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Emergency Plan of Action update

Belarus: Population movement



DREF n° MDRBY005	GLIDE n° OT-2014-000146-BLR
Update n° 1 Date of issue: 12 January 2015	Timeframe covered by this update: 28 October 2014 – 9 January 2015
Operation start date: 28 October 2014	Operation timeframe: 28 October 2014 to 28 February 2015 (4 months)
Operation budget: CHF 126,229	DREF amount allocated: CHF 126,229
N° of people being assisted: 2,400 Note: 1,200 people have already been supported by mobilizing the National Society's emergency stocks	
Host National Society presence (number of volunteers, staff, branches): 150 volunteers and 100 staff at Headquarters and 8 regional branches	
Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement partners currently involved in the operation: ICRC, Swiss Red Cross, Danish Red Cross	
Other partner organizations currently involved in the operation: Belarusian Citizenship and Migration Office; Labour, Employment and Social Protection Committee of Belarus; Belarusian Ministry of Health; Belarusian Ministry of Education; local authorities, the Orthodox Church, ICRC, UNHCR, IOM.	

Summary of major revisions made to emergency plan of action:

In general terms, the operation is running as planned except for the extension of timeframe for distribution of food and hygiene vouchers, procurement of kitchen sets, carrying out a beneficiary satisfaction survey and conducting a "lessons learned" workshop. This timeframe extension is required due to some procurement challenges faced by the Belarus Red Cross Society when launching the tender process for the provision of vouchers.

A. Situation analysis

A.1 Description of the disaster

Since June 2014 Belarus has seen increasing numbers of people fleeing the areas of conflict in Ukraine. As of 23 December, the authorities in Belarus reported that the number of asylum applications reached 652, while some 59,600 are reportedly seeking other forms of legal stay¹.

Every week Belarus Red Cross headquarters and its eight regional branches receive on average 130 people who either have come to Belarus recently or have just learned about the Red Cross as a potential source of assistance to them. There are also others who come to ask for assistance repeatedly. In total, some 7,738 displaced people have applied for assistance to Belarus Red Cross headquarters and branches² (as compared with 5,900 applicants in mid-October 2014).

¹ Source: UNHCR operation update, Operational Update - 31 December 2014.

² Source: Belarus Red Cross, 29 December 2014.

Table 1. Number of people seeking assistance from Belarus Red Cross by regions

<i>Region</i>	<i>Total number of displaced people who applied for assistance</i>	<i>Number of people who applied for the first time during Week 52, i.e. 22-28 Dec 2014</i>	<i>Number of people who applied for the second or third times during Week 52, i.e. 22-28 Dec 2014</i>
Gomel region	1,994	21	987
Minsk region	1,019	3	0
Mogilev region	1,193	25	40
Brest region	671	0	0
Vitebsk region	668	12	16
Railway Red Cross branch	45	11	0
Grodno region	797	0	0
Minsk city	864	45	7
Headquarters	487	0	6
Total	7,738	117	1,056

A.2 Summary of current response

Overview of Host National Society

Belarus Red Cross continues to provide assistance to the most vulnerable people affected by the out-bound population displacement from Ukraine. Among the key target groups are single-parent families, families with many children, expectant women and breastfeeding mothers, elderly and disabled people. By 5 January 2015, the assistance provided by Belarus Red Cross to displaced people consisted of 2,914 food kits, 1,861 hygiene kits, 57,284 items of clothing and 3,050 pairs of shoes³. In addition, Belarus Red Cross provided referral, counselling and psychological support services, support with temporary accommodation, travel and medication.

Overview of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in country

The IFRC Secretariat supported the National Society in the development of a consolidated plan of action to provide humanitarian aid to 4,000 displaced people. In addition to IFRC's DREF allocation of CHF 126,229, ICRC has provided complementary support to the Belarus Red Cross in the value of CHF 483,300 to cover the needs in winter clothes and food of 3,000 displaced people and strengthened the emergency response capacity of the Belarus Red Cross. An EcoSec delegate was assigned by ICRC for three weeks to support Belarus Red Cross in setting up the operation and improving field monitoring at all levels.

