In brief

Programme purpose:\ The Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre) serves to promote and enable psychosocial wellbeing of beneficiaries, humanitarian staff and volunteers and contribute to realizing the International Federation Global Agenda Goals. The PS Centre seeks to achieve this through its four strategic objectives:

1. Operational and technical assistance to psychosocial programming to promote high quality and timely psychosocial responses.
2. Capacity-building of National Societies and competence development of RCRC staff and volunteers to strengthen their ability to effectively identify, respond and programme for the psychosocial needs of beneficiaries.
3. Knowledge generation and knowledge management to ensure that psychosocial interventions are based on evidence-based research and best practices.
4. Advocacy and communications to increase awareness of psychosocial reactions to disaster and social disruption, and to raise attention to psychosocial needs of beneficiaries in policies.

Progress update: In the first six months of 2010, the PS Centre was heavily engaged in the psychosocial response to the Haiti earthquake that hit in January. The Centre provided technical and coordination support to the implementation of the Emergency Response Unit (ERU) Psychosocial Support (PSS) component, which was deployed for the first time as part of the Health ERU. A real time review was conducted in February/March, which provided a positive evaluation of the humanitarian added value of the PSS component. The Centre participated in a number of international working group meetings to present the ERU PSS component and the outcome of the
review, and has undertaken a number of revisions of the Delegates Manual based on the lessons learned.

The French translation of the ERU PSS Delegate Manual, the Training Kit, the Psychosocial Interventions Handbook were undertaken and completed in the first half of 2010, and are expected to greatly increase the tools global outreach and utility.

The short-film A Story from Gaza is almost finalized and documents the need for, and the type of psychosocial support provided by the Palestinian Red Crescent to the population in Gaza. Along with the PS Centre's other material and news stories, the film will be available on our website www.ifrc.org/psychosocial. The Centre also produced two editions of Coping with Crisis and a number of e-newsletters, which featured up-to-date stories from the field.

The PS Centre provided technical support to a large number of national societies including Haiti, Chile, China, Uganda, Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria, South and Central America, the Caribbean, Cyprus, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, Pakistan, as well as interacted with the IFRC Geneva and the zone and regional offices. The Centre continued to play an active role in the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and in the MHPSS Network. The Centre also provided input to the revision of the Sphere Guidelines, the International Recovery Platform Psychosocial Handbook, co-authored a chapter for Routledge Disaster Handbook and contributed with articles for FedNet, the Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN) Magazine and other news channels and papers.

Three pipeline projects were launched in the first six months of 2010. The first phase of the Volunteers in Emergency project was implemented, which included a global baseline survey of existing PSS tools and approaches to volunteers in emergencies by national societies. The PS Centre also hired consultants to take the knowledge and documentation centre project forward. And finally, a project to develop school-based PSS material got started in partnership with Save the Children Denmark.

The PS Centre conducted various PSS training sessions. This included a five-day regional Psychosocial Support training course in Uganda with participants from 7 East African national societies and a training in Panama with national societies from South, Central and North America and the Caribbean. A number of ERU PSS awareness raising sessions were also conducted as part of ERU trainings. And finally, the PS centre delivered a training session for emergency health professionals at the School of Global Health, University of Copenhagen.

High staff turn-over characterized the first half of 2010. The technical advisor, training advisor and communications advisor left the team. The training advisor was replaced with a staff-on-loan from Finnish Red Cross, while the other two positions have been filled with short-term consultants. The financial situation remains vulnerable and considerable time and effort goes into resource mobilization.

Financial update: The total core budget for 2010 is CHF 857,951 (DKK 4,386,252). For the reporting period, total expenditures were CHF 411,822 (DKK 2,076,002), equivalent to 47 per cent consumption.

The budget was revised in March and approved by the Steering Committee on 26 May 2010.

Click here directly to go to the attached financial report
Context

The first months of 2010 was dominated by a number of large earthquakes. The devastating earthquake that hit Port-au-Prince in Haiti on 12 January 2010 resulted in around 250,000 dead with 3 million, or approximately one third of Haiti’s population, affected. The international disaster response was one of the largest operations in recent years and the recovery and reconstruction work will continue for years to come. Only one month later on 27 February, another large earthquake struck Chile. Although bigger in magnitude than the one in Haiti, the death toll was less but the devastation significant and around 2 million people were affected. On 14 April, another large earthquake hit the Quinghai Province in China and killed more than 600 people and injured 10,000.

In April, the volcanic eruption in Eyjafjallajokull in South Iceland led to a temporary evacuation of approximately 800 people and the volcanic ash severely disrupted air traffic in Europe and affected millions of people.

Civil unrest in southern Kyrgyzstan in June claimed several hundred lives and displaced around 375,000 people. The situation remains fragile. In Gaza, one and a half years after the Israeli insurgence and the continuing closure of the border, the humanitarian situation remains vulnerable.

The global financial crisis continued in 2010 to show its human implications in terms of growing unemployment and related poverty, while climate change and extreme weather conditions affect a growing number of people each year.

The PS Centre continues to support national societies and the Federation in responding effectively to these and other global disasters and emergencies in the area of psychosocial support.

Progress towards outcomes

A. Operational and technical assistance to psychosocial programming to promote high quality and timely psychosocial responses

Achievements

As a global reference centre, the PS Centre responds to requests for support from national societies and the IFRC. The PS Centre played an active supporting role in the disaster response to the earthquake in Haiti and helped organising and coordinating the deployment of the ERU PSS component, which was sent out for the first time as part of the Norwegian Red Cross Health ERU. The Centre helped to identify and brief psychosocial delegates, and served as technical back stopper during their deployment. The Centre also participated actively in the IASC MHPSS coordination work around Haiti and helped to develop a set of tailored MHPSS guidelines for Haiti.

The Haiti earthquake took up considerable amount of time and human resources in the first months of 2010. Yet, the Centre managed also to provide technical, operational and capacity-building support to a large number of other national societies including to Chile, China, Uganda, Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria, South and Central America, the Caribbean, Cyprus, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Finland, Canada, France, Germany and Pakistan, and interacted with the IFRC Geneva as well as the zone and regional offices. The type of support varied pending on the request but included, among other things, input to strategy development, programme design, baseline surveys, technical reviews of funding proposals and staff competence development.
It is difficult to measure the impact of the type of support provided by the Centre but the feedback received from national societies is positive, as is the support seen to help quality assure national PSS responses.

Constraints or Challenges

With a mandate to service 186 National Societies, the PS Centre’s capacity remains limited and there is a constant need to prioritize resources when responding to requests from National Societies.

The need for translation of PSS materials into all major languages became very evident in the past six months. Similarly, there is a need in the coming years to train a roster of psychosocial delegates with balanced language skills. It proved difficult to find a sufficient number of fully trained French speaking delegates for Haiti.

B. Capacity-building of National Societies and competence development of RCRC staff and volunteers to strengthen their ability to effectively identify, respond and programme for the psychosocial needs of beneficiaries.

Achievements

The global distribution of the Handbook and the Training Kit in English continued in 2010. These tools are also available on-line on www.ifrc.org/psychosocial. The feedback received indicates that the materials are considered useful by national societies and increasingly used to build staff competences.

The French translation of the ERU PSS Delegate Manual, the Training Kit and the Psychosocial Interventions Handbook were completed in the first half of 2010, and are expected to greatly increase the tools’ global outreach and utility. The Spanish translation of these tools has been negotiated. The Rebuilding Hope film was translated into French, Spanish and Arabic with voice-overs and subtitles.

New materials are being developed including a school-based PSS tool kit targeting school children and the supporting community. This tool is developed in partnership with Save the Children Denmark.

The PS Centre conducted a psychosocial support training session at a continental training in Panama for national societies in South America, Central America, North America and the Caribbean. The Centre also organized a five-day regional Psychosocial Support Training course in Uganda with staff from 7 African national societies (Uganda, South Africa, Ethiopia, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Sudan). The Uganda training was scheduled for April but postponed till July due to the Icelandic volcanic ash interference with air traffic. Various introductory training sessions have been conducted in Finland, Denmark and for the South Asia regional office and the India Office in New Delhi.

The Centre acknowledges that sustainable capacity-building of national societies in PSS requires a systematic implementation strategy than has so far been used. Together with the South Asia regional office, the Centre has developed a new model for PSS capacity-building and will be piloting this model with interested national societies in the coming year. Based on its success, the Centre will consider this model for a global roll out. In the meantime, the Centre will continue to support national societies’ requests for capacity-building support to the extent resources allow.

The first phase of the Volunteers in Emergency project was initiated early this year and included a global baseline survey of existing PSS tools and approaches to volunteers in emergencies by
national societies. The next phase of the project will be determined by the findings and recommendations of the consultancy report.

A staff-on-loan supported by Finnish Red Cross started in February and fills the position of training advisor.

Constraints or Challenges

The global distribution of the hard copies of the Practitioners Handbook and Training kit remain a financial challenge for the PS Centre, which needs to be addressed in the coming year.

C. Knowledge generation and knowledge management to ensure that psychosocial interventions are based on evidence-based research and best practices.

Achievements

A real time review of the ERU PSS component in Haiti was conducted in February/March, which provided a positive evaluation of the added value of the component in emergency and disaster interventions. The Centre has participated in a number of international meetings including the ERU working group meeting in Stockholm and the Health ERU working group meeting in Geneva, to present the ERU PSS component and the outcome of the review. The evaluation has led to a number of improvements in IFRC’s emergency response in the area of health/psychosocial support. It has also led to concrete revisions of the Delegates Manual and the kit. The revised manual and kit is expected finalized later this year.

The Centre continued to play an active role in the IASC MHPSS and in the development of the MHPSS Network. The Centre has also provided inputs to the revision of the Sphere Guidelines, International Recovery Platform Handbook Series Psychosocial, co-authored a chapter for Routledge Disaster Handbook on Psychosocial Support and Recovery and contributed with an article for the Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN) Magazine on Rapid Deployment Emergency Hospital to Haiti Earthquake: A Red Cross Model. Furthermore, the PS Centre has contributed several articles to FedNet, other news channels and papers. The Centre conducted a global academic training for emergency health professionals at the Master’s Education in Emergency Health, School of Global Health at the University Copenhagen. Finally, the PS Centre Director participated as key note speaker at the International Conference on Traumatic Stress at the Centre for Trauma, Resilience and Growth at the Institute of Mental Health in Nottingham, England. These ways, the Centre promotes sharing of knowledge and contributes to the further development of the psychosocial field.

The project to develop a knowledge and documentation centre was initiated in the spring. Consultants are hired to come up with a suitable and cost-effective model for the Centre. In the meantime, efforts continue to mobilize funds for the implementation of the longer term project.

Partnerships and cooperation with research institutions also continued in the first half of 2010 and will be followed up in the Autumn.

Constraints or Challenges

The PS Centre considers the knowledge and documentation centre a very high priority in the coming years if the Red Cross Red Crescent wishes to position itself as a global humanitarian lead in the field of psychosocial support. The establishment of a knowledge and documentation centre is therefore an important investment in the future.

D. Advocacy and communications to increase awareness of psychosocial reactions to disaster and social disruption, and to raise attention to psychosocial needs of beneficiaries in policies
Achievements

In the first half of 2010, the PS Centre has continued to publish its quarterly magazine *Coping with Crisis*, regular e-newsletters and website news stories. The circulation and number of hits continues to increase and indicate a growing awareness of the PS Centre and interest in psychosocial support.

The short-film *A Story from Gaza* is under finalization and documents the need for, and highlights the type of psychosocial support provided by the Palestinian Red Crescent to the population in Gaza. All of the PS Centre’s publications and media material are made available on our website and updates are given on the PS Centre’s Facebook page, as well as on the Federation’s website and elsewhere such as AlertNet.

Constraints or Challenges

Keeping up-to-date and abreast of new forms of online social media will continuously need attention. Making full use of different communication channels is furthermore a challenge with respect to outreach in the four Federation languages and requires coordination with parties outside of the PS Centre due to limited staffing.

Working in partnership

The most important partners of the PS Centre are the National Societies, and the Centre continues to respond to requests for support from a large number of National Societies in the Middle East, Europe, South America, Asia and Africa. The PS Centre has strong partnerships with the Nordic Red Cross national societies – the Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Icelandic Red Cross – as well as with the United Arab Emirates, French, Hellenic, American and Canadian Red Cross. Ongoing effort is made to further strengthen these partnerships and to expand the number to promote a better geographical balance.

The PS Centre also has standing partnership with leading universities and research centres around the world including with Copenhagen University, University of Nottingham, University of South Dakota and the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen.

The PS Centre seeks to expand its partnerships with civil society organisations and recently partnered with Save the Children Denmark, the International Council for Sports, Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE), Human Rights Info and REPSSI, a regional initiative focusing on psychosocial support to vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa.

Contributing to longer-term impact

Community based psychosocial support is increasingly recognized and acknowledged as an important sector and contributing factor to a speedy recovery from a disaster – man-made or natural. The positive evaluation and response to the deployment of the ERU PSS component in Haiti bear witness to the growing acceptance of psychosocial support as a valuable humanitarian approach. The work of the PS Centre contributes to high quality psychosocial responses by national societies, and to the build-up of global knowledge and expertise on the subject.
Looking ahead

In the first six months of 2010, the PS Centre put a lot of its resources into supporting the Haiti response and the testing of the ERU PSS component. In the coming months, the component will be refined and finalized, and a global dissemination, sensitisation and capacity-building programme will be needed.

The Centre succeeded in launching a number of high priority initiatives such as the volunteers in emergency, the knowledge and documentation centre and the school-based PSS material. The full implementation of these projects will depend on successful resource mobilisation, and hence this will demand high attention in the coming months.

Capacity-building of national societies continues to be an important focus of the PS Centre work plan. A new model has been developed together with the South Asia Regional Office and the first part of the model will be implemented with a master training course in Sri Lanka in November.

The PS Centre Roster group will meet in October and, among other things, discuss a new working model of the Roster.

A new five-year Strategy for the PS Centre will need to be developed in 2010. A process of consultation with stakeholders has already begun and will need to continue in the coming months along with the drafting of the new strategy.

Finally, a new Technical Advisor and Communications Advisor will be recruited, while resource mobilisation will continue to take up considerable time and human resources of the Centre.

### How we work

All Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO’s) in Disaster Relief and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

IFRC’s vision is to: Inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

IFRC’s work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

### Contact information

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