



**CENTRI CIVILNIH INICIJATIVA
ЦЕНТРИ ЦИВИЛНИХ ИНИЦИЈАТИВА**

On August 6, 2014 CCI in Sarajevo presented to the public the analysis “Floods in BiH – Natural disasters and/or institutional inefficiency”

THE SITUATION IS WORRYING ACCORDING TO VARIOUS PARAMETERS, THE VICTIMS OF CATASTROPHE IN MAY ARE STILL ELEMENTARY NEGLECTED, AND INSTEAD OF VIGOROUSLY WORKING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS THE GOVERNMENT IS ON VACATION!

The BiH is still only at the beginning of recovering from the consequences of the catastrophe that hit the country in May of this year. The catastrophe was caused by the natural disaster, but also by the human factor negligence, hence by irresponsible, risky, short-sighted behavior of the government, which continues to act slowly and inadequately even after the disaster.

The Center for Civic Initiatives, guided by the theses that a safe society can be achieved by working on reducing the risks from catastrophes through prevention, but also by working on raising awareness and the safe behavior culture, has created an analytic document “Floods in BiH – Natural disasters and/or institutional inefficiency” by which it wants to underline current state of the system, (in)ability of the government to deal with the catastrophes, oversights made and also to highlight measures that have to be undertaken in this area. Another objective of the document is to encourage public discussion on readiness of BiH to adequately respond to various types of catastrophes, both natural disasters and the ones caused by human activities, since the floods are yet another disaster periodically occurring in our country and it is necessary to establish an efficient prevention system reducing the risk from catastrophes to the minimum, and increasing the emergency response and recovery to the maximum.

Present situation in which the authorities continuously responds only to consequence, whereby they really do not make true efforts, but only attempt to create impression that they are really working, is truly unacceptable.

The analysis conducted by the CCI indicates that the current protection and rescue system cannot adequately respond to the needs of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that in case of natural and other incidents it does not safeguard citizens' lives or their property.

Water management in Bosnia and Herzegovina is inefficient, and existing institutional water related framework is decentralized, very fragmented and heterogeneous, both at the entity and the local levels. Instead of having river basins in the focus of the system development, thus enabling efficient water management and protection of the citizens, the focus is on the administrative divisions, which due to lack of synchronization both in the area of legislation and the working processes in the field, at the end cause damage to the citizens.

The prevention and protection system is not completely developed due to the lack of continuity in planning, but also due to the tardiness of the government institutions to adopt key documents necessary for water management and protection. For example, only adoption of the first Water Management Strategy in FBiH was three years late, and in the RS the strategy is still not adopted, while at the state level it even does not exist as a draft.

The analysis of legislation, but also the responsiveness at the time of natural disaster, indicate that the existing water management system and civil protection and rescue system in BiH are generally too complex, difficult to manage and lacking equipment, and in practice it was proven insufficiently functional due to scarce training provided to the personnel. At the same time, the protection system is not good due to tardiness in the decision-making process and the possibility of having this process obstructed by unreasonable, politically motivated decisions.

The politics also blocked the path when it comes to implementation of the BiH Framework Law on protection and rescue of people and material goods in case of natural and other disasters, so that even six years after the law was adopted the “mixed specialized unit for protection and rescue in case of natural and other disasters” defined by the law was not established.

One of the main conclusions of the analysis is that regardless of the fact that BiH is a decentralized state, no politics justifies development of two independent protection systems, because in such a way the problem is not solved and the human lives are jeopardized due to unreasonable politics. The solution would be in developing either one state or entity systems that are completely harmonized and which are mutually functionally supplemented, thus creating a unity compatible to the systems of the countries in the region. Floods and protection from floods are actually problems that in principle are solved at a global, international plan, whereby

irresponsibility and failure to implement necessary measures can lead to having only citizens of the country with irresponsible government feeling the consequences of the natural disasters.

By analyzing financial projections in the development documents of the Water management company "Vodoprivreda" RS it was concluded that they largely exceed realistic amounts received under special water fees. In the RS, contrary to the BiH Federation, the realistic incomes are lower, since the incomes are not made from the general water management fee. Therefore there is potential danger of unbalanced development, but also realistic danger that the RS water management development would get more and more behind in comparison to the BiH Federation.

The analysis also showed that the funds for protection and rescue of people and material goods were spent inappropriately. Due to the financial crisis and budget deficits at all levels of authority, the entity and cantonal governments for many years adopted decisions by which they borrowed funds from the fees collected for protection from natural disasters, and had used the funds to improve budget liquidity. So it happened that beside the fact that we have poorly equipped and poorly trained structures of civil protection, the funds that were intended for that purpose were spent inappropriately. At the same time world wide experience proves that every Euro invested towards actions for reducing risks from catastrophe through prevention saved 7 Euros.

