

# Stories of Impact

*A series highlighting achievements in disaster risk management*

## Building the Foundation for Resilience in Serbia



**REGION:** EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

**FOCUS:** RESILIENT RECOVERY

**COUNTRY:** SERBIA



### RESULTS:

- GFDRR and the World Bank supported the establishment of the National Disaster Risk Management Program (NDRMP), an umbrella framework for attracting funds and coordinating efforts;
- Since the 2014 floods, more than \$70 million has been raised through NDRMP to build capacity for the disaster risk and crisis management system, representing a major shift on the part of the Serbian government from a reactive to a proactive approach;
- GFDRR has leveraged \$10 million supporting NDRMP priorities and resilience efforts in Serbia. This includes development of a national DRM Plan and DRM legislation. Further efforts are planned in strengthening disaster information, preparedness, early warning, and disaster risk financing.

Following extremely heavy rainfall in May 2014, Serbia experienced its most severe flooding in more than a century. In the aftermath, the government conducted a recovery needs assessment (RNA) with support from the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the European Union (EU). The RNA revealed that the floods affected 22% of the population, and estimated recovery and reconstruction needs at nearly \$1.5 billion.

Informed by the assessment and supported by the World Bank, EU, UN, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the government launched a National Disaster Risk Management Program (NDRMP) to build resilience, reduce disaster risks, and mobilize recovery funding for priority sectors.



## CONTEXT:

The 2014 floods illustrated the country's vulnerability to the risks of flooding, forcing 32,000 families out of their homes, claiming 57 lives, and contributing to the onset of a recession. Among the hardest hit sectors were energy and agriculture, while flood protection infrastructure suffered as well, leading to increased concerns over power and food shortages and leaving the country even more exposed to subsequent flooding.

## APPROACH:

GFDRR, the World Bank, and other partners supported Serbia's efforts to move from a focus on response towards prevention and preparedness. Technical assistance was channeled to priority areas, including:

- Developing new legal and operational frameworks for DRM, and supporting Serbia's intention to become the first country in the world with legislation fully aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030;
- Prioritizing risk identification, preparedness, and early warning, including strengthening flood forecasting and hydro-meteorological monitoring by purchasing equipment, telecoms hardware and software, and producing a high-resolution digital terrain model for flood risk mapping;
- Enhancing the government's fiscal resilience, including advising on building a comprehensive financial protection strategy, and a tentative agreement on the provision of a Development Policy Loan with a Catastrophic Deferred Drawdown Option (Cat-DDO) that will provide up to \$100 million in rapid liquidity in the event of a disaster.

## NEXT STEPS:

GFDRR support has helped strengthen Serbia's DRM capacity, but more remains to be done. Moving forward, the programmatic approach will:

- Enhance a framework for implementing the National Action Plan for DRM;
- Improve risk identification with development of a flood risk assessment methodology and acquisition of LiDAR surveying technology;
- Build capacity for early warning and preparedness with the acquisition of monitoring equipment and by analyzing and communicating risk information and early warning gaps;
- Strengthen financial resilience by establishing a fiscal risk unit and putting in place a Cat-DDO.

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\*ALL MONETARY VALUES IN USD



*"With the National Disaster Risk Management program Serbia is moving from a response focused approach to disasters to a more proactive risk reduction way of securing the country's sustainable development."*

– Mr. Marko Blagojević, Director of the Public Investment Management Office

## LESSONS LEARNED:

**Getting the government involved in tailoring the project approach to their specific needs can help to ensure effectiveness.** GFDRR and the World Bank have supported and helped shape the government-led DRM program, which has become a blueprint for further activities, including flood risk assessment for flood-prone areas, the design of an End-to-End Early Warning System, and further investments to target other hazards.

**Transparency is central to successful implementation.** It was evident that NDRMP's results will depend on effective channeling of funds raised from donors to the sectors most in need. Transparency fosters a more efficient use of resources, enhances credibility, and strengthens public confidence. The Office of Reconstruction and Flood Relief (now under the Public Investment Management Office) of Serbia has paid special attention to sharing all the necessary information to stakeholders on investments and activities through their website.