

Alert note*Serbia drought, August 2026***Completed by:** Ilija Radovanovic, Borka Vrekic**Date completed:** 11.08.2026.**Forum:** -**Type of emergency:** Drought and Heat-Related Drinking Water Emergency in Kraljevo, Novi Sad & Plandište**1. The nature of the emergency**

Serbia is experiencing an exceptionally dry summer and severe hydrological stress, with prolonged high temperatures and reduced availability of water affecting a number of communities, according to the [national hydrological service](#). In the territory of the City of Kraljevo, the situation is particularly concerning in rural areas where public water supply is not systematically available and many communities depend on small local village water systems and individual wells. These systems have historically experienced significant difficulties during prolonged summer droughts and periods of increased water demand. The most acute situation identified to date is affecting a vulnerable Roma settlement in Kraljevo, where more than 60 families, approximately 300 people, are currently reported to be without access to drinking water. At the same time, local civil protection data identify additional rural settlements with a combined population of 3,829 people as particularly vulnerable to drinking water shortages. The emergency is therefore considered a slow-onset drought-related water crisis requiring immediate relief for households already without drinking water, combined with preventive action in other high-risk communities.

This [prolonged extreme heat](#) is associated with very low Danube water levels creating increased risks for vulnerable communities. In Novi Sad, reduced water availability is particularly concerning for households in substandard Roma settlements, where access to safe drinking water and basic services may already be limited. Prolonged high temperatures further increase the risks of dehydration, heat exhaustion and other heat-related health problems.

In the Municipality of Plandište, extreme temperatures are creating heightened risks for vulnerable people, particularly older persons and children with developmental disabilities who are already reached through home-help services. Their age, health status, disabilities and/or reduced mobility may limit their ability to cope with prolonged heat and increase their dependence on external assistance. An additional emerging concern is the ongoing wildfire in the Deliblatska Peščara area in South Banat. While no direct impact on Plandište has been confirmed, the municipality's relative proximity to the affected area creates a potential risk of smoke and deteriorating air quality, as well as possible disruption to local mobility and services. The combination of wildfire-related risks and extreme heat could further aggravate the vulnerability of older people, children with developmental disabilities and other persons with reduced mobility or chronic health conditions.

2. The impact and scale of the emergency

Based on the initial assessment, the situation is considered a small-scale localized humanitarian emergency, with the potential for further deterioration if drought conditions continue. The immediate geographical focus is the territory of the City of Kraljevo, with particular attention to a vulnerable Roma settlement currently affected by the interruption of drinking water supply and to rural communities dependent on local village water systems and individual wells.

More than 60 Roma families, representing approximately 300 people, are currently reported to be without access to drinking water. This community already faces multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities, including poverty, social exclusion, inadequate infrastructure and limited access to essential public services, significantly reducing households' capacity to cope with an additional crisis.

In addition, an assessment provided by the City of Kraljevo Department for Civil Protection identifies 11 rural settlements with a combined population of 3,829 people as particularly vulnerable to drinking water shortages. Among them are 593 minors and 1,112 people over the age of 65, demonstrating a substantial presence of population groups particularly vulnerable to dehydration, heat-related illness and deterioration of hygiene conditions. The emergency is affecting vulnerable populations in two municipalities too: Novi Sad and Plandište with an estimated 310 people directly prioritized for assistance. In [Novi Sad](#), approximately 50 vulnerable Roma households, comprising around 240 individuals, are affected by the combined effects of prolonged extreme temperatures and very low Danube water levels. The impact is particularly significant in substandard Roma settlements, where access to safe drinking water

and basic services may already be limited. Households with children, older people, persons with disabilities and limited financial resources are likely to face the greatest difficulties in securing sufficient drinking water and food during the period of extreme heat.

In the Municipality of Plandište, approximately 70 vulnerable beneficiaries are affected by prolonged high temperatures, including older people and children with developmental disabilities who receive EHO home-help services. These groups are at increased risk of dehydration, heat exhaustion and deterioration of existing health conditions, particularly where reduced mobility or dependence on assistance limits their ability to respond to the extreme weather conditions.

