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# Emergency Plan of Action (EPoA)

## Belarus: Extreme winter conditions

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

<b>DREF Operation n° MDRBY007</b>	<b>Glide n° CW-2017-000005-BLR</b>
<b>Date of issue: 24 January 2017</b>	<b>Date of disaster: 5-9 January 2017</b>
<b>Operation manager (responsible for this EPoA): Sergei Boltrushevich Head of Office IFRC Country Office in Belarus</b>	<b>Point of contact: Mychko Olga Secretary General Belarus Red Cross</b>
<b>Operation start date: 5 January 2017</b>	<b>Expected timeframe: 20 January - 20 April 2017 (3 months)</b>
<b>Overall operation budget: CHF 111,431</b>	
<b>Number of people affected: 50,000</b>	<b>Number of people to be assisted: 41,500</b>
<b>Host National Society(ies) presence (n° of volunteers, staff, branches): 211 volunteers, 121 staff, 1 headquarters and 107 district branches</b>	
<b>Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: Ministry of Emergency Situations</b>	

## A. Situation analysis

### Description of the disaster

A sharp cold snap (Cyclone Axel) hit Belarus on 5 January 2017, with heavy snowfalls accompanied by frost and strong winds. Temperatures dropped down to 25-29 degrees Celsius below zero, and in some places even to minus 31-34 Celsius degrees. The country's meteorological service issued an orange weather warning. Invasion of cold arctic air masses from the north of European Russia followed on 6 January.

Many Belarusian citizens, especially homeless, were unprepared to severe frosts and snowfalls. Within one night, snow layers reached up to 18-22 cm. Snow caused a large number of road accidents, including those with intercity buses, leaving the drivers and travellers stranded for hours on highways. In addition, the wind was 19-22 meters per second according to the Belarusian hydro-meteorological centre.

According to the data reported on 11 January 2017, it is estimated that 539 people (including 31 children) were traumatized and 10 died of hypothermia.

All six regions of Belarus, Vitebsk, Minsk, Gomel, Grodno, Brest and Mogilev regions, and Minsk city have been affected by extreme winter conditions.

The cyclone has considerably affected the most vulnerable people, in particular those who had to be out in the open air for a long time, the homeless and elderly people in remote areas with disruptions in heating as well as Orthodox believers who attended Christmas Eve mass on 6-7 January. 10,000 people attended the mass in Minsk, 2,000 in Gomel, 2,000 in Mogilev, 1000 in Grodno, 1,500 in Vitebsk, and 500 in Brest.



BRC volunteers assisting homeless people at the damp site in Gomel.  
Photo: Belarus Red Cross

## Summary of the current response

An emergency warning about Cyclone Axel approaching Belarus was received by the Belarus Red Cross on 1 January 2017. Consequently, to raise public awareness about the upcoming natural disaster the Belarus Red Cross jointly with the Ministry of Emergency Situations launched an awareness-raising campaign and arranged a joint press-conference on 4 January ([http://sputnik.by/press\\_video/20170104/1026813862/mchs-krasnyi-krest-moroz-pogoda.html](http://sputnik.by/press_video/20170104/1026813862/mchs-krasnyi-krest-moroz-pogoda.html)). Moreover, population had an access to the Belarus Red Cross interactive map of natural disasters helping monitor weather conditions and emergency situations related to them.

From 5 January to 9 January, 2017 Belarus Red Cross operation headquarters undertook measures to respond to cold wave with a strong focus on the homeless. On 6 of January Belarus Red Cross allocated BYN 10,000 (approx. CHF 5,000) from its contingency fund disposable tableware, meals and used BYN 14,000 (approx. CHF 7,000) donated by Cola-Cola to purchase winter tires and fuel for power generators, heavy duty vehicles and heating canons.

To immediately respond to the needs of the most vulnerable, the National Society set up 107 warming stations at the sites of mass-gatherings such as churches, open-air public transport stops. Of these, 83 warming stations were arranged in the offices of Belarus Red Cross regional and district branches, eight were Red Cross tents with heating canons and power generators, and 16 vehicle-based mobile points which also delivered assistance to the places where homeless usually gather, which include dump sites and glass bottle buy-back centres. The most affected homeless people were provided with hot meals, tea, warm clothes and blankets. Belarus Red Cross also supplied meals, blankets and bedlinen to seven state-run temporary shelters for the homeless as the number of people seeking refuge in these shelters has doubled and the authorities requested for Red Cross assistance.

The Belarus Red Cross telephone helpline 201 provided psycho-social support to the affected, as well as coordinated work of volunteers and staff.

