

Bosnia and Herzegovina 2014 Floods Disaster

Case Study – Maglaj May 2014 Floods

Background

- Due to extremely heavy rainfall leading up to 14 May 2014, when a quarter of the average annual rainfall fell in a period of 4 days (*approx. 300 l/m²*), water in the vicinity of the spring of the river Bosna and its tributaries burst their banks and flooded the surrounding areas in the Sarajevo Canton. This was followed by a flood wave which affected areas downstream, all the way to the confluence of the river Bosna with the river Sava at Šamac.
- The 2014 floods are the biggest humanitarian disaster in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the end of the war in the former Yugoslavia. Over 90,000 people lost their homes, and a large number of schools, health centres and other buildings were damaged or destroyed. The floods also caused landslides which dislocated previously marked mine fields.
- The preliminary emergency phase, where the main objective was to save the lives of flood victims, was essentially completed 10 days after the occurrence of critical flooding, subsequent to which the disaster recovery and consequence-mitigation phase commenced.

Background

BiH 2014 floods disaster (data provided by the Ministry of Security of BiH)

- 73 municipalities (50%) in BiH affected by the floods
- 100,000 homes damaged or destroyed
- 230 schools and hospitals damaged or destroyed
- 66,080 persons evacuated
- 7,176 landslides activated
- Total damage estimated at 2 billion EUR

Maglaj 2014 floods disaster (Municipal report on the 2014 floods)

- 1,686 households affected (5,396 individuals)
- 296 small and medium enterprises damaged or destroyed
- 70 landslides activated
- 49 houses entirely destroyed due to the landslides
- Total damage estimated at 85 million EUR



Photographs



OSCE Response

- In the aftermath of the floods, post-flood OSCE Temporary Premises have been established in Bijeljina, Maglaj, Orašje, Prijedor and Šamac
- As of 1 September, only the Temporary Premises in Maglaj remains open
- The objective of Temporary Premises has been to monitor political, economic and social developments in flood-affected areas, provide logistical and technical assistance to local authorities and recovery/relief organizations/agencies, and help strengthen early-warning capacities

- Following the emergency phase and the first recovery phase Municipality of Maglaj voiced an interest in assessing the situation, concerned with documenting the details and identifying lessons learned in the aftermath of the floods and resulting landslides which dislocated previously-marked mine fields



The Case Study

- Recognizing the OSCE as a valuable and reliable partner in the field, Municipality of Maglaj approached the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and asked for assistance to local authorities in conducting a flood-related case study with the aim of establishing an objective overview of the situation and Municipal response to the May 2014 floods
- In technical terms the consultant contracted by the OSCE used the Risk Vulnerability Assessment (RVA) methodology
- By the decision of the Mayor of Maglaj, the local authorities appointed a working group consisting of local experts to support the work of the consultant in his technical assessment, as well as through wider consultation with other stakeholders



Objectives of the Study

- To document the different aspects of the the Maglaj May 2014 flood disaster, with a view to increasing disaster management capacities and flood resilience of the Maglaj Municipality;
- To improve the overall disaster preparedness of the Maglaj Municipality through identification of weaknesses and proposal of necessary measures and actions;
- To identify lessons learnt by analysing the chronology of events and preparedness of all municipal structures before, during and after the disaster;
- To translate the proposed measures into projects to be implemented by local, national and international institutions and organizations.



Findings

- Multiple hazards and vulnerability factors exist in the Maglaj Municipality (frequent floods, landslides, drought, forest fires, unexploded ordnances, etc.);
- The Municipality's disaster prevention and mitigation capacities as well as environment protection policies are very poorly organized, insufficiently financed and inadequately managed, owing in large part to the overall lack of integrated risk management in BiH;
- Local flood hazard planning, watershed management and impact assessment and prevention is structurally underdeveloped – both infrastructure and human resources;
- Timely and tailor-made intervention by international organizations, including the EU, UNDP, USAID, CRS, Islamic Relief, Hilfswerk, Tika, and the OSCE, greatly facilitated rapid recovery of communities after the floods.



Conclusions and recommendations

- Use the lessons learnt from the May 2014 flooding of the Maglaj Municipality to prevent and adequately respond to future disasters;
- Start developing effective flood preparedness and mitigation system by enhancing co-operation, co-ordination and information sharing between institutions, citizens and authorities at all levels;
- Improve the understanding of local policymakers of the relevance of managing risk in connection to land-use management, economic and housing development in flood-prone areas and deforestation to increasing the Municipality's flood resilience;

Conclusions and recommendations

- Strengthen the Municipality's emergency response capacity to manage natural disaster risks - providing adequate facilities, equipment and training for the functioning of civil protection services;
- Develop an effective flood alert, forecast and warning system in the Municipality to better detect the risk of a flood-triggering situation;
- Conduct a targeted public campaign to raise awareness among citizens on the role of the municipal civil protection unit in emergency situations.

Steps forward

- After intensive consultations with the local stakeholders, the Study was adopted by Maglaj Municipal Assembly as an official Municipal Document
- The Study is accessible to the public on the Municipal webpage
- The Study will be presented at wider regional forums to support the improvement of the general country civil protection systems

Photographs

