

# Programme Update



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Central Europe

Appeal No. MA66001

31 August 2008

This report covers the period 01/01/08 to 30/06/08.



The owner of a totally destroyed house during the arms depot explosion is visited by a Red Cross volunteer in the village of Gerdec. **Albanian Red Cross**

## In brief

**Programme purpose:** The main programme areas in the first half of 2008 were disaster management, health and care, organizational development and participatory community development as well as population movement. The focus areas are aligned with *Strategy 2010* core areas, the Istanbul Commitments made at the VII Red Cross Red Crescent Conference and they contribute to the four Global Agenda Goals.

**Programme summary:** Within disaster management, the National Societies supported through the regional representation of the International Federation- Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia and Romania plus Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo, which also have their own appeals- focused on strengthening regional and national disaster response mechanisms and increasing the knowledge about vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) tools and risk reduction activities. Within the health and care programme, social care and harm reduction were the main activity areas. Mobilization of financial resources and financial management were focus areas within organizational development including the installation of a financial management system and fund-raising activities. Participatory community development and population movement activities focused on empowering local communities through community participation as well as support the social integration of refugees, returnees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations.

**Financial situation:** Total 2008 budget for Central Europe (MAA66001) was initially 6,404,721 Swiss francs (USD 5,822,474 or EUR 3,965,772). The revised budget is 6,229,682 Swiss francs (USD 5,663,347 or EUR 3,857,388), out of which 59 per cent covered. The overall 2008 budget for the programmes run from the International Federation's regional representation in Budapest is 1,441,145 Swiss francs. Other programmes under this appeal are run by the country representation

in Belgrade and the Federation offices in Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina and are reported on in separate programme updates. The revision of the appeal budget is due to a slight decrease in the budget of the Federation office in Kosovo.

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

**No. of people we help:** Approximately 124,440 beneficiaries benefited from the International Federation's secretariat supported programmes. Out of this 123,200 are among vulnerable people and 1,240 staff and volunteers of the National Societies in the region.

Programme/project	Target population	No. of people we help
Disaster management	Members of communities in disaster-prone areas	58,000
	Red Cross staff and volunteers	520
Health and care	Young people at risk, TB patients and the general public	43,000
	Red Cross staff and volunteers	120
Organizational development	Red Cross staff, volunteers and members	360
Participatory community dev.	Roma communities, children and youth	21,000
	Red Cross staff and volunteers	240
Population Movement	Returnees, elderly people and youth	1,200
<b>Total</b>		<b>124,440</b>

**Our partners:** The main donors supporting the regional programmes are the Norwegian Red Cross, Swedish Red Cross, British Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, American Red Cross, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), ECHO and International Federation's Capacity Building Fund. In addition regional representation and the National Societies in region have established partnerships with various stakeholders, international organizations, governmental agencies and UN agencies.

## Context

Although not being as prominent in the news as during the conflicts in the 1990s or in the period prior to some of the countries acceding to the European Union in the mid years of this decade, the region still has issues of Europe-wide importance. Kosovo has been under direct UN administration since the 1999. On 17 February 2008, the Kosovo Assembly declared its independence from Serbia. Unrest and confrontations in Serb populated areas in the north of Kosovo followed. However, no major population movements have been observed and the situation seems to have stabilized. The Kosovo question remains a thorny issue internationally though. Kosovo as an independent state has been recognized by some 45 countries.

Every year severe flooding devastates homes and infrastructure claiming scores of lives and washing away livelihoods. Heavy snowfalls, landslides and earthquakes also cause disruption and damage to communities and drain scarce resources away from other areas of the economy. Such phenomena, as well as traditional threats, are encouraging the National Societies of Central Europe to join the debates on how to meet these challenges as part of an overall scaling up of disaster risk reduction to make communities better prepared. Man-made disasters also occur and in March a series of explosions in Albania resulted in more than 4,000 people in three villages being affected.

