

Relief Project for the Flood in Serbia **Help through The Union of Baptist Churches in Serbia**

The Situation

The unusually intensive rain (incomparable with any weather patterns since the meteorological institution in Serbia exists) has been coming down for the whole week in Serbia, but also in some other Balkan countries. The rain filled up the great rivers as Sava and Danube, but also many smaller rivers in the basin of those large rivers.

In an extraordinary short period of time the water level raised and dozens of cities and, probably, thousands of towns and villages have been turned into the lakes. The waters caused other problems as well, such as landslides, roads and bridges destruction, ruined the power stations, infrastructure, etc. In less than two days Serbia found itself at the complete collapse and chaos. The worst situation is in towns like Obrenovac, Paraćin, Krupanj, Valjevo, Šabac, etc. Town Obrenovac, with population of about 25.000, became nearly a symbol of this flood because, practically whole of the town turned into a lake. Some 17 people died and there are fears of even more casualties.

Believers

Believers, of course, haven't been exempt from this disaster. In most of these cities, Baptists have either churches, or just believers. Some of them have been badly affected, lost the whole, or most of their property. Such is the case in Paraćin and Obrenovac. But, many of other cities, towns and villages have been greatly hit by flooding and need our help as well.

The need

It is not yet possible to make a complete assessment of the disaster; Serbia will certainly suffer from this calamity years and years to come. However, even now, we can say that this kind of tragedy and the extent of destruction exceeded usual occasional flood disasters or other similar disasters in Serbia. It already seriously affects everyday life in Serbia, but the results of this disaster are going to affect it beyond any estimates we could say as of now. Because, Serbia did not yet get rid of recent economic crisis, it is needless to say that this flood makes the things even worse.

Many people have lost their houses; even more of them lost the whole furniture, cattle, reserves of food, became infected with diseases, etc. In Obrenovac alone, it is hard to find someone who was not affected by the flood; in Paraćin, about 1.500 families have been affected, etc. Serbian Government is doing a lot, trying to solve bigger infrastructural, economic, agricultural and many other issues in flooded areas. Nevertheless, it is up to the individuals, families, institutions, NGO-s and finally the evangelical Churches that will take the main burden of responsibility. Together with you we can make the difference.

Helping first to churches and their members affected by the flood, Baptist Union quickly understood that there is both a great need and the opportunity for getting involved. Therefore, the very first day of the disaster, many Baptists, individually and as church teams got involved in rescue situations. Such was the case of joining the teams which were building the berms on the river banks, collecting food, potable water, clothes and collecting other goods in the churches, opened the churches for the evacuated families, etc. Being actively involved in the relief, Baptist leaders realized the need for going even beyond the local involvement and thus raise the awareness and appeal to the international level, where you our brothers and sisters, believers around the world indicated their readiness to help. Thank you for many inquiries. Among the first, of course, have been neighboring Hungarian Baptist Aid, but many other individuals, as well as the organizations announced their help, or at least readiness to be involved. Many of you have asked us for a Relief Project of Baptist involvement and help, and here it is: our written Project with the proposed Budget.

This Project has been put together after our assessment of the extent of the disaster right in affected areas. Thus it reflects the real, specific and immediate needs, of both believers affected by the flood, but also other people whom we know and have been in contact with. It includes the long-term needs as well. We as the Union of Churches have also estimated our own resources, potential and abilities, considering our size, people we can count with, other resources we have, etc. We are aware that other Christian organizations are doing something as well, and we are connected with them, especially with “The Bread of Life,” in Belgrade, which is ready to work side by side with the Baptist Union, doing the logistics which we are not able to do and thus offering us help. Other evangelical organizations, such as KES, “Love your Neighbor” and “Tabita” are also active in helping and are open for mutual cooperation where it is appropriate, possible and necessary.

Local Resources

We have concluded that in our churches we have great resource in people willing to be involved and help those in need. We also have some facility (some of our churches have opened their buildings for the evacuated families); we also have limited resources in goods and money. All those resources are already very much implemented in this whole situation. Our teams are visiting Paraćin, collective centers and individuals on the daily basis. They collect goods in the churches and distribute them to the designated points, etc. However, much more serious involvement and extensive work greatly exceeds our potential and ability.

Therefore, considering both our own potential and resources, and the readiness of our fellow brothers and sisters internationally, we have formed the following Relief Project consisting of two phases: First, the immediate help to certain number of families in the period of three months; Second, the permanent resettlement of hurting families back to their homes.

THE FIRST PHASE – immediate needs

In both phases we had to limit our help to a realistic and accomplishable extent that, according to our assessment should involve a limited number of families (and individuals) and places. Therefore, we decided to target 4 cities and certain number of other cases outside of these places. The targeted cities are: Obrenovac, Paraćin, Kraljevo and Krupanj. We have selected those places as a priority, not only because they have been most severely affected by the flood, but secondly, because we have the believers there. Partly different is Krupanj, which is also severely damaged, but although we don't have a church there, we have some good contacts.

