

RCHF EMERGENCY INTERVENTION IN DOROHOI

In 2005, 2006 and 2008 the north eastern area of Romania suffered severe flooding resulting in the loss of human life, and damage to domestic property and personal belongings of families affected, infrastructure (including roads and bridges), livestock and massive amounts of crops and RCHF was able to provide help to families affected in Iasi and Bacau counties in those times.



On the evening of 28th June 2010, in Dorohoi town after days of extreme rain, the river Buhai which was already above danger level after weeks of torrential and extreme rainstorms, broke its banks sending a wall of water over 2m high across the residential area of Dorohoi, and over half the small town was affected by immediate flooding. Mains services were cut, roads, bridges and even rail infrastructure was affected and brought to a halt because of the high level of water and debris the now flooded the area. Lives were lost as local people tried to get out of the path of the

water that had invaded their homes. Many dwellings were destroyed, and business premises, as water hit roof level, and others were so badly damaged that they now need to be demolished, with few being left repairable after being hit by such a high volume of water and debris. A countless number of animals drowned and, again, large areas of agricultural production were destroyed. RCHF was quickly on scene to provide emergency support and was shocked by what we both saw and faced. In previous years we had helped in times of national disasters with extreme flooding but this was far worse as a wall of water hit the old residential area at night thus creating havoc on a scale not seen before in Romanian flooding. In many dwellings the force of the water literally smashed in windows and knocked whole rear walls out as it rushed through the dwellings and as a result many simply collapsed into the deep muddy water. Families complete with children and pensioners alike were rescued from rooftops in the all-nightlong rescue operation and by next morning it was realized that 7 Dorohoi residents including a child had died unable to escape the rush of water. By daylight the tragedy could be seen by all with dwellings fallen into the water and others so badly damaged that they would be demolished quickly.



The Dorohoi rescue operation and inside a flood damaged dwelling with water line on the wall

The statistics of the Dorohoi disaster show that 7 people were killed, 2,800 people were evacuated in the night all in a state of trauma and shock, 285 dwellings destroyed in total and the next step for RCHF was to help preserve life that had been saved. Fresh drinking water was essential as all of the street wells were flooded and unusable, so we helped with fresh bottled water supplies and via partners brought in quickly over 30 tons of aid including more bottled water supplies, boxes of fresh food, clothing and replacement beds and mattresses, complete with clean bedding.



Brian Douglas inspecting flood damaged dwellings in Dorohoi June 2010



In the photographs on this page one can see the destruction caused by the wall of water, slime, mud and debris after it hit Dorohoi residential dwellings.



RCHF aid arrives in Dorohoi

Thanks to an appeal quickly made by RCHF to our friends and partners we were able to alleviate serious problems in the early days after the Dorohoi disaster. This was essential as those who were left homeless has lost not only their homes but also everything they ever owned and many stood up in the only clothing they had as all had been destroyed by the raging muddy water. Even trying to salvage some clothing was impossible as there was no clean water to wash items in and the risk of infection was so high that all had to be destroyed in the majority of cases. Many were living rough as there was a lack of accommodation, whilst a few lucky other families sought shelter with relatives unaffected who lived on higher ground in the small town. Just 30 container homes arrived for support from the authorities far short of what was required and the rest of the families were left to fend for themselves. RCHF spoke with the Dorohoi Mayors offices and though they were doing all they could to help were being hampered by a complete lack of support with urgent aid from Government in Bucharest. This created frustration and anger as residents had no idea what was or was not happening and we therefore developed relations with the Dorohoi Vice Mayor and continue to collaborate today with the Mayors office, In doing so we can act as a go between in many cases so that residents are informed of the actions of the Mayors officers on their behalf and also RCHF itself can compliment the relief work in a positive and correct legal manner.



RCHF aid arrives in Dorohoi early July 2010 and is distributed street by street to refugee homeless families. Clean water, food, beds and bedding, plus essential furniture items were all distributed as well as children's toys and sanitary items including detergents and disinfectants all donated by our partner's within dorcas.

Second RCHF refugee aid transport arrives in Dorohoi again in July 2010



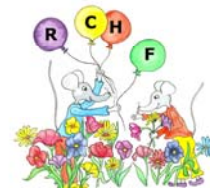
The RCHF car awaits the transport in Dorohoi 21st July 2010 and with volunteer help unloads the vital aid which included heavy replacement furniture, clothing, food and water, plus more sanitary supplies to help to continue to attain good healthcare standards for refugee families.