The poor socio-economic conditions of the region are reflected in high unemployment rates. The CIA World Factbook estimates unemployment as high as 19 per cent in Serbia, 35 per cent in Macedonia, 43 per cent in Kosovo and 46 per cent in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In several countries, approximately 30

per cent of the population lives under the poverty line. In such a climate of poverty, inadequate access to health services and low levels of health education HIV and AIDS and tuberculosis (TB) thrive.

Migration and other population movements, whether remnants of the conflicts of the 1990s- approximately half a million refugees and internally displaced people live in the region- or more recent phenomena like trafficking in human beings related to the poverty and corruption, have an impact on all the countries in some way. With Central Europe being at the crossroads of the continent, movement of people is not confined to just one region, but spreads to a much wider area.

## Progress towards outcomes

### Disaster management

**Outcome/expected result:** The disaster response capacity of the National Societies in the region is strengthened through the development of disaster preparedness plans and a regional disaster management strategy, including a contingency plan and regional cooperation. Risk reduction and community based disaster prevention and preparedness activities are expanded, targeting communities in areas prone to disasters.

### Risk reduction and disaster preparedness and response

During the reporting period the Central Europe and Southern Caucasus regions only experienced small scale disasters. Consequently the regional representation and the Red Cross National Societies were able to focus more on disaster preparedness rather than disaster response activities. The regional representation, along with the National Societies focused on strengthening regional and national disaster response mechanisms and increasing the knowledge about vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) tools and risk reduction activities.

In May, one regional disaster response team (RDRT) training for new team members was held in Bosnia and Herzegovina, bringing together 26 participants from 10 countries. The training was divided into a theoretical and a practical part including group work and plenary field work discussions. With this RDTR training the regional representation for Central Europe and Southern Caucasus now has 110 RDRT members on its roster ready to be deployed in case of disasters. Out of these 21 are trained in water and sanitation, including 6 who passed the ERU water and sanitation training organized by the Austrian Red Cross in Austria in 2007 and 2008. The regional representation also supported the participation of staff from National Societies who are not RDRT members, but who have technical expertise and interest in water and sanitation.

To further strengthen capacities in disaster response the regional representation in coordination with the office in Kosovo supported two national disaster response teams trainings (NDRT) for two the Red Cross organizations in Kosovo for approximately 65 staff and volunteers. This was the third training conducted for the same groups of participants, following the needs assessment training organized in November 2006 and the basic NDRT training in 2007.

The regional meeting for disaster management coordinators in Central Europe and Southern Caucasus was held in Budapest in March to discuss common disaster management activities in the region and how the National Societies can cooperate and coordinate their activities in 2008. Much emphasis was given to the need for sharing National Societies' good practices, expertise and experiences as well as joint trainings of Balkan National Societies in water and sanitation, water rescue, IT and NDRT.

The Red Cross National Societies in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, including Kosovo received support in updating their disaster preparedness planning through participating in relevant meetings and linked training sessions at regional and national level. The first National Society contingency plan was produced by the Macedonian Red Cross to be followed by contingency plans in Serbia (including Kosovo) and Montenegro by the end of

2008.

The Albanian Red Cross' experience in VCA contributed to the regional representation's decision to organize a regional VCA training of trainers' workshop in Albania. The aim of the training was to create a group of VCA practitioners whose skills will be used when VCA trainings are organized in their own countries or within the region. In total 30 participants from 10 National Societies actively participated in the workshop.

### **Constraints or challenges**

No major constraints or challenges were faced.

## Health and care

**Outcome/expected result:** The capacity of the National Societies' health and care programmes has been strengthened to identify and respond to the health and care needs in the region.

### **Social care and harm reduction**

In January the Romanian Red Cross ended a project for psychological support to multi-drug resistant TB (MDRTB) patients that had been running since April 2007. The main goal of the project was to demonstrate the need for associating treatment of TB with psychological support in order to increase the treatment success rate. Voluntary psychologists were interviewed and supervised with the support of professional medical personnel to provide support to MDRTB and TB patients. The support included psychotherapy sessions, psychosocial support and health education. Several hundred TB patients were reached including MDRTB patients, new TB patients and relapse TB patients.

