

HAITI

CHF 693,000

Programme No. 01.51/2000

National Context

Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere. It ranks 152 on the United Nations' list of Human Development Indicators, and is grouped in the Least Developed Countries.

The political instability of the last decade, and in particular the past two years, has blocked economic and social progress and discouraged investment. There has been a steady, steep decline in the gross domestic product and in the average per capita income per year, in 1999 down to USD 250 (one of the lowest in the world), and a net rise in unemployment, currently at 70%. Life expectancy at birth, just over 50 years, is declining, 32% of children under five are malnourished, only 28% of the population can count on safe water, and less than a quarter have access to sanitation facilities.

These conditions have spurred a large scale exodus from the country and migration from rural areas to the main urban centres. Ten years ago the urban population in Haiti was 33%, the lowest in the hemisphere. Today, more than one third of the total population of the country lives in the capital and shantytowns have sprung up in all the main cities, often constructed haphazardly in inappropriate areas, such as drainage areas and river beds.

While Haiti is exposed to all the meteorological and most of the geological hazards in the Caribbean – tropical storms, hurricanes, floods, landslides, drought, earthquakes and tsunamis – the environmental hazards caused by deforestation and toxic waste disposal along the coast are a matter of growing concern.

The current situation makes poverty the main factor contributing to people's overall vulnerability to natural and man-made hazards, with recent disasters demonstrating that it is very difficult to distinguish between the population directly affected by natural disasters and those not affected.

Country Assistance Strategy

The overall aims of the Federation's assistance to the Haiti Red Cross (HRC) are to enable the Society to make further progress in its institutional development process, and to ensure that it has the appropriate disaster preparedness and response capacity at all levels in order to serve the most vulnerable communities in the country. A key factor will be the strengthening of the Society's capacity to plan and to develop programmes and plans of action as well as its ability to mobilise resources, both human and financial, in the country.

A two fold approach will be adopted. Support to capacity building will focus on increasing the Society's capacity at National HQ, provincial, municipal and community levels to plan and implement its community oriented activity programmes and to mobilise resources through training of both the elected office

bearers and staff at the various levels. This will be paired with support to the Society's plans to implement its branch development programme in all the nine departments, and further develop community based disaster preparedness in the country's most disaster prone areas.

Because of the immense needs and the complex political background, resources and activities must be carefully co-ordinated to ensure maximal output and results. To this end, a permanent support structure to the Haiti Red Cross will be established, whereby one of the Participating National Societies presently represented in Haiti assumes a leading role in the branch development programme in close collaboration with the Federation's Regional Delegation in Santo Domingo.

Programme Objectives

Disaster Response

The National Society will be given the appropriate support, in case of a disaster.

Disaster Preparedness

The Federation will support the Haiti Red Cross Community Based Disaster Preparedness project, which aims at strengthening the disaster management capacities of local communities and of the National Society while reinforcing the relationships which exists between the Red Cross, the government, NGOs and other actors in the national disaster management sector. While the project will improve the disaster management capability and capacity of the National Society headquarters and branch levels, the main emphasis is on having vulnerable communities assume a greater role in local disaster management and risk reduction activities, including the elaboration of disaster plans which address the specific threats faced by the community. In order to improve the physical capacity of the vulnerable communities to cope with disasters, small scale mitigation projects identified by the community will be developed.

Health

Support will continue to the women's "Kay Nou" centres – a HRC project designed to reduce the vulnerability of women with children living on the streets in a number of towns. The women are provided with accommodation, medical care and vocational training, as part of an effort to reintegrate them into their home communities.

Humanitarian Values

The Haiti Red Cross will benefit from the regional information and communication programme which aims at promoting the activities and the social role of the individual National Societies. With support from communications and marketing professionals in the region and in Haiti, a promotional programme will be developed to improve the Red Cross image. An important element of the programme is to diversify the dissemination channels, using the local and national mass media, and emphasise the use of alternative information sources and educational techniques through which the humanitarian values of the Movement will be promoted.

Humanitarian values in Haiti are also being promoted by the ICRC through its country delegation, which is involved in protection and assistance programmes in the country's prisons.

Capacity Building

The Federation will direct its efforts at the Society's Branch Development project, which aims at enabling Haiti Red Cross provincial and municipal committees to meet the needs of the most vulnerable communities at community level. Based on training in the use of appropriate Participatory Rapid Assessment techniques to identify current threats to the communities as well as their vulnerabilities and capacities to cope, the project will develop new - and strengthen existing - Haiti Red Cross community health and development activities in the most vulnerable communities.