

# MINOR EMERGENCY



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## BULGARIA: FLOODS

no. 05ME047  
Update no. 1  
21 November 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

### In Brief

Operations Update no. 1; Period covered: 9 August 2005 to 15 November 2005

This Minor Emergency Update no. 1 is being issued based on the situation described below and reflecting the information available at this time. In August 2005, CHF 142,309.85 (USD 110,470 or EUR 91,931) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to respond to the needs in this operation. This allocation met a portion of the needs as assessed by the Bulgarian Red Cross during the emergency response phase. An interim report on the utilization of the DREF allocation of CHF 142,309.85 will be available by the beginning of December 2005.

A further DREF allocation was approved in November 2005 in an amount of CHF 77,500 (EUR 50,000). This allocation was made to support outstanding needs amongst the affected population as winter approaches: to support the final clearing out and cleaning phase with disinfectants and insecticides, as well as the provision of basic household materials – beds and mattresses. This brings the overall budget for this minor emergency appeal to CHF 219,809.86 (EUR 141,931). The operational timeframe for this minor emergency appeal has also been extended to 31 January 2006. A total of 4,507 families will be assisted through the operation, and a Final Report will be made available one month after the end of the operation (i.e. by 28 February 2006). Replenishment of DREF by un-earmarked contributions is welcome and needed.

*For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:*

- In Bulgaria: Bulgarian Red Cross, Jassen Slivensky, Disaster Management Coordinator, [j.slivensky@redcross.bg](mailto:j.slivensky@redcross.bg), phone: +359 281 64898
- In Regional Delegation Budapest: Slobodanka Curic, Regional Disaster Management Coordinator, [slobodanka.curic@ifrc.org](mailto:slobodanka.curic@ifrc.org), phone: + 38765 665 747
- In Geneva: Europe Department, Erja Reinikainen, Regional Officer [erja.reinikainen@ifrc.org](mailto:erja.reinikainen@ifrc.org), phone: + 41 22 730 4319, fax + 41 22 733 0395.

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### Background, and current situation

As a result of storms, unprecedented heavy rain and hail in the period 25 May - 12 August 2005, Bulgaria suffered the worst flooding in 70 years. Many dams burst and overflowed, rivers flooded arable land, and the work of many electrical distribution stations and pump stations was threatened; roads and railway infrastructure were swept away, drinking water supplies were disrupted, bridges were destroyed and communication across the country was disrupted. Electricity supplies and communications in many cities and villages were cut off. In many places erosion and landslides led to mud and rocks blocking roads and rail roads. The rivers Yantra, Kamchiya, Roussensky Lom and their subsidiary streams burst their banks.

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The floods damaged inhabited buildings (public and private) and infrastructure – roads, streets, railroad sections, gutters, draining equipment, and bridges and disrupted communication along the two biggest Bulgarian highways - Hemus and Trakiya. Some 70% of the territory of Bulgaria was affected. Losses are enormous in the affected agriculture areas – damaged grain cultures amount to some 54,874 hectares, with some 10,599 drowned animals (Source: Ministry of Agriculture). As heavy rains continued to fall through September, grapes, vegetable and fruit crops were also heavily affected and actual losses are only finally becoming clear as the flood waters are draining away. Some 3,645 inhabited buildings were declared unsuitable to live in, directly affecting 60,137 people. In 62 municipalities, there were 258 houses totally destroyed and 1,143 partially destroyed, 44 municipalities declared a state of emergency, and 164 municipalities were affected by the floods. (Source: National Association of the municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria).

In rural areas the population traditionally prepares a variety of food products (up to 50% of all used) during summer and early autumn to be consumed in late autumn, winter and early spring. This includes conservation of fruits and vegetables, cheese, meat, etc. Most of the ingredients are grown in private gardens and stored in basements after conservation. All these were totally destroyed in flooded areas. Water remained for weeks in almost all basements and many gardens and orchards. Almost all domestic birds and many animals were killed, because people could not save them. According to United Nations (UN) agency sources, 20 people were killed (Source: UN-OCHA). The floods have so far affected more than 2 million people (25 % of the Bulgarian population). The damage is estimated at USD 633 million. (Source: NATO).

As work on the needs assessment continued, the second week of September saw a further wave of flooding with 565 houses flooded, mainly in the region of Veliko Tarnovo, hit by flooding for the third time in the space of five months. Some 60 houses were destroyed by water in Plovdiv region.

### **Local authority and state initiatives**

The State Agency for Civil Protection, Fire Brigade, Police and other disaster partners have been coordinating actions in response to the crisis, and from the beginning of the alert, the Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) has been in daily contact with the Crisis Management Centre of the agency. The regional branches of the BRC have also been critical in monitoring developments in the communities in which they work.

Urgent action was taken to alleviate the consequences of the floods by governmental institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Rescue teams have been involved in drainage work, clearing mud and fallen trees from the buildings, roads and streets. Temporary dikes were built on endangered sections. People have been relocated from the most affected buildings to temporary shelters, mostly schools, kindergartens, relatives and host families. Immediately after declaring a state of emergency, the Standing Commission for civil protection in times of disasters, accidents and catastrophes – Council of ministers, regional and municipal commissions in the affected regions – started to work. Rescue efforts were immediately organized with crews from Civil Protection, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Defense, Municipal organizations and others who had tasks to ensure and accomplish urgent emergency-rescue activities, according to the municipal and regional plans for action in disasters, accidents and catastrophes. The organization and coordination of human and material resources were supervised by the commissions at all levels.

The BRC has played a crucial role as a valuable partner of the government in this difficult situation and has coordinated its efforts with national and local authorities, NGOs, the national society of municipalities in Bulgaria, and other organizations such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Caritas, Care, etc.

