

www.ifrc.org
Saving lives,
changing minds.

Emergency Plan of Action (EPoA) Belarus: Extreme winter conditions

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DREF Operation	Operation n° MDRBY004 Glide n° CW-2014-000007-BLR
Date of issue: 24 January 2014	Date of disaster: 18 January 2014
Operation manager (responsible for this EPoA): Sergei Boltrushevich, Head of Office, IFRC Representation	Point of contact: Viktor Kolbanov, Secretary General of Belarus Red Cross
Operation start date: 18 January 2014	Expected timeframe: 23 January to 23 April 2014
Overall operation budget: CHF 25,920	
Number of people affected: 30,000	Number of people to be assisted: 12,000
Host National Society(ies) presence (n° of volunteers, staff, branches): 62 volunteers, 14 staff, 1 headquarters and 40 branches	
Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners actively involved in the operation (if available and relevant): N/A	
Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: Ministry of Emergencies	

A. Situation analysis

Description of the disaster

After a long period of a relatively mild weather, a sudden onset of extremely cold winter caught many Belarusians completely unprepared, especially homeless, drivers and city dwellers who need to travel long distances by public transport or by foot.

On 18-20 January 2014 temperatures fell down to minus 16 and 21 degrees Celsius. The current temperatures are below minus 22-25 degrees Celsius at night and minus 21 degrees Celsius during the day. Freezing weather has already killed two persons in Belarus over the past few days, and temperatures are set to drop even further according to weather forecasts.

In this context, Belarus Red Cross immediately responded to extreme weather conditions to the needs of the most vulnerable with setting up winterized tents with equipment to function as stations in the cities where people can warm up and receive services and relief from the Red Cross. Trained Red Cross volunteers also provide first aid to people with traumas like frostbite and hypothermia.

Frosts will go down to reach minus 28 degrees Celsius at night in the period between 22 and 29 January 2014. Northern winds of 10 to 15 m/sec, snowstorms and black ice will add to the severe frosty conditions, making people feeling as uncomfortable as with minus 30-35 degrees Celsius.

On 21 January, a number of public buses from Minsk to Grodno, Vitebsk, Mogilev, Polotsk and Chashniki were cancelled. The sudden onset of the extremely cold weather will also continue throughout February and it is estimated that some 50,000 people will be affected until the weather improves.



Winterized tents set up by Belarus Red Cross.
Photo: Belarus Red Cross volunteer

Summary of the current response

Overview of Host National Society

With the support of the IFRC, Austrian, Danish and Swiss Red Cross Societies, Belarus Red Cross has managed to increase its level of services to the vulnerable population in comparison to previous years – an increase in the number of volunteers, in disaster preparedness, response and relief. At the same time, the National Society has managed to still work on improving its operational and organizational capacity to increase the level of quality support to more vulnerable people, reaching out to individuals, families and communities based upon Red Cross Red Crescent principles.

Belarus Red Cross rescue teams became operational by the equipment and the training provided through previous projects that enabled the teams to respond to the extreme weather conditions in winter, spring and summer.

Belarus Red Cross branches have volunteer emergency response teams trained in first aid, psychosocial support, search and rescue, deployment of relief camps and transportation of victims, as well as maintaining basic stock of relief items, including tents, clothing, and tea, ready for distributions in case of disaster.

In September and December 2013 large-scale drills were organized in Minsk by the Belarusian Ministry of Emergencies in order to prepare for extreme winter conditions. Being included in the national plan "Snowstorm", Belarus Red Cross took part in these national simulations. The emergencies and defence ministries, traffic police, local authorities, and corporate partners also participated.

From 27 November to 1 December 2013, Belarus Red Cross conducted its own 3-day training (drills) for its volunteers to further strengthen its capacity to respond to winter frosts and snowstorms. The purpose of the drills was to enable Red Cross volunteers to respond to new challenges related to winter conditions. The drills strengthened their practical skills in the following areas: search and rescue in snowstorm, driving and using rescue and auxiliary vehicles in winter conditions, providing first psychosocial assistance as per IFRC standards, assessment of needs at regional level, development of regional plans for winter 2013/2014. The established regional plans were linked to the Belarus Red Cross national contingency plan.

Simulations such as these have allowed the Belarus Red Cross to strengthen and demonstrate its preparedness for large-scale emergencies.

Action already taken by the Host National Society

Belarus Red Cross sees its role in assisting the people affected by severe frosts, with a strong focus on the homeless, stranded drivers and people caught up by the extreme weather in public places.

When the harsh winter conditions started, Belarus Red Cross mobilised trained volunteers in all regional branches. Altogether, 62 volunteers have been engaged in the action so far. Belarus Red Cross has assisted 115 of the most vulnerable people (homeless) with food rations (instant soup and tea). 15 people who had traffic accidents have been assisted by seven Belarus Red Cross volunteers.

