

Stories of Impact

A series highlighting achievements in disaster risk management

Building Back Better in Bosnia and Herzegovina



REGION: EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA
FOCUS: RESILIENT RECOVERY
COUNTRY: BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



RESULTS:

- The Recovery Needs Assessment's findings, which estimated damages and losses at \$2.7 billion, leveraged \$100 million from the World Bank IDA's Crisis Response Window to finance emergency goods and rehabilitate high-priority infrastructure.
- More than 105,000 people received emergency assistance, including agricultural goods (seeds, irrigation equipment, and greenhouses) to restore livelihoods and received construction materials to rebuild damaged houses.
- More than 500,000 people, nearly half of whom are women, have benefitted from rehabilitated infrastructure and flood protection in affected areas since the 2014 floods.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

In May 2014, unprecedented rainfall in Bosnia and Herzegovina affected more than 1 million people (25% of the population), and the resulting heavy flooding caused estimated damages and losses equivalent to nearly 15% of the country's GDP. In a country where one fifth of the workforce is employed in agriculture, river floods inundated newly-plowed fields and ravaged 81 municipalities, severely disrupting the economy and imperiling livelihoods.

In response to this crisis, a Recovery Needs Assessment (RNA) was launched by the Governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina with support from the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), the World Bank, the European Union, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This resulting assessment was used to quantify damages and provide a robust reconstruction and recovery plan for effective rehabilitation of energy supply, water and sanitation, transport, and other vital infrastructure and services in flood-affected areas.



GFDRR
Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery

CONTEXT:

With more than 2,500 km² of territory prone to flooding, Bosnia and Herzegovina is particularly vulnerable to extreme precipitation and river basin flooding, which have intensified in recent years. Despite improved emergency services, floods and landslides represent a recurring risk, as seen in December 2010 and May 2014. At the moment, the country's annual average population affected by flooding exceeds 100,000, and the annual average impact on GDP is nearly \$600 million. The most productive regions are also among the most exposed areas of the country as they are located around the Sava, Drina, Bosna and Vrbas rivers, which have many agricultural holdings, industrial facilities, energy plants, and touristic sites.

APPROACH:

After the destructive flooding, the RNA helped the Governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina to quantify damages and, equally important, provided timely technical assistance to launch sustainable reconstruction efforts. By identifying opportunities for instilling disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation consideration into national and subnational recovery and development strategies, this expert assistance was able to:

- Facilitate donor coordination and prioritize the most flood-affected areas. Following the RNA, donor efforts, including the World Bank financed Flood Emergency Recovery Project, focused on rehabilitating regional roads and railways and flood protection infrastructure, as well as local infrastructure such as rural roads, water and sanitation, schools, hospitals and other priority infrastructure and services at a community level.
- Support “build back better” principle. In the design and rehabilitation or reconstruction of priority infrastructure, improving construction and efficiency standards alongside infrastructure robustness to future flooding and rainfall-induced landslide events, was particularly emphasized.
- Ensure that gender-responsive preparedness considerations play a key role in recovery planning, including mapping vulnerable groups and expanding SOS telephone lines.

NEXT STEPS:

Given projections of increased flooding due to climate change, GFDRR, the World Bank, and their partners will ensure that post-flood recovery efforts reinforce the country's disaster resilience by capitalizing on its existing multi-sector engagements in disaster risk management, and putting in place comprehensive flood protection and preparedness measures. With more ongoing efforts dedicated to reconstruct affected regional and local infrastructure ongoing, the Floods Emergency Recovery Project has provided assistance to 500,000 people in flood-affected areas. Technical assistance will continue to strengthen civil protection capacity as well as regional cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro to improve integrated river basin flood risk management.



“I was born and raised here and I can’t remember the water ever being that high. When the floods happened, it was night. In the morning, we saw what happened. Anyone who has seen that will always remember. You don’t believe anyone will help, however, we received a lot of support. We were motivated by all the help we received, and we recovered fast – in about a year.”

– Sudo Forto, farmer, Gorazde, Bosnia and Herzegovina

LESSONS LEARNED:

Strengthening resilience against future shocks demands that early considerations should be made for reducing inequalities that create vulnerability. For example, resources dedicated to women's economic and political empowerment, and for equal participation in all disaster-related forums, will be key to building back better to reduce future disaster risks.

Partnering with local governments in identifying rehabilitation measures increases ownership and accountability. Assigning the decision making authority as close as possible to affected persons improved local ownership and enhanced the accountability of local authorities. Building on the RNA's recommendations, the resulting World Bank-funded project (Floods Emergency Recovery Project) enabled national and local governments to set priorities among pre-selected intervention options in order to improve living conditions within their respective communities.