The Standing Governmental Commission asked the Bulgarian Red Cross for assistance and the Civil Protection agency is continuing to provide updated figures to the Bulgarian Red Cross.

### **Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

Since the beginning of the floods, an immediate response to provide emergency assistance to the victims of floods has been provided by the Bulgarian Red Cross National Headquarters and the local branches in the affected regions. Various types of relief goods were distributed through the Red Cross branches during the whole period of on-going rain and floods on the basis of needs assessment and in constant co-ordination with state authorities, both at national and local level.

Thanks to the financial support from an initial allocation of EUR 55,162 from the DREF fund of the International Federation, relief supplies consisting of family hygiene parcels, blankets, bedding sets, and kitchen sets were distributed to 5,000 beneficiaries in the nine most affected regions for a period of one month, ending on 31 August. This was covered under the Minor Emergency Appeal 05ME035 ([For the Emergency Appeal, please click here](#)).



**Distribution of relief in Pazardjik**

The needs set out in this original Minor Emergency Appeal 05ME047 have been met by the second allocation from the International Federation's DREF fund in an amount of EUR 91,931 and assisting 2,400 families for one month with basic food and non-food items (blankets, bed linen, pillows, mattresses and sleeping bags). This operation has been finalized and a report will be available by the beginning of December 2005.

### **Coordination and Cooperation**

The BRC is the only non-governmental organization which is included in the national system for protection of the population in case of natural and technological disasters in time of peace and war. It is represented in the Standing Commission at the Council of Ministers, for protection of the population against natural and

technological disasters. The BRC works in close co-operation and interaction with the Ministry of Defense, State Agency for Civil Protection, Ministry of Interior, governmental institutions, local authorities and other partners in disaster response.

The overall coordination of the BRC operation has been undertaken by the BRC Crisis Management Team which has met on a regular basis to process information from various sources and BRC branches, to assess the situation and take decisions. As a result:

- BRC delivered immediately emergency aid to the affected people from its own disaster reserves;
- BRC approached the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies with a request for allocation of funds from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF);
- BRC has utilized several cash and in-kind donations coming from partnering National Societies;
- BRC started a national media campaign to fundraise for cash and in-kind donations.

Regular briefings and press-conferences were held to inform the public of BRC actions and outstanding needs. Information about the operation was published on the BRC webpage ([For official webpage, please click here](#)).

The response of the general public has been generous and bears witness to the trust the BRC enjoys amongst the general public. The BRC has mobilized its staff and volunteers and delivered to the affected population more than 100 trucks of emergency items to cover the most urgent needs: food, water, clothing, blankets, bedding, mattresses, pillows disinfectants, insecticides, etc.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided financial assistance (USD 50,000) via the American Red Cross for procurement and delivering of food, hygiene materials, blankets, bedding sets, mattresses etc., to assist 3000 beneficiaries in seven affected regions for a one month period.

The Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies have also supported the BRC operation with donations for assistance to people in need: Spanish Red Cross (18,000 Euros for the purchase of generators and water pumps), Croatian Red Cross (in-kind materials such as blankets, beds, linen, etc.), Luxembourg Red Cross (2,400 blankets and 2,400 hygiene parcels), Turkish Red Crescent (in-kind donation and USD 5,000), Austrian Red Cross (EUR 2,500), Czech Red Cross (33,889 Euros).

### **Assessment**

The Bulgarian Red Cross regional teams have made assessment in the field in their own regions. The BRC Disaster Preparedness/Disaster Response Department has collected and collated this data, and has coordinated the whole operation with the branches and all partners. Assessment team members from National Headquarters have visited Targovishte, Bourgas Pazardjik, Plovdiv Shumen and Veliko Tarnovo regions and provided support to Red Cross staff and volunteers there in their efforts to assist the affected people. According to the Bulgarian Red Cross assessment, in cooperation with Agency for Civil Protection, the number of affected population which continues to need basic support is over 46,000 people. Other agencies which are also involved (UNDP, CARE, Caritas ) in providing assistance are in contact with BRC, coordinating the relief provided by them in order to cover some of the remaining needs.

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The BRC has a developed system for the processing of assessment information and the identification of beneficiaries. A commission, consisting of national society representatives, and respected public figures including journalists, is involved in scrutinizing the needs assessment data collected from both local municipality and local BRC branches. Decisions are then taken by the commission in targeting of beneficiaries.

**Outstanding Needs :**

According to the latest needs assessment data, the criteria concerning the most vulnerable groups remain :

- elderly people over 60 years old and living alone
- single women with young children
- disabled and handicapped
- low-income families under social minimum

Although the operation is no longer in its emergency phase, the clearing out and cleaning phase is still on-going as is the provision of essential items to ensure basic living conditions.

The most needed items amongst these vulnerable groups are beds and mattresses, a range of disinfectants, insecticides and cleaning materials. Ahead of the winter months it is essential that families can ensure the hygiene conditions of their homes in order to return before the winter snows and falling temperatures set in. The proper and safe use of all disinfectant and insecticide materials is ensured by the central and local health and sanitary authorities working in close cooperation with the local Red Cross headquarters and branches.

This update sets out the remaining needs as initially assessed during the emergency phase and reaffirmed during the latest round of assessment. This involves:

- To provide assistance to the most affected people and families in ten regions
- To provide beds and mattresses to 347 families
- To distribute disinfectants and cleaning agents to 1,760 beneficiaries

The activities will be carried out according to internationally accepted tendering procedures with the operation to be completed by the end of January 2006 and final reporting by end of February 2006. The relief materials will be distributed in the regions of Veliko Tarnovo, Pleven, Shoumen, Varna, Lovech, Targovishte, Sofia region, Vratsa, Rousse and Stara Zagora

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