The observed immediate outcome of the activities was that a number of patients were complying with their TB treatment and that several were able to resume their education or enhanced their labour market abilities. The project confirmed that psychological support should become a natural supplement to traditional TB treatment. Furthermore, to increase treatment success rate TB treatment also needs to be accompanied by social support, especially for difficult MDRTB cases. From a project perspective, for such projects to succeed there is a need for intensive stakeholder advocacy.

From February and throughout the whole reporting period, the Romanian Red Cross also implemented a harm reduction project targeting youth aged 14 to 20. In total 20 volunteers were recruited and received a three-day training seminar. Information activities were then conducted in school units and leaflets were printed. The main partners were a school inspectorate in Bucharest as well as the non-governmental organization *Integration* which promotes non-discrimination and non-drug use. The project was well received by the target group. However, the number of activities carried out was limited due to the need to coordinate the activities with multiple stakeholders including volunteers, NGO(s) and school schedules.

"I am stopping TB" was the slogan for the National Societies' involvement in and celebration of the World TB day. Activities organized by the National Societies included press conferences, work on TB within the framework of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and malaria (GFATM) and distribution of information internally as well as externally. Target groups were the general public including children and youth in schools and Red Cross local branches. Partners were among others national TB institutes, health ministries and other NGOs dealing with TB.

The Albania and Macedonia Red Cross societies received funds donated by the Canadian Red Cross for implementing activities within health and care including social assistance for elderly, blood donation awareness, breastfeeding promotion and HIV prevention. For its social and care activities Albania Red Cross received project funds to provide elderly people alone in Pogradec, Lac and Lushnje with necessary social and health care to improve their living conditions. Macedonia Red Cross also received funds within their social and care activities for a breastfeeding project which creates a healthier population by developing healthy eating habits as well as preventing hazards to

children related to inappropriate childhood nutrition. The project will be implemented in the Kocani branch which will also be covering the Vinica, Berovo and Delcevo branches.

Within their harm reduction work the Macedonia Red Cross received funds to implement a project to raise youth's awareness of the importance of blood donation. The project will be implemented in the local branches of Bitola, Skopje and Tetovo. Furthermore Macedonia obtained funds for harm reduction activities in connection with HIV and AIDS. Thus the funds secure the continuation of the National Society's harm reduction activities towards maintaining a low HIV prevalence in the country. The project focuses on HIV prevention, particularly among young people.

### **Constraints or Challenges**

No major constraints or challenges occurred affecting the activities.

## **Organizational development**

**Outcome/expected result:** Well functioning National Societies with good public image are working efficiently and effectively to improve the lives of vulnerable people.

### **Mobilization of financial resources and financial management**

The regional representation provided technical support and consultation to the National Societies in the region aiming at further strengthening their capacities to provide more efficient services to the most vulnerable. Many of the National Societies in the region underwent development processes to improve their human resources, finance management and service delivery.

With the support from the International Federation's regional representation an external consultant supported the Macedonian Red Cross in developing a fund-raising strategy. A workshop for branch secretaries and volunteers was organized focusing on fund-raising and experience sharing. The workshop was organized as part of the implementation of the ongoing capacity building project supported by the Norwegian Red Cross in coordination with the regional representation. As a result the Macedonian Red Cross developed and published a two year strategy 2008-2010 for mobilization of funds from the cooperate sector. This was an important step for the National Society for increasing the financial stability and establishing an efficient system for mobilization of funds at the local as well as the national level.

Limited financial support was provided to the Polish Red Cross for the implementation of the financial management system at regional branches and headquarters. Consultations and trainings for key staff members in two regional branches as well as in the headquarters were organized in how to use the finance software. In both branches charts of accounts were modified and adopted based on the needs. The National Society also updated all employees' yearly financial reports into the system that would be sent to the tax administration. Following the implementation of the financial management system the financial work has become more efficient as the preparation of documents and access to financial information has become significantly easier.