Furthermore, extremely cold weather hit 17,000 Orthodox believers attending Christmas Eve mass on 6-7 January. To assist city inhabitants visiting the mass and homeless people, Belarus Red Cross immediately deployed eight winterized tents in Minsk city and all the regional centres near all the cathedrals. During its 24-hour duty, Belarus Red Cross distributed hot drinks to an estimated total of 2,500 people and provided first aid to 13 persons from among mass attendees and stranded drivers.

Traditionally, the severe winter increases vulnerability of stranded drivers. Four days before Belarus was hit by cold wave, the State Automobile Inspectorate had started a driver-oriented awareness-raising campaign aiming to prevent them from using their vehicles on 5 January 2016 and during the next days. But despite all the prevention measures, road traffic in Belarus remained active even during the harsh weather conditions. In order to assist stranded drivers, Belarus Red Cross was patrolling the city's 160 km ring road and the Belarusian / Polish border. All in all, Belarus Red Cross emergency response teams helped 154 drivers stranded on highways.

A total of 1,000 blankets, 1,000 pairs of warm socks, 1,000 pairs of gloves, 1,000 scarves and 100 warm boots from Belarus Red Cross stocks were distributed to the target beneficiaries. Furthermore, 1,500 hygiene kits and 1,500 food parcels were issued from the Belarus Red Cross warehouse, which accounts for 70 per cent of its contingency stock. In addition, CHF 5,000 was spent to purchase hot meals to the most affected.

121 Red Cross staff and 211 Red Cross volunteers have been engaged in the response.

Overall, BRC assisted with relief and warming possibly 14,248 vulnerable people out of the 50,000 affected. This number includes 239 homeless people provided with hot meals and warm clothes, and 154 stranded drivers.

## Overview of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in country

In Belarus, there is IFRC presence with a Country Office manned by two staff. IFRC ensures strong support to Belarus Red Cross providing technical advice, tools and standards, facilitating organizational development and knowledge-sharing, monitoring and reporting.



Red Cross volunteers assisting drivers at the Belarusian-Polish border.  
Photo: Belarus Red Cross volunteer

The IFRC Country Office in Belarus and the National Society cooperate closely in assessing the needs and the response to this emergency. The operation will be coordinated by Belarus Red Cross branch chairpersons in their areas of responsibility. Red Cross volunteers will be responsible for delivering the emergency assistance.

ICRC has one staff based in Minsk to support a longstanding partnership with the Belarus Red Cross. The role of ICRC in Belarus is related to protection of the population and assistance to people affected by armed conflict and violence. ICRC has supported capacity building in various areas such as providing equipment to the National Society for increasing conflict-related emergency preparedness and response capacities, trainings in restoring family links and first aid. ICRC has also supported displaced people from Ukraine with economic security services.

The Swiss Red Cross is present in country and supports Belarus Red Cross in the field of integrating and institutionalising homecare, and healthy ageing through participatory community work. They also provide winter assistance every Christmas, which is a more humanitarian project. Following the request from Belarus Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross will provide CHF 5,000 to assist 1,000 homeless people with instant soups and porridge, hot tea and disposable tableware, as well as disinfectants and means of protection for volunteers. These funds will be soon received to be used during the ongoing winter season.

#### Overview of non-RCRC actors in country

From the very beginning of this emergency, Belarus Red Cross branches have been in close contact with local authorities and emergency response units of the Ministry of Emergencies, who provide the National Society with hands-on information on the evolving situation and the needs of the people.

The cooperation agreement between the Belarus Red Cross and the Ministry of Emergencies defines the Red Cross's auxiliary role as providing social support, such as distributing basic items and setting up first aid points to people affected by disasters. The Ministry ensures that the Red Cross participates in its disaster response trainings and makes its warehouses available for its supplies, as well as informs it about disaster forecasts. Belarus Red Cross is part of the national warning and emergency response system with the defined role for providing support to units of Ministry of Emergencies.

**The response plan in case of extreme winter conditions includes setting up Red Cross winterised tents in agreed placed upon a call from the Ministry.** The Ministry in its turn provides operational information on the situation in the country and responds to emergencies caused by freezing temperatures such as accidents with heating systems, fires, etc. **The Ministry of Emergencies only provides its heating tents when Belarus Red Cross is not able to meet all the needs as the National Society is responsible to setup the heating stations according to the national plan.** The Red Cross also works closely with the media to raise public awareness on prevention of traumas and chilblains.

