

GUATEMALA

CHF 2,600,000

Programme No. 01.18/2000

National Context

Guatemala, where an estimated 75% of the population lives in poverty, is the third poorest country in the Americas – a situation at least partly rooted in the 36 years of civil unrest that came to an end in 1996. Despite the peace accord commitments to reintegrate conflict affected groups, to build democracy and to modernise structures, social disruption is widespread and violence persists, threatening the country's fragile stability.

Guatemala is also disaster-prone – with 30 active volcanoes, frequent earthquakes and severe rainstorms. In 1998 it was one of four Central American nations to suffer countrywide devastation from Hurricane Mitch.

Country Assistance Strategy

In the post-war definition of its role, the Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC) recognised that it could contribute to the peace process and to strengthening civil society by addressing fundamental needs through well targeted activities. To achieve this aim it identified two priorities: its own institutional development and a human development initiative that would improve the quality of life and health through the establishment of a community based programme incorporating primary health care, disaster preparedness and community training. A pilot phase has begun in three regions and will gradually be extended to the rest of the country. The Federation supported the launching of these two priority programmes with an international appeal in 1997; it will continue its support in 2000 - 2001.

Programme Objectives

Disaster Response

Hurricane Mitch in late 1998 pointed up the need for improved response systems and better trained volunteers. The Federation will assist the National Society in its post-Mitch "Country Plan for Rehabilitation", in co-operation with several PNS.

Disaster Preparedness

To help the National Society to be better prepared, the Federation will assist the national relief department and the recently created emergency response teams. The community based disaster preparedness (DP) programme, which provides training in DP, first aid, rescue and the most common domestic accidents, will continue. (The programme is closely linked to the strengthening of disaster response capacity that is part of GRC institutional development).

Health

The Federation will maintain support to the GRC community based health care programme, which focuses on four key areas: health care for women, child health, general health including HIV / AIDS / STDs prevention, and environmental health. Two branches have already signed contracts with the Ministry of Health to provide basic health services to a total of 28,800 persons. Activities include mobile health teams, training of health promoters and traditional birth attendants, health education, and setting up basic community health units and pharmacies. All other branches are providing similar services, but without formal contracts.

Humanitarian Values

In order to build an image of a reliable organisation and impartial humanitarian aid, committed to the needs of the community, the GRC has two approaches: public information and the actual work done with the community itself. It endeavours to balance the two, in order to inspire credibility and obtain public support in the form of two fundamental elements: voluntary personnel and revenues. This activity will be supported by the Federation. The Society's capacity building plans also include a project to disseminate International Humanitarian Law and the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. This project is supported by the ICRC.

Capacity Building

The National Society's capacity building programme, which will continue to receive Federation support, has been part of the Tripartite Project. It includes strengthening governance and management capacity, branch development, resource development and resource planning. Individual branch development plans will address institutional development, programme development and resource development. Training of staff and volunteers and upgrading of infrastructure and facilities will continue to be key components. New branch buildings will be constructed in various locations (with funding from Participating National Societies). Additional external funding may be sought for the construction of basic structures for newly opened branches.

Relationships between branches and headquarters will be strengthened. Resource development will enable the Guatemalan Red Cross to gradually take over responsibility for the funding of its services. Activities will include national campaigns, donor and membership recruitment, increased cost recovery for selected services, and improved fund-raising at both national and branch levels. A national training programme has been set up to develop human resources, in order to expand the skills base and improve services.