The ongoing [wildfire in Deliblatska Peščara](#) represents an additional and potentially compounding hazard for the Plandište area. According to the [Government of the Republic of Serbia](#), as of 9 August 2026, the wildfire had affected more than 1,500 hectares, with more than 400 responders involved in firefighting operations. Although no direct impact on Plandište has been confirmed, the proximity of the affected area creates a potential for indirect impacts, including smoke, deteriorating air quality and possible disruption of mobility and local services. These factors could further increase health risks for already vulnerable beneficiaries, particularly older people and children with developmental disabilities and persons with reduced mobility or chronic health conditions.

The scale of the emergency is therefore defined not only by the number of people directly targeted, but also by the cumulative nature of the hazards, as prolonged extreme heat, water scarcity and the potential effects of the nearby wildfire may reinforce each other and disproportionately affect people with limited resources and reduced capacity to cope.

Lack of reliable access to drinking water affects basic daily needs, including hydration, food preparation, personal hygiene and household sanitation. For low-income families, purchasing and transporting bottled water creates an additional financial burden and may lead households to reduce expenditure on food and other basic necessities. In rural areas, the problem is compounded by uncertainty concerning the microbiological and chemical safety of water from small village water systems, many of which are not subject to regular laboratory testing, chlorination or adequate sanitary protection.

If the current conditions persist, short-term consequences may include increased health and hygiene risks, inability of vulnerable households to meet minimum drinking water needs and growing dependence on emergency assistance. Longer-term consequences may include deterioration of household livelihoods, increased expenditure on water and food, and continued exposure to potentially unsafe local water sources.

3. Local and national capacity

Affected households are currently relying on a combination of coping mechanisms. Drinking water is being delivered sporadically by water tankers, but there is currently no coordinated and predictable mechanism ensuring regular coverage of all affected households and communities. In addition, many people are purchasing bottled drinking water at their own expense, which represents a significant additional burden for low-income and already vulnerable families.

The City of Kraljevo has functioning local emergency and civil protection structures, and the Department for Civil Protection has identified rural communities considered particularly vulnerable to drinking water shortages. JKP Vodovod Kraljevo manages the public water supply system; however, significant parts of the wider city territory, particularly rural areas, are not connected to this system. Water supply in these areas is predominantly provided through small local village water systems and individual wells. The Institute of Public Health Kraljevo represents an important local technical resource and has previous experience in laboratory testing of drinking water from local water supply systems. Cooperation with the Institute could therefore enable rapid sampling and testing of water in the most vulnerable rural communities.

In Novi Sad, community outreach and engagement with Roma communities including experience in identifying and supporting vulnerable households in substandard settlements has been established by Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization. In the Municipality of Plandište, EHO provides ongoing [home-help services](#) to adults and older people, as well as to children with developmental disabilities.

These existing community-based and social-protection structures provide EHO with direct access to vulnerable beneficiaries and established channels for rapid identification of those most at risk. They also enable the organisation to mobilize existing staff and local networks for the timely distribution of drinking water and basic food items as well as follow-up monitoring and identification of additional needs during the emergency.

At the local level, existing municipal and social-protection structures provide an important framework for reaching vulnerable populations and coordinating assistance. However, the combination of prolonged extreme heat, water scarcity and the potential indirect effects of the wildfire place additional pressure on vulnerable households and existing support services. At present, emergency water provision remains sporadic and fragmented, with no established coordination mechanism bringing together local authorities, public utilities, community representatives and humanitarian actors to systematically assess needs, plan deliveries and ensure equitable coverage. Information on the total volume of water currently being distributed, the frequency of tanker deliveries and the number of households reached is not yet fully available.

Information on any specific national contingency plan currently activated in response to the water shortage is also not currently available. No significant international humanitarian response or UN-led coordination mechanism is known to be active in relation to this localized emergency at present.

4. Key needs and gaps

The highest immediate priority is access to a sufficient quantity of safe drinking water for households currently without a reliable supply, with particular attention to the Roma community where approximately 300 people are already reported to be affected. Emergency drinking water assistance should prioritize households with children, older people, persons with disabilities, and people with chronic health conditions, single-parent households and families experiencing severe economic hardship.