#### Needs analysis, beneficiary selection, risk assessment and scenario planning

The current emergency response measures were based on lessons learnt from the previous experience in response on extremely low temperature as well as the extreme winter preparedness plan developed by the Belarus Red Cross jointly with the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

According to Belarus Red Cross assessment made on the first two days of the response (5-6 January) as well as previous experience, the most affected by extreme weather conditions are the following:

- Homeless people at places where they usually appear;
- City dwellers in public places;
- Drivers and passengers stuck in vehicles and at border crossings.



Belarus Red Cross warming station set up in Minsk. Photo: Belarus Red Cross



A distribution point near the church in Gomel. Photo: Belarus Red Cross

Considering the most vulnerable a special focus was made on homeless people, based on a list of potential beneficiaries and their location.

As a special group, stranded drivers have been tracked with the use of a map of snow-ridden road sections developed by the Belarus Red Cross jointly with the Ministry of Emergency Situations and State Road Security Organization. Snow-ridden road sections were regularly monitored by the Belarus Red Cross volunteers.

The field assessment show the following needs of these population groups:

- Hot drinks;
- Basic hot meals such as instant soup or porridge;
- Places to warm up;
- Clothing and blankets.

Since Belarus faces extremely temperatures every year, all its equipment is being maintained regularly and prepared for winter conditions.

However, during this operation the reagents cleaning the roads from ice have affected heavily the Red Cross tents which are now covered all over with big black stains. Tent frames have also been broken in addition to cloth roof wear and tear. Heating canons have been working without a break for 100-150 hours and some of them are now out of order. Currently out of 24 mobile tents eight are out-of-use as well as 20 folding furniture kits, which are set in warming stations, and 10 out of 20 vehicles involved in the operation are in need of repair. Vehicles were patrolling the highway, and broke down.

To strengthen its capacity to respond to extremely low temperatures, the National Society also needs 16 heating canons, 16 power generators, 20 folding beds and 30 thermo pots.

To ensure quality assistance, Belarus Red Cross staff held meetings with local executive authorities and discussed response activities and relevant types of assistance.



Hot drinks and meals distribution among homeless people in Gomel oblast branch of the Belarus Red Cross. *Photo: Belarus*

### Risk assessment

According to the weather forecast weather conditions may deteriorate again resulting in more people in need. Roads, if not cleaned from snow, may hamper access to the target groups. Belarus Red Cross and IFRC will gauge the situation and mobilise additional means of assistance if needed both in country and internationally.

## B. Operational strategy and plan

### Overall objective

The overall objective is to provide immediate assistance to 41,500 people affected by extreme winter conditions. The following target beneficiaries will be assisted through the DREF operation:

Target group	Type of assistance	Already assisted	Number of targeted beneficiaries
Homeless	Food, hygiene, warming and temporary stay, first aid	239	1,000
Stranded drivers and passengers	Evacuation, transportation, warming and temporary stay, first aid	158	500
City dwellers in public places	Warming	13,855	40,000

### Proposed strategy

To achieve the overall objective the following action will be prioritized: provision of hot water and food items, immediate access to heating points, assistance to stranded vehicles along with the logistic support this action entails.

More specifically, the operation will cover the following immediate needs:

- hot meals, tea and shelter will be provided to assist at least 1,000 homeless people. The content of the ration will consist of instant soup, porridge and tea;
- hot tea and temporary shelter in Red Cross tents will be offered to some 40,000 dwellers caught by the extreme weather conditions;
- hot tea and assistance in starting up stranded vehicles will be provided to some 500 people stuck on the road or waiting in line at border crossings.

The operation also includes the replenishment of emergency stocks:

- Tents: eight new tents along with new heating equipment and furniture will be purchased to replace the eight ones out of service;
- Eight existing tents will be equipped with additional heating systems and furniture.

The purchase of tents is justified by the National Society's responsibility for warming up the people all over the country, while experience shows that it is not always possible to mobilise warming up stations of the Ministry of Emergencies as they keep them for their own preparedness in case of large scale disasters. Heating canons are needed together with the tents in order to operate them as warming up stations.

Once the Belarus Red Cross stocks are replenished, 150 heating stations will be set up countrywide, 10 per cent of which will be operating all day long. At the same time, 20 heating stations will be deployed in remote regions of the country. Renting heating canons and power generators is too expensive in Belarus. Renting one generator costs CHF 10 per day. In 15-17 day the cost of rent will be equal to the cost of power generator. Renting heating canons costs CHF 5 per day which is also comparable to the cost of purchase. Taking into account that during winter season Belarus Red Cross responds two-three times to extreme temperatures, they can purchase twice as much equipment with the funds to be used for rent.

Actions conducted by Belarus Red Cross will comply with Sphere minimum humanitarian standards.

