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Emergency Plan of Action (EPoA) Serbia : Extreme Winter Conditions

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DREF Operation / Emergency Appeal	Operation n° MDRRS007 Glide n° CW-2014-000017-SRB
Date of issue: 10 February 2014	Date of disaster 01.02.2014.
Operation manager (responsible for this EPoA): Djula Losonc Disaster Management Coordinator, Serbia Red Cross Tel +381 11 30 32 125 Email djula@redcross.org.rs	Point of contact: Vesna Milenovic Secretary General of the Red Cross of Serbia Tel +381 11 30 32 125 Email secretary@redcross.org.rs
Alberto Monguzzi IFRC Europe Zone Disaster Management Coordinator Tel +36 1 8884 505 Email alberto.monguzzi@ifrc.org	
Operation start date: 7 February 2014	Expected timeframe: until 7 May 2014
Overall operation budget: CHF 56,536	
Number of people affected: 3,000	Number of people to be assisted: 2,000
Host National Society(ies) presence (n° of volunteers, staff, branches): Red Cross of Serbia 185 volunteers, 7 HQ staff members, 2 staff from Vojvodina province	
Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement partners actively involved in the operation: none	
Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: Sector for Emergency Management of the Serbian Ministry of interior, Military of Serbia, Serbian Motorway & Highway Services and Assistance	

A. Situation analysis

Description of the disaster

Due to extreme winds (120-150 kilometres per hour), snow drifts paralyzed traffic along the international highway E-75, but also down to many local and district roads especially in Vojvodina province. Hundreds of vehicles were stranded for three days, some for more than 15 hours, while the cold weather and the snow drifts made further travel challenging. Finally the Government of Serbia mobilised almost all available heavy machinery on Saturday, 01.02.2014, to clean the roads and to get access to vehicles at the critical points. In these efforts the Military, the Police Forces, and the Emergency Management Department with fire-fighters were mobilised, and a rescue operation was launched and completed. It is estimated that more than 1,000 vehicles were stranded in the snow. Emergency airlifts were initiated as the most effective way to reach those almost frozen in their cars. A state of emergency was proclaimed in three municipalities, Backa Topola, Zrenjanin and Kikinda as of Sunday 02.02.2014. The Red Cross of Serbia, in coordination with the State Emergency Services was engaged for the protection and rescue as of Saturday morning in the provision of assistance to the most affected travellers. The number of evacuated passengers from the snow-captured vehicles from the highway E75, on the sections in Backa Topola and Mali Idjos reached 2,000 people on Sunday, 02.02.2014.

Summary of the current response

Overview of Host National Society

The Red Cross of Serbia has a great experience in mobilizing volunteers in disasters, assisting people in need, implementing relief distributions, organizing basic disaster response and First Aid trainings for volunteers. Each Red Cross branch has one disaster response team established with a wide range of activities to perform in case of disasters. The Red Cross of Serbia has five regional teams which can provide rescue and evacuation during extreme winter conditions. They are equipped with snowmobiles, trailers and more, and other trained staff and volunteers support them when they are deployed. The NS tries to maintain a solid disaster response stock which enables the DM department to intervene in the first hours of any disaster.

In terms of disaster preparedness, Red Cross of Serbia has been building on the experience from previous training and distribution programmes of recent years. This programme is about providing key equipment and refresher training for national teams, ensuring participation of national experts in the regional teams, and working on developing municipal-level disaster preparedness and response.

The latest such activity is an independent project, Municipal Disaster Preparedness Project), and it encompasses identifying risk-prone communities, developing a tabletop disaster simulation, ensuring the participation of all important stakeholders (local authorities, police, firefighters, paramedics, Red Cross), analyzing the simulation results and identifying weak spots in inter-agency coordination, and, finally, developing local plans of action based on the simulation analysis.