A local Dorohoi man helps us unload the transport and women affected by the tragedy are given first choice of replacement furniture and aid supplies.



Men with horses and carts arrive to help deliver the aid with the affected families.



Hold ups and delays leave refugees stranded without accommodation

The incompetence of the Romanian authorities in Bucharest to act and support the urgent needs of all those affected by the Dorohoi tragedy has been ongoing and RCHF has in all this time continued to help and support with ongoing essential aid and supplies to affected families. No more portable accommodation was sent from Bucharest and refugee families were for want of a better word forgotten by the Bucharest authorities. In September with the onset of autumn we still had families living in hastily erected shacks made from wooden debris from the flooding and others living in dwellings that were infected, with walls blown out and in a dangerous condition. Once Dorohoi was no longer main news on the TV it was forgotten and the residents also, but not by RCHF as we have stayed there and will remain with these families who are innocent victims and will support them all we can until every family is re housed.

Re building work started in September but despite all the fine efforts of the cash strapped local council and Habitat for Humanity volunteers there was little progress as all of the building materials were held up in a litigation in Bucharest! This took weeks to clear and in all this time the weather got colder and wetter, thus adding to the trauma of these families living as refugees in Dorohoi. In all of this time families continue to suffer.



A constant lack of building materials has hampered reconstruction. Mid September saw just cement and building blocks onsite.

By October the situation hadn't improved, nor had it by November or December when the winter snow arrived thus causing building work to stop as cement and concrete cant set in sub zero temperatures, thus no replacement dwellings will be completed before at the earliest spring 2011.

This leaves the refugee families literally out in the bitter cold throughout the hard winter months.

In Dorohoi temperatures drop in the winter months to minus 30c and any family without heated accommodation is in danger of suffering from serious health problems, especially young children and senior citizens.



RCHF STOP GAP ACCOMODATION

By September it was clear to RCHF staff that there would be no replacement dwellings for the refugees in Dorohoi and in consultation with Rupert Wolfe Murray we decided to purchase arctic quality tents to use as stop gap accommodation for refugee families as a way of keeping a family dry and warm. The tents found by Rupert at the Decathlon store in Bucharest were of a high quality and able to withstand over 100 liters of rain per square meter in any storm, plus had thermal insulating properties, came with 2 double mattresses and a pump, plus the tents have 2 bedrooms and a living are and we managed to gain a portable lantern also for each tent. By early September we had families installed in these stopgap tent accommodations in Dorohoi and both Brian and Rupert spent days in Dorohoi erecting the tents and installing families within them with local volunteer support. All of the families were grateful and reported sleeping well and being warm.



In the photos above is a pensioner couple with their temporary tent home and refugee children also in their tent home in Dorohoi in September 2010.



In this photograph taken on a sub zero days in mid December 2010 in Dorohoi we see a refugee family tent home in the snow.

By the end of December with extreme sub zero temperatures some families remained in their RCHF tent homes whilst others erected shacks with small heating devices to help keep themselves warm in. For all these wonderful families the winter has brought added pain and trauma in Dorohoi

RCHF is thankful for the kind support also in Dorohoi of Jan Glas, Samuel Onn, Rupert Wolfe Murray, Andra Miron, Heineken, Malteser, TPA Horworth, KAOS UEA, Ampleforth College, Castle Craig and KKE –BV who have all helped us provide support for the Dorohoi victims and their families.

Christmas cheer from RCHF to Dorohoi families

This Christmas RCHF made certain that the refugee families worst affected and still homeless in every sense of the word received special attention. Father Christmas visited with RCHF presents for children and buckets of much needed food supplies for parents and older people and the response was so overwhelming with tears of joy and instant happiness for these families who had not smiled for such a long time.



In 2011 we have a lot of work to do in Dorohoi as there are many needs for all of these families and RCHF will be there with them, helping where we can and supporting in every way possible as well as continuing our other projects.

You can join in also by offering to help these Dorohoi refugees via a donation to RCHF specifically for the Dorohoi aid program.

For further details without obligation please contact
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