The Russian Red Cross Society

Founded: 1867
Staff: 1,443 (2004)

1. National context
Russia is the world’s largest country, covering 11 time zones and home to over 144 million people and 200 ethnic groups.

Russia ended 2004 with its sixth straight year of growth, averaging 6.5% annually since the financial crisis of 1998. GDP\(^1\) grew last year by 7.2 percent. The figure puts Russia’s annual GDP on par with the Netherlands. This has impacted positively on the lives of many Russian citizens who now enjoy more employment stability and purchasing power\(^2\). It has also affected Russia’s image abroad. Increasingly Russia is portrayed as having emerged from its economic crisis and having entered a period of growth and stability. Many international development and humanitarian donors therefore are turning their attention elsewhere.

At the same time, Russia is home to one of the highest incidence rates of tuberculosis (TB) worldwide, and the highest recorded rate of multi-drug resistance TB\(^3\). HIV/AIDS is fast reaching epidemic proportions, fuelled by an increasing population of injecting drug users and deep rooted stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS. The state health service is undergoing necessary reforms, but too slowly, to compete with the current need.

Meanwhile, Russia’s socio-economic problems are compounded by a regular occurrence of natural disasters (floods, typhoons, earthquakes etc.) and manmade disasters (conflict, forced migration).

Capital: Moscow
Infant mortality rate: 16 per 1,000 live births (2003)
Adult literacy rate: 100 per cent (2000)

2. Foundation
Mission
The Russian Red Cross (RRC) is the only indigenous, volunteer and community-based and nationwide organisation working within the Russian Federation. RRC has demonstrated its capacity to assist people in need over the past 137 years, assisting on average 5 million people annually through programmes at national, regional and local levels. It continues to evolve into a better functioning National Society via ongoing attempts at self improvement as well as its work at community level.

The mission of the Russian Red is reflected in its statutes, which are based on the Fundamental Principles of the Movement. These have been distributed to every provincial committee and all members of elected bodies.

\(^{1}\) GDP (gross domestic product) is defined as the total value of all goods and services produced within the territory during a specified period.

\(^{2}\) The value of money measured by the amount of goods and services it can buy.

The national society’s operational focus is shifting from relief towards long-term developmental programmes. However, it recognises the need to address the ongoing social and economic implications on the country’s most vulnerable population. Russian Red Cross priorities for the coming years will continue to concentrate on building its capacity to reduce vulnerability, as well as measures to improve the organisation’s financial management and fund-raising at all levels. The focus for the short-term is to build the capacity of the regional committees of the Russian Red Cross and to improve the sharing of best practices. The Russian Red Cross will provide assistance to vulnerable populations in health and care, disaster management, humanitarian values, and organisational development.

The society cooperates with the government and has close relations with the ministries of social welfare and public health in its social and health programmes. It also works closely with the ministry of emergency situations and the state migration service.

**Legal base**
The society was originally founded in 1867 and was recognized by the ICRC in 1921. It joined the International Federation in 1934. A new charter was adopted by the 11th congress of the RRC in May 1991. The statutes were last updated in November 2001 at the 13th congress. The last national elections were also held at this congress. A federal Red Cross law is under consideration by the State Duma.

**Constituency**
The RRC has 98 regional and 1,595 district committees (branches) as well as 14,190 grass-roots organizations. In 1999, the RRC carried out a project to issue membership cards. This project contributed to institutional and financial strengthening of the regional and railroad committees, and Red Cross committees were re-established in three national districts.

**3. Capacity**
**Leadership**
The congress, or general assembly, is the National Society’s highest authority. It meets every five years and elects the governing board. The governing board elects the chairperson. Between general assemblies, the society is controlled and administered by the governing board. The governing board is presided over by the society’s chairperson and is composed of 39 people and meets once a year. The presidium, which is elected by the governing board, comprises 11 members and meets as required, but at a minimum, every three months. A similar governing structure exists at the provincial level.

**Human resources**
There are a total of 1,443 people employed by the RRC throughout the country. At headquarters level, there are 67 full and part-time employees.

The society prioritizes training for its staff and volunteers. In 2004, 15,670 volunteers, 542 primary organization leaders, 518 regional branch and 16 headquarters staff members received training.

**Financial resources**
RRC programme expenditure for 2004 totalled CHF 9.2 million. The Russian government pays the RRC’s annual contribution to the International Federation and supports the Ivanovo Red Cross boarding school. The International Federation, ICRC and some sister National Societies help to fund the society’s activities. The society also receives some revenues from its institutions as well as membership fees.

**Material resources**
In addition to its headquarters building, the central committee owns a school for orphans, a sanatorium and a warehouse.

**Organization/planning**

In February 2003 the Russian Red Cross adopted the Strategic Plan of Development (SPD) 2010, drawn from the national society plan of development 1998-2001 and reflecting Strategy 2010, the International Federation’s main strategic statement. The main objectives of the Strategy are to: enhance efficiency and effectiveness of support to the most vulnerable in the Russian Federation, including victims of disasters and other emergencies; promote RRC development as an efficient, mobile, progressing and financially sustainable institution; and raise the RRC profile as a main humanitarian actor.

The RRC Strategy 2010 was distributed to nearly all RRC branches. Many branches have now developed their own Strategic Development Plans and plans of action, adapting the Strategy 2010 to local conditions. The society’s legal status was strengthened and more clearly defined, following adoptions of new statutes. Revisions include a renewed drive for RRC membership, its youth activities, promotion of its public image and a strengthening of its management and executive capacities.

Every year the society draws up its detailed annual budget as well as the budgets for each regional committee. A summary annual report is prepared based on the regional branch reports and results of the past financial year. Annual plenary sessions examine and adopt the budget. The society has an internal audit department that inspects and reports on the regional branches.