### **Constraints or challenges**

In implementing its new financial system the Polish Red Cross experienced some technical problems in linking up with a bank account application. This problem will be addressed and solved.

## **Participatory Community Development**

**Outcome/expected result:** Empowered local communities with strengthened capacity to cope with the vulnerabilities and their root causes through participation and community action.

During the reporting period the National Societies of Croatia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia have utilized the participatory community development (PCD) approach in their work with the most vulnerable groups of society. A total of 12 vulnerable communities were targeted

implementing 12 micro-projects supported by the Norwegian and the British Red Cross through the regional representation. Another 16 small community based projects were supported by the International Federation and other stakeholders involved in the PCD process. Most of the targeted communities were vulnerable Roma but also other marginalized groups such as children in isolated communities, migrants and those at risk of human trafficking.

For most of the communities where a rapid appraisal was carried out, low living standards, bad infrastructure, environmental issues, social problems and discrimination were issues needing to be addressed. The involvement of vulnerable people in all stages of the PCD process led to a better understanding of these communities' needs by the National Societies and enabled the implementation of the micro-projects based on the priorities identified during large group workshops. Due to the needs uncovered most of the micro-projects contained an educational component, the decrease of social exclusion and improving social and health conditions of the most vulnerable. A number of stakeholders were part of the process contributing to establishing partnerships with the communities and the Red Cross as well as ensuring sustainability of the projects. This was a particularly important aspect concerning the participation of local authorities throughout the PCD process.

In Croatia four micro-projects were tailored to decrease the exclusion of Roma children from school through additional educational and social activities. The projects resulted in many of the Roma children going back to school from which they had previously left. Three micro-projects in Macedonia were designed to contribute to better health conditions among Roma communities by constructing a new drainage system and organizing health education and family planning workshops. In addition an education club for youth was opened which will serve as a community centre and its activities will be supported by local authorities. In Serbia two micro-projects were implemented aiming to facilitate the social integration of Roma children and adults through preparatory workshops for school enrolment and various workshops for parents. Another community project implemented in Serbia focused on increasing awareness on different health issues and promoting healthy lifestyles through health education trainings. Micro-project activities in Montenegro contributed to better living conditions among a Roma community by improving housing facilities and undertaking clean-up campaigns in order to decrease the possibility of any disease in the community. The PCD activities in Romania targeted young people at risk of human trafficking while in Bulgaria the activities aimed at decreasing isolation and discrimination among migrants.

## Population Movement

**Outcome/Expected result:** To reduce the vulnerability and strengthen the process of social integration of the refugees, returnees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable population.

The population movement programme in Croatia continued to assist the most vulnerable returnees and other vulnerable groups in rebuilding their lives and in assisting them during the process of social (re)integration. The programme aimed to ensure a sustainable return through local micro-projects and the facilitation of community participation. The activities were funded by the Norwegian government and the Norwegian Red Cross and supported and coordinated through the regional representation.

A total of 7 communities in Croatia were targeted and approximately 1,200 most vulnerable benefited from 26 small community-based projects. The tailored projects assisted returnees and other vulnerable individuals in addressing the needs of the communities through participatory engagement. Furthermore inter-ethnic social activities within the Red Cross branches were organized and constituted an important element of the community mobilization project through the promotion of the Movement's principles as well as contributing to the ongoing reconciliation process. Increased participation and active involvement of the community contributed to community empowerment and ownership of changes being made.

Mobilizing local communities to improve their life conditions upon return was fulfilled through organizing different activities for all interested community members, and providing basic tools for returnee families to sustain themselves, such as agricultural machinery, seeds, and education.

Through the abovementioned projects, interaction within the multi-ethnic community was enhanced. Elderly people and people with disabilities were assisted as well and brought out of isolation with the support of community co-members.

### Constraints or challenges

Although no major constraints occurred during the implementation of the programme, the needs of target communities were much greater than the capacity of the Red Cross to respond. Therefore, the needs were prioritized together with the targeted beneficiaries and small projects were implemented accordingly.

