

www.ifrc.org  
Saving lives,  
changing minds.

## Disaster relief emergency fund (DREF) Bulgaria: Population Movement

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**DREF operation n° MDRBG001  
GLIDE n° OT-2013-000124-BGR  
3 October 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.

**172,726 CHF has been allocated from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Bulgarian Red Cross Society in delivering immediate assistance to approximately 2,000 beneficiaries. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.**

**Summary:** Since August 2013, the flow of asylum seekers from Syria to Bulgaria has increased rapidly up to more than 5,100 persons registered at 30 September 2013.

The crisis that has been evolving since the beginning of August 2013 has greatly challenged the existing Bulgarian state mechanisms and support to the asylum seekers, as well as the additional assistance channels of the UNHCR, the Bulgarian Red Cross, NGOs and citizens, including the Syrian community in Bulgaria.

On 30 September 2013, all functioning accommodation centres, managed by the government have exceeded the limits of their capacity.

On the stocks, there is a lack of food and non-food items including clothes, shoes, beds, and bed linen for the newcomers. Some facilities lack hot water, which in combination with bad hygiene conditions and overcrowding of the living premises creates epidemic risks for the people accommodated. There is also a lack of medicines, difficult access to medical care and disinfectants, specific needs of infants and children (diapers, baby milk, etc.) and other basic items. Most of the asylum seekers settled in the accommodation centres, majority of whom are Syrians, are facing great difficulties to manage their living, having depleted their own resources on the long way to asylum, while the facilities and services in Bulgaria are struggling with the rapidly increasing inflow of asylum seekers.

Following the sharp increase of the asylum seekers in Bulgaria and on the basis of a request from the Government, the Bulgarian RCS announced a national fundraising campaign on 18 September 2013 in support for the refugees, collecting funds through SMS, online and bank transfers and cash donations. The Bulgarian RCS collected for and distributed at the accommodation centres of the State Agency for Refugees and at the facilities of the Ministry of Interior near the border with Turkey a variety of needed relief items from public and private donations and from its own disaster relief stock: including food, clothes for adults and children, socks, diapers for infants and children, beds, mattresses, bed linen, blankets, disinfectants, mattresses, pillows, towels, toys, tableware and other important items.



Bulgarian RC volunteers and staff distribute needed relief items to the asylum seekers, accommodated in Sofia on 27 September 2013.

*Photo: Bulgarian Red Cross*

In line with its auxiliary role to the State and in response to the request from the Government, the Bulgarian Red Cross approached the IFRC for a DREF allocation to respond to the needs of the asylum seekers in Bulgaria. In the period between 24 and 26 September 2013, a joint team with the participation of the Disaster Management Coordinator of the IFRC Europe Zone Office and Bulgarian RC staff carried out a field assessment in all centres and facilities accommodating asylum seekers in Bulgaria.

Resulting from the needs assessment, the Bulgarian Red Cross has identified 1,500 beneficiaries, who urgently need assistance, 1,000 of whom settled in the two accommodation centres in Sofia and 500 people who stay from 24 hours to 5 days in the facilities of the Ministry of Interior near the borders with Turkey, while waiting their asylum requests to be processed and further transportation to accommodation centres.

The major needs of the asylum seekers include food, warm clothes, blankets and bed linen, hygiene materials and diapers, disinfectants, and information on asylum procedures, RFL, hygiene promotion, etc.

This operation is expected to be implemented over four months, and will be completed by 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014; a Final Report will be made available three months after the end of the operation (by 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2014).

The DREF operation is part of the Plan of Action of the Bulgarian Red Cross to assist the asylum seekers in Bulgaria (including mid-term and longer term activities), which will be also supported through its national fundraising campaign.

[<click here for the DREF budget; and here for contact details>](#)

## The situation

From the beginning of 2011, the anti-government uprisings in Syria led to mass displacement of Syrian nationals, which now according to UNHCR adds up to more than 4 million internally displaced and between 1,5 and 2,5 million asylum seekers in the neighbouring countries – Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan.

Since August 2013, the refugee flow of Syrian nationals has also increased in some of the EU countries – by sea mainly to Italy and overland to Greece and Bulgaria, boosting the number of asylum seekers in Bulgaria to more than 5,100 persons at 30 September 2013, compared to a total of 1,387 persons seeking refuge in Bulgaria for the whole year 2012.