**Partnerships**

At present, the Red Cross Red Crescent is a main supporter of the RRC’s programmes, especially at the federal level. The International Federation, ICRC and the National Societies of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Denmark, the United States and the United Kingdom have been the main donors. The RRC has cooperation agreements with the Norwegian, German and Swedish national societies. In 2004 ICRC/RRC, International Federation/RRC programmes, as well as joint programmes with the Netherlands Red Cross, Swedish Red Cross and German Red Cross were under way in Russia.

The society works together with the Ukrainian and Belarusian Red Cross Societies in implementing the Chernobyl programme. It also sends humanitarian assistance, when resources permit, to countries affected by disasters.

The RRC has partnership relations with some international and non-governmental organizations working in Russia. These include USAID, UNAIDS, DFID, UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, IOM, SDC, CAF and “Partnership for Health”.

At a regional level, many branches of the Russian Red Cross receive support from local administration budgets. Internationally supported activities often aim to be integrated into these budgets after a number of years.

**4. Performance**

**Activities**

**Disaster relief/preparedness**

Russia has seen two horrific hostage crises on its territory over the last four years. In both cases RRC staff and volunteers were on the scene. Learning lessons from these tragic events, RRC is building a small scale hostage crisis support capacity for Moscow and the North Caucasus. This capacity, of equipment and trained staff, could be mobilised to support victims of natural disasters too.
Refugees and population movements
Despite the decreasing wave of migrants from CIS countries since the 1990s and new stricter laws on Russian Federation citizenship, the migration situation remains problematic.

Since 1997 RRC has been assisting migrants concentrating on their integration into civil society. In 2006 the Russian Red Cross is aiming to assist internal and external migrants through a comprehensive programme consisting of: provision of psychological and legal support and practical assistance on issues that directly affect migrants; tackling the problem of discrimination and stigmatisation in the local community and increasing access of these vulnerable groups to social benefits. All these efforts undertaken by the Russian Red Cross will lead to an improved quality of life of migrants and facilitate their gradual integration into civil society. As in previous years, this support will be provided at emergency reception points at railways stations which target migrants arriving to new areas; at regional reception points, which operate from Red Cross branches in areas heavily populated by migrants; and at integrated support centres, designed to function as a social centre and meeting place for migrants as well as a place for receiving professional Red Cross assistance. Red Cross professionals will also participate in field trips to reach migrant communities living in remote areas, and conduct summer camps for migrant children.

Health
Medical assistance is given to vulnerable groups of the population (elderly, invalids, orphans, families with many children, and single parent families). A visiting nurse programme comprises 2,106 nurses who run medico-social centres in 79 regional branches as well as carrying out home-care services providing support to up to 250,000 vulnerable people annually

Infectious diseases that are spreading predominately among vulnerable groups are a priority for RRC. RRC uses its vast experience of public health, its close cooperation with government ministries and health institutions, its network of visiting nurses and volunteers, to provide care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS and TB and to counter the spread of these diseases.

Since September 1999, the Federation and the Russian Red Cross have implemented a TB/HIV/AIDS programme in 12 regions of the Russian Federation - Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Pskov, Belgorod, Khakasia, Khabarovsk, Buryatia, Tomsk, Kemerovo, Oryol, Astrakhan and Ivanovo. The focus is on promoting the inclusion of the most vulnerable patients in treatment support services. Based on the experience gained, further development of TB Red Cross intervention programmes is expected in 2006. In addition to the continuing implementation of incentive schemes for treatment adherence, Russian Red Cross will be developing a training module to encourage better communication with patients and a greater say for patients in selecting treatment support options. Also, RRC will be testing a model of intervention with patients infected with multi drug resistance mycobacterium (MDR) in three regions.

RRC has been engaged in HIV programming since 1993 but its most successful initiative has been in Irkutsk oblast where the Russian Red Cross has implemented a multi-facetted assistance package based on harm reduction, peer education, counseling, mother and child care, home care and advocacy.

In 2006, Russian Red Cross will focus on three aspects of prevention and support to people living with HIV/AIDS. Work with policy makers and medical staff regarding prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS particularly in penitentiary centres. Peer education among high risk groups focusing on the promotion and tracking of behaviour change. Harm reduction among injecting drug users through needle exchange and counselling. In each of the above approaches the Russian Red Cross will promote inclusion for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) within project activities but also through advocating for access to rights and campaigning against stigma.

First aid
During 2004, Russian Red Cross staff and volunteers conducted 97 first aid training courses for community members.
In 2006, first aid training units will prepare teams of 250 trainers/instructors, who in turn will disseminate acquired knowledge throughout local communities (to at least 50,000 inhabitants).

**Social welfare**
Vulnerable groups receive medical and social assistance, largely through the visiting nurse programme, the RRC against TB and HIV/AIDS programme and the population movement programme. Some local committees operate soup kitchens and distribute food parcels and second-hand clothing.

In 2005 a Youth and Volunteering Department was established at the RRC HQ. There are youth sections and groups in more than 40 regions. Activities include: promoting Red Cross activities amongst youth; spreading knowledge about international humanitarian issues; HIV/AIDS peer education; promoting a healthy lifestyle, tolerance, and violence prevention; voluntary rescue work; work with HIV-positive people; recruitment of youth members.

In 2005, RRC ran focus groups with over 1000 vulnerable older people in order to get a clearer picture of older people’s capacities and needs and to design collectively support strategies. As a result RRC social welfare strategies are promoting social inclusion through a three fold approach of service delivery, advocacy and awareness raising.

5. Further information
*Russian Red Cross Strategic Plan of Development (SPD) 2010 (2003)*