On 21 January 2014, Belarus Red Cross headquarters activated its contingency plan by issuing an order to its regional branches instructing them to set in motion their regional plans so as to immediately assist people affected by frosts by setting up distribution posts with hot drinks, meals, warm clothing and blankets, as well as by delivering assistance to the places where homeless usually gather, which include dump sites and glass bottle buy-back centres. In addition, the order provides for organizing a mobile unit for assisting people at Minsk ring road by distribution of hot drinks and meals to drivers and assistance in starting up stranded vehicles, and at the same time delivering meals, clothing, footwear and blankets to the homeless.

Overview of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in country

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

The IFRC representation 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.

There are no Partner National Societies currently in the country.

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 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

According to Belarus Red Cross own assessment and previous experience, the most affected by extreme weather conditions are the following vulnerable target groups:

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

Field assessments 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.

Risk Assessment

Weather conditions may deteriorate faster than expected 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 12,000 people affected by extreme winter conditions.

Proposed strategy

To achieve the overall objective the following action will be prioritized: provision of hot water and food items, immediate access to warming up stations, assistance to stranded vehicles along with the logistic support these 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 shelter in Red Cross tents will be offered to some 10,000 dwellers caught by the extreme weather conditions;
- hot tea and assistance in starting up stranded vehicles will be provided to some 1,000 people either stuck on the road or waiting in line at border crossings.

The distributions will start immediately and will be directly linked to climate conditions (freezing temperatures) in 40 towns of the country.

Actions conducted by Belarus Red Cross will be in accordance with Sphere minimum humanitarian standards.



Belarus Red Cross providing assistance for beneficiaries.
Photo: Belarus Red Cross

Operational support services

Human resources

Belarus Red Cross has mobilized 62 volunteers and 14 staff to date for assessments, distributions, maintenance of warming up stations, use of power generators and heating canons, and assistance to stranded vehicles. In the coming days the number of engaged volunteers is expected to increase to 100 persons. For these volunteers, meals and hot drinks will be covered.

For the planned operation, Belarus Red Cross staff will be providing support to volunteers. Taking into account the DREF operational needs, part-time DM officer 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 DM officer will be supported by accountant and assistant-translator.

There is no need for international staff deployment as the required technical support, including monitoring and reporting, adherence to standard IFRC procedures and financial management will be ensured by IFRC national staff based in Minsk.

Logistics and supply chain

Belarus Red Cross has a logistics officer and procurement procedures which follows IFRC procurements standards. The local market allows alternatives in terms of suppliers for all budgeted items. The National Society also has a warehouse and vehicles to carry relief items for distributions.

Information technologies (IT)

Belarus Red Cross volunteers are equipped with radio stations.

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 IFRC office in Minsk to the Europe Zone Office Disaster Management team.

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 Europe Zone Office Disaster Management Coordinator.

For monitoring and reporting purposes, experienced IFRC staff is included in the operation and will assist the National Society with fulfilling these tasks.

In March 2014 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 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 two months. The same rule is applies 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.

Budget

Click [here](#) to see the attached budget.

DREF OPERATION

21-01-14

Belarus Extreme Winter Conditions

Budget Group	DREF Grant Budget CHF
500 Shelter - Relief	
501 Shelter - Transitional	
502 Construction - Housing	
503 Construction - Facilities	
505 Construction - Materials	
510 Clothing & Textiles	1,400
520 Food	7,895
523 Seeds & Plants	
530 Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	
540 Medical & First Aid	
550 Teaching Materials	
560 Utensils & Tools	1,200
570 Other Supplies & Services	3,000
578 Cash Disbursements	
Total RELIEF ITEMS, CONSTRUCTION AND SUPPLIES	13,495
580 Land & Buildings	
581 Vehicles	
582 Computer & Telecom Equipment	
584 Office/Household Furniture & Equipment	
587 Medical Equipment	
589 Other Machinery & Equipment	
Total LAND, VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT	0
590 Storage, Warehousing	
592 Distribution & Monitoring	400
593 Transport & Vehicle Costs	1,000
594 Logistics Services	
Total LOGISTICS, TRANSPORT AND STORAGE	1,400
600 International Staff	0
661 National Staff	2,000
662 National Society Staff	1,803
667 Volunteers	1,900
Total PERSONNEL	5,703
670 Consultants	
750 Professional Fees	
Total CONSULTANTS & PROFESSIONAL FEES	0
680 Workshops & Training	2,000
Total WORKSHOP & TRAINING	2,000
700 Travel	200
710 Information & Public Relations	
730 Office Costs	
740 Communications	
760 Financial Charges	240
790 Other General Expenses	
799 Shared Office and Services Costs	1,300
Total GENERAL EXPENDITURES	1,740
830 Partner National Societies	
831 Other Partners (NGOs, UN, other)	
Total TRANSFER TO PARTNERS	0
599 Programme and Supplementary Services Recovery	1,582
Total INDIRECT COSTS	1,582
TOTAL BUDGET	25,920