The crisis that has been evolving since the beginning of August 2013 has greatly challenged the existing mechanisms of the Bulgarian State in providing shelter and support to the asylum seekers as well the support provided by the UNHCR, Bulgarian Red Cross and other NGOs and citizens, including the Syrian Community in Bulgaria. On 30 September 2013, all of the functioning accommodation centres, managed by the State Agency for Refugees at the Council of Ministers have exceeded their capacity. While new accommodation centres are being prepared, the existing ones are overcrowded and lack resources to ensure the basic needs of the asylum seekers, in particular that of the most vulnerable groups such as babies, mothers and children, elderly and sick people.

The facilities of the Ministry of Interior near the border with Turkey, where the incoming asylum seekers are registered and their asylum requests processed, are also facing difficulty to manage the increasing number of new arrivals and their humanitarian needs.

The accommodation centres suffer from the lack of food and non-food items, including clothes, shoes, beds, and bed linen for the newcomers. Some facilities lack hot water, in combination with bad hygiene conditions and overcrowding of the living premises. There is also a lack of medicines, difficult access to medical care, disinfectants, and specific items (diapers, food formula, etc.) needed for the babies and children and some other items covering their basic needs. Most of the asylum seekers, the majority of whom are Syrians, are facing a great difficulty, having depleted their own resources on the long way to asylum, while the facilities and services in Bulgaria are struggling with the rapidly increasing numbers.

The prognosis at the moment is that the refugee flow is not likely to decrease, and the upcoming winter will be an additional challenge for the refugees, and also for the institutions and organizations involved. Another challenge is the negative attitudes among some groups of the Bulgarian population towards the Syrian refugees, caused by fears for their own safety and resulting from the media coverage of the crisis in Syria and its repercussions. The future development remains unpredictable, as the situation in Syria evolves, while some estimates given in September 2013 by different State representatives have varied between several thousand and 10,000 asylum seekers in Bulgaria by the end of 2013.

As a result of the above mentioned situation, a National Operational Headquarters was established by the Prime Minister of Republic of Bulgaria on the State level, and a plan with emergency measures to reduce the migratory pressure has been adopted, including measures to seek international financial assistance.

On the basis of the request of the Government and according to the adopted emergency measures, the Bulgarian RCS has requested a DREF allocation from the IFRC. In the period between 23 and 27 September 2013, a Bulgarian RCS team together with the Disaster Management Coordinator of the IFRC Zone Europe Office accomplished a field mission in order to assess the humanitarian needs of the asylum seekers and to prepare an emergency action plan.

## Coordination and partnerships

The coordinator of the crisis response on national level and the head of the National Operational Headquarters is the Minister of Interior & Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria. The relevant structures, that ensure the basic needs of incoming refugees in Bulgaria include the State Agency for Refugees, the Migration Directorate at the Ministry of Interior, and also as part of the National Operational Centre other participating ministries such as the Ministry of Health. The Bulgarian Red Cross Society is represented in the Working Group supporting the National Operational Headquarters and acts in coordination with all other actors involved.

The Bulgarian Red Cross has a long history in supporting individuals seeking asylum in Bulgaria, cooperating with the UNHCR and the State institutions, and since 1997 a migrant-refugee service has been functioning as part of the Bulgarian RC.

The Bulgarian Red Cross has been an implementing partner of the UNHCR in Bulgaria for many years, providing humanitarian aid, social and legal counselling, assistance and translation when visiting various institutions and hospitals, restoring family links and monitoring of the living conditions in the accommodation centres. Annually the Bulgarian RCS provides different services to more than 1,300 asylum seekers and refugees.

Besides supporting the BRCS activities in favour of asylum seekers and refugees, the UNHCR also carries out a monitoring of the refugee centres, together with the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee. Caritas also launched a national appeal to raise financial aid, and the Rotary Club is collecting financial and material relief for the refugees. The Great Mufti of Bulgaria has also launched a campaign to help refugees among the Muslim community. Many other smaller organizations actively seek support for the refugees, for example Time Heroes, an organization connecting volunteers with causes. The association of Syrians in Bulgaria also plays a very active role in collecting and distributing humanitarian aid. Efforts to collect and send donations are made by smaller organizations and informal groups through social networks like Facebook.

