



PHOTO & CAPTION

Recovering from the Floods



Photo: CARE International

As the water began to recede in western Bulgaria, homes were reduced to piles of rubble.

In the summer of 2005, Bulgaria experienced one of its most serious natural disasters in recent history. Torrential rains brought massive flooding countrywide that caused power outages and damaged more than 14,000 buildings, bridges, dikes, roads and railways. Most of the damage occurred in western Bulgaria, when the Marista River burst its banks on August 6, flooding two suburbs of Plovdiv. The Sofia-Plovdiv connection — Bulgaria's most important road and railway line — was totally submerged and closed for days. Hundreds of people had to be evacuated from their homes, and more than 12,000 people were left homeless. The cost of the damage has reached

over \$660 million, and could still increase.

USAID responded quickly to the disaster in early July, working with the Bulgarian Red Cross to provide water, food, bedding and sanitary products. As the extent of the disaster became more evident, USAID provided additional funds for humanitarian and recovery operations and equipment, including boats, water pumps, generators and hygiene products, such as bleach, detergent and disinfectant. Information leaflets were also printed, advising residents how to disinfect water.

While the heavy rainfall seemed to have stopped by the end of the summer, isolated but intense showers continued to hamper relief efforts around the country. The threat of infectious disease remains a concern, and many roads are still closed, making it difficult to reach remote towns and villages in the west.

USAID continues to monitor the situation, as people on the ground work tirelessly to deliver aid to the Bulgarians who have borne the brunt of these torrential rains and help them begin to rebuild.