

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

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO/ KOSOVO

18 January 2004

Appeal No. 01.74/2004

Appeal Target: CHF 3,371,523

[<click here for appeal details including coverage and contributions>](#)

Programme Update No. 5

Period covered: 1 June to 31 December, 2004

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.

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In Brief

Appeal coverage: 103%

Outstanding needs: None

Programme Summary: The main aim of the Federation delegation in 2004 had been the handover of programmes to the Serbia and Montenegro Red Cross Society, together with a significant downsizing of the delegation and reducing support for service delivery. There have been significant steps made in this direction in the second half of the year – the delegation has reduced in size with the responsibility for many activities transferred to the national society. However, 2004 being a transitional year in several ways, for the national society and the country itself, it was necessary to adjust the pace at which the handover was going. The Federation is still very much involved with much of the activities of the national society, providing assistance in managing programmes, but is at the same time moving into other areas – helping broker partnerships with interested national societies and other agencies, assisting with the development of capacities etc.

The political situation in the country has remained unstable throughout the second half of the year. The new government in Serbia has been challenged on regular basis – from the external pressures related to the persons sought by the Hague Tribunal, to the internal tremors related to the privatisation process, whereas the political scene in Montenegro remains split in half with opposing forces seemingly unable to find common ground for discussion. Currently there does not seem to be much hope that the union of states will last beyond the end of the three-year trial period (end of 2005). The country's economy has not yet made significant steps forward. The progress made will give tangible results in the long run, however, the immediate effects are scarce. With 207,000 refugees and another 270,000 Internally Displaced People in the country, humanitarian needs are still very much present. The Federation has therefore focused on the vulnerable population and service delivery more than initially expected.

The assistance to the National Society needs to remain active and strong while these issues are addressed, and while new opportunities for programme development and partnership in areas such as Commercial First Aid and

Municipal Disaster Preparedness are explored. Funding and support for these two projects are still needed. The National Society has, with Federation support, provided direct assistance to beneficiaries through its Health and Care, Soup Kitchen and Population Movement programmes. Additionally, the National Society's capacity to meet the existing humanitarian needs has been enhanced through training, technical support and capacity building. The Disaster Preparedness programme has strengthened the National Society and its capacity to respond to disasters, at the same time improving its position in society and helping to address the key issues of overall national disaster preparedness policies.

The Organisational Development programme has initiated a planning process for the transition of the national society towards better and more efficient models of functioning. Partner National Societies and other partners in this period who deserve deepest gratitude are: Spanish Red Cross, Hellenic red Cross, Luxembourg Red Cross, French Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, British Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, Icelandic Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross, German Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, Belgian Red Cross, Austrian Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross and Swiss Agency for development and Co-operation.

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Operational developments

Over the past three years the Federation has been supporting a shift in National Society activities, moving from relief-focused to community-based programmes. The presumption was that the changed political environment, the end of conflict and the new economic and social climate would all mean improved political and economic stability at the end of the current three year programming period, 2001-2004. Therefore, the Federation has been supporting programmes intended to meet local needs and attract local support, in order to set the basis for sustainable, long term programmes and strategic thinking in the National Society. However, the whole transition process of the country is going much slower than anticipated. Politically, there are still strong opposing forces in society, clashing on a number of issues such as privatisation, the Hague tribunal and the restructuring of the education system. The recovery and development of the economy is slow and what progress is being made usually has very subtle effects on the day to day life of most of the population. The standard of living is low and in constant jeopardy because of increasing inflation, especially visible in the last six months of the year. The average salary remains at 200 euros per month, while the value of the local currency has dropped by about 10% in the June-December period. The state-owned enterprises continue to restructure or close adding more numbers to the already huge caseload of unemployed workers (current statistics range from 32% to 34.5%).

The governments of Serbia and Montenegro are working to develop durable solutions for Europe's largest population of refugees and internally displaced people (207,000 refugees and 270,000 IDPs according to UNHCR's report of May 2004). Although many have returned to Bosnia-Herzegovina and (to a lesser extent) Croatia, a significant number of those who remain require assistance to integrate within the local community. At the moment, the return of IDPs to Kosovo remains unlikely. The capacity of the government to respond to the needs of the vulnerable