The corporate sector also responded to the needs and a number of companies have already provided assistance to the asylum seekers, directly or through the Bulgarian RCS.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

A crisis centre has been established at the Bulgarian RC headquarters, led by the Director General, for coordination of the overall support of refugees, in cooperation with the relevant State and regional institutions, the public donation campaign, information and communication with the donors, logistics, distribution of the in-kind and financial donations and for coordination with the IFRC.

On 18 September 2013, the Bulgarian RCS announced a national fundraising campaign in support for the refugees, collecting funds through SMS, online and bank transfers and cash donations. The Bulgarian National Society collected and distributed at the reception centres of the State Agency for Refugees and at the facilities of the Ministry of Interior, a variety of relief items, including food, clothes for adults and children, socks, diapers for babies and children, beds with linen and blankets, disinfectants, mattresses, pillows, towels, toys, tableware and other important items. The Bulgarian Red Cross has mobilised its regional branches in the border areas, who are involved in the provision of humanitarian aid and are assessing the humanitarian needs of the incoming asylum seekers. Five hundred volunteers have been mobilized.

To respond to the pressing needs, until 1 October 2013, the Bulgarian RCS has made several distributions of relief items from its own disaster reserve as follows:

Type of relief items	Number of relief items
Blankets	1,000
Plastic tarpaulins	200
Inflatable beds	300
Buckets 20 litre capacity	300
Disinfectant items	400
Cleaning tools kits	30

Bed linen	500
Pillows	500
Construction materials	20
Clothes - boxes	50
Towels	100
Toys - boxes	10
Mattresses	100
Kitchen sets	100

In the period between 24 and 26 September 2013, a joint team with the participation of the Disaster Management Coordinator of the IFRC Europe Zone Office and Bulgarian RCS staff members carried out a field assessment in all centres and facilities accommodating asylum seekers in Bulgaria.

Meanwhile, the Bulgarian Red Cross is actively helping refugees in the accommodation centres. The National Society has distributed to the state institutions responsible for the centres, the following relief until now: non-perishable food (sugar, lentils, cooking oil, flour, rice, pasta, biscuits, jam, honey, etc. ) for over € 7,000. Clothes for adults and children socks, diapers for babies and children, 44 inflatable beds with bed linen and blankets, 160 beds with full sleeping packs - blankets and bedding, 172 blankets, mattresses, pillows, towels, toys, tableware.

In addition to the humanitarian aid, the Bulgarian National Society supports all refugees and asylum seekers, providing the following services: staff or volunteers accompany refugees for medical examinations where translation is needed, provide advice on the rights and duties of asylum seekers, support refugees in the capital city of Sofia in finding accommodation, in registering at a doctor and in enrolling their children to Bulgarian schools. More than 20 volunteers are involved in this activity, some of whom speak Arabic.

The overall Plan of Action of the Bulgarian Red Cross in support to the asylum seekers in Bulgaria includes the following sectors:

- Distribution of food and non-food items;
- Hygiene promotion;
- Psychosocial support;
- Orientation and information on asylum procedures;
- Restoring family links;
- Support for registration of recognized refugees with a doctor, labour office, enrolment of children in kindergartens and schools;
- Bulgarian language courses and integration activities.

The family links restoring activities are maintained by the Bulgarian RC, and include distribution of information about the service in the accommodation centres, visits and registration of inquirers, receiving tracing requests and exchange of Red Cross family messages. The asylum seekers settled in the accommodation centres will be visited by Bulgarian RC staff and volunteers and their tracing requests processed, while the persons with refugee status and asylum seekers in a procedure, who manage their accommodation on their own will receive the services at the Bulgarian RC.

## The needs

### Immediate needs

In accordance with its auxiliary role, the Bulgarian Red Cross Society supports the government in the humanitarian aspects of action, through distribution of food and non-food items, such as hygiene kits, washing materials, blankets, bed linen, recreational, and psychosocial care for children in cooperation with related agencies and institutions.

Therefore Bulgarian RCS is focusing on preparing for the onset of cold weather over the winter months by addressing the needs of people related to relief (non-food items) and service provision in the Centres in Vrajdebna and Voenna Rampa in Sofia. A winter strategy for these centers has been prepared by the Bulgarian RCS with IFRC support and is based on the increasing needs of people to enhance their level of resilience to the winter weather conditions.