Red Cross / Red Crescent Action

Starting from Saturday 1st February 2014, in the morning 12 volunteers from the National Team for Winter Assistance and Evacuation in Extreme Conditions, equipped with snowmobiles, trailers, and other essential winter rescue equipment, supported the Department for Emergency Situations - fire rescue units in evacuation of snow trapped people along the critical road communications. The Red Cross actions involved emergency evacuations, first aid, distribution of urgent food and water supplies as well as hot drinks, blankets. In total 128 people were evacuated by the RCS team - some of them towards the OMV filling station in Backa Topola and some to the point where emergency airlifts were organized.



Red Cross rescue operations along the highway E-75
Photo: Serbian Red Cross

The following emergency stock was distributed starting from Saturday, 01.02.2014 by Red Cross volunteers of Zrenjanin branch and members of the National Disaster Response Team specialized for rescue and care in extreme winter conditions.

Distributed from NS emergency stock 01 - 04.02.2014										
	RC Vojvodine	RC Subotica	RC Kanjiža	RC Bačka Topola	RC Mali Iđoš	RC Zrenjanin	RC Novi Sad	RC Vršac	RC Srbije	TOTAL
Bread (loaf) pcs.		585				15				600
Canned meat pcs.	425	1,750	-	4,350		50	30		60	6,665
Meat pate pcs.	325	-	-	-		50	30		60	465
Canned fish pcs.	-	-	-	-		50	-		60	110
Ready to eat meals pcs.	216	-	-	-		-	-		60	276
Sugar kg	-	-	6	100kg		5kg				111
Wheat flour kg				2,040						2,040
Margarin kg				42,5						42,5
Tea pcs.			10	280		120	-			410
Milk lit.				5						5
Sandwiches pcs.								84		84
Cooked meals pcs.								48		42
Hygiene parcels pcs.				10						10
Bottled water 2 lit/pcs.		1,020				100	30	150		1,300
Thermal underwear									50	50
Gloves									50	50
Thermal socks									50	50
Helmet									10	10
Gaiter									30	30
Snowglasses									10	10
Snowshoes									30	30
Blankets pcs.	-	400	-	400	50	30			50	930
Mattresses pcs.				32						32

Two slightly injured people were assisted with First Aid by Red Cross volunteers and one child was safely transported to the reception point for evacuees.

In Backa Topola 1,600 people were temporarily accommodated over the night from 01 to 02.02.2014 and during the day in the following locations:

- The two elementary schools with a total of 1,000 people
- The Red Cross offices in Backa Topola with 120 people
- The religious communities with 80 people
- The OMW gas station about with 150 people
- In private houses with 250 people.

In Mali Iđjos 100 people were temporarily accommodated over the night and during the day in the following locations:

- The fire-fighters building and offices with 80 people
- In private houses with 20 people.

In Backa Topola and Mali Iđjos distribution of food, and hot drinks for people temporarily accommodated was organized by Red Cross branches, where 100 local volunteers, 10 professionals, as well as 9 members of the national Disaster response team from Vojvodina were deployed. The Red Cross made available 1,000 mattresses and 2,000 blankets in places where people were sheltered while canned food and ready-to-eat meals were distributed where needed.

The National Team specialized for rescue and care in extreme winter conditions was replaced by a nine-member Disaster response team of the Red Cross of Vojvodina yesterday evening in response to the disaster and the changing role of the Red Cross in the field.

Red Cross Subotica branch distributed lunch parcels (canned food, bread, water) and hot drinks for 400 passengers who were snow-blocked on the highway E75 section between Subotica and Horgos. A six member team of Red Cross branch in Novi Sad distributed 30 lunch packages and drinking water for passengers in the vicinity of the pay toll booth at Sirig on Highway E75.

Vrsac RC branch distributed sandwiches, ready-to-eat meals, water and hot drinks, to people who were blocked on the Serbia/Romania border crossing at Vatin.

