

RUSSIAN FEDERATION: REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

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Although the Institutional Development programme is moving ahead into its third phase, the visiting nurses and first aid programmes are picking up speed and initiatives such as health support for the Chelyabinsk area, diphtheria control and an image survey are being launched, acute funding and staffing shortages are putting severe constraints on the achievement of 1996 Appeal targets.

Latest events

President Yeltsin, although trailing his communist opponent, Gennady Zyuganov, in opinion polls up to April, gained 35% of the vote in the first round of the presidential elections on 16th June against Zyuganov's 31%. With no clear winner in the first round, a run-off was due on 3rd July.

Uneasy about the outcome of the elections, both Russian regional authorities and international concerns adopted a "wait and see" policy, bringing the economy to a virtual halt. However, following the first stage in abolishing export tariffs, the April instalment of a three year \$10 billion IMF loan was released. The loan, agreed in March, is tied to tough fiscal and monetary controls.

The economy showed no sign of a long - awaited turnaround in May, with gross domestic product declining by 7% from May 1995 and industrial output down 6%. The average wage slipped 3.6% in May to Rb747,000 - (\$148) per capita from Rb775,000 in April. In one month, the subsistence income rose by Rb6,000 to Rb378,000.

The general inflation rate was 11.4% for the first three months of 1996. The growth in prices of food products stands at 10.4%, that for consumer goods is 7.5%, while services have risen by 23.8%. A policy of stabilising the rouble, begun in April 1995, has been extended for a further six months from January 1996. An All Russian Public Opinion Research Centre poll showed the high cost of living as the main concern among Russians, followed by the war in Chechnya and unpaid wages.

Events in Chechnya continue to dominate the political agenda. The latest ICRC figure for displaced persons who have left Chechnya is 120,000. Thousands more are internally displaced.

The number of IDPs is expected to rise by 620,000 to reach 1.7 million by the end of 1996. Despite this influx --

mainly Russian nationals leaving former Soviet republics for the Russian Federation -- the population (148,306,000) will decrease by over 200,000.

Red Cross Action - Main Achievements

The Delegation and the Russian Red Cross were heavily involved in preparing the Donor's Meeting (1st and 2nd February) in Moscow. It was attended by representatives from the RC Societies of Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the USA as well as by international aid organisations and Russian government agencies. The meeting enabled them to share information and views and discuss the 1996 Appeal, which was the result of joint planning between the Delegation and the Russian Red Cross.

The Delegation hosted a launch of the World Disasters Report 1996 on 29th May, having partially translated it into Russian with the co-operation of Federation Delegations in Almaty, Minsk and Tbilisi.

The Russian Red Cross, the Delegation and the Secretariat Programme Officer met in Moscow 19-23 June to review, plan and update activities for the second half of 1996.

Development

From 1993 - 1994, the Russian Red Cross, together with the Federation, the Swedish RC and the Finnish RC, conducted Steps I and II of an Institutional Development Training programme. Whereas these first two steps targeted chairpersons of the oblast committees across Russia, Step III aims at training people at rayon (district) level. In order to guarantee sustainability of the programme, 16 Russian trainers were trained and used as facilitators in the training of rayon personnel in six oblasts. From January to April, five Step III seminars took place in Nizhni Novgorod, Krasnodar, Vologda, Astrakhan and in Moscow Oblast. (The first was held in Chelyabinsk last December.)

A closing meeting took place on 30th May in Helsinki. Participants and trainers/facilitators alike expressed satisfaction with the seminars, which were also attended by representatives from the Russian Red Cross Central Committee and the Federation. A small grant competition is being held among all RC local committees in Chelyabinsk and Nizhni Novgorod. Programmes should be completed by the end of September.

The assessment of the financial management of the Russian Red Cross was carried out from 29th February to 9th March by a team of three consultants, one of them a Russian expert. The report was issued in English and Russian on 12th March. The assessment was the first step of the proposed Financial Management Training included in the Emergency Appeal 1996. As part of this training, the British RC invited the Russian Red Cross leadership to London to become acquainted with the reorganisation it has recently undertaken.

