

PROGRAMME 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

BELARUS

3 July 2003

Appeal No. 01.81/2003

Appeal Target: CHF 682,589 (USD 467,993 or EUR 463,608)

Programme Update No. 1

Period covered: January to May 2003

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 180 countries.

For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

Appeal coverage: 78%; (As of date of report issue, for live financial update, click below)

http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual03/1-2-3%20-%20ap018103.pdf

Outstanding needs: CHF 149,891 (USD 111,000 / EUR 97,000)

Operational developments

Belarus has the second highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the region. In 2001 approximately 27% of newly registered cases were attributed to heterosexual transmission. Many may be associated with heterosexual relations between injecting drug users but the trend may indicate a spread of HIV/AIDS to the wider population. The expected number of HIV infected drug users in the Republic of Belarus will be 5,669 by 2005 and 8,382 by 2010 if present trends continue. HIV prevalence rates among 15–50 year olds in Belarus will be approximately 127 per 100,000 people in 2005 and 187 per 100,000 by 2010.

Belarus Ministry of Health submitted its HIV/AIDS proposal to the Global Fund in May. The proposal was developed with the in-country UN office. Because of time constraints, a TB proposal will be submitted to the Global Fund later. The Belarus Ministry of Health hopes to again receive assistance from an international organisation to complete this application.

The economic climate in Belarus continues to affect the population. A gradual decrease in government funds has hit the level of medical and social services traditionally provided by the state. The economic situation and reduction of real income has resulted in changes in household expenditure: the majority of household income is now spent on food. More than 40% of the population is living on or below the poverty line.

Health and care

Goal: The health status of the population is strengthened through an increased awareness of HIV/AIDS, STDs (sexually transmitted disease) and TB those infected and affected are better supported. In addition health emergencies and their consequences are reduced and the quality of life is improved.

Objective: The capacity of the Belarus Red Cross to participate effectively in health promotion and disease prevention is strengthened.

Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

Project 1: Youth against HIV/AIDS

Expected results

By the end of 2003, up to 10,000 beneficiaries will have increased awareness of HIV/AIDS, STDs and TB, as well as of stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS: the target population will be in the cities of Minsk, Bobruisk and Mozyr. This will be achieved by producing and disseminating information materials; workshops and events by three working teams of youth peer educators on HIV/AIDS, STDs and TB prevention and other activities.

Actual results

Danish Red Cross and Empress Shoken Fund continued to fund the project in 2003. Additional support was received from DFID as of May 2003. 132 volunteers participated in peer education training of trainers courses. These volunteers conducted sessions on HIV/TB prevention for 1,664 pupils. Regular experience exchange meetings enabled volunteer trainers to resolve problems in their work in schools, and maintained their enthusiasm in the work of the Red Cross. Evaluation of the volunteers' work revealed that schoolchildren attending sessions show more interest in their own health. In addition, children discussed the information received with their friends and relatives. Belarus Red Cross volunteers are thus having an impact through their disseminating work. The sessions are also contributing to changing young people's attitude towards HIV-positive people. Initially 54% of the target group considered that HIV-positive people should be isolated from society. After training the figure was just 17%.

The programme has been expanded beyond the target areas. Originally planned for Minsk and Bobruisk, the project has expanded to three new towns (Molodechno, Krupky and Starye Dorogi). Belarus Red Cross has also introduced educational sessions in Lida (Grodno region) and Baranovichy (Brest region), where training of volunteer trainers courses will take place in autumn 2003.

Within the project, 37,000 leaflets, 3,000 wall calendars, 400 HIV/AIDS manuals, 5,000 posters were produced to support volunteers' work. Cooperation and information sharing with the National Centre for AIDS prevention, the Positive Movement and UNAIDS enabled the Belarus Red Cross to implement best practice.

In addition, in May a harm reduction component was incorporated within the programme: three Red Cross needle exchange centres in Molodechno (Minsk region), Kalinkovichy (Gomel region) and Mikashevichy (Brest region) started to gain the confidence of intravenous drug users who commented that they felt more comfortable attending a Red Cross centre than a government-run needle exchange.

Overall, the programme has progressed and is regarded as one of the key activities of the Belarus Red Cross.

Impact

The programme is built around a dedicated team of trained volunteers delivering education to their peers. This approach transfers knowledge and teaches life skills resulting in a change of behaviour among beneficiaries. Consequently stigma and discrimination towards people living with HIV/TB is reduced.

Constraints

No major constraints were experienced during the project.