A second urgent need concerns access to basic food items. The additional cost of purchasing and transporting drinking water places a disproportionate burden on low-income households and can reduce already limited resources available for food and other essential needs. Basic food assistance would therefore complement emergency water provision for the most vulnerable households during the acute phase of the crisis.

A significant information and public-health gap also exists regarding the safety of drinking water in rural settlements dependent on local village water systems. Many of these systems are reportedly not subject to systematic laboratory monitoring, regular chlorination or adequate sanitary protection. Water quality testing is therefore needed to establish whether existing water sources are safe for human consumption and to identify communities where additional preventive or emergency measures may be required.

It is proposed that water sampling and laboratory testing be undertaken in cooperation with the Institute of Public Health Kraljevo. The results should be consolidated into an assessment report mapping tested water systems, identified risks and practical recommendations for the City of Kraljevo, local communities and relevant service providers. This would provide an evidence base for immediate public-health measures and future improvements in the safety and resilience of rural water supply.

In Novi Sad, the key gap is the limited ability of vulnerable Roma households in substandard settlements to secure sufficient drinking water and basic food during prolonged periods of extreme heat, particularly for households with children, older people, persons with disabilities and limited financial resources. In Plandište, the main gap concerns the additional support required by older people and children with developmental disabilities who are particularly vulnerable to heat-related health risks and may have limited capacity to independently secure water, food and other essential items. Continuous communication and follow-up with beneficiaries during and after the emergency will be important to monitor changing needs and identify any additional gaps in assistance.

Existing assistance and its coverage are currently being mapped. At this stage, complete information is not available regarding the frequency and volume of water deliveries, the number of households reached and the extent to which local authorities and other actors can meet the identified needs.

Please indicate whether you are considering:

	Indicate your intention with an X below
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Rapid Response Fund (<i>intended for small and medium scale emergencies</i>)	X
Appeal (<i>intended for large scale emergencies</i>)	

5. Forum Capacity and members intention to respond

ACT Member	Geographical focus	Sectors of expertise and experience
Philanthropy – Charitable Foundation of the Serbian Orthodox Church	Kraljevo, with particular focus on the affected Roma settlement and vulnerable rural communities	Humanitarian assistance; assistance to vulnerable and socially excluded households; MPCA; emergency distributions; community-based outreach; needs assessment; protection and social inclusion; cooperation with local institutions
Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation	Novi Sad, with particular focus on the vulnerable Roma households in substandard settlements Plandište, with particular focus on older people and children with developmental disabilities	Humanitarian assistance; assistance to vulnerable and socially excluded households; emergency distributions; community-based outreach; needs assessment; protection and social inclusion; continuous communication and follow-up with beneficiaries throughout and after the emergency; cooperation with local institutions

6. Potential responses

Based on the initial assessment, ACT members are considering a rapid and localized response combining immediate humanitarian assistance with targeted public-health risk assessment.

First, emergency drinking water would be distributed to the most affected households, initially prioritizing the Roma settlement where approx. 120 families in total, are currently reported to be without drinking water. Assistance would subsequently be extended to other verified vulnerable households and communities according to needs identified through rapid field assessment and coordination with local authorities.

Second, basic food packages would be provided to the most vulnerable affected households. This component would target families whose already limited household resources are further strained by the need to obtain drinking water and who face difficulties meeting basic food needs during the emergency.

Third, drinking water from selected village water supply systems in the identified high-risk rural communities would be sampled and laboratory tested in cooperation with the Institute of Public Health Kraljevo. Testing would provide evidence on water safety and identify potential microbiological and/or other risks requiring immediate action.

Laboratory findings and field information would subsequently be consolidated into a water safety assessment and recommendations report. The report would summarize the condition and safety of the tested rural water systems, identify priority risks and provide practical recommendations for local authorities and communities regarding monitoring, treatment, protection of water sources and measures required during future drought periods.

RRF support would primarily be required to finance procurement and distribution of drinking water and basic food items, water sampling and laboratory analysis, logistical costs, field assessment and monitoring, and preparation of the final assessment and recommendations report.