A joint Federation/RRC Development Committee, set up in 1995, has been unable to achieve its aim of producing a development plan for the Russian Red Cross, mainly due to lack of time and other organisational priorities, including the Development Delegate having to act as HORD during the last quarter. He leaves at the end of June, and his replacement will have to address this issue. However, ad hoc development co-operation with the RRC has been active and effective.

The RRC and the Delegation are at present preparing a proposal that aims at seeking funding for legal advice. This is required to assist the RRC in obtaining the ratification by Parliament of a Red Cross Law or decree .

RRC Image Survey

The report is expected at the end of June. The questionnaire was developed from the basis of a paper produced by the Development Delegate and, after tenders, is being carried out by VTSIOM, a Moscow company.

Relief

North Caucasus

After three Federation/RRC missions in 1995, a further two were carried out in February this year, enabling a new unified relief development programme proposal to be prepared. Funding is urgently needed.

ECHO Chelyabinsk Medical Distribution

The Federation used funds left over from the ECU 300,000 grant for its Chelyabinsk programme to supply 140 district hospital kits and 200 nursing kits to Chelyabinsk and neighbouring Dugan and Sverdlovsk oblasts.

Medical equipment for Budyonnovsk hospital

This was expected to arrive at the end of June.

Used clothing

The Swedish RC remains the main donor; however, in the first quarter of this year, the Delegation also received an initial consignment of used clothes from the Finnish RC. The Delegation Logistics Department assisted OXFAM (UK) in handling used clothes for Chechnya and Ingushetia.

Visiting Nurses Programme

The Visiting Nurses Programme (VNP), a collaborative effort between the RRC and the American RC, with Federation support, aims to increase Visiting Nurses' skills and support the institutional development and sustainability of this RC service by developing distinctive nurse training materials and establishing a nation-wide training structure for Visiting Nurses.

The two-year project, originally designed to begin in May 1995, finally got underway in February 1996. The first task, to adapt the Amcross text book for use in Russia, is being undertaken by a committee of nursing professors, representatives from oblasts and members of appropriate ministries. The long-range plan is for the RC to offer this book for sale to the Ministries of Social Protection, Education and Employment as well as to the general public. Candidates for instructor trainers are being selected and it is planned that eventually each region will have a cadre of instructors to provide training.

The Amcross delegate has visited Ekaterinburg, Pskov, Ulan Ude, Ulyanovsk and St. Petersburg to establish the level of support for the programme as well as to interview potential instructor trainers. A RRC representative travels to all meetings with the delegate, thus ensuring the RRC is kept fully involved in the programme.

Following the Donors' meeting, the Japanese RC expressed interest in offering funding to expand the programme in the Far East (Khabarovsk).

Discussions are underway to hold a workshop on this programme in order to increase co-ordination and planning throughout the CIS. Such a workshop would include all ONSs from the region and involve PNSs. A tentative date would be the second half of October. Besides the VNP, the agenda might also include the practical implications of the recent "CIS Population Movement Conference", ONS's need for legal advice on

Red Cross Laws and other matters, the restitution of former RC/RC property and planning for the 1997 Appeal.

Health

Chelyabinsk Programme

Following a Federation/RRC mission in September 1995, a programme was drawn up to raise public awareness about radioactivity and how to minimise its effects. Besides such information activities, the programme envisages supplying a new type of kit for medical outposts, so that assistance can reach people living in rural areas, at the first referral level. The primary group of beneficiaries are people living in settlements along the Techa River. In the long term, all those living in contaminated areas (Chernobyl, Altai, etc.) might benefit from such a programme. The Finnish Red Cross is currently investigating further the feasibility of funding this programme from its own resources and through applications to TACIS or ECHO.

In March, the Federation health officer attended the European Commission's international conference on the radiological consequences of the Chernobyl accident in Belarus, Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

Diphtheria

The Pskov RRC regional committee has designed a programme to assist the Ministry of Health (MOH) in tackling the diphtheria epidemic since, despite a three year mass vaccination campaign, the effects are insufficient. Three regions have been selected for the programme (Pskov and Leningrad oblasts and Karelia).

