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DREF operation update

Romania: Extreme winter conditions

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DREF operation n° MDRRO003
GLIDE n° CW-2012-000006-ROM
Update n°1
2nd May 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.

Period covered by this update: 13th February 2012 to 27th April 2012.

CHF 165,927 has been allocated from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Romanian Red Cross in delivering immediate assistance to 800 families (3,200 beneficiaries). Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

During the DREF operation, the Romanian Red Cross distributed relief items to the targeted 800 families (3,200 beneficiaries). Above the DREF contribution, as a result of the fundraising campaign launched by the Romanian Red Cross Society, 94 tons of food and bottled water was collected and



Red Cross volunteers distributing food parcels to people in Buzau, Romania, affected by severe winter conditions in February 2012. Due to the massive snow falls which left the main access roads impassable, local stores could not take supplies. Photo: Romanian RC

distributed to the affected counties with the help of the government authorities. Relief items including blankets, sleeping bags, beds, heaters and wood stoves were distributed from the central and regional warehouses and reached a total of 7,300 beneficiaries in 11 counties. Vrancea, Buzau, Ialomita, Giurgiu, Tulcea, Calarasi, Teleorman, Mehedinti, Caras-Severin, Ilfov, and Prahova.

Due to delays with the procurement procedures for the replenishment of its stocks, the Romanian Red Cross has requested an extension of the timeframe until May 25th for completing the operations.

The major donors and partners of the DREF operation in Romania include the Australian, the American and the Belgian Governments, the Austrian Red Cross, the Canadian Red Cross and the Canadian Government, the Danish Red Cross and the Danish Government, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), the Irish and the Italian Governments, the Japanese Red Cross Society, the Luxembourg Government, the Monaco Red Cross and the Monaco Government, the Netherlands Red Cross and the Netherlands Government, the Norwegian Red Cross and the Norwegian Government, the Spanish Government, the Swedish Red Cross and the Swedish Government, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), the Medtronic and Z Zurich Foundations, and other corporate and private donors. On behalf of the Romanian Red Cross Society, the IFRC would like to extend their thanks to all of them for their generous contributions.

The situation

In February 2012, unusually cold winter weather conditions affected Romania in the form of heavy snowfalls and extremely low temperatures, reaching minus 25 degrees Celsius in some places, which resulted in numerous traffic problems especially in rural areas, and led to the lack of food supplies and medical assistance, creating hunger and frostbites especially among the homeless.

The cold wave that reached Romania starting 23rd January 2012, along with heavy snowfalls, first hit the south-eastern part of the country, and later extended to the whole territory of the country. Roads were blocked by the snow, and people were getting stranded in their homes, cars or trains. Government and municipal authorities were mobilized to provide support to those in need. According to the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, an overall number of 504 localities in 27 counties were affected by the extreme winter conditions. The counties worst affected were: Buzau, Vrancea, Ialomita, Calarasi, Giurgiu, Mehedinti, and Tulcea. The total number of deaths caused by severe hypothermia during that period was 86.

Starting from 25th February 2012, temperatures returned to normal values. However, the snow banks created by massive snowfalls and strong winds continued to hinder access to affected communities. To date, the situation has returned to normal throughout the whole country.

Coordination and partnerships

Meetings of the Commands for Emergency Situations were held regularly to coordinate response operations in each county or municipality, to ensure the efficiency and timeliness of the response, minimize the overlapping of activities and maximize the number of people reached. In their capacity as members of the Commands for Emergency Situations, the Romanian Red Cross branches and headquarters staff members were attending these meetings and actively participated, along with the representatives of the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, in the planning, coordination and decision-making so as to combat the effects of the harsh weather. During the coordination meetings, the situation was evaluated and specific measures were taken to reduce the consequences of the cold wave.

At the national level, the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations and other public institutions were closely monitoring the developments, and intervened wherever necessary. At the local level, all activities were implemented by the local administrative units, and were focused on cleaning the access routes from snow, ensuring medical assistance, and the distribution of drinking water. All the activities were implemented in cooperation with the Red Cross offices at local and national level.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Progress towards outcomes

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)
Objective: Providing emergency assistance (food, non-food and clothing items) to approximately 800 families (3,200 beneficiaries)
Output: The food and hygiene needs of the most vulnerable 3,200 people will be met through distribution of food and non-food items and clothes.
Activities planned: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordination with local emergency departments and social welfare authorities.• Preparation of final beneficiary lists.• Preparation of a distribution plan.• Procurement of emergency items in Romania• Distribution of emergency items by RC branches, staff and volunteers, according to the prepared beneficiary lists.• Beneficiaries will be notified of the times of distribution.• Monitoring and reporting.

Progress:

Through its territorial branches, the Romanian Red Cross distributed food, non-food items, clothing and equipment to more than 7,300 beneficiaries in the following 11 counties, affected by the extreme winter

weather conditions: Vrancea, Buzau, Ialomita, Giurgiu, Tulcea, Calarasi, Teleorman, Mehedinti, Caras-Severin, Ilfov, and Prahova.

Reaching almost twice as many beneficiaries as planned in the DREF was made possible due to the national fundraising campaign that was launched on 11th February 2012. The campaign allowed the National Society to collect 94 tons of food and bottled drinking water.

From the existing emergency stocks in the central and regional warehouses, and due to the donations received, the Romanian Red Cross distributed the following: 70 beds (for homeless shelters), 1,600 blankets, 800 sleeping bags, 120 clothing sets, 800 hygiene parcels, 200 heaters and 278 wood stoves. The wood stoves (not captured in DREF) were received as in-kind donation and covered the needs of 1,100 beneficiaries. Based on the results of the second assessment carried out by the National Society, only 800 of the 1,600 sleeping bags funded by DREF were distributed. The remaining 800 pieces will be deployed among the Romanian Red Cross regional warehouses.

The 800 food parcels, used from the emergency stocks were replenished in order to be used for future emergencies, taking into account the likelihood of floods in the coming months.

The Romanian Red Cross is still working on procurements for stocks replenishment and has therefore requested an extension of the timeframe of the operation until 25th May 2012.

From 18th to 20th May, a "Lessons Learned" workshop will be conducted, bringing together staff members and volunteers involved in the relief operations, from all participating Romanian Red Cross branches. The results of the session will be captured in the final report. The final evaluation will also be carried out within the extended timeframe.

Challenges:

The procurements procedures for the replenishment of stocks, covered by this DREF, started later than projected due to time constraints during the emergency period.

Deliveries of heaters and beds by the suppliers have been delayed due to insufficient storage space. To solve this issue, Romanian Red Cross Headquarters has made use of an additional warehouse.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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DREF history:

This DREF was initially allocated on 13rd February 2012 to the amount of **CHF 165,927** for two months to assist 800 families (3,200 beneficiaries).



Click here

1. Click [here](#) to return to the title page

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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