For the first phase, we hence decided to limit our help to 50 families in each of those cities and 50 families outside of these four locations (whom we know, and who will probably be omitted from other helping agencies). We would like to help these 250 families in the period of next three months. This would be by providing for them on the monthly basis one parcel to each member of the family. We have also made the list of most necessary items that should be contained in that parcel (some canned food, dry goods, some hygiene items, disinfectant, some medicines etc.) all needed for the flood disaster. If we consider that each of these families have at least 3 members that brings us to the number of 750 people. Three months care for them amounts to 2,250 parcels. We estimated that the value of each parcel would be around EU 25.00. This brought us to the sum of **EU 56,250.00** for this first phase of our relief ministry of immediate help.

THE SECOND PHASE – permanent resettlement

In this phase we would narrow our focus even more, to the number of 20 families from each of these 4 cities, + 20 extra families from other places, which brings us to the number of 100 families. We would select those families whose houses are destroyed or seriously damaged and whose furniture, cattle and equipment were destroyed, and help them to build or fully renovate their houses and replenish the simple and most needed furniture.

We estimate that the most needed building materials for a modest house could cost up to EU 6,000.00, and the most needed furniture will cost about EU 3,000.00. Which means that we would help those people with such a need with EU 9,000.00 per family. We are aware that a house could cost even more, but we would limit our contribution to that sum; which brings us to the total cost of the second phase (permanent resettlement) to **EU 900,000.00**.

Let us also make another visionary proposal at this point concerning the Kingdom of God. In three of the above-mentioned cities we have the Church planters and some believers, but not the Church buildings. Let us pray, as the Gospel is presented in the tangible way, that one day the Church buildings will be built, so that these people may have proper worship places. So far they have done it in their homes or rented garage. May we ask you to pray with us for this glorious crown of this Relief Project? We did not budget this vision in this Project, but will as the time passes.

PERSONELL-TRANSPORT-EQUIPMENT

In order to implement this project, we need a team of at least three persons who will care, coordinate and carry out this project. They will regularly travel to those places, buy the items necessary for the distribution, organize their packing, transport them to those places and organize its distribution. We estimate that this team will be needed for the period of 4 months, and they have to receive a minimal monthly support of EU 350.00 for that. That would cost in total **EU 4,200.00** for the whole period.

For that work we need a used vehicle (used van, still in a good condition) costing up to **EU 12,000.00**. Considering that in that period of time, this vehicle will make about 60,000 km, we estimate that the fuel for the transport will cost about **EU 9,000.00**.

We also plan for the second phase to form at least 5 *work teams* from our churches, on voluntary basis, for the construction work on damaged houses and infrastructure. We estimate that a team should have about 5 people, and they would work intensively about 2 months on one project. Although, they will join the team on voluntary basis, we think that those teams should be financially independent from the local situations, and that the people who sign up should be rewarded for their participation, with about half of an official daily allowance, which in Serbia is about EU 300.00 monthly. This would cost EU 15,000.00. Their daily food will cost about EU 12,000.00 (EU 200 daily); which brings the work teams expenses to **EU 27,000.00**.

And finally, we already have many self-organized, or church organized *cleanup groups* that travel on the daily basis to Paraćin, Kraljevo, and soon will travel to other places and will help to clean and dry damp houses. They also have travel/food expenses, which so far have been somehow provided from locals or from church resources. But it is not possible in all cases and will not be possible on a longer-term basis. A fund of about **EU 4,000.00** would be very welcomed for this purpose.

For the cleanup efforts the main hygiene and sanitary supplies are necessary like some *disinfectants* and antiseptic materials, rubber gloves as well as *drying fans and equipment*. We think that about 10 sets of that equipment would enable us to do that work efficiently, and we estimate that would cost about **EU 6,000.00**.

If any of the above expenses are compensated by possible parcel or other donation (such as for instance, canned meat, a vehicle, etc.) that would decrease our financial projection.

Finally, let us say that we would provide you with the full accountability and reports as to materialization of this above disclosed Project. We are willing to abide by your principles of accountability and thus be responsible to you, our beloved people and in the first place to our God.

Hence, this is our Project and by implementing it we hope it would help both the believers, but also good number of other people, to overcome the tragic results of the flood in Serbia. At the same time make an effective Christian testimony to the people of Serbia and the society we live in. Come and help us to serve our beloved people in Serbia!

PROPOSED BUDGET SPECIFICATION in EU

Phase I:

56,250.00 – Humanitarian parcels for 2,250 persons (3 months care for 250 families)
4,200.00 – For the Union's relief team (for 4 months)
12,000.00 – Vehicle for the distribution
9,000.00 – Fuel

81,450.00 TOTAL

Phase II:

900,000.00 – Renovation and furniture for 100 houses
27,000.00 – Work teams
4,000.00 – Cleanup teams
6,000.00 – Disinfectants, antiseptic materials and drying fans and equipment

937,000.00 TOTAL

On behalf of UBACS



Dr. Ondrej Franka, president



Dane Vidović, general secretary