Joint financial funds (certain state fund) are missing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and such funds could be used in case of natural or other disasters, hence the funds would be used to finance the needs of receiving international assistance in protection and rescue, as well as to assist the most affected citizens and protection and rescue structures in the days following occurrence of the natural or other disasters.

By stressing the issue of non-transparency, the CCI warns that there is a likely danger that distribution of the funds collected for the flooded areas will not be completely public, and that the information will be disseminated selectively and late. Non-transparency of the processes in BiH, even in the area of water management and civil protection, is no news for our country, which is clearly proven by the fact that most financial plans and reports on work of the entity agencies for water management, but also of the entity and cantonal civil protection administrations, are not published on the official web sites.

It is very important to mention that insufficient progress on the path of the European integration, due to lack of interest and obstructions by the politicians, even in the case of lately experienced catastrophe, has the price that is paid by the citizens, since BiH, as the only country in the region that did not meet the conditions to apply for membership in the EU, does not have the possibility to use the funds from the "EU Solidarity Fund".

Due to numerous problems that have been identified in the water management system and in the system of protection and rescue of people and material goods in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the findings of the Analysis, the Center for civic initiative comes before the bodies of authority with series of recommendations, whose number indicates severity of the problem we are facing, neglect of the system and the volume of work the government should do as soon as possible. The work has to be done immediately, not waiting for yet another catastrophe for whose consequences they would be directly responsible, if they do not undertake everything in their power to prevent or mitigate them.

The CCI does not predispose solution, it respects the constitutional structure of the country, but it insists on a solution that would ensure maximum safety for citizens and that would prevent them of becoming victims of irresponsibility and politicking within the structures of authority.

One of the things the government should do is to define, and to include in legislative regulations, simple parameters of assessing successfulness of the response to natural disasters by the responsible bodies, but also to include sanctions for persons who by their mistakes or lack of action jeopardize human lives and material goods. Namely, even beside casualties and enormous material destruction, along with apparently poorly managed flood defense system, no representative of the present authority or persons at managing functions in various administrations and agencies, did not bear any responsibility after the catastrophe in May. But unfortunately our political establishment did not come to the point in the civilizational development of society and democracy in which responsible persons resign from their duties due to the feeling of moral responsibility.

And it is exactly the lack of the civilizational values in the behavior of our political establishment (that unbelievable arrogance, self-obsession, disregard of citizens' interests, affinity to criminal behavior, complete lack of readiness to admit mistakes, to be remorseful and to make a moral act at the end), that has resulted in public expression of doubt in our government by representatives of many countries and in its readiness to use funds donated for the people hit by floods for the activities they were intended using transparent procedure and without using someone else's money for personal and party political promotion.

Such an action would be a reason for collective resignation for any, at least a bit, democratic, responsible and moral government (here we are taking about resignations – since here it is not mistrust in a certain institution or persons, but the whole government, at all levels, is not being trustworthy). But, instead of that or at least some contrition by someone, who is aware of his/her responsibility for what is happening, our politicians sarcastically comment views of the international officials who are helping this country and its people.

Beside the fact that the local governments, due lack of action, redirection of funds and inadequate response, became one of the main cause of the catastrophe that hit the country, they are also responsible for the fact that country does not have access to the EU Solidarity Fund and that the procedure of receiving international donations

and directing them to the ones in need will be additionally complicated and unnecessary lengthened due to disbelief in our government.

And while the people, who were affected by the floods, are still not taken care of and are still waiting for the adequate assistance from the state, and while the government that is usually late in realization of its obligations and should be solving serious problems of its citizens, faces too many obligations, and while BiH is mentioned in the world press as a country with the highest probability for bankruptcy, our government leaves for a collective vacation (it means that instead of putting additional efforts and stepping up to the challenge ahead it pauses the work). Following the vacation the government will be busy with elections and subsequently it will torture citizens for several months with the process of constituting the government – which can last forever, since the authorities after seven years failed to adopt the CCI's initiative of making changes to the BiH Election Law that would make early elections possible and provide a time limit for constituting the new government.

At the end we would like to remember the former US Ambassador to BiH, Thomas Miller, who once, in the identical situation, while our government left for vacation neglecting all its obligations, where some of the obligations were limited by time, and problems, he, the ambassador, spent his vacation among Bosnian returnees, providing them financial assistance and giving them a hand in reconstruction of their homes.

