole of Europe. A special ECRE meeting on return was held in Belgrade in September. The National Society also continued its involvement in the Platform for European Red Cross Cooperation on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants (PERCO) and in its Steering Group. The Red Cross of Serbia is currently co-chairing the network, and hosted its biannual meeting in Belgrade in April. In total 19 members of the National Society participated.

Vocational training for refugees

The Red Cross of Serbia, supported by the International Federation, have been implementing a vocational training programme targeting refugees from Croatia and Bosnia to ease their access to the labour market.⁶ The National Society has been cooperating with the National Employment Agency to determine training courses to match labour market needs. Out of 110 participants who followed courses which ended in March, 61 have been employed. Two new training cycles started in April and November with 90 and 100 participants respectively.

Constraints or Challenges

The overall national strategy dealing with returning asylum seekers from western European countries is unclear and as yet there is no proper link between the national and local level. The Red Cross of Serbia is participating in all related discussions and is actively seeking ways to assist the reintegration of returnees through its local branches. Although the Law on Asylum has been adopted, securing the rights of asylum seekers, a gap still exists concerning irregular migrants. The National Society is addressing this issue in official meetings.

Working in partnership

The Red Cross National Societies in Serbia and Montenegro worked in partnership with the International Federation and received funds from the British and Norwegian Red Cross Societies through the International Federation appeal and bilaterally from the Danish Red Cross. Furthermore the Austrian Red Cross, with support from the International Federation, has become a partner for disaster management development in Montenegro. Besides Red Cross donors SDC contributed with funds. USAID is a supporter of both the disaster management programme and activities within health and care. The latter programme is further implemented through several partnerships at local level including local authorities, centres for social welfare, schools, Roma NGOs and pensioners' associations. At the national level HumanaS, the Pomoć deci NGO and UNICEF are partners contributing to the programme.

Supported by the International Federation, both National Societies successfully held partnership meetings in October. Possible partnerships were subsequently explored, with follow-up meetings planned in 2009. Hitherto the Red Cross of Montenegro has been discussing support from the Austrian Red Cross and the Italian Red Cross.

Contributing to longer-term impact

The work of the National Societies, supported by the International Federation, is in line with the Federation's Global Agenda and its emphasis on reducing the impact of disasters, preventing deaths and illnesses as well as building communities' capacities to combat their own vulnerability. Emphasis is on disaster management, health practices, access to health and social support institutions and education, and ensuring a community-wide response to needs. Furthermore programme components were compatible with local and regional initiatives such as *The Decade of*

⁶ Courses covered during training cycles include business secretary and management courses, accounting courses, courses for fiscal cash register service, computing courses, courses for gerontology nurses, various craft courses and driver's license courses.

Roma Inclusion, the National Strategy of Ageing in Serbia and Poverty Reduction Strategies in both countries.

All programmes have gender as an integrated and important component. Within disaster preparedness the psycho-social component puts special emphasis on gender to ensure that the needs of each family member are adequately assessed and met. In vocational training for refugees the training is provided to meet the needs of both genders. In health promotion gender balance is presented as one of the priorities resulting in projects addressing reproductive health as well as sexual hygiene and specific activities for target groups of both genders. In volunteering and youth activities, the organizational development programme promotes humanitarian values through a young volunteer project with a clear gender focus.

Looking ahead

Reduced prospects for future multilateral funding will inevitably affect the Federation's support to both National Societies in the near future, and discussions are underway in this regard. The Federation is working to ensure that responsibilities and competencies for sustaining or finalizing programmes are transferred to both National Societies. Programmes expected to be affected include the home care programme in both countries and disaster management and organizational development in Montenegro. At the same time the Federation will aim to support and facilitate coordinated bilateral partnerships, support and funding wherever possible.

A promising development during the reporting period was the signing of a one-year agreement with SDC for continuing the social welfare programme. Several other partners were involved as well including the Spanish and Danish Red Cross. A possibility for extending the support for at least three years is being discussed.

How we work	
<p>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".</p>	<p>Global Agenda Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
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