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DREF operation update Hungary: Extreme winter conditions

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DREF operation n° MDRHU001 GLIDE n° CW-2013-000031-HUN Update n° 1 – 13th June 2013

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of unearmarked 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:
20th March to 12th June 2013.

Summary: CHF 178,068 has been allocated from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Hungarian Red Cross Society by the replenishment of their own emergency stocks already distributed to some 15,000 beneficiaries. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

The extreme snowfalls that started on 14th March 2013 halted road traffic and disrupted the normal operation of the infrastructure all over Hungary. The Hungarian Red Cross distributed large amounts of food items and blankets to the people trapped on the roads.

The replenishment of the Red Cross's own stocks has started and the procurement of the items is under way. By the end of the timeframe of the DREF allocation, the whole procurement process will be finalized in line with IFRC regulations. According to IFRC reporting standards, the Final Report, both narrative and financial, is due within 90 days after the end of the operation, i.e. by 30th September 2013.

The new timeframe of the operation will end on 30th June 2013. The extension of the timeframe was needed due the lack of appropriate response from some of the suppliers for the stock replenishment.

The Coca Cola Foundation has donated CHF 90,000 to replenish the DREF allocation. Other major donors and partners of the DREF operation in Hungary include the Australian, American and 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



Hungarian Red Cross staff and volunteers assisted stranded truck drivers, most of them foreigners in international transportation.
Photo: Hungarian Red Cross

behalf of the Hungarian Red Cross, the IFRC would like to extend their thanks to all of them for their generous contributions. <http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/responding/drs/tools/dref/donors.asp>

The situation

Heavy snowfall, violent wind gusts and ice paralysed the normal life in Hungary between 14th and 16th March 2013. The extreme snowing started on 14th March 2013 countrywide, causing traffic halts and road accidents for several days, leaving tens of thousands of people without electricity and basic services. Massive snowdrifts blocked off 160 roads and disrupted five railway lines.

The authorities issued red alert for seven counties, and orange alert for many others. The motorways in the northern and south-western parts of Hungary and also in the north-eastern regions were blocked off by the snowdrifts in some areas and were closed down by the police. More than 5,700 cars were stranded on the roads and nearly 20 trains were stuck between stations. A severe snowstorm compounded by strong gusty winds forced around 14,000 people to spend the night in their cars or in the nearest roadside buildings along the major Hungarian highways. Among the stranded there were also children and pregnant women.

Many local roads became impossible to pass, and a lot of villages were cut off from the outside world in the counties of Somogy, Fejer, Zala, Komarom-Esztergom, Tolna, Gyor-Moson-Sopron, Borsod-Abauj-Zemplen, Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg and Veszprem, where unusually strong gusts of wind, icy lines and fallen trees caused power failure.

The Hungarian Red Cross started its replenishment procedures from the DREF fund, but no valid offers have arrived so far. The market was apparently not ready for this quantity of orders. The coordination with the IFRC Europe Zone Office resulted in the re-launch of procurement procedures. As soon the Hungarian Red Cross receives the necessary offers, they will effect the procurement of the items.

Coordination and partnerships

The Hungarian Red Cross was part of the joint rescue efforts exerted by the Hungarian Police, the Armed Forces, the National Ambulance Service and the National Disaster Management Directorate.

The leadership and the head of disaster management (DM) of the Hungarian Red Cross Society were liaising with the National Directorate General for Disaster Management of Hungary and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The Hungarian RC set up a crisis room at the National Headquarters (NHQ) and started to develop an action plan. A toll free helpline with the call number 1359 was opened on 15th March, and it stayed in operation for several weeks, to raise funds in support of the affected population. The Hungarian RC is an active member of National Disaster Management committee and they have a well defined role in disaster response. Throughout the whole operation the IFRC Europe Zone Office support was essential for a successful operation.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Progress towards outcomes

Stocks replenishment

Outcome: Resilience of the potentially affected citizens is increased by the replenishment of the Hungarian Red Cross's emergency stocks for 15,000 vulnerable people

Output: Access to complementary basic food and relief items for 15,000 people is ensured in case another disaster affects the country

Activities planned:

- Local procurement of emergency items and the prepositioning at the Hungarian Red Cross's central warehouse following IFRC rules and procedures.
- Coordination with local emergency departments and local authorities for proper distribution in case a disaster affects Hungary.
- Monitoring and reporting.

Progress: The procurement process has duly started, the specific items were selected.

Challenges: After sending out the request for quotations, the Hungarian RC did not receive valid offers. No purchase has been done. With the support of the IFRC Europe Zone Office new requests were sent out. Apparently, the ordered quantities seemed too high for the commercial stocks in the Hungarian market.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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DREF history:

- This DREF was initially allocated on 20th March 2013 for 178,068 CHF until the 20th May 2013 to assist 15,000 beneficiaries.
- DREF Operation Update n° 1 was issued on 13th June 2013 for the extension of the timeframe until 30th June 2013.

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.