Swiss Red Cross supported the consolidated plan of action with a contribution of CHF 100,000 for 1,000 persons (clothes, shoes) and another CHF 45,000 for the repair/spare parts of seven all-terrain transport vehicles which the National Society needs badly for the distribution of goods. A DM/logistics delegate has also been deployed with this support.

The Icelandic Red Cross contributed CHF 50,000 to the DREF replenishment for the Belarus operation and also sent to Belarus a container load of winter clothing and footwear. Danish Red Cross contributed CHF 5,000 to provide psycho-social support training to 16 staff and volunteers involved in the operation at national and regional levels.

Overview of non-RCRC actors in country

The Swiss Embassy in Belarus supported the training Belarus Red Cross volunteers in basic homecare skills to provide assistance to elderly and disabled people. UNICEF has expressed its interest in providing assistance to children arriving from Ukraine. Discussions on the possibilities of assistance are in progress.



Displaced Ukrainian families explaining their needs and receiving assistance at the Belarus Red Cross branch in Baranovichi. December 2014. Photo: Swiss Red Cross

³ Source: Belarus Red Cross, 5 January 2015.

A.3 Needs analysis and scenario planning

Risk Analysis

Because of the close commercial ties, the economic crisis in Russia and a fall in global oil prices pose a serious challenge to the Belarusian economy. In recent weeks the Belarusian rouble has tumbled along with the Russian rouble. The Belarusian rouble reached 14,060 against the US dollar, and 16,570 against the euro. Hyperinflation has begun to set in as consumers seek to ditch their national currency in favour of dollars. At the end of December 2014, people in Belarus began to strip store shelves bare before the national currency, which has lost 50 per cent of its value since the beginning of the year, slipped further. A banking panic has also taken hold, as worried savers have begun to withdraw their life savings over fears that the banks might collapse. The situation affects both the DREF operation, since less items can be purchased with the devalued rouble, and the displaced people themselves who are becoming even more vulnerable in view of the growing prices for goods and services.

The unit value of one voucher for food and hygiene items will remain the same (CHF 50). In case Belarus Red Cross receives additional funding, the number of target beneficiaries will be reviewed.

B. Operational strategy and plan

Overall Objective

The overall objective is to provide immediate assistance to 2,400 people, of whom 1,200 people are affected by population displacement, and to replenish the emergency stock that was used earlier to support 1,200 affected beneficiaries.

Proposed strategy

The proposed strategy included the distribution of vouchers so as to meet the basic needs of the target groups for food and hygiene. Due to the delay in the introduction of voucher mechanism (for detailed reasons please refer to the section titled "*Logistics and supply chain*"), a one-month extension of the operation timeframe is requested.

The grant amount is set at CHF 50 per person to cover emergency food and hygiene needs for one month. A cash desk with a Red Cross logo will be established in each shop of the partnering commercial chain, and the cashiers will be instructed on how to work with the vouchers.

The following items will be provided through the voucher mechanism:

- food items including canned meat and fish, tea, coffee, sugar, salt, cereals, beans, bottled water, juice and cocoa products, etc.;
- hygiene items: soap, washing powder, tooth paste and brush, feminine pads, diapers for infants, disinfectants, napkins, razor blades, shampoo, etc.

With this DREF allocation, Belarus Red Cross is also replenishing the distributed stock to be prepared for a potential emergency in future.

The replenished non-food items include blankets, kitchen sets and bed-linen.

A one-month extension will allow the National Society to complete all distributions, to carry out a beneficiary satisfaction survey and conduct a "lessons learned" workshop.

