

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE

REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

CHF 4,146,000

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Introduction

Between the 15 countries covered by the Regional Delegation in Budapest, a north-south gap is slowly emerging. There are those countries drawing closer to EU and NATO membership, and those who continue to struggle against increasing poverty, chaotic political and economic conditions, as well as increasing security concerns. Natural disasters continued to challenge the National Societies in 1998, while fighting in the Serbian province of Kosovo provoked a mass movement of the ethnic Albanian population, and served to underline the fragile political, social and economic balance in the region.

Against this background, the priorities of the National Societies include institutional and resource development (human and financial), disaster preparedness and response, social welfare and health services, youth, communications, regional recruitment and population movements. The Regional Delegation has supported the process of capacity building in these fields. The Regional Delegation's current Five Year Plan to 2002 reflects its developing role: combining a long-term commitment to capacity building - including the co-ordination of training opportunities and sharing best practices - with a flexible approach to country-specific emergencies.

Follow-up to the emergency assistance programme in Albania and FYR Macedonia will be provided through the Regional Delegation in 1999, as the international community continues to search for a solution to the Kosovo crisis. The Regional Delegation will also play an important role in the transitional phase for Federation delegations in former Yugoslavia. With the closure of the Croatia delegation in December 1998, Budapest will assume administrative responsibility for the support of programmes in Croatia. Plans to move the Regional Logistics Centre (RLC) from Zagreb to Budapest in 1999 will result in a more active role in logistical support to Federation delegations and National Societies in the region.

Elsewhere, the Regional Delegation will continue to support initiatives from the three main sub-regional groups

- the Central European, Balkan and Baltic groups - established to address specific issues arising from common social, economic or political developments.

In 1999, capacity building - including resource development - will remain a priority in all programme areas.

As traditional funding sources dry up, support will be provided to identify and tap into new opportunities. The Regional Delegation aims to maximise training opportunities for the National Societies in this field – in approaching donors, project planning, implementation, reporting and evaluation. The delegation will also facilitate the ongoing development of external relations – particularly with governments (regarding the revision and adoption of Red Cross laws, property restitution issues) as well as intergovernmental regional groups.

Objectives

- To assist the National Societies in attaining financial self-reliance through the provision of technical assistance; to continue support for the institutional development process and staff and governance training initiatives; to facilitate implementation of the Nordic-Baltic Work Plan and other partnerships in the region; to promote access to English-language training at all National Society levels.
- To co-ordinate implementation and revision of long-term disaster preparedness (DP) plans in Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia; to provide support to other DP plans, e.g. in Albania.
- To support ongoing NS programmes of social welfare support in Albania, FYR Macedonia and Bulgaria;
- To respond to Red Cross Youth training requirements and to facilitate the development of a regional Youth network;
- To facilitate the development and implementation of National Society communications strategies through training at all levels;
- To provide support for the expansion of the population movement programmes in the Baltic states;
- To ensure a prompt emergency response capacity in the region and support for country delegations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia through the Regional Logistics Centre (RLC);
- To better utilise human resources from within the region through the Regional Delegate Recruitment initiative.

Programmes

Institutional & Resource Development

Regional Resource Development

Although much work has been done by the Federation and through individual Participating National Societies to help strengthen National Society resource development programmes in the region, the focus on resource development must sharpen and intensify by putting in place a region-wide programme. This new project will provide technical assistance to those National Societies demonstrating need and commitment, enabling them to make measurable progress

towards financial self-reliance. During the 27-month programme, which is to involve four to six National Societies and which will be kicked off by an assessment of their needs, the resource development delegate will co-ordinate activities with those already in place in Bosnia Herzegovina and the Baltic States.

Regional Institutional Development

In 1999, the Regional Delegation will embark on a two-year programme of institutional development with

11 National Societies in the region. During 1999 the focus will be on those Societies which are committed to comprehensive capacity building work (Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia). Follow-up will be provided to ongoing programmes in Albania, FR Yugoslavia, Estonia and Lithuania, with promotion work to take place in Croatia, FYR Macedonia and Latvia for an eventual start in the year 2000. The programme will focus on developing a two-year review programme and on training National Society facilitators to implement the process. Emphasis will be given to supporting the development of gender balance in the areas of National Society governance, management and programme delivery with particular attention to volunteer and beneficiary participation. In addition, specific support will be provided to the Albanian Red Cross to continue the institutional strengthening process of the National Society, focusing on human resources and programme management development, as well as training at the branch and executive council levels, including the provision of equipment and facilitating participation at international seminars and workshops.

Regional English-Language Training

The Regional Delegation will continue to provide English-language training opportunities for National Society staff and volunteers. The programme aims to improve communications and international networking skills, as well as to enable National Societies to be better represented on Federation advisory bodies.

Disaster Preparedness and Response

In 1999, supported by the German Red Cross, the Regional Delegation will assist in the implementation of long-term disaster preparedness plans drawn up by the Polish, Czech and Slovak Red Cross in the wake of the 1997 floods. The plans, which aim to strengthen management and operational procedures, improve National Society response capacity and facilitate their integration into national disaster preparedness plans. With the support of a delegate, technical advice and training will be provided.

Over the previous two years, the disaster response capacity of the Albanian Red Cross has been stretched to the limit, responding to the political and social crisis of 1997 and the Kosovo refugee influx in 1998. Specific support will be provided to the Albanian Red Cross to boost the National Society's disaster preparedness programme and to allow the replacement of emergency relief stocks. The National Society will focus on expanding its capacity to respond to natural disasters through the organisation of regional training courses, the recruitment and equipping of volunteers and the replacement of emergency relief stocks. In addition, construction of a permanent warehouse is planned.

Social Welfare and Health

Support will focus on ongoing National Society social welfare programmes benefiting vulnerable groups previously supported through emergency appeals, and on countries where the capacity to respond is severely limited by socio-economic factors.

The Macedonian Red Cross will continue to provide social welfare assistance to the most vulnerable among the 2,500 Bosnian refugees who remain in FYR Macedonia. This programme, which has been running for over five years, will continue to cover essential psycho-social support, education, information centre running costs, hygiene and medical needs.

In Bulgaria follow-up assistance will be provided for the soup kitchen and baby food programmes following the end of the emergency appeal programmes in June 1998. Although macro-economic indicators have improved in the country, the situation of the most vulnerable continues to be a major cause for concern, and is likely to deteriorate further over the winter 1998/99. This programme seeks to fund the running of 12 soup kitchens for eight months, serving 845 elderly persons daily, and to secure baby food for 1,400 beneficiaries throughout the year.

In January 1998 the Albanian Red Cross resumed its traditional community-based activities following the end of the 1997 emergency relief operation. Six months later, the Kosovo refugee assistance programme again threatened those traditional activities, although maximum efforts were made to maintain programme schedules. In 1999, the focus will be on continuing the programme of mother and child care activities and oral hygiene in schools; expanding the First Aid programme; revitalising the blood donor recruitment programme; and maintaining support for the vulnerable elderly through soup kitchens and social activities in elderly homes.

Regional Youth

The focus of the 1999 regional youth programme will be on the drawing up and implementation by National Societies of youth programme plans of action. With capacity building and programme development at different stages within the region, this programme seeks to form a regional network to make better mutual use of skills, knowledge and available material. The further development of many youth sections hinges on increasing access to leadership training and fund-raising skills, a situation often mirrored by National Society needs in general.

Specific support will also be provided to the Albanian Red Cross Youth programme, which focuses on the provision of training for local youth leaders and support for the ongoing substance abuse awareness programme. Other regional activities will include: training of trainers and support for the implementation of a leadership training system in eight National Societies; organisation of a regional fund-raising seminar for youth representatives; organisation of a regional youth meeting on the exchange of know-how, sharing of best practices, and networking; and assistance with the translation of training material.

Communications

Communications resource development will be the key to the Regional Delegation's information activities in 1999, with the goal of enhancing National Society capacity to respond to evolving internal and external information needs. The programme aims to provide National Societies with training and equipment to support the development of communications activities at both headquarters and branch level. Special emphasis will be given to optimising co-operation and co-ordination between information, dissemination and resource mobilisation activities of National Societies. The delegation will support National Societies to identify and implement local information initiatives, and will assist them to identify new funding sources and to fully use the know-how and experience existing in the region.

The focus of the programme will be on providing further training opportunities for professional National Society communicators, with an introduction to basic communications/PR skills for National Society leadership and volunteers. The communications programme also includes continued support for the dissemination of Red Cross/Red Crescent values and activities through the production of a number of regular publications, notably The Bridge; support for Federation publications promoting operations in the region of former Yugoslavia; and specific support for the Albanian Red Cross information programme focusing on the production of publicity materials, salary support and the organisation of a seminar for media representatives.

Population Movements

In 1999 the programme will continue to support National Society co-ordinators in the Baltic states to develop or expand their assistance programmes to the increasing numbers of refugees and migrants from the former Soviet Union and Asia through the establishment of donor contacts, the provision of technical advice and the organisation of workshops. The progress of the programme will be monitored by a number of time-related indicators. As of mid-November 1998, the regional population movement delegate will be based with the Federation delegation in Minsk, but will continue to cover programme activities with the Baltic National Societies. In 1999 the focus will be on salary support for population movement co-ordinators; increasing awareness at branch level and creation of branch networks for refugee assistance; assistance to the National Societies in implementation of programme activities (e.g., integration of refugees, social rehabilitation support, dissemination) through the provision of technical advice; assistance in the establishment of co-operation agreements with governments, and in contacts with potential donors.

Regional Logistics Centre

The Regional Logistics Centre (RLC) in Zagreb will continue to stage training workshops to ensure that Federation standards, systems and procedures will be implemented throughout the region. The emphasis in 1999 will be on the logistics counterparts of National Society staff in the region to strengthen human resource capacity in this field. The RLC is financially self-supporting through a system of recharge for services provided to operational programmes in the respective delegations. It is planned that in 1999 the RLC will move from Zagreb to Budapest, following the closure of the Federation delegation in Croatia in December 1998.

Regional Delegate Recruitment

The Regional Delegation is acting as the focal point for the implementation of a regional recruitment and training programme, aimed at increasing the number of delegates from non-traditional sources. Training and support to National Societies in the region to develop screening procedures began in the autumn 1998. National Societies are expected to provide candidates for a regional Basic Training Course to be held by the Regional Delegation in the first half of 1999. Follow-up work will focus on further selection and recruitment issues, including registers, training, briefing and debriefing and psychological support and welfare. The programme aims to address the imbalance in the number of National Societies providing delegates for Federation operations worldwide.

Capacity

The Regional Delegation will have seven delegates in 1999 (HoRD, Finance, Development, ID for Baltics, Resource Development, Youth, Information). The emphasis is very much on ID/RD, with a new Resource Development Delegate in place in early 1999. Additional support will be provided by the Population Movement Delegate based in Minsk and a half time DP Delegate provided by the German Red Cross.