

Floods in the Balkans: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia Situation Report

25 May 2014

SITUATION OVERVIEW



> 2 Million
AFFECTED



> 60 000
DISPLACED



55
DEATHS



> 50 DAMAGED
HEALTH FACILITIES

- Since 13 May 2014 communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia have been severely affected by floods triggered by cyclone Tamara and the associated heavy rainfall, hitting large areas in all three countries.
- The floods are the worst in this area since the beginning of record keeping.
- A large number of landslides were triggered by the floods.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, at least 19 people died, 19 500 people are displaced and 1 million affected.
- In Croatia, two people died, 15 000 are displaced and 30 000 are in need of assistance.
- In Serbia, 33 people died, 32 000 people are displaced and 180 000 in need of assistance, with 1.6 million living in the 39 affected municipalities.
- The water and power supplies are severely hampered in large parts of the affected areas.
- Economic damage is calculated to be in the order of hundreds of millions of euros.
- While the rain has stopped and flood waters are receding in some areas, the danger from flood waters and landslides continues.

HEALTH IMPACTS

- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 40 health facilities in the flood-affected areas are reported to be damaged.
- In Croatia, 7 primary health care centers are damaged.
- In Serbia, at least 14 health facilities are damaged or destroyed.
- Large-scale cleaning, disinfection, fumigation and pest control are urgently required.
- Efforts are highly focused on the prevention and control of communicable diseases, in particular water- and vector-borne diseases, as well as on psychosocial support.

WHO RESPONSE

- In light of the scale, urgency, complexity and context of this natural disaster, WHO has categorized the event as a Grade 2 emergency according to the Emergency Response Framework.
- An Emergency Support Team has been established at the WHO Regional Office for Europe's Emergency Operations Centre to support all three countries through the WHO country offices.
- Following WHO's Emergency Response Framework procedures, and to fulfil WHO's core functions in emergencies, staff from the country offices and the Regional Office have been repurposed and deployed to support the response operations.
- A letter of support from the WHO Regional Director for Europe reached the affected countries and a statement has been posted on the WHO/Europe website (<http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/regional-director/speeches-and-presentations-by-year/2014/statement-floods-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina,-croatia-and-serbia>).
- A water and sanitation specialist from the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health in Bonn, Germany, was immediately deployed to Serbia to work with health authorities on site.
- A number of experts in emergency preparedness and response, environmental health and communicable diseases are being deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia to assist in the aftermath of the disaster.
- More in-depth health needs assessments are under way, but there is still limited access to some of the affected areas due to damage to bridges and roads.
- Three emergency health kits with medicines and supplies to cover the health needs of 90 000 people for one month as well as water purification equipment and water tanks have been shipped from the United Nations humanitarian response depots in Brindisi, Italy and Dubai, United Arab Emirates, with the financial support of Italy, Norway and the Russian Federation.
- Public health advice is being provided to the affected communities through the distribution of leaflets developed jointly by the ministries of health of the three affected countries and WHO. The leaflets are available in local languages and provide information to the general public on the health effects of the floods and



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appropriate preventive measures.

- Post-disaster needs assessments will be conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. WHO will support these assessments by mobilizing expertise from the Regional Office and its headquarters in Geneva to address health sector needs.
- Donor proposals have been submitted to the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to support life-saving health interventions and to the Government of Norway to support flood-affected communities through coordinated public health interventions. Further financial support will be required to expand WHO's support to the affected countries.

HEALTH PRIORITIES

- The lack of access to safe drinking water and the displacement of communities – hosted in temporary shelters – pose a serious risk of outbreaks of communicable diseases. Disease surveillance and early warning systems for communicable diseases in the affected areas need to be strengthened and enhanced.
- Of particular concern is the forecast rise in temperature that is likely to lead to increased mosquito breeding in a region that experienced a West Nile fever outbreak in the summer of 2013.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, dislodged land mines left from the Balkan wars in the 1990s pose a serious risk of injury.
- Industrial and chemical pollution of the flood water and a large number of animal carcasses pose additional health threats.
- Damaged health facilities need to be rehabilitated.
- Mental health and psychosocial support services need to be provided to people affected by the disaster.



Photo source: stefanogiantin/ flickr /cc

More information and advice on preparing for and responding to emergencies, including flooding, can be found on the WHO/Europe website (<http://www.euro.who.int/emergencies>).

For further information, contact:

WHO Regional Office for Europe
UN City, Marmorvej 51
DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark
Email: alert@euro.who.int

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