

MINSK DELEGATION

CHF 4,452,000

Programme No. 01.40/98

The Delegation, opened in 1991, covers Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova and, for the purposes of the Chernobyl Humanitarian Assistance and Rehabilitation Programme, the affected areas of the Russian Federation. In 1996 a Representative Office was opened in Kiev following the conclusion of a Status agreement with the Ukrainian Government.

In 1997, after five years of programmes prioritising medical assistance, the Delegation attempted to refocus efforts on capacity building in the National Societies which, like their countries, are traversing an unstable transition period. Serious underfunding of the 1997 appeal, however, meant that most of the projected programmes had to be postponed. Strengthening the self-reliance of the Societies nevertheless remains a priority for the region, in 1998 and beyond.

The Delegation will continue to provide support to the Chernobyl Programme (see also separate entry).

Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine are all facing serious economic difficulties in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although the three countries undertook varying degrees of economic and political reform in 1997, it may take years for regional economies and government revenues to recover. Reforms were accompanied by a severe degradation of living standards and a decline in the health care systems, putting at risk large sectors of the population. Low pensions, underfunded social services and meagre medical supplies are characteristic of the welfare system throughout the region.

Ten years after the Chernobyl nuclear accident approximately four million people are still living in contaminated areas. Population movement within the NIS countries, producing increasing numbers of refugees, returnees, displaced persons or migrants in need of assistance, is a major source of concern.

In these conditions, the Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova Red Cross Societies, while struggling to cope with the growing numbers of vulnerable people, need support to redefine their place and role in society and develop their response capacity.

Objectives in 1998

In defining objectives for 1998, the National Societies and the Federation took into account the advantages of regionalising working strategies and using local resources. The objectives of regional programmes are:

- | To assist the Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova Red Cross Societies in their efforts to improve their legal foundation;
- | to strengthen and reinforce the foundation, the capacity and the performances of the Societies through Institutional Development Programmes;
- | to continue support to the Red Cross Visiting Nurses and to assist the National Societies, through institutional development, in finding ways of ensuring the long term sustainability of the nurses programme;
- | to support the development of Disaster Preparedness Programmes and continue to provide disaster relief in case of emergencies;
- | to support the Community Based First Aid Programme and possibly include First Aid Training in national disaster preparedness plans;
- | to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable, including refugees and migrants;
- | to assess the medical/health situation and provide support to Red Cross medico-social centres;
- | to continue to support the Red Cross Chernobyl Humanitarian Assistance and Rehabilitation Programme in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine.

Programmes in 1998

BELARUS

Visiting Nurses Programme

In 1997, with salary support from the Swiss Red Cross and partial governmental funding, the number of Visiting Nurses was increased from 396 to 414, after a 50% drop (from 700 to 396) in 1996. The Red Cross Nurses train for two to four years in state institutes before joining the Red Cross. They give comprehensive medical and social assistance to the elderly living on their own, handicapped, bedridden and fatally sick persons, who are dependent on external support. The Programme fills a gap in services which would normally be covered by the

Government and is the only source of support for most of these people who would probably die should assistance be terminated.

The nurses will be supplied with nursing kits, winter clothes (including uniforms, coats and shoes) and bicycles. They will continue to provide vital services to approximately 15,000 lonely, disabled, elderly people. Additional basic medical equipment and supplies will be provided to the 115 medico-social centres which are the nurses' operational base.

Disaster Preparedness Programme

Belarus's national disaster preparedness and response has been reorganised: it is now the joint responsibility of Emercom, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, (the former Chernobyl Ministry) and the Ministry of the Interior.

The Belarus Red Cross Disaster Preparedness Service was set up in 1992, and has functioned since with support from the German Red Cross. In August 1996, the two National Societies successfully conducted a national level disaster preparedness exercise and in 1997 the Society supplied relief items to the victims of a hurricane. The objectives of the programme, consisting of two phases, are to create an infrastructure for disaster response and to provide training.

In the first phase, the Red Cross Society will continue the construction of the Disaster Preparedness Service Base, comprising a training centre and premises for storage of emergency equipment and relief supplies. The second phase involves setting up a training centre and starting training exercises (which will be open to participation by other Societies).

Community Based First Aid Programme

First Aid training, part of Belarus Red Cross services to the community, has almost collapsed since the break up of the Soviet Union, due to the lack of funds for training and a shortage of qualified trainers within the National Society. Enterprises in crisis are unable to pay for the service (previously provided free under the state system). Two Federation assessments have been conducted. The objectives of the project are to train 30 instructors, to provide sustainable first aid training services, and to equip 2000 people at community level with the skills and knowledge to deal with eventual disasters.