## Mid-term needs

The continued violence in Syria and the ensuing migration influx in Bulgaria will bring the Bulgarian RCS to prepare for a further increase in the numbers of people needing asylum, taking into account the impact of refugee-hosting in the local communities. National Authorities forecast a total of 20,000 refugees/asylum seekers.

## Selection of people to be reached

The main intended beneficiaries of this operation would be asylum seekers requiring humanitarian assistance in the reception centres set up by the Bulgarian Government to cope with this influx and on the border facilities, where the asylum seekers are waiting for the procedure and further transfer to the reception centres. In the reception centres the beneficiaries will be prioritized according to the following criteria:

- Single mothers / women-headed households;
- Families with people with disabilities;
- Families with older individuals;
- Large families (more than five members).

## The proposed operation

The proposed action foresees to cope with the refugee crisis, the replenishment of the stock already used up by Bulgarian Red Cross and increase the stock as preparedness measure in the case of rapid scale up of operations in the face of a deteriorating humanitarian situation.

Based on the assessment needs in the transitional centre, the Bulgarian Red Cross Society, supported by the IFRC and partner RC / RC National Societies, aims to provide two hygiene kits and two blankets to each of the 1,000 refugees/asylum seekers. It is planned to distribute a hygiene kit and two blankets upon the arrival in the two reception centres (Vrazhdebna and Voenna Rampa) in Sofia to meet their hygienic basic needs and the second hygiene kit in the third month of the operation. The operation will be implemented over a four month period.

The proposed actions aim also at prepositioning of emergency stock for 500 individuals in the border area for the emergency needs of the refugees/asylum seekers who have arrived in Bulgaria and are waiting for the clarification of their status in the reception centre.

The proposed action aims also to prepositioning of emergency stock for 500 individuals near the border into the reception centre in Elhovo - people who have arrived in Bulgaria and are awaiting the clarification of their status.

The DREF operation is part of the plan of action developed by the Bulgarian Red Cross for coping with the situation, and part of the activities will be supported via a national fundraising campaign.

### Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

**Objective1: 1,000 people residing in temporary centres in Sofia will have received urgent non-food relief items.**

**Outcome 1: 1,000 people are supported with non-food items (NFIs: blankets, hygiene kits)**

**Outcome 2: 350 children are supported with tailored assistance through children`s NFI kits**

**Outcome 3: 500 people (elderly, pregnant women, and people with disabilities) are supported with NFIs (bed linen and pillows) fulfilling their special needs.**

#### Activities planned:

- Coordination with national and local authorities.
- Develop beneficiary targeting strategy and registration system to deliver intended assistance.
- Procure relief supply from local suppliers according to Federation standards.
- 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.
- Monitor and evaluate the voucher systems.

**Content of a hygiene family kit for one month**

Items	Content of one kit
Soap	5 pieces
Shampoo	2 litres
Tooth paste	5 pieces per 80 ml
Dishwashing liquid	2 pieces per 0.5 litres
Tooth brush	5 pieces
Toilet paper	5 pieces

**Content of children`s basic kits**

Items	Content of one kit
Diapers	1 box
Cleaning baby tissues	3 pieces
Feeding bottle	3 pieces
Pacifier	3 pieces

**Objective 2: Contingency stocks for 500 people will be procured and pre-positioned in case of deterioration of the humanitarian situation and increase the influx of refugees/asylum seekers**

**Outcome: Contingency of food and non-food items stock is set up and made available for supporting at least 500 individuals**

**Activities planned:**

- Enhance Bulgarian RCS preparedness through pre-positioning of contingency relief items (dry food parcel, hygiene kit and blankets) for an additional 500 people
- Procure goods according to Bulgarian RCS and IFRC standards and procedures of procurement
- Ensure that goods specifications meet or exceed minimum Bulgarian standards.

**Content of an individual food parcel:**

Items	Content of one kit
Canned food (meat)	3 pieces
Canned food (tuna fish)	3 pieces
Beans	2 pieces
Soda crackers	1 box

The food parcel will be procured and distributed according to SPHERE standards. The procured food parcels will be stored according to international health and safety standards and in compliance with the relevant Bulgarian law on public health and food safety.

**Objective 3: Resilience of the potentially affected citizens is increased by the replenishment of the Bulgarian Red Cross`s emergency stocks for 500 – 1000 vulnerable people according to the needs and the situation accrued**

**Outcome: Access to complementary basic relief items for 500 – 1000 people is ensured in case disaster affects the country.**

**Activities planned:**

- Local procurement of emergency items and prepositioning at Bulgarian Red Cross central warehouse.
- Monitoring and reporting.