## **Operational support services**

### **Human resources**

Belarus Red Cross has mobilized 211 volunteers and 121 staff to carry out assessments, distribution of hot meals and drinks, maintenance of heating points, use of power generators and heating pumps, and assistance to stranded vehicles. Insurance policies will be covered for the 211 engaged volunteers.

For the planned operation, Belarus Red Cross newly recruited staff will be providing support to volunteers. Taking into account the DREF operational needs, part-time coordinator will be needed, who will manage operation activities and will be responsible for volunteer and financial management, as well as reporting to IFRC country office. The coordinator will be supported by accountant and assistant-translator also recruited for this particular operation. Belarus Red Cross Head of DM and Tracing Department will oversee the operation without salary support from DREF.

### **Logistics and supply chain**

Belarus Red Cross has enough logistics capacity to support the implementation of the activities planned under this emergency operation, including: a logistics officer and procurement procedures aligned to IFRC procurements standards; a warehouse, vehicles and drivers to carry relief items for distributions.

With the financial support of the IFRC, the National Society is planning to source in country the required relief items and services (like repairing 10 vehicles) to assist the population and replenish stock levels of relief items up to the contingency capacity prior to the beginning of the emergency response.

### **Information technologies (IT)**

Belarus Red Cross volunteers are equipped with radio stations, Internet-based radio stations and android-based interactive platform.

### **Communications**

Visibility of the work of the Red Cross volunteers will be ensured during the operation through the local media. Belarus Red Cross senior management, public relations and DM officers will periodically inform the authorities and the general public regarding the progress of the operation. Regular operation updates will be provided by the NS to the IFRC country office in Minsk.

## Security

Security risks have been taken into consideration by making use of mobile phone and radio stations, so that immediate assistance could be arranged in case of failure of heating equipment or car accident.

## Planning, monitoring, evaluation, & reporting (PMER)

The Belarus Red Cross Headquarters, in close cooperation with IFRC Country Representation, will monitor the progress and provide the necessary technical expertise. In addition, IFRC Minsk-based staff will receive support from the IFRC Regional Office for Europe and an RDRT mission (Regional Disaster Response Team) will be deployed to accompany the operation and also to ensure that the lessons learned are taken further in the region.

In March 2017, a workshop will be held for Red Cross staff and volunteers to share best practices and lessons learned, to update the National Society contingency plan and to further improve its disaster management capacity.

## Administration and Finance

The National Society administration and finance costs are according to DREF guidelines and will not cover structural and normal office costs; the costs are limited to supporting only the DREF operation work plan for three months. The same rule is applied to the IFRC costs that are supporting human resources. IFRC staff based in Minsk will be the project's manager and will work closely with Belarus Red Cross.

## Contact information

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## How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



**Save lives.**  
protect livelihoods,  
and strengthen recovery  
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**  
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**  
and a culture of  
**non-violence** and **peace**.