ANNEX – CCI'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BIH AUTHORITIES

- All levels of authority should make an objective analysis in which they will examine in details all circumstances and omissions, clearly determining institutional and individual responsibility, both in the area of prevention, but also during rescue of people and material goods during catastrophe in May of 2014.
- To establish, as soon as possible, a system for monitoring receipt, distribution and use of all funds intended for the recovery after the natural disaster, taking into consideration transparency, responsibility and efficiency in using the funds and that spending of the funds is in line with its purpose and agreed priorities.
- To conduct a thorough performance analysis (to check cost-effectiveness, efficiency and transparency) of prevention and active defense from floods at all levels of authority. To publicize the results of the audit of effectiveness of active defense from floods for public scrutiny and to use the results, through extensive public and professional debate, for reform of the civil protection organization at all levels in BiH.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina it is necessary to continuously further develop the system of protection and rescue from natural disasters, such as floods, as well as to invest into constructing and maintaining protective facilities and systems, ensuring continuous training and certification process for individuals and organizations aimed at planned and coordinated action in case of natural disasters. In the forthcoming period these activities must become priority actions at all levels of government.
- To put the end to the practice of inappropriate use of funds for protection and rescue of people and material goods that were redirected to other government's accounts, namely to stop giving funds intended for protection and rescue of people in natural disasters, as interest-free loans to other budget institutions by the government. This being one of the direct causes of this degree of destruction that the country had suffered during the last catastrophe.
- It is necessary to ensure as soon as possible a consistent and harmonized approach to water management at the state level in accordance with the recommendations of the European Commission in the Progress Report. Therefore it is necessary to urgently complete by-laws related to the sector of water management in both entities, implementing necessary corrections in order to ensure maximal possible harmonization between all laws and regulations that were adopted in the different time periods.
- Having in mind that waters in BiH are managed inefficiently, additional efforts should be made towards adopting a framework law and framework strategy on water at the state level, not diminishing importance of the entity laws on water, and that all with the objective of having clear distribution of competences in regard to joint water resources and water management issues that concern the whole country.
- Existing protective facilities have to be regularly and adequately maintained and upgraded, and at the time of flood threats and during floods such facilities have to be appropriately managed. The consequences of the floods in May in our country show that the water infrastructure, which generally has suffered enormous damage during the last war, is obsolete and has been poorly maintained during the last 15 years.
- The flood protection system in BiH has to be designed so that it enables planning and implementation of preventive measures, which are adjusted to the entire river basin with clearly defined responsibilities of each level of decision-making. The BiH authorities should more use potential and possibilities for realization of regional project from the EU Strategy for the Danube region and the Sava River Basin Management Plan. The catastrophic floods that the countries in the Sava River Basin had faced, confirm the fact that disasters as floods do not know of borders, namely that individual efforts made by the countries have to be supported by organizing protection from floods at the level of entire river basin.
- It is necessary to improve cross-sector and inter-entity coordination and cooperation of all key actors in implementing measures of protection from floods, whereby special role should be assigned to the resource state ministries (BiH Ministry of foreign trade and economic relations, the BiH Ministry of security). Further

improvement of the monitoring, early warning and forecast system is necessary for more quality preparation for implementation of operational measures of protection from floods (preparation of space to tolerate flooding).

- To design a budget item “Fund” in the BiH budget, which would be used exclusively and only in case of natural and other incidents under earlier defined criteria. This area has to be regulated by adopting a state law on establishing and managing the “Fund”.
- To consider re-introducing general water management fee in RS to prevent RS Water Management Company being behind in the development process when compared to the FBiH.
- Additional efforts have to be made to established mixed specialized unit for protection and rescue in case of natural or other catastrophes as soon as possible (as well as for participation in the international drills, assistance operations and other activities) – in accordance with the obligations of the BiH Council of Ministers in line with Article 13 of the Framework Law on protection and rescue of people and material goods in case of natural and other disasters in BiH
- To urgently initiate the process of preparing a multi-annual operational program for the flood defense system, including the new long-term strategy of investments to be made for defense from floods, and the assessment of the future needs for flood and waterline defense, taking into consideration the newest risk maps and economic analysis.
- One should ensure functional, integrated data base containing review of all parts of our country regarding equipment of the civil protection administration and headquarters, i.e. it is necessary in one place to ensure transparency of all relevant data for protection and rescue of people and material goods in BiH. Also, it is necessary to ensure more transparent and functional performance of the Coordination body BiH for protection and rescue.
- To consider possibility of standardizing the area of “training staff and teams” to be able to respond in case of emergency situation and to ensure higher turnout at the trainings and other various courses. With reference to the latter, earlier we could hear recommendation for BiH to start preparing Strategy for disseminating information to the public and raising awareness of the citizens on the role and the place of the civil protection in the society.
- The legislative process in Brčko District of BiH has to be completed by adopting the Law on civil protection of the BD BiH, since Brčko District of BiH still does not have a special regulation on protection and rescue or civil protection, which in the previous period reflected on quality of assistance provided (lack of coordination, lack of financial means for procurement of certain equipment for the civil protection administration, etc...).