B2 Operational support services

Logistics and supply chain

Although Belarus Red Cross had been in contact with a number of potential suppliers and received a positive response from one supermarket chain prior to the operation, the National Society faced challenges when a tender process for provision of vouchers was launched.

A tender process for procurement of food and hygiene vouchers started in November and was finalized by 5 December 2014 when a meeting of the Local Committee on Contracts reviewed three bids received from the supermarket chains "Almi", "Euroopt Ltd" and "Belinterproduct (Rublevsky)". However, only one offer was presented on a formal company paper with due signatures and stamp while the other two were available only in electronic versions of agreements proposed for signing. Furthermore, the company which submitted a proper offer did not have a sufficient network of shops and was not represented in two regions of Belarus. Following a long discussion, it was decided to re-tender.

On 20 December 2014, the Committee on Contracts met for the official opening of the sealed envelopes received from three supermarket chains, namely "Libretic (Sosed)", "Euroopt" and "Belinterproduct (Rublevsky)". The meeting of the Committee on Contracts was held later on the same day to review the offers. Again, only two bidders ("Libretic (Sosed)" and "Belinterproduct (Rublevsky)") were represented in all regions of the country. The third bidder ("Euroopt")

with the largest network could not guarantee the return of cash checks or other documentation for reporting purposes and the exclusion of alcohol or tobacco items. After many considerations the commission decided to award the contract to “Euroopt” with the proposed solution to the reporting challenge to involve an additional number of staff and volunteers in the field to guide beneficiaries and to ensure the collection of receipts after purchase.

Due to the New Year holiday period, the contract for the supply of vouchers was finalized only at the beginning of January 2015, and it is expected to be signed by “Euroopt” in the coming days. The distribution of vouchers will start in 10 days from signing the contract.

1,200 blankets and 190 sets of bed linen were also procured on a tender basis and are placed to the central warehouse in Minsk as stock replenishment. A tender for kitchen sets had to be re-announced due to a lack of interest among potential suppliers.

C. Detailed Operational Plan

Food security, Nutrition, and Livelihoods

Needs analysis: Target population groups are in need of provision of food and hygiene items.

Population to be assisted: Based on the assessment, the operation assists the following most vulnerable displaced citizens of Ukraine: expectant and single mothers, multi-child families, elderly and disabled people.

Food security, Nutrition, and Livelihoods																	
Outcome 1: Providing emergency assistance to 1,200 displaced citizens of Ukraine																	
Output 1.1 The nutritional and health needs of 1200 displaced people are met through the distribution of Red Cross food and hygiene vouchers																	
Activities planned	Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Rapid assessment of the beneficiaries’ needs and lists in close coordination with local authorities																	
Contracting a local supplier for the provision of emergency food and hygiene items through vouchers																	
Distribution of vouchers and monitoring of purchasing process																	
Coordination with key state and non-state stakeholders																	
Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey																	
Lessons Learned Workshop																	
Monitoring and reporting																	
Progress towards Outcomes																	
The operation is running as planned except for the extension of timeframe for distribution of food and hygiene vouchers, carrying out Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey and conducting a Lessons Learned Workshop.																	

Shelter and settlements (and household items)

Needs analysis: Target population groups are in need of basic household items.

Population to be assisted: Based on the assessment, the operation will meet emergency household needs of 1,200 vulnerable people.

Shelter and Settlements																	
Outcome 1: Essential household items are prepositioned to meet the needs of 1,200 people																	
Output 1.1 Disaster preparedness stock of Belarus Red Cross used for the initial response to the displaced people is replenished																	
Activities planned	Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Local procurement of selected emergency stock items (blankets, kitchen sets and bed linen)																	
Monitoring of procurement and prepositioning activities																	
Monitoring of the evolving situation to respond to emergency household needs and use the stocks																	
Monitoring and reporting on the use of stocks																	
Progress towards Outcomes																	
The operation is running as planned except for the extension of timeframe for procurement of kitchen sets.																	

Contact information

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