

OPERATIONS UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

PALESTINE RED CRESCENT SOCIETY

4 December 2002

This Programme Update is intended for reporting on Annual Appeals.

Appeal No. 13/2002

Appeal Target CHF 1,873,000

Programme Update No. 1

"At a Glance"

Appeal coverage: 39.6%

Outstanding needs: CHF 1,131,087

Related Appeals: MENA regional programmes (01.54/2002); Palestin Red Crescent Society (01.57/2002); PRCS Lebanon/Syria branches (01.58/2002)

Update: The situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has continued to be very unstable. The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has been facing a huge task to maintain its humanitarian assistance and services. Using the PRCS Post Disaster Rehabilitation Plan to support vulnerable people as a basis, the ICRC increased its budget for the Palestinian autonomous/occupied territories (A/OT) and the International Federation launched this Emergency Appeal in May 2002 to support PRCS activities. Backing to this appeal, through the Secretariat and bilaterally from National Societies, has been reasonable and has assisted many vulnerable Palestinians.

Operational Developments:

Ongoing violence in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and within Israel continues to destabilise the region. The Palestinian territories have been affected physically, socially and economically. According to a CARE International nutritional assessment report, almost 10 percent of Palestinian children under five years are suffering acute malnutrition and almost 20 percent are anaemic.

Restrictions on movement have been severe around the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including for members of the Palestinian Authority and humanitarian organizations. Deliveries of assistance, such as medicine, medical equipment and health care, as well as food and other relief items, have been affected.

The impact of the intifada on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon has also been of major concern. Psychological pressure, poverty and the denial of access to work opportunities or other alternatives in

Lebanese society has left the refugees even more vulnerable and dependent on external aid. Along with UNRWA (UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) the PRCS remains the main provider of health care services to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Disaster Response

Response to the crisis has taken much of the capacity, energy and time of the staff and management of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. The Federation delegate, who since late December 2001 has been alone in the Federation Office has also been engaged in responding to the emergency programme of the National Society (NS). In particular has this been in relation to monitoring and supervision of the Primary Health Care programme as well as trying to increase the capacity and response of the NS.

The security situation has often been poor and restrictions on movement inside West Bank and Gaza Strip has made it difficult for the NS to implement programmes. Staff and volunteers of the PRCS have been, at times, on alert 24 hours a day. In particular the staff of the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) have carried the main burden, stretching their capacity and courage to the limit.

In this difficult environment, the ICRC and Federation delegates have been working closely with the NS, whenever needed, coordinating with the Israeli Authorities movements of ambulances and medical staff of the PRCS. There have still been problems for PRCS staff in terms of access.

The PRCS has, due to good disaster preparedness, been able to mobilize staff and volunteers and carry out programmes. Much has been based on the disaster preparedness plan of the Society and the experience gained through internal processes related to the Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) carried out in 2000 by the PRCS with support from the Federation.

Objectives and activities:

1. Integration of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Primary Health Care services (PHC).

In a number of locations where the PRCS runs a PHC center there is also an EMS station. This structure has been to the benefit of both programmes and the beneficiaries. Measures have been taken to strengthen the ties and daily cooperation in terms of replenishing supplies and equipment, as well as monitoring, follow up training, and providing services to people in need, particularly in remote areas.

The original idea behind the EMS was to provide the earliest possible treatment to emergency cases with professional supervision to give necessary transportation of the patient to hospitals, health centers or other available health facilities. Due to logistical constraints for the Ministry of Health (MoH) and other organizations/agencies in providing ambulance transport in non-emergency cases, the PRCS EMS has been responding to these demands. This has also been to the advantage of the PRCS PHC programme. However, it has also put a heavy burden on the PRCS EMS staff and volunteers. With its fleet of ambulances from dispatch stations in the districts and the additional substations around the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the EMS programme has been helpful in transporting medicine and medical supplies to PHC centers as well as to hospitals in need.

The PRCS PHC programme has, due to the present support from the International RC/RC Movement, been able to run almost according to the plan. While other providers of health services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been facing huge constraints in the implementation of programmes, the PRCS has been able to replenish stocks of medicine and medical supplies around in all PHC centers. In some centers the NS has even been providing 24-hour services. A special project called "Medical Hotline", supported by the French Red Cross, is providing medical advice and support through the telephone network.

The Home Based Care component of the Integrated Health Care programme has been running well from most health centers, providing direct curative services as well as teaching the other family members of the sick person how to give relief and help to their relative.

2. **Emergency Response Unit (ERU) with field hospital.**

Equipping an ERU field hospital with fifty beds, ready for deployment in Palestine or in the MENA region is continuing. Parts have been purchased locally or received as in-kind donations, but still there are important components missing. It will have structure that comprises smaller units and the project is important as part of effort to build the capacity of the PRCS to serve the most vulnerable people.

Training personnel for the ERU has, despite all difficulties, been going on in the headquarters as well as some of the major branches. At the end of October, eight PRCS staff attended, together with staff and volunteers of sister national societies in Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Norway, went on an ERU workshop in Oslo, Norway. This initiative of Norwegian Red Cross will be followed up with more training of the same kind in the future.

3. **Strengthen the volunteer & branch network with the following activities: Rapid Needs Assessment, Water & Sanitation programme, and Camp Management.**

There is a great need to collect baseline data on such issues as health care to improve monitoring and quick response. The PRCS has developed and is now using the Rapid Damage Assessment as a tool to collect such data to improve its interventions. The Society is, through this tool, also able to alert other organizations/agencies in times of imminent needs in specific locations. Data is being collected from satellites of the NS, such as branches, PHC centers and EMS stations, as well as from the other components of the RC/RC Movement.

Workshops have been conducted focusing on water and sanitation, and stock of equipment for purification of water has been deployed in a number of the PRCS branches.

4. **Centralized emergency and logistics management.**

The PRCS has strengthened its emergency and logistical structure in the headquarters as well as in some branches. Operation rooms have been established and people trained in disaster management and response. Training sessions have been conducted in a number of places, and “on the job training” has provided important and valuable experience to the development of the capacity of the NS.

The new Disaster Management unit in the PRCS HQ is the driving force in the development process to improve the PRCS disaster response capacity. Due to closure of roads and other logistical constraints it has become important to adopt a regional approach to storage of relief supplies. The two new sub-warehouses in Hebron, West Bank south and Nablus, West Bank north as well as one in the Gaza city branch have been equipped and stocked with non food relief items, purchased locally or received as donations from donors within as well as outside of the RC/RC Movement.

Health

All organizations running health care programmes have been facing difficulties. Thanks to logistical and financial support from RC/RC partners the PRCS has been able to continue providing health care services almost as usual from most PHC centers. There has been some relocation of health staff based on accessibility and logistical opportunities, which has facilitated a more reliable provision of services. Replacement of medicine and medical supplies to the integrated health care programme of the PRCS, according to the specific requirement, has in general been carried out, often with the help of

RC/RC partners. Monitoring of the programme has mostly been made possible through facilitation of the Federation office in Al-Bireh.

The implementation of the Medical Hotline from PRCS PHC centers or from other locations was prompt. A group of about 90 volunteers, mainly doctors and nurses, have responded to telephone calls from people in need around the West Bank. The project, financially supported by French Red Cross, has provided vital information and support to patients facing difficulties in reaching health facilities in their village or in neighbouring areas.

Capacity Building for Disaster Preparedness and Response

With the building up of sub-warehouses (Nablus, Hebron and Gaza) the NS is in a better position to deliver and respond to urgent needs in the various regions. The PRCS has received donations of three Rub-Halls from the Norwegian Red Cross to increase storage capacity of the Society around the territories. More will be supplied on special request from the PRCS. One of these has been put up outside the headquarters, and others will be provided to PRCS branches with the need for storage capacity beyond what the branch can obtain locally.

More ambulances have been provided by several donor societies and from Saudi Arabia the PRCS received generators, which also will be distributed according to emergency needs.

The newly established IHL Unit in the PRCS HQ has for the last months been running a number of workshops for staff and volunteers. Also people from outside the NS have benefited from this programme, focusing on general knowledge about the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement as well as more specifically IHL related issues.

National Society Capacity Building

From the VCA process in year 2000, and the recommendation put forward in the VCA document, the role of the PRCS in the Palestinian community is clear. However, due to the impact of the intifada most of the other providers of humanitarian services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, even the Ministry of Health and other ministries, have been prevented from delivering services according to their responsibility and plans. Therefore the RC/RC Movement, and in most cases the NS, have been forced to step in, trying to fill the gap left behind. The PRCS had to take this into consideration when assessing its own capacity to deliver services, often outside its normal scope of activities.

For further details please contact: Evgeni Parfenov, Phone : 41 22 7304325; Fax: 41 22 733 03 95; email: parfenov@ifrc.org

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>.

John Horekens
Director
External Relations

Ali Said Ali
Head
MENA Department