During the first year of this three year programme the basic curriculum and training materials will be developed and field tested, based on common emergencies and health messages identified for the specific target groups. Also during the first year the 30 National Instructor Trainers will be trained. One Delegate, to be based in Kiev, Ukraine, will cover the Programmes in both Belarus and Ukraine. The Programme will complement the Disaster Preparedness Programme.

Medical Assistance Programme

Medical assistance will complement the Visiting Nurses Programme, providing disposable syringes, gloves, hygiene items and disinfectants in order to sustain nurses' services in patients' homes and in the medico-social centres. The total number of beneficiaries is up to 60,000 people.

Population Movement Programme

Exact figures on displaced people in Belarus are not available, but estimates put their numbers at around 400,000 — a heavy burden for a country in crisis. This population of illegal migrants includes people from other NIS countries, asylum seekers and those fleeing conflicts in Afghanistan, Tajikistan

and Chechnya. The National Society, which provides permanent support to some 2,000 refugees ranging from clothing and medical aid to language training and legal advice, will develop its capacities to respond to the needs of 5000-7000 displaced people. Aid envisaged includes clothing, footwear, blankets, medical care and financial support for lodgings.

Institutional Development Programme

The Belarus Red Cross carried out a self-assessment in a series of Institutional Development workshops in 1996. This identified its legal base and relations with the Government as a key issue. This relationship has important financial implications, affecting the Society's ability to provide badly needed services - particularly through its medico-social centres and the Visiting Nurses Programme. Currently, the Belarus Red Cross receives meagre support from the Government. With advice from a local lawyer, the National Society will push for the adoption of a Red Cross law (it is currently operating by Presidential Decree) linked to the already existing Statutes.

Due to the above situation and reduced income from its branches, fund raising is a top priority for the National Society. Staff at all levels of the Society need to develop their skills in presenting activities to the authorities and the public in order to generate financial support. Fund raising will be oriented towards local donors to ensure sustainability of programmes. Internal-external information and communication activities (promotional material, newsletters) will be developed to boost and upgrade the image of the Society.

Fund raising workshops, staff training and material support for communication facilities (one fax machine and computer per Oblast) are planned.

Youth Programme

To maintain the active involvement of young people in Red Cross operations, the Programme is addressing two target groups: youth leaders and youth themselves. Youth leaders are mainly young teachers or university students who are willing to co-operate with the Red Cross. Their numbers can be increased but training and educational materials are needed. Besides, the Society will try to introduce national Youth Red Cross activities and services.

Activities will be co-ordinated with the educational authorities, who, together with the Red Cross, will develop a common strategy of the Youth Red Cross in educational institutions.

UKRAINE

Visiting Nurses Programme

The government has made a substantial financial contribution to the service by providing partial funding for the salaries of the nurses. The 3,000 Red Cross nurses who serve 200,000 beneficiaries, mainly elderly people living alone, will be equipped with nursing kits, winter clothes (uniforms) and bicycles. Twenty medical equipment sets including basic medicines will be provided to the Red Cross medico-social centres.

Disaster Preparedness Programme

Ukraine is disaster prone: during the past decade, some 240 natural disasters occurred. During the Soviet era, the Ukrainian Red Cross was responsible for relief services and was provided with sufficient warehouse space. Today, such services are an integral part of the new Emercom Ministry. The National Society is among organisations that will be called on in an emergency but does not have the resources to respond adequately.

Implementation of the National Society's Disaster Preparedness Programme will allow it to be formally included in the national disaster plans. The Society needs to complete the construction of

warehouse facilities on its DP base. Training should be continued for new DP team members and to upgrade the skills of the old DP team.

Community Based First Aid Programme

First Aid activities, which were part of the Ukrainian Red Cross services before the break up of the Soviet Union, have almost collapsed. The objectives of the project, reflecting a Federation assessment in 1996, are to train 50 instructors in each region of the country, and to provide first aid training for 5000 people at community level to deal with disasters and accidents. The Community Based First Aid Programme will complement the Disaster Preparedness Programme.

During the first year of this three year programme a basic curriculum and training materials will be developed and field tested, based on common emergencies and health messages identified for the specific target groups (drivers, youth, traffic police, firemen, workers in industry). During the first year 50 National Instructor Trainers will be trained. One Delegate, based in Kiev, will cover the Programmes in both Belarus and Ukraine.

Population Movement

Since the dissolution of the USSR, population movement has become a growing problem in Ukraine, which is receiving increasing numbers of displaced, refugees, repatriates, and illegal migrants. The Population Movement Programme of the Ukraine Red Cross comprises two projects: they address the most critical situations — those of detained illegal migrants in a Transcarpathian filtration camp and repatriates in the Crimea peninsula.

