

REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
GOVERNMENT
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Answers to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on climate change and the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of the child

Respect for children's rights in emergency situations is of particular relevance, as well as avoiding violations of children's rights, due to the fact that emergencies may increase the risk of negative impact on children's rights and that certain groups of children may be more vulnerable, as, for example, children with difficulties in development and children with disabilities, migrant children, children without parental care, children who are travelling through Serbia unaccompanied by parents and others. For this reason we believe that respect and support to the rights of children affected by emergency situations is of particular significance, as is raising awareness of the increased risk of violence, abuse and exploitation of children in such situations because children have a right to grow up in a safe and healthy environment.

Cooperation with humanitarian organisations and the non-governmental sector is also of paramount importance in emergency response and protection of children's rights. However, it is also of immense significance to improve human and institutional capacities in order to reduce the impact of climate change and adapt to climate change.

In 2011, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Regulation on compulsory means and equipment for personal, mutual and collective protection against natural and other disasters, which determines the type, as well as the minimum amount of means and equipment for the implementation of personal, mutual and collective protection against natural disasters, technical and technological disasters, accidents and disasters caused by terrorism, wars and other major accidents. State authorities, autonomous provinces, local self-government bodies, business organisations, other legal persons, citizens and owners of residential buildings are responsible for securing assets and equipment.

In order to protect and save the lives and health of people, material goods and the environment or to mitigate the impact of certain effects or dangers, owners or users of buildings in which there are employees or a larger number of people, as well as objects containing substances, goods or assets that represent a particular threat to life, health or which may cause an accident, are required to purchase and maintain in proper condition means and equipment for the implementation of personal, mutual and collective protection of people in these facilities.

Over the course of 2011, the Government of the Republic of Serbia passed the Regulation on the content and the method of preparing plans for protection and rescue in emergency

situations. This regulation regulates the content and manner of preparation of the Plan of Protection and Rescue in Emergency Situations at the level of the Republic of Serbia, state administration bodies, autonomous provinces, local self-government units, and companies and other legal entities and organisations. The plan is being prepared on the basis of the Threat assessment of natural disasters and other catastrophes. The assessment is a document identifying hazards, sources and forms of threats, possible effects and consequences, and it takes into consideration capabilities and resources to respond to dangers caused by natural disasters and other disasters, and protect and save lives and health of people, animals, material and cultural goods and the environment. Bearers of plans' preparation are required to continuously monitor and assess the risk of natural disasters and other disasters in accordance with changes in vulnerability assessments and adjusted or updated plans.

The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs in 2014 issued the Instruction on the treatment of social welfare institutions in conditions of declared or undeclared emergencies provoked by emergency situations. This ministry has assessed that in order to provide timely, comprehensive, equal and legal treatment of social welfare institutions, it is necessary (social work centres, institutions for the accommodation of beneficiaries- infants, children, youth, adults, the elderly and persons with disabilities in physical and mental development, as well as adult mentally ill persons) in conditions of a declared and undeclared emergency situation caused by extraordinary events (natural disaster or event that causes general danger to people, property and the environment) to issue special instructions governing the organisation of work and responsibilities of these institutions, in accordance with the Law on State Administration.

According to this instruction, social welfare institutions are obliged to immediately after the declaration of the formation or unannounced occurrence of a emergency situation caused by extraordinary events (natural disaster or event causing general danger to people, property and the environment), provide all their professional, financial, technical and other resources for the implementation of measures to protect people, property and other assets from the dangers caused by exceptional occurrences.

The work of institutions of social protection in conditions of a declared and undeclared emergency situation caused by extraordinary events shall be executed in accordance with decisions and in coordination with the headquarters for emergency situations in local self-governments.

The Centre for Social Work is obliged to visit all persons in the area of its territorial jurisdiction that were evacuated from their place of residence and, in cooperation with the crisis headquarters of the local self-government, the Red Cross and the health service, provide for urgent needs of evacuees/displaced persons in the fields of safety, care health and fulfilment of basic needs.

Experts of the Centre for Social Work shall organise special teams in conjunction with activists of the Red Cross and certain CSOs operating in an affected area and ensure the provision of psychosocial support services for evacuated/displaced persons, especially children and youth.

Furthermore, according to this instruction, experts of the Centre for Social Work together with experts in centres for foster care and adoption must visit all foster families and children accommodated within the territory of its territorial jurisdiction as soon as circumstances permit, determine the state of their security and emergency needs in the areas of security, health care and fulfilment of basic living conditions, and also ensure the satisfaction of those urgent needs. They must make a tour of the most vulnerable target groups, namely households with single elderly and disabled with limited movement and handicapped persons, and determine the state of their security and urgent needs.

Social welfare institutions for accommodation of beneficiaries are obliged, in accordance with objective circumstances, to make available capacities for the reception and care of evacuees/displaced persons. Furthermore, all their reserves of food, personal hygiene items, hygiene products for maintenance of premises and equipment, medical supplies and medicines, as well as equipment - clothing, footwear, bedding, beds (without jeopardising the realisation of its core business) must be made available to the headquarters for emergency situations in local self-governments. In addition, institutions for accommodation of beneficiaries are required to also make available all their professional, administrative and technical capacities (without jeopardizing the realization of its core business) to the headquarters for emergency situations in local self-governments.

Bearing in mind that Serbia in 2014 was faced with large-scale floods and their catastrophic consequences, appropriate measures were implemented in the field of social protection measures to protect the rights of beneficiaries, both adults and children, in emergency situations. Employees from the Division of Family Care and Social Protection of the line ministry visited all social protection institutions for accommodation of beneficiaries after the floods with the aim of reviewing the conditions, operational problems, missing equipment, as well as examining possibilities and the need for urgent action.

It is necessary to monitor the protection of the rights of children in areas affected by floods or other climatic changes (storm winds, earthquakes, etc.) and issue recommendations on giving priority to the care of families with children, for example, during the renewal of the housing fund and providing care, the priority should be given to families with children and records should be kept on children and psychosocial measures, humanitarian, health and other interventions, which would enable comprehensive monitoring of the measures taken to protect the rights and interests of each child, as well as at the national level for possible future crises. Special attention must be paid to the needs of young children and infants.

It is necessary to pay more attention to the treatment of municipal waste due to the threat to children's health, as well as setting up mobile telephony base stations and so-forth on or near facilities where children reside (in the field of social protection these are primarily homes for children without parental care, children with disabilities and children with behavioural disorders).

It is important to provide appropriate psychological support to children in emergency situations, as well as organise educational workshops for parents and provide them with help and assistance in identifying psychological problems in children. The right of children to participate should be respected in all of the above, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Also, children's rights and the rights of their families should be included in plans for emergency situations and elimination of damage caused to the environment and the health of children.