## **Emergency health and psychosocial support**

**Objective: Improve the physical and psychological condition of the refugees / asylum seekers**

**Output 1: Psychosocial support is provided with special focus on children.**

**Output 2: Awareness related to health and hygiene promotion is provided to the beneficiaries**

**Activities planned:**

- Provide psychosocial support through Red Cross staff and trained volunteers to address needs primarily to the children in the centres and to improve their psychological condition.
- Develop and translate health and hygiene promotion materials in Arabic, Farsi, English and French to accompany health and hygiene promotion activities

## **Restoring Family Links**

**Objective: Family links are restored wherever people are separated from, or without news of their families**

**Output 1: Family tracing, messaging services are provided to the refugees / asylum seekers**

**Output 2: Materials related to restoring families link and rights of the refugees are provided to the refugees / asylum seekers**

**Activities planned:**

- Handling of tracing requests and provision of family messaging service
- Translation or adaptation of the existing materials, printing and distribution in the refugees/asylum seekers centre.

The Bulgarian RCS will, in close cooperation with the IFRC Zone Office in Budapest, monitor the implementation of activities and provide the necessary technical advice. The Bulgarian RCS will provide to the IFRC Disaster Management Coordinator in the Europe Zone a weekly update related to the progress of the operation.

At the beginning of the operation the Bulgarian RCS will organize an induction training on focus about the policies, the activities and the cultural aspect of the work with asylum seekers. After completion, the Bulgarian RCS will organize a workshop on the national level with participation of all involved parties to share experience and lessons learnt during the operation.

The visibility of Bulgarian Red Cross Society activities and strengthening of the National Society's image will be ensured through maximizing the visibility of the National Society during relief distribution, visits to the refugees (asylum seekers, monitoring and evaluation by Bulgarian RCS volunteers and staff.

## Contact information

**For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:**

- **Bulgarian Red Cross:** Jassen Slivensky, Director Disaster Management Department;  
Phone: +359 2 8164 898, email: [j.slivensky@redcross.bg](mailto:j.slivensky@redcross.bg)
- **IFRC Europe Zone Office:** Alberto Monguzzi, Disaster Management Coordinator;  
Phone: +36 1 888 4500; email: [alberto.monguzzi@ifrc.org](mailto:alberto.monguzzi@ifrc.org)
- **IFRC Geneva:** Christine South, Operations Support;  
Phone: +41 22 730 4529, email: [christine.south@ifrc.org](mailto:christine.south@ifrc.org)



**Click here**

1. Click [here](#) to see the DREF budget
2. 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.

[www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)  
Saving lives, changing minds.



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.

# DREF OPERATION

## Bulgaria

Budget Group	DREF Grant Budget CHF
Shelter - Relief	6,250
Shelter - Transitional	
Construction - Housing	
Construction - Facilities	
Construction - Materials	375
Clothing & Textiles	59,370
Food	4,687
Seeds & Plants	
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	29,685
Medical & First Aid	
Teaching Materials	4,600
Ustensils & Tools	2,531
Other Supplies & Services	10,937
Emergency Response Units	
Cash Disbursements	
<b>Total RELIEF ITEMS, CONSTRUCTION AND SUPPLIES</b>	<b>118,435</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	2,000
Distribution & Monitoring	2,000
Transport & Vehicle Costs	1,500
Logistics Services	
<b>Total LOGISTICS, TRANSPORT AND STORAGE</b>	<b>5,500</b>
International Staff	
National Staff	
National Society Staff	2,000
Volunteers	4,000
<b>Total PERSONNEL</b>	<b>6,000</b>
Consultants	
Professional Fees	
<b>Total CONSULTANTS &amp; PROFESSIONAL FEES</b>	<b>0</b>
Workshops & Training	10,000
<b>Total WORKSHOP &amp; TRAINING</b>	<b>10,000</b>
Travel	3,500
Information & Public Relations	13,749
Office Costs	1,000
Communications	3,000
Financial Charges	1,000
Other General Expenses	
Shared Support Services	
<b>Total GENERAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>22,249</b>
Programme and Supplementary Services Recovery	10,542
<b>Total INDIRECT COSTS</b>	<b>10,542</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>172,726</b>