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Emergency Plan of Action - Final Report

Slovenia: Extreme Winter Conditions

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DREF Operation Final Report	Operation n° MDRSI001 Glide n°CW-2014-000018-SVN
Date of issue: 11 August 2014	Date of disaster: 1 February 2014
Operation managers (responsible for this EPoA): Boris Plavšič, Slovenian Red Cross Disaster Management Coordinator Tel +386 1 2414 326; email: boris.plavsic@rks.si Alberto Monguzzi IFRC Europe Zone Disaster Management Coordinator Tel: + 38 1 8884 505; email: alberto.monguzzi@ifrc.org	Point of contact: Danijel Starman, Secretary General Slovenian Red Cross Tel +386 1 2414 316; email: danijel.starman@rks.si
Operation start date: 11 February 2014	Operation end date: 11 May 2014
Host National Society(ies): Slovenian Red Cross, with 600 Slovenian Red Cross volunteers and 25 staff members on the national and local branch levels involved in the emergency operation	Operation budget: CHF 191,864
Number of people affected: 50,000	Number of people assisted: 4,500
N° of National Societies involved in the operation: Austrian RC and Croatian RC	
N° of other partner organizations involved in the operation: The operation was led by the Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Response of Slovenia with full involvement of all forces within the National Protection and Rescue System; electricity providers workers, international fire brigades from Austria, Military Forces of Slovenia.	

A. Situation analysis

Description of the disaster

Highly unfavorable weather conditions, heavy snow and sleet (freezing rain) hit Slovenia on Friday, 31 January 2014, and continued during the weekend of 1-2 February 2014. Many regions were affected but mostly the Notranjska region in the south-western part of the country. A state of emergency (red alarm) was proclaimed for the whole country on 2 February 2014. However, the scope of sleet devastation was beyond any anticipated estimations.

The extreme weather conditions caused extensive power cuts with more than 80,000 client sites affected, leaving around 250,000 people without electric power. Therefore, on 2 February 2014 the Republic of Slovenia requested assistance through the European Union's Civil Protection Mechanism with a request for 100 power generators (100 - 300 kVA) in order to provide electricity to the affected population.

A week after the disaster had stricken, there were still 30,000 people without electric power. Therefore all efforts of the Slovenian Civil Protection, as well as of the Slovenian Red Cross, were made to deploy the greatest possible number of generators. In some areas the restoration of electrical wiring took weeks, even months. In Postojna area electric power supply was ensured through generators for the following three months, before all reparation works were done



Distribution of gas heaters from the RC national logistic warehouse to the affected local branches.
Photo: Slovenian RC

and normal wiring was back in place. As an immediate response to the disaster, the Slovenian Red Cross started the procurement and delivery of generators intended for households with its own internal funds.

The Slovenian Red Cross was actively involved in the response activities from 2 February 2014 on all three operational levels of the National Society's structure: HQ, Local Branches and Local Organizations.

One of the biggest concerns in the following days after the disaster was also a high risk of floods. However, the consequences were not as bad as anticipated. The needs assessment showed an affected population in need for assistance in four additional Local Branches of the Slovenia RC; namely in Domžale, Ilirska Bistrica, Logatec and Novo Mesto.

Summary of response

Overview of Host National Society

On the basis of the Law on the Slovenian Red Cross (Article 9), Disaster Preparedness and Response is carried out based on public authorization. The Slovenian Red Cross (Slovenian RC) is an integral part of the National Protection System and works therefore in close cooperation with the Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief under the Ministry of Defense. The Red Cross is mainly responsible for the implementation of health-related measures for the affected population in case of natural or other disasters; but also for the admission, accommodation and supply of the affected population; for coordination and shipment of humanitarian aid and for training volunteers.

The Slovenian RC has vast experiences in assisting people in need, implementing relief distributions and organizing basic disaster response. The Slovenian RC has 80 First Aid teams across the country and 4 mobile units with the capacity to accommodate 100 people.