The programme was finalised and approved after consultations by a representative of the RRC and the Moscow Delegation's health officer with the MOH, the State Sanitary and Epidemiology Surveillance Committee and experts in vaccination. These confirmed that there was no need for vaccine, but that assistance was required with cold chain equipment, training and social mobilisation. After a mission to the three target areas by the Federation's Baltic Diphtheria co-ordinator, a programme and budget were drawn up and a plan of action designed. An application to ECHO followed.

First Aid

First Aid, a key RRC programme in the past, was one of the first to suffer from the major cuts in government support for the NS. No formal FA training has been conducted in Russia since 1991. Recent laws have made FA training obligatory for various professional groups. Recognising the huge potential for RC committees to raise funds through this service, a project to reintroduce training, begun by the Canadian RC in 1995, is continuing in 1996. The RRC, a Federation Delegate and two Canadian consultants have been developing FA books and materials for students and instructors suited to the situation in Russia. Eight regions have been selected where two-week seminars, each training 20 instructors and instructor trainers, will be conducted. Sixty per cent of the student manual has been translated and work is proceeding on the instructor manual.

Two Cancross consultants were accompanied by a member of the RRC to Nizhni Novgorod (the only oblast not visited in last year's tour) to discuss the programme with relevant authorities.

A second working session was held with RRC oblast chairpersons to discuss progress and, in view of the time constraints, a prolongation of the programme. However, staffing is the primary problem: three people working on the programme are insufficient to carry it out successfully.

Information

The information department was strengthened by the hiring of an information assistant. The information officer attended the ID seminars in Nizhni Novgorod (28 - 31st January) and Krasnodar (25th - 28th February) to conduct interviews with the local press and TV, as well as work with participants whom she briefed on the Federation's main aims and role.

A project concerning a series of children's programmes being produced by Russian TV about Federation and ICRC activities continued.

An image survey of the RRC is being conducted (see above). Little strategic planning can take place before the report becomes available although the RRC press department and information officer work well together.

Outstanding needs

Further funding is needed for the continuation and implementation of the programmes described above. It is also urgently required to maintain other programmes featured in the 1996 Appeal -- specifically North Caucasus, AIDS Awareness, Soup Kitchens, and Regional Delegation technical support.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

On the initiative of the Federation Secretariat, a delegation of six representatives from ONSs in the CIS and three representatives of PNSs attended the CIS Population Movement Conference in Geneva, 29--31 May, chaired by the UN. In its Declaration the conference recognised the role of the Movement in rendering humanitarian assistance to various categories of displaced. After defining the different categories the document called upon governments in the CIS to protect and support them and requested donors to pledge contributions. The Federation is at present processing programme proposals to be shared with potential donors. The Secretariat is registered with the Steering Committee following up on the conference and the execution of the Declaration.

The Moscow launch of the World Disaster Report provided an opportunity to raise the profile of both the RRC and the Federation among various ministries, companies connected with emergency relief and NGOs.

Both the Delegation and the RRC maintain regular contacts with the MOH, other institutes and local authorities in areas scheduled for assistance. Delegates also attend meetings among NGOs, usually hosted by the UN, to discuss the situation in the North Caucasus, IDPs, relief and other topics. Through the *Newsletter*, written by the Federation with input from the RRC, both the Russian and foreign media, as well as NSs, are kept abreast of Federation/RRC activities.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

As expected, 1996 is proving a challenging year, both for Russia as a whole and for the RRC which, while it tries to redefine its role in society and adjust to an austere domestic funding climate, faces extra pressure on its services from the growing numbers of vulnerable groups.

The present very low funding of the regional programmes contained in the Emergency Appeal 1996 poses a serious threat to their implementation. It happens just as the RRC is getting to grips with organisational and programme issues. It occurs at a time when the Federation should be consolidating and building on the momentum gained from large-scale initiatives and investment in the region in the past few years. If the situation does not improve soon a major opportunity will be permanently lost.

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