## Working in partnership

During the reporting period key donors supporting the regional programmes have visited the regional representation. The governing board members of the Norwegian Red Cross were briefed about the achievements in their supported activities and discussions were made for the future cooperation and support. Regional Representative was involved in various discussions and meetings concerning the cooperation with the Red Cross Societies of the United States, Sweden, Britain, Finland, Denmark and Italy. To promote the work of the International Federation and possible cooperation the regional representative had meetings with the Ambassadors of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Canada.

A large number of local stakeholders were involved in all stages of the PCD process. As members in the local PCD teams, representatives of various local authorities, institutions and NGOs took part in the participatory needs assessments using PRA methods, planning, implementing and monitoring community micro projects. The participation and better understanding of local community needs has enabled different stakeholders to contribute with their resources to micro-projects and support other community initiatives.

In the population movement programme the cooperation with external stakeholders has been very good and the referral system has been maintained with all relevant actors including governmental institutions, NGOs, international organizations and UNHCR in particular. At local level, all relevant actors were mobilized during the implementation, especially local municipalities, schools, centres for social welfare and NGOs. Micro-projects were implemented within the framework of the population movement programme and other relevant activities were initiated locally. These activities brought attention on the part of those responsible towards vulnerable communities.

The cooperation in the area of disaster management continues with the ICRC (RDRT trainings, NDRT trainings and regional meeting for disaster management coordinators), the Red Cross Climate Centre, the Austrian Red Cross (training sessions on water and sanitation and creation of water and sanitation teams within the region) and the Finnish Red Cross (RDRT trainings).

All National Societies in the region have partnerships with their respective governments and other partners support their work with the most vulnerable groups of society. Several participating National Societies are also working bilaterally supporting various programmes and activities.

## Contributing to longer-term impact

Different trainings, meetings and simulations were provided to National Society disaster managers and RDRT members to improve their skills in disaster management. It has become a practice in the region that National Society coordinators invite each other as facilitators to their national disaster management trainings or exchange staff and volunteers for knowledge sharing and experience. The regional representation will in the future continue to support such efforts to ensure best practices are replicated throughout the region.

Some of the National Societies using the participatory community development have trained other branches that are not familiar with the participatory methodology. This is enabling National Societies to expand their activities using this approach with the most vulnerable people in particular in identifying and addressing their needs and also using it in other programme areas. The PCD method is intended to be introduced and applied in other programmes within the Red Cross of Serbia. The National Society has already developed its capacities to work according to the participatory approach with local communities through its tuberculosis protection programme.

In addition monitoring of the programmes was carried out by the regional representation through visits and interviews with staff and volunteers and meetings with local authorities.

## Looking ahead

The regional representation has been engaged in providing regular notifications to National Societies in the region on the calls for proposals coming from, among others, EU and the World Bank. This will continue in the future contributing to establishing partnerships but also to enable a diverse funding perspective for National Societies in the region. Additional emphasis will be put on the National Societies of Southern Caucasus, which the representation also covers, who needs more attention in capacity building of their programmes to better and more effectively respond to the needs of the most vulnerable.

Support will be continued to the National Societies in the area of disaster management and in particular in risk reduction activities as well as promoting community based tools such as PCD and VCA. The regional representation will continue its active promotion of, and linking to, regional and cross-regional networks, information sharing, capacity building in various programme areas that contribute to the Global Agenda goals and take forward the Istanbul commitments.

A further strengthening and increased participation in the Global Alliance on HIV to scale-up and enhance the quality of the work within HIV is expected. National Societies are currently working towards joining the alliance and the International Federation has supported their efforts. The societies already implement a wide range of activities within HIV and AIDS and several have recently received funding for HIV and AIDS related activities from the Canadian and the American Red Cross Societies. Parts of the funds from the American National Society are donated explicitly towards participation in the alliance. Other alliances, including the operational alliance concept, are encouraged to combine capabilities and competencies to better respond to community needs. The PCD approach may prove a valuable component in this connection. The number and variety of humanitarian and other actors in the region may thus indicate good prospects for further alliance building.

## How we work

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

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