The Red Cross staff namely the Secretary General on national level and the Local Branch secretaries on local level, are members of the Civil Protection Headquarters, whose activities and roles are jointly defined on a daily basis.

Out of the 56 Local Branches of Slovenian Red Cross 14 were heavily affected by the present sleet disaster; namely Ajdovščina, Cerknica, Idrija, Postojna, Kočevje, Kranj, Škofja Loka, Ljubljana, Maribor, Mozirje, Nova Gorica, Slovenj Gradec, Velenje and Zagorje.

The most devastated region was Notranjska (south-west Slovenia) with a Local Branch in the municipality of Postojna, where out of 21,675 people, only 5,000 people had (limited) access to electricity, and the residents stranded in the city were in urgent need for heating devices.

Overview of non-RCRC actors in-country

The Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief of the Republic of Slovenia was in charge of the relief operation with professionals and also volunteers recruited under the National Protection and Rescue System. The extent of the sleet disaster demanded the involvement of all forces within the National Protection and Rescue System with more than 30,000 professionals and volunteers, in some areas assisted by the military. Through the EU CP Mechanism, several European countries (e.g. Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic) responded by sending generators, as well as by the deployment of their experts and firefighters (Austrian Federal Agency for Technical Relief).

B. Operational strategy and plan

Overall objective of the operation

The immediate needs of 4,500 affected people were met through the provision of non-food basic relief items (heating devices, blankets, batteries) and food parcels.

With this DREF allocation the resilience capacities of the people affected by extreme winter conditions were improved through the distribution of basic relief items and with sheltering support.

C. DETAILED OPERATIONAL PLAN

Achievements

The Slovenian Red Cross immediately started to respond to the extreme weather conditions with the activation of their First Aid teams and volunteers in order to distribute food and non-food relief items and in order to provide psychosocial support to the affected people.

From the beginning of February, there were 600 RC employees and volunteers working actively in the relief operation at the affected sites, supporting the efforts of the forces led by Civil Protection in order to reach all affected people and carry out a needs assessment; as well as distributing basic relief items: food parcels, blankets and wall dryers.

However, some parts of the affected areas could only be reached by heavy-duty military vehicles (Jezersko); while safe access to some remote villages remained a challenge for almost another month.

Red Cross volunteers were also providing psychosocial support to the affected people at 14 Local Branches, while the national psychosocial support team was deployed in Postojna area.

According to the needs of this specific disaster that left large number of households without electricity, the Slovenian RC immediately started the procurement of generators (60) through the Slovenian RC Solidarity Fund and distributed those to 11 affected Local Branches already on 6 February.

As mentioned, the Slovenian National Society immediately started the distribution of relief items and already in the first week it was providing the affected people via the Local Branches with bottled water (53,760 liters), food parcels (300), blankets (100), candles (2,500) and generators (8) *from its own emergency stock*. The Slovenian RC also requested assistance through in-kind donations (generators) from neighbouring National Societies. The Croatian RC responded with 2 generators; the Austrian RC delivered 15 generators of community purposes (not for individual households).

Heating devices and other relief items were distributed down from the national level to the affected Local Branches and through a network of volunteers and local Red Cross staff to the beneficiaries (households). Priority was given to those households, where heating and cooking were a problem due to the lack or shortage of electric power.

The items were distributed to 4,500 beneficiaries as follows, according to the continuous needs assessment by the Local Branches` staff and volunteers, in agreement with the Slovenian RC DM Manager.

1. 4,500 beneficiaries (1,500 households) received food parcels, 2 parcels for each household, during the period when cooking was difficult due to power cuts.
2. Additionally, the neediest 1,200 beneficiaries in 400 households also received non-food items as detailed below:
 - 150 households (450 beneficiaries) received gas heaters
 - 250 households (750 beneficiaries) received petroleum heaters
 - 400 households (1,200 beneficiaries) received blankets, hand batteries and wall dryers.