Illegal migrants are the most vulnerable and unprotected group of moving populations. The Transcarpathian Oblast, the most western part of Ukraine, is a cross-roads for migratory movements. Despite border policing, there are estimated to be 300,000 irregular labour migrants in the area. Border guards caught 900 illegal migrants in the first half of 1997 alone. All those apprehended are sent to a crowded tent camp, without heating, running water or basic medical services, where they are held for up to 20 days.

A Federation survey mission in April 1997 revealed sub-human conditions in the camp and the urgent need for action. The Beregovo Red Cross Committee, supported by the Federation, became the first organisation to provide regular assistance. The projected programme will enable the local Oblast Red Cross Committee to support the health authorities and other NGOs in improving conditions in the camp. Relief supplies, including food, personal hygiene items and medicines will be provided, health education training organised, and information materials produced.

One of the biggest social problems in Ukraine is related to returnees, mainly belonging to the Tatar national minority, to the Crimean peninsula. Deported in 1940-50, these people were entitled to return to their original home region when democratic reforms were initiated. Repatriation took place on a massive scale: 270,000 have returned already and numbers are expected to reach 320,000 in 1998-99. Many of the returnees are crammed into premises unfit for human habitation, without sanitation or running water. The incidence of tuberculosis is increasing alarmingly; the rate was double the national average last year (45/100 000 population, average 23).

The Red Cross programme will provide access to better quality drinking water for several thousand families. It will also procure a mobile immunisation unit, which will vaccinate against TB, help with early diagnosis of this and other respiratory diseases, and refer cases for treatment.

Institutional Development Programme

The Ukrainian Red Cross completed its self-assessment in 1996. Under the projected 1998 programme, the Society will seek to reinforce its legal base, win more support from the authorities,

develop external and internal information and communication and improve fund-raising.— identified as the key problem. Staff training at all levels is a priority in order to guarantee operations in the long term. It is proposed to conduct workshops in fund raising and finance a resource development position in the National Headquarters. Support will also be provided for production of promotional materials such as posters and leaflets.

The Ukrainian Red Cross covers a population of over 50 million people through a structure of Oblast and Rayon Committees. Internal communication is crucial in such a large Society and support is needed for the provision of fax machines for Oblast Committees.

Youth Programme

The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in Ukraine has made control and care a priority problem. The youth section of the Ukrainian Red Cross will organise public events in the worst affected parts of the country. Two workshops will be held for youth leaders who will further share their knowledge.

MOLDOVA

Visiting Nurses Programme

Moldova's 30 Red Cross visiting nurses will be supplied with nursing kits, winter clothes (uniforms) and bicycles. Medical equipment kits including basic medicines will be supplied for the three Red Cross medico-social rooms to be set up in the country's hospitals.

Institutional Development Programme

The Moldova Red Cross is not yet a member of the International Federation. Like its neighbouring National Societies, its primary organizations, membership and funding base have shrunk drastically. A lack of well-defined activities leads to an unclear role and image, especially in relation to the health authorities. The Red Cross Society has revised its Statutes and adopted Development Guidelines for the period 1996-2000.

The government has recently expressed interest in supporting the Society. A Red Cross law, covering the return of Red Cross property and outlining a strong Red Cross role in First Aid training and Disaster Preparedness, is expected to be voted shortly. However, the Society will need external support to be able to live up to the authorities' expectations, to revitalise its programmes and make its structures more efficient.

An American Peace Corps Volunteer will work with the Society in order to reinforce its Headquarters management, especially in the area of liaison with the Delegation and international organizations. Support is needed for operational expenses and for a Moldovan Red Cross counterpart. Training in fund-raising is a priority, as is the production of promotional material in the Moldovan language, to enhance the image of the Society. Another area for improvement is programme planning capacity. A series of training workshops will be organised to familiarise the newly elected leaders at different levels of the Society with their tasks. Fax equipment is also foreseen to facilitate internal communication.

Medical Assistance Programme

The programme will provide medicines and equipment to help the country cope with the alarming increase of TB. Presently, Chisinau, Moldova's capital, has the highest TB morbidity rate in Europe.

Disaster Preparedness Programme

The key element is to create 4 Red Cross Disaster Preparedness teams and to provide them with training, transportation and communications. Locally based volunteers will improve DP on community level, thus making people less vulnerable to a possible calamity.

The programme will secure the necessary relief supplies of tents, blankets, bed linen and first aid kits and arrange for a warehouse.