Red Cross branches in Backa Topola, Mali Idjos and Zrenjanin along the major highway and RC branch closest to the Romanian border Vrsac, and the Hungarian border Subotica provided emergency shelter. It additionally included the distribution of thermal blankets, warm socks, thermal underwear, gaiter, and gloves where needed, to those evacuated and volunteers who were taking part in rescue efforts. Locations for emergency shelter were selected in coordination with the local authorities. Based on circumstances, hot meals or canned food were provided, ready-to-eat meals, and hot drinks were offered by the Red Cross branches in charge.

Overview of non-RCRC actors in country

The Government of Serbia alerted all emergency services including the military to assist those affected by the extreme weather conditions. Rescue operations including evacuations commenced using helicopters for emergency airlift at some points. Over the weekend more than 2,000 people were evacuated from the snow trapped cars. Heavy machinery was organized from different sources to make the roads accessible as soon as possible in order to allow further traveling on the major roads in Vojvodina province. All Red Cross activities were coordinated with the Department for Emergency Situations of the Republic of Serbia.

The section of the E75 motorway from Subotica to Novi Sad, northern Serbia, was opened to passenger and cargo traffic in both directions on Tuesday at noon. Railway traffic on the Pancevo-Vrsac section the international railroad toward Romania is still blocked for the fourth day in a row due to snow drifts which trapped two engines near Banatsko Novo Selo.

Needs analysis, beneficiary selection, risk assessment and scenario planning

It was estimated by the Red Cross of Serbia that close to 2,000 people would be in need for emergency shelter until the roads were made accessible again and people were able to continue their journeys. The Red Cross branches Backa Topola, Mali Idjos and Zrenjanin along the major highway and the RC branch closest to the Romanian border at Vrsac, and to the Hungarian border at Subotica provided emergency shelter. The operation included the distribution of thermal blankets, warm socks, thermal underwear, gaiters, and gloves where needed, to those evacuated and volunteers who were taking part in the rescue efforts. Locations for emergency shelter were selected in coordination with the local authorities. Based on the circumstances, wherever possible, hot meals were provided on the spot or the distribution of canned food, ready-to-eat meals, and hot drinks was organized by Red Cross branches in charge. The Red Cross evaluation of the current situations suggested that emergency shelter would be needed for max. 24-48 hours and had to be organized in order to support people to recover from the hours spent in snowed trapped vehicles. For the resting people, the Red Cross branches needed to provide mattresses, beds, and blankets. The Red Cross assisted with emergency evacuations, first aid, where needed, using the national team for winter assistance and evacuation in extreme conditions equipped with snowmobiles, trailers, and other essential winter rescue equipment.

Overall objective of the closed operation

The immediate needs of at least 2,000 snow trapped people in vehicles on the major roads in Vojvodina province were met through the provision of urgent food, non-food items and emergency shelter, and through the Red Cross support to rescue operations of Military and Emergency Sector of the Ministry of Interior.

Proposed strategy

With this DREF, the Serbian RC will replenish the used stock to be prepared for an eventual next emergency in the future, and to improve the resilience capacities of the possible affected persons.

To accomplish the overall objective, the Red Cross staff and volunteers focused on the provision of blankets, warm socks, thermal underwear, gaiter, and gloves to resist the cold weather, as well as emergency food and water supplies to increase the resilience of people affected by the extreme winter conditions. Emergency shelters were prepared by Red Cross branch volunteers in locations provided by the municipal authorities. Five emergency shelters were equipped with blankets and mattresses to make people feel more comfortable while waiting for the continuation of their journey. Similar level of support was provided to those ad hoc shelters created or occupied with people evacuated.

Operational support services

Human resources

185 volunteers, 7 HQ staff members, 2 staff from Vojvodina province, provincial and municipal branches were involved in the emergency operation. No international staff deployment is foreseen within the DREF implementation time frame.

Logistics and supply chain

The Red Cross of Serbia has a logistic department and procurement guidelines which are in agreement with IFRC procurement standards and in-country legal requirements. The emergency stock of the NS is well maintained, and transport capacities are ready to respond to the emergency situation.