Table 1 – Items distributed from the national level to the Local Branches in the affected area

No.	Name of SRC Local Branch	Food parcels ¹	Gas heaters with gas bottles	Petroleum heaters	Blankets	Hand batteries	Wall dryers ²
1	AJDOVŠČINA	0	5	5	25	10	5
2	CERKNICA	300	10	20	100	20	20
3	DOMŽALE	0	2	5	10	10	5
4	IDRIJA	50	10	20	100	20	20
5	ILIRSKA BISTRICA	100	10	15	50	10	10
6	KOČEVJE	50	10	20	50	20	10
7	KRANJ	80	3	5	25	10	5
8	LJUBLJANA	200	10	20	50	20	10
9	LOGATEC	450	5	10	50	20	5
10	MARIBOR	400	10	20	50	20	10
11	MOZIRJE	0	10	20	100	20	10
12	NOVA GORICA	120	10	10	40	10	10
13	NOVO MESTO	50	0	0	0	0	0
14	POSTOJNA	650	20	30	100	20	30
15	SLOVENJ GRADEC	0	5	10	50	10	10
16	ŠKOFJA LOKA	100	10	20	50	10	10
17	VELENJE	0	10	10	100	10	20
18	ZAGORJE	150	10	10	50	10	10
	TOTAL	2,700	150	250	1,000	250	200

¹ An additional 300 food parcels were distributed from the NS` s own stock prior to the DREF allocation.

² For blankets, hand batteries and wall dryers, distribution was differentiated according to individual needs.



Slovenian RC volunteers conducting needs assessment and delivering aid (Postojna area)
 Photo: Slovenian RC



Red Cross volunteers delivering food parcels to an affected family in Cerknica.
 Photo: Slovenian RC

Lessons learned and challenges

The Slovenian Red Cross organized a day-long meeting in order to analyze their disaster response to the extreme weather conditions and lessons learned. Secretaries of all affected Local Branches, including the Secretary General of the Slovenian Red Cross, some volunteers, members of a national psycho-social assistance (PSP) team and the Deputy Chief of the Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief were present at the meeting.

Participants agreed that the Red Cross response was fast and efficient according to the available capacities. They also praised the fast mobilization of the volunteers and their good visibility in the field.

However, apart from positive results in reacting to the sleet disaster, the Slovenian Red Cross believes that based on the experiences from this operation, the following points have to be improved for better response in future similar emergencies.

- Prepare, in cooperation and agreement with the Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, a specific plan of action with detailed tasks and responsibilities for extreme weather disasters. The Slovenian RC was faced with many difficulties in regard to demands of non-food relief items in the form of generators and heaters, while this was a rather untypical disaster, which demanded an untypical RC response.
- Provide specific training to RC staff and volunteers in order to respond to these kinds of disasters (extreme weather conditions) and form a national pool of experts.
- Improve internal and external coordination.
- Update and supplement Slovenian RC's national DM guidelines.

The Slovenian RC will continue to improve the planning of disaster response in case of extreme weather conditions and strive to strengthen capacities of its response by utilizing the knowledge and skills of sister National Societies and other expert organization such as the Slovenian Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief.

D. THE BUDGET

The DREF allocation of CHF 191,864 has been fully spent in line with the approved budget. The financial documentation will be published shortly pending technical formalities.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- **Slovenian Red Cross:**

Danijel Starman, Secretary General;

Phone: +386 1 2414 300; email: danijel.starman@rks.si

- **IFRC Europe Zone Office:**

- Mette Petersen, Head of Country Cluster,

phone:+36 1 888 4515; email: mette.petersen@ifrc.org

- Alberto Monguzzi, Disaster Management Coordinator;

phone:+36 1 888 4500; email: alberto.monguzzi@ifrc.org

- **IFRC Geneva:**

Cristina Estrada, Operations Support;

phone: +41.22.730.4260, email: cristina.estrada@ifrc.org

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.

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2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.