# DREF OPERATION

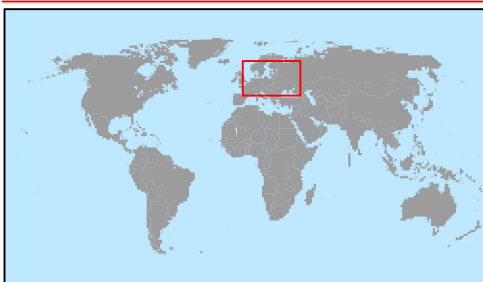
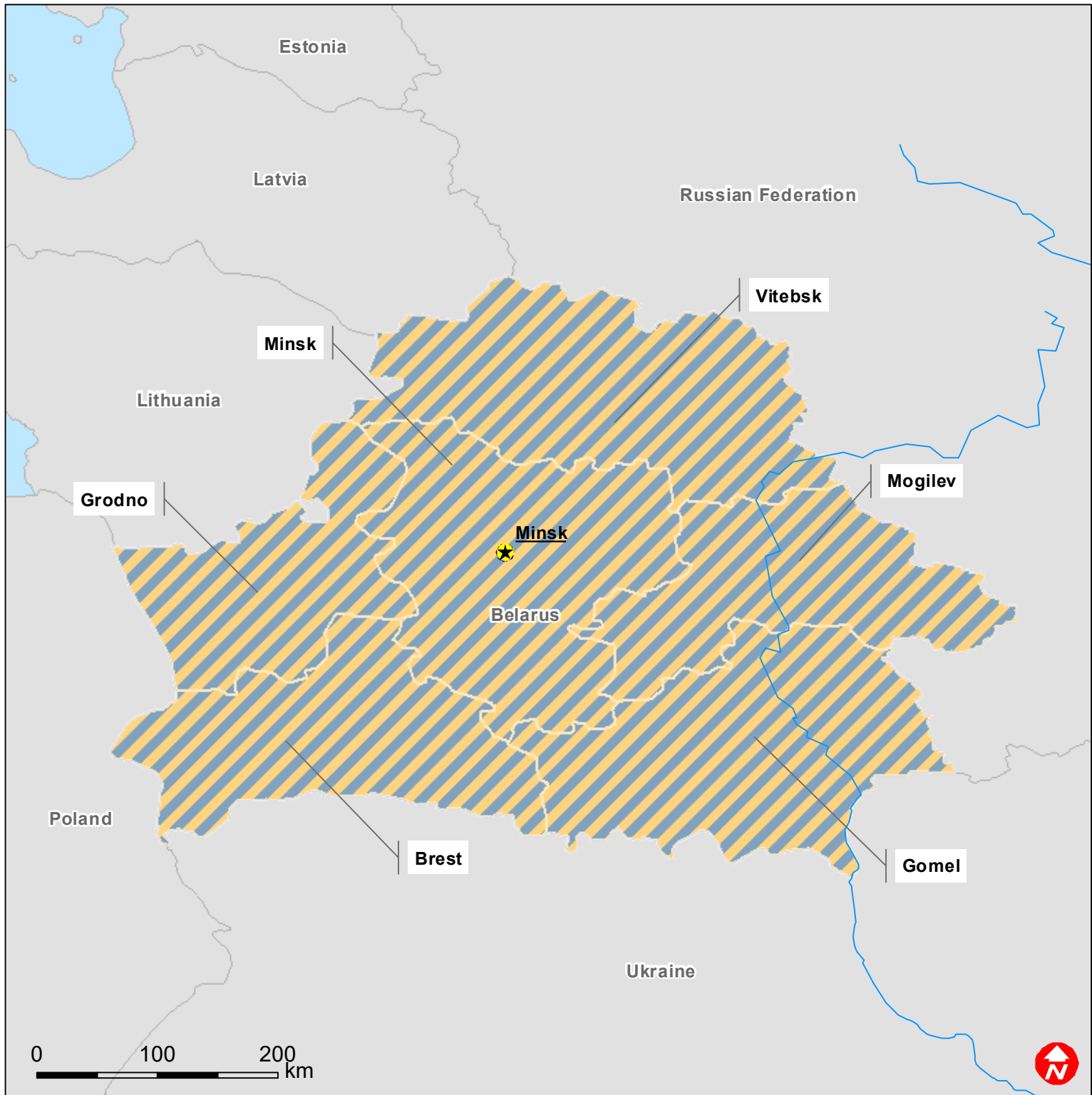
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Belarus Extreme Winter Conditions

Budget Group	DREF Grant Budget CHF
Shelter - Relief	16,000
Shelter - Transitional	
Construction - Housing	
Construction - Facilities	
Construction - Materials	
Clothing & Textiles	31,000
Food	7,500
Seeds & Plants	
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	7,500
Medical & First Aid	
Teaching Materials	
Ustensils & Tools	15,800
Other Supplies & Services	
Emergency Response Units	
Cash Disbursements	
<b>Total RELIEF ITEMS, CONSTRUCTION AND SUPPLIES</b>	<b>77,800</b>
Land & Buildings	
Vehicles Purchase	
Computer & Telecom Equipment	
Office/Household Furniture & Equipment	
Medical Equipment	
Other Machinery & Equipment	
<b>Total LAND, VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>0</b>
Storage, Warehousing	
Distribution & Monitoring	400
Transport & Vehicle Costs	6,400
Logistics Services	
<b>Total LOGISTICS, TRANSPORT AND STORAGE</b>	<b>6,800</b>
International Staff	
National Staff	
National Society Staff	2,621
Volunteers	4,300
<b>Total PERSONNEL</b>	<b>6,921</b>
Consultants	
Professional Fees	
<b>Total CONSULTANTS &amp; PROFESSIONAL FEES</b>	<b>0</b>
Workshops & Training	2,000
<b>Total WORKSHOP &amp; TRAINING</b>	<b>2,000</b>
Travel	6,500
Information & Public Relations	2,059
Office Costs	1,800
Communications	650
Financial Charges	100
Other General Expenses	
Shared Support Services	
<b>Total GENERAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>11,109</b>
Programme and Supplementary Services Recovery	6,801
<b>Total INDIRECT COSTS</b>	<b>6,801</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>111,431</b>



# Belarus: Extreme Winter Conditions



 Affected Regions