Information technologies (IT)

The Red Cross of Serbia was maintaining the communication with teams and volunteers in the field using mobile phones, and a certain amount to cover costs of the phone usage is foreseen in the DREF budget. For orientation purposes during rescue operations NS staff and volunteers used GPS.

Communications

The visibility of Red Cross Serbia activities in the field was reinforced with proper information dissemination to the media on all National Society activities during relief distribution, rescue activities and activities carried out in emergency shelters. Operation-related news and photos were disseminated to the web media, newspapers and on the RCS website.

Security

Due to the frozen roads, the possibility of volunteers to get injured in rescue or evacuation activity was higher than usually and the RC staff and volunteers received proper briefing before moving to the field in order to be informed about the risk in moving on the icy roads. All disaster response volunteers of the National Society had at some stage a First Aid training separately or as part of a basic disaster management training.

Planning, monitoring, evaluation, & reporting (PMER)

The Red Cross of Serbia has been monitoring the implementation of activities, while at the end of the operation a two day lessons-learned workshop will be organised in order to evaluate the operation together with major partners such as the Ministry for Interior, Sector for Emergency Management, representatives of municipal authorities where operations took place.

Weekly operation updates will be sent to the IFRC Europe Zone Office.

DREF OPERATION

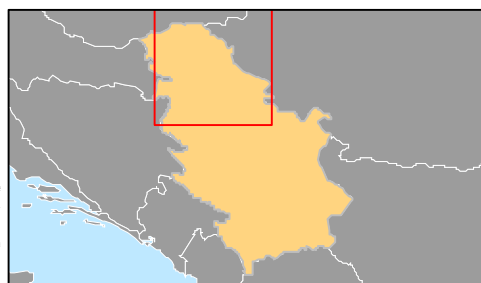
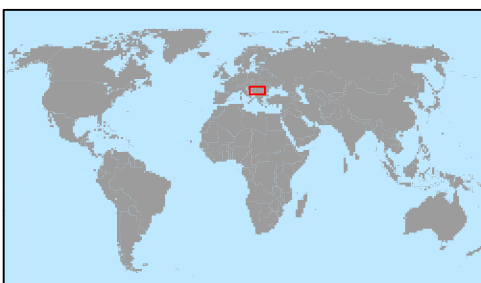
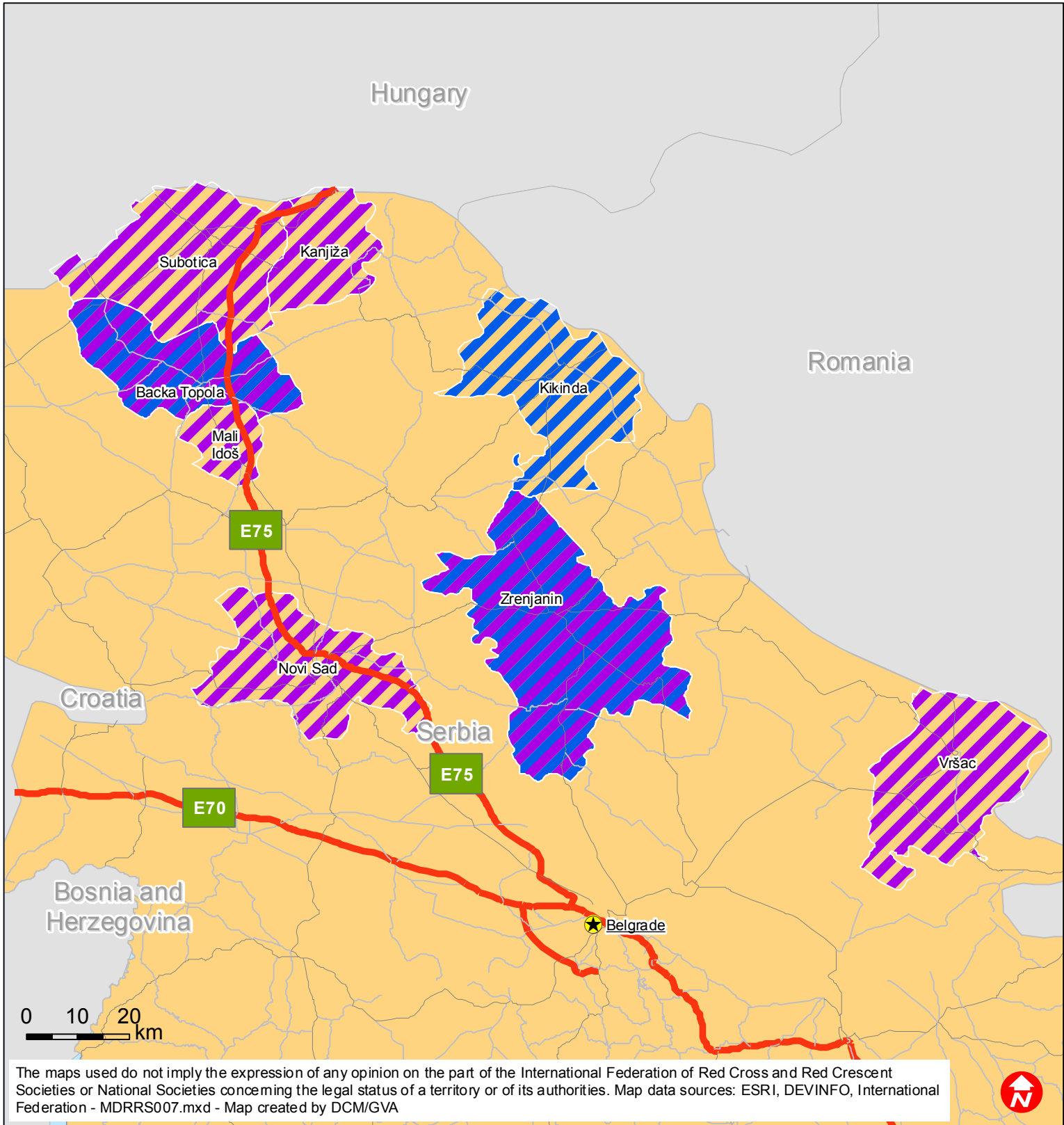
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Serbia Extreme Winter Conditions

	DREF Grant Budget CHF
Budget Group	
500 Shelter - Relief	
501 Shelter - Transitional	
502 Construction - Housing	
503 Construction - Facilities	
505 Construction - Materials	
510 Clothing & Textiles	28,090
520 Food	8,811
523 Seeds & Plants	
530 Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	
540 Medical & First Aid	5,124
550 Teaching Materials	
560 Utensils & Tools	
570 Other Supplies & Services	
578 Cash Disbursements	
Total RELIEF ITEMS, CONSTRUCTION AND SUPPLIES	42,025
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	
593 Transport & Vehicle Costs	2,850
594 Logistics Services	
Total LOGISTICS, TRANSPORT AND STORAGE	2,850
600 International Staff	
661 National Staff	366
662 National Society Staff	
667 Volunteers	1,800
Total PERSONNEL	2,166
670 Consultants	
750 Professional Fees	
Total CONSULTANTS & PROFESSIONAL FEES	0
680 Workshops & Training	5,800
Total WORKSHOP & TRAINING	5,800
700 Travel	
710 Information & Public Relations	
730 Office Costs	
740 Communications	244
760 Financial Charges	
790 Other General Expenses	
799 Shared Office and Services Costs	
Total GENERAL EXPENDITURES	244
830 Partner National Societies	
831 Other Partners (NGOs, UN, other)	
Total TRANSFER TO PARTNERS	0
599 Programme and Supplementary Services Recovery	3,451
Total INDIRECT COSTS	3,451
TOTAL BUDGET	56,536



Serbia: Extreme Winter Conditions



- Other roads
- Main roads
- Highway
- ▨ Mobilized branches
- ▨ State of emergency