Coordination

- The Delegation supported Belarus Red Cross to develop its partnership with Danish Red Cross and establish a long-term branch-to-branch co-operation on HIV/AIDS/TB prevention. Selection of partner Red Cross branches in both Belarus and Denmark will start soon.
- The Federation coordinated inputs from different donors (Danish Red Cross, DFID, Empress Shoken Fund) to ensure contributions are utilised effectively.
- The Federation prepared a regional HIV/AIDS application to be submitted to the Global Fund. An international expert will visit Belarus in August 2003 to assist in preparatory work for this application.
- The Delegation organised a meeting with Positive Movement (a Belarus NGO working with people living with HIV/AIDS) to discuss possible cooperation with the Belarus Red Cross. The Delegation's advocacy work for including people living with HIV/AIDS into the Youth against HIV/AIDS project continued.
- As a member of the UN theme group on HIV/AIDS, the Delegation participated in several meetings organised by UNDP/UNAIDS to discuss joint actions for HIV/AIDS prevention.

Project 2: First Aid

Expected results

An effective first aid system will be established by the Belarus Red Cross in Grodno and Minsk regions, with increased branch capacity to target the general public.

Actual results

The project was re-established in September 2002 thanks to DFID funding. The programme continued to focus on strengthening Belarus Red Cross capacity by providing first aid training for target groups among the public. In January, 15 new instructors were trained in Grodno region, increasing the number of Belarus Red Cross first aid trainers to 35. Since January, Red Cross instructors trained 200 people in two target areas in first aid skills. People trained included schoolchildren; students; rescue workers; members of industrial emergency teams and traffic police.

Impact

Red Cross expertise in first aid training has been improved in branches in Grodno and Brest regions. Cooperation between local Red Cross committees and various governmental institutions and organisations, such as police departments, fire departments, schools, and health institutions has been strengthened. Belarus Red Cross continues to raise public awareness about the importance of first aid training through various public events (e.g. a children's painting contest) and involvement of volunteers in first aid training.

Coordination

An informal analysis of the programme was conducted while preparing a project proposal to DFID. Recommendations on how to improve targeting of the general population were taken on board.

Constraints

Short-term and unpredictable funding makes strategic planning difficult. Some essential parts of the first aid programme require more time and at least some level of financial security e.g. publication of educational materials, and the extended cooperation plan with the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Education. (Belarus government intends to introduce compulsory first aid courses for new drivers, and to introduce first aid into the school curriculum. Red Cross instructors will conduct these courses). One-year continuous support for the first aid programme, if received, would be extremely beneficial to the National Society.

Disaster Management

Goal: Vulnerability level among the population most affected by socio-economical crisis is reduced and the quality of life improved.

Objective: The Belarus Red Cross effectively delivers aid to alleviate the plight of the country's most vulnerable population with a focus on victims of the socio-economical crisis, refugees and migrants.

Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

Project 1: Humanitarian Assistance to the vulnerable

Expected results

Short-term nutritional support provided for 7,200 most vulnerable in all six regions of Belarus.

Actual results

The project was developed to address the needs of lonely elderly people who are traditionally considered to be hardest hit by poor living conditions and substandard nutritional status. Swiss Red Cross funding enabled preparations for procurement of 4,600 food parcels in March 2003, to be distributed in three rounds in two target areas of Belarus. Target areas selected are Brest region, heavily affected by the Chernobyl disaster; and Minsk City, which has the highest concentration of elderly inhabitants in Belarus.

Beneficiary lists were prepared following a careful selection procedure co-ordinated by local Red Cross branches and local authorities and based on the medical and social data recorded by health and social services. In May, the procurement tender was completed and tender documents were approved by the Logistics Department in Geneva to ensure full compliance with the Federation's procurement requirements. On 29 May, the supply contract was signed with a selected supplier. In accordance with the plan, the procurement and distribution of food parcels will be carried out during June-July.

Impact

The impact of the project will be assessed after distribution is completed. However, it is clear that the needs for nutritional support among the target group will remain high even after this distribution.

The project contributes to increasing the disaster response capacity of the National Society both at the headquarters and regional branch levels, especially in terms of following Federation's logistics/procurement requirements correctly.

Coordination

The project has been scaled down due to lack of the donor response. The delegation assisted Belarus Red Cross to select the target areas and most needy beneficiaries.

Constraints

Belarus Red Cross planned to provide assistance by distributing some 7,200 food parcels in all six regions of Belarus to a wider target group: lonely elderly, disabled, homeless, TB patients, ex-prisoners and children from single-parent and socially disadvantaged families. This initial objective had to be revised due to poor donor response.

Organisational Development

Goal: The National Society assumes a greater role in humanitarian work in Belarus through organisational reforms and improved technical capacities.

Objective: The capacity of the Belarus Red Cross to effectively respond to the needs of the most vulnerable is increased through greatly improved governance, management, as well as use of financial and information systems.

Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

Project 1: Capacity Building

Expected Results

- Management, governance and human resources in the headquarters and branches of the Belarus Red Cross are strengthened by the end of 2003, through a newly elected chairman and elimination of paid staff members from serving on the board. The new members will be selected on the basis of their ability to help the Belarus Red Cross in management, programme and fund-raising; and the board will be more able to assist the Belarus Red Cross in achieving its programme and revenue objectives and to assure its oversight of management and trustworthiness to donors. The oblasts and districts will carry out the same restructuring.
- Strategic planning skills of the Belarus Red Cross will be greatly improved by the end of 2003, through focusing on a range of activities, including fund-raising, relations with the government and key donors, working with the board, leading organizational change, establishing management priorities, delegating responsibility to key managers, and encouraging and supporting staff in the change progress and their ongoing work. The management team of the Belarus Red Cross will demonstrate greater teamwork, responsibility, and a culture supporting the work of the National Society.

Actual Results

An important change process initiated within the Belarus Red Cross in February 2002 was facilitated by the allocation of the Federation's Capacity Building Fund. The earmarked funds helped the National Society

concentrate on institutional development, including developing fund-raising systems, a legislative base, and material and human resources.

Following on from a training/coaching process initiated by the international consultant in 2002, a further two training sessions on governance, management, institutional culture and fund-raising were held for some 50 people from regional and district Red Cross branches in Grodno (February 2003) and Mogilev (March 2003).

The Federation Secretariat's Legal Department in Geneva supported continued work on changes to the new Belarus Red Cross Statutes. Based on recommendations of the Federation and international consultant, these changes were endorsed at the plenary meeting held in March 2003. The final version is expected to be approved in September 2003 at an ad hoc Congress session. This session will officially distinguish between governance and management within the Belarus Red Cross. A Head of the Board (volunteer chairperson) and staff director (paid president) will be selected. The Board will be strengthened by the election of more outside directors skilled in health, management and fund-raising. A precise wording of the revised National Statutes has to be clarified and endorsed by legal advisers at the Ministry of Justice to ensure that all statements are in compliance with local legislation.

Meanwhile, this change process has already begun in some regional and district branches and is replicated at all levels within the Belarus Red Cross. New chairpersons (Brest and Mogilev Regional branches) and executive director (Brest Regional branch) as well as unpaid voluntary chairs of the boards (Bobruisk district and Mogilev Regional branches) were recruited. The new recruits are eager to tackle new challenges of fund-raising and staff/volunteer policies as well as Visiting Nurses Service sustainability and rent for Red Cross premises.

In addition, the Belarus Red Cross Executive Director and international consultant identified five key areas for management change: the management will be primarily responsible for fundraising with support from staff and volunteers at all levels; routine work will be more public and transparent; more volunteers will be recruited; better planning skills will be developed; and lines of responsibility will be clarified.

These five areas need further attention and will be followed up in June through December 2003 to ensure both qualitative and quantitative change first at the Belarus Red Cross Headquarters level Belarus Red Cross and the Federation have agreed to develop clear indicators to measure these five improvements.

A "Project Planning Process" (PPP) training course was held for 12 participants from the Belarusian Red Cross Headquarters and Minsk City branch in Minsk on 12-14 May 2003 to promote the Red Cross staff management and planning skills in drafting and implementing projects. The training was delivered by a trained resource person at Minsk Delegation. Participants seem to be more encouraged and strongly motivated when writing programmes to attract both international and local donors.

Impact

The change process is moving ahead at several levels within the Belarus Red Cross.

The Project Planning Process training will enable Belarus Red Cross to produce high standards in project planning. Projects prepared for the new Appeal will be viewed as pilot implementation of new skills learned.

Coordination

Belarus Red Cross welcomed the Delegation's proposal to identify a local resource person (trainer) to follow up the work completed by the international consultant. This person will be selected according to the normal recruitment procedure and with approval of the President of the Belarus Red Cross, Delegation and the international consultant.

Constraints

Submission of a draft of the revised Belarus Red Cross Statutes to the Joint Commission (Joint ICRC/Federation Commission for National Society Statutes) is pending. Recent changes within Belarusian legislation which demand certain amendments to binding documents of NGOs country-wide have delayed submission of this draft.

Project 2: Organisational Development - Communication and financial network

Expected Results

Communication and financial information flow within and outside the Belarus Red Cross is improved by the end of 2003, with computer network and other systems of communications, data management, financial records, and human resource management established.

Actual Results

In 2002, DFID (British Government) funding enabled the Belarus Red Cross to finish the first stage of the "Communication and Information Network" project at the National Society's headquarters level. A local network for the Belarus Red Cross Headquarters Accounting Department has now been established, with enough capacity to create and maintain a computer data base. Preparatory work for further extension of the network to the regions started in May: qualified staff to implement the project at a regional branch level was selected; independent IT-expertise has been recruited to complete tender of computer and network equipment.

Impact

The computer-based network system set up at headquarters level has improved the overall operational efficiency of the Belarus Red Cross. It is a basis for extension of the network at the regional level and organisation of training sessions to upgrade professional skills of Red Cross staff.

Co-ordination

The Delegation assisted Belarus Red Cross to complete the Capacity Building project proposal for DFID. The delegation also coordinated discussions with a range of local computer companies on assessing various technical options for the project.

Constraints

Lack of technical expertise and IT knowledge caused difficulties in preparing a technical budget proposal. This led to a one-month delay in the project implementation.

In addition, due to absence of an anti virus system, a series of viruses spread through the Belarus Red Cross computer network, causing widespread computer malfunction. The Belarus Red Cross intends to install an anti virus system immediately.

Federation Co-ordination

Goal: A well-governed and well-managed National Society in Belarus working together effectively with other partners within and outside the Movement and providing responsive and focused services to the most vulnerable.

Objective: The Federation increases its capacity to act as an effective co-ordination body for the benefit of the Belarus Red Cross and designs a strategy for mobilising appropriate resources of support.

Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

Belarus Red Cross is now in the middle of a change process which was initiated in 2002. Although the in-country profile of the National Society is high, the Belarus Red Cross faces difficulties in attracting local donors, lacks modern fund-raising strategies and tools and continues to be dependent on external support. There is also a need to better utilise experience and technical and methodological expertise of other sister societies and the Federation.

Federation/ Belarus Red Cross efforts have struggled to sustain the Visiting Nurses Service. One of the major challenges faced by Belarus Red Cross in 2002 was the severe reduction of its visiting nurses. This reduction was due to the unexpected withdrawal of government subsidies to Red Cross wages. The Federation Delegation immediately appealed to sister National Societies to bridge the funding gap: contributions from the Icelandic, Liechtenstein, Spanish, Swedish and Swiss Red Cross Societies (some CHF65,000 in total) prevented the crisis from escalating in 2003 and ensured the continuation of VNS services, if only, at a minimum level. At the same time, a Task Force has been created by the Belarus Red Cross and the Federation to prevent any repetition of the crisis.

The Delegation introduced a sustainability concept for the Visiting Nurses Service in March. The document outlines specific strategies to develop well functioning, well equipped and high quality medico-social centres and Visiting Nurses Service.

In 2003, the Delegation continued to support the Belarus Red Cross with technical advice and follow-up help. Regular contacts were maintained with embassies, various national and international organisations working in the country such as TACIS, UNDP, UNAIDS, Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and the World Bank.

In 2003 a new Delegation management structure was implemented after a review of Federation work in the light of the Federation's change strategy for Europe. This model includes the introduction of the budget holder concept, redefining of roles and a more effective placement of national staff, as well as sharing of resources and technical expertise with the delegation in Moscow. There is now one programme coordinator per region covered by the delegation (Moldova; Ukraine; Belarus). Minsk delegation is planning its internal strategy to support the National Society for the coming four years, with one detailed strategy per two years.

In addition, an analysis of the Federation's annual Appeals over the last five years for Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine (including CHARP) was prepared by the Delegation and shared with the Red Cross National Society of the region.

The partnership meeting for the National Societies in the region, other partner National Societies, the ICRC and Federation delegations took place in Minsk in April 2003. The National Red Cross Societies present were: Belarus, Moldova, Ukrainian, Russian, American, Austrian, British, Danish, German, Norwegian, Swedish and Swiss Red Cross. Also present were representatives from the Minsk, Moscow and Budapest Federation delegations, the Secretariat, and the ICRC Kiev delegation. The meeting was a unique opportunity for all the partners to meet in a structured environment and to discuss working towards mutually agreed goals and enhancing common approaches and continuity in the interests of the National Societies and their programmes.

Impact

The Federation concentrated on encouraging the Belarus Red Cross to become a well functioning institution with an increased capacity to independently design, manage and implement more focused and responsive programmes primarily based on internal funding.

For further information please contact:

- *At the Belarus Red Cross Society: Anton Romanovsky, President
e-mail: belrc@home.by, phone/fax: +375 (0) 17 227 26 20*
- *At Minsk Delegation: Stefan Seebacher, Head of Delegation
email: ifrcby02@ifrc.org, phone: +375 (0) 17 216 21 08, fax: +375 (0) 17 221 90 60*
- *At the Federation Secretariat, Miro Modrusan, Desk Officer for Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and Moldova
email: miro.modrusan@ifrc.org, phone: +41 (0) 22 730 43 24 fax:*

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

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