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Disaster relief emergency fund (DREF) Serbia: Extreme winter conditions

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DREF operation n° MDRRS006
GLIDE n° CW-2012-000006-SRB
8th February 2012

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent emergency response. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of National Societies to respond to disasters.

CHF 206,291 has been allocated from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Red Cross of Serbia in delivering immediate assistance to some 3,000 families (8,000 beneficiaries). Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

Summary: Extreme cold and snowfall in the past two weeks have caused many problems in the southern parts of Serbia, spreading also to the rest of the country. After 37 municipalities had declared a local level state of emergency, now the Government of Serbia declared a nation-wide state of emergency on Sunday, February 5th, to coordinate road clearing, food and medicine distribution as well as electricity supply restoration. Approximately 70,000 people are snowed in and cut off from the world, whereas nine people lost lives and one person is missing.

The Red Cross of Serbia works closely with the National Crisis Headquarters. It is estimated that some 3,000 families / 8,000 people (elderly households or older individuals living alone in remote areas with little or no family support, families with small children on a low level of social security and little to no income) are in need of urgent relief assistance in terms of food, warm clothes and hygiene items.

This operation is expected to be implemented over three months, and will therefore be completed by 6th May 2012; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 6th August 2012).

[<click here for the DREF budget; here for contact details; here to view the map of the affected area>](#)



Brus Branch Red Cross mountain rescue team assisting in medical evacuation in a snow-buried village.
Photo: Red Cross of Serbia

The situation

Extreme cold and heavy snowfall in the past two weeks have caused many problems in the southern parts of Serbia, particularly in the municipality of Sjenica, where the temperature dropped to thirty degrees Celsius below zero during night time, making it the coldest spot in Europe in the first week of February. Harsh weather has in the meantime expanded to cover most of the country.

Heavy snow and extreme cold have caused numerous traffic problems with many of the roads completely blocked, supply lines interrupted and access to medical and other services made impossible or extremely difficult. After 37 municipalities had declared a local level state of emergency earlier, now the Government of Serbia declared a nation-wide state of emergency on Sunday, February 5th. That decision was taken as multiple problems caused by the weather could no longer be resolved by regular means in the field of road clearing, food, medicine and electricity supply. Approximately 70,000 people are snowed in and cut off from the world, whereas nine people lost lives and one person is missing.

The weather forecast for the next week is predicting that the snowfall will last until February 8th adding up to 25 centimetres of snow per day on the average, and that the extreme cold will intensify. The temperatures in Serbia for the past seven days have not managed to climb to zero Celsius degrees, ranging from five below to thirty below zero Celsius and it is forecast that on 8th and 9th February they will go to new extremes, with the coldest parts of the country dropping below minus 30 Celsius.

While the electricity supply is in general operational with no restrictions planned, many parts of the country are experiencing cuts due to sporadic network malfunctions caused by the heavy snow.

The Serbia Government has instructed the Ministry of Education and Science to consider the possibility to suspend or limit the work of institutions of primary, secondary and higher education and of student centres. As of 6th February, all the schools in Serbia went on a temporary break until the beginning of next week.

Corporate clients are recommended to reduce energy consumption to a technological minimum while other consumers are advised to rationalize the consumption of energy. Local authorities are also advised to reduce the use of electricity for street lighting, billboards and neon signs.

A historic maximum in power consumption of 160 million kw/h per day was reached, as well as a record gas consumption of 15 million cubic metres per day.

On 3rd February the Government urgently sent non-refundable aid consignments to the most affected municipalities: 332,500 litres of diesel fuel, 7,000 litres of unleaded gasoline and 5,000 kg of heating fuel. The Government also allocated 69.2 million RS Dinars (approximately CHF 790,000) for eliminating the consequences of natural disasters in 15 municipalities.

More than 550 heavy machines, bulldozers, 1,500 firemen and rescuers, 1,200 members of other services and around 300 medical workers clearing the snow and helping people in distress. As of 5th February and since the declaration of the national state of emergency, another 14,000 members of the Serbian Army have joined the rescue efforts. Over the past month Emergency Sector officers have rescued a total of 176 persons from snowbound remote areas of the country. Ten people died in the last seven days from low temperatures and ice-related accidents.

The National Crisis Headquarters is working on responding to the effects of the current emergency. At the same time they are already beginning to plan for the almost inevitable floods that are likely to follow the heavy snowfall within six to eight weeks. The Red Cross of Serbia is part of this planning process.

Coordination and partnerships

The secretaries of municipal Red Cross branches across Serbia are members of the Municipal Crisis Headquarters and are participating in planning, coordination and decision making related to the efforts to combat the effects of harsh weather. At the moment it is difficult to arrive at a more detailed assessment of needs due to blocked roads and difficult travel, but also due to interruptions in Internet and telephone communications with areas that are buried under snow and cut off.

The Red Cross of Serbia branches in those 37 municipalities that have declared a local level state of emergency are reporting daily to the National Society headquarters, helping with planning and coordination of a nation-wide response. The Red Cross of Serbia's Secretary General is a member of the National Crisis Headquarters and she is working closely with all the other actors (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Local Self Government and other branches of the government).

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Over the past two weeks the Red Cross of Serbia has prepared itself to act and, going by rough estimations made sure stocks are prepositioned in the most vulnerable areas. This has been done in two instalments, placing the relief goods in Red Cross branches' warehouses in six municipalities. 650 families have been initially identified as the most vulnerable ones and those in need of assistance. The following goods are already being delivered to the beneficiaries where possible:

- Canned food, 5,450 cans
- Ready-to-serve meals 4,200 pcs
- Warm winter clothes, 2,570 pcs
- boots, 350 pcs
- gloves, 700 pcs
- blankets, 1300 pcs
- candles 3,500 pcs
- family hygiene parcels 1,000 pcs
- tea 700 packets

The part of the DREF allocation will be used for replenishment of the emergency stocks of the National Society for the already distributed items.

On 2nd February 2012 the members of the mountain and water rescue team of municipal Red Cross branch of Brus municipality participated in a rescue effort to save the life of 82 year old Svetolik Simić living in Graševci village with a heart condition. Full story [can be accessed here](#).

The Red Cross branch of Bačka Topola municipality has made its facilities available to the local homeless so that they can protect themselves from the cold. Other local branches are carefully monitoring the situation in their respective municipalities and will do the same if needed.

In the capital city, Belgrade, one municipal branch (Novi Beograd) has started visiting Roma settlements, distributing hot meals to those most in need and two other branches (Stari grad and Rakovica) have acted upon the suggestions of the City Crisis Headquarters and provided warm drinks to the drivers on the highway.

The needs

According to the data available at the moment and provided by the municipal Red Cross branches in the most affected communities, there are an estimated 3,000 families (approximately 8,000 people) in need of immediate support. Those are mostly elderly households or older individuals living alone in remote areas and little to no family support, families with small children with low level of social security and little to no income. Their needs are mostly for warm clothes, hygiene items and food due to the fact that the extreme cold means most of their efforts and funds have gone into securing firewood and heating fuel.

More detailed assessment of needs will be done as soon as the roads are unblocked and the cut off areas become accessible. The Red Cross will be part of the broader assessment effort mounted by the Municipal Crisis Headquarters.

The proposed operation

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Outcome: The most affected population (approximately 3,000 families / 8,000 people) will manage to preserve their health through distribution of clothes, hygiene items and food.

Outputs (expected results) and activities planned: The food and hygiene needs of the most vulnerable people will be met through distribution of food and non-food items and clothes.

- Conduct needs and capacity assessments.
- Develop beneficiary targeting strategy and registration system to deliver intended assistance.
- Distribute relief supplies and control supply movements from point of dispatch to end user.
- Monitor and evaluate the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distributions.

The contents of one food parcel are as follows:

Item	Unit	Quantity
Flour	kg	10
Cooking oil	litre	2
Salt	kg	1
Sugar	kg	1
Beans	kg	2
Rice	kg	2
Pasta	kg	2

The contents of one family hygiene parcel are as follows:

Item	Unit	Quantity
Washing powder 3 kg	piece	1
Hair shampoo 1 litre	piece	1
Soap 200 g	piece	4
Toilet paper, two ply	piece	4
Tooth paste	piece	2
Tooth brush	piece	4
Shaving foam	piece	1
Razor	piece	4
Hygiene pads	package	2
Detergent for dishwashing	piece	1

At the end of the operation a mountain rescue lessons learnt sharing workshop will be conducted for the Red Cross volunteers and members of the national Red Cross Disaster Response team.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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Click [here](#)

1. DREF budget is available [here](#)
 2. Map of the affected area is available [here](#)
 3. Click [here](#) to return to the title page
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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 Disaster 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.

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

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
 2. Enable healthy and safe living.
 3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.
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DREF OPERATION

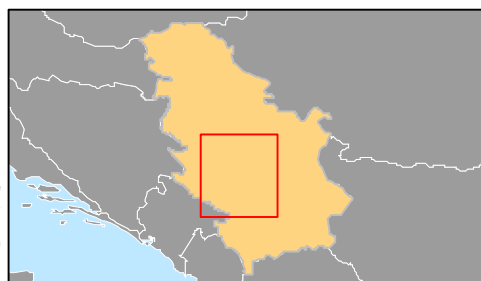
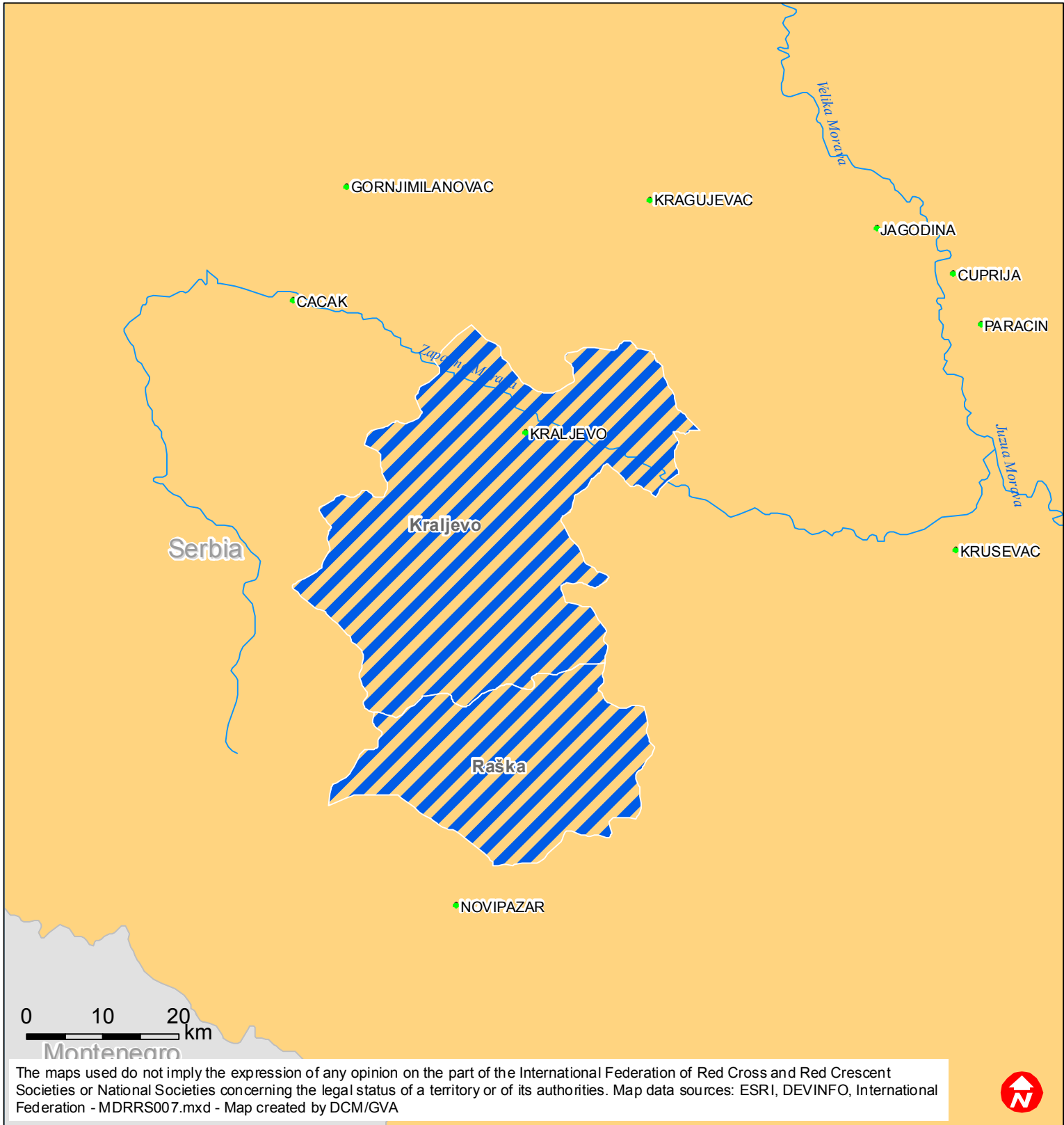
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MDRRS006 Serbia: Extreme winter conditions

Budget Group	DREF Grant Budget CHF
Shelter - Relief	
Shelter - Transitional	
Construction - Housing	
Construction - Facilities	
Construction - Materials	
Clothing & Textiles	36,200
Food	97,700
Seeds & Plants	
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	36,200
Medical & First Aid	
Teaching Materials	
Ustensils & Tools	
Other Supplies & Services	
Emergency Response Units	
Cash Disbursements	
Total RELIEF ITEMS, CONSTRUCTION AND SUPPLIES	170,100
Land & Buildings	
Vehicles Purchase	
Computer & Telecom Equipment	
Office/Household Furniture & Equipment	
Medical Equipment	
Other Machinery & Equipment	
Total LAND, VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT	0
Storage, Warehousing	2,000
Distribution & Monitoring	10,000
Transport & Vehicle Costs	2,000
Logistics Services	
Total LOGISTICS, TRANSPORT AND STORAGE	14,000
International Staff	900
National Staff	
National Society Staff	3,000
Volunteers	200
Total PERSONNEL	4,100
Consultants	
Professional Fees	
Total CONSULTANTS & PROFESSIONAL FEES	0
Workshops & Training	3,500
Total WORKSHOP & TRAINING	3,500
Travel	1,000
Information & Public Relations	
Office Costs	
Communications	500
Financial Charges	500
Other General Expenses	
Shared Support Services	
Total GENERAL EXPENDITURES	2,000
Programme and Supplementary Services Recovery	12,591
Total INDIRECT COSTS	12,591
TOTAL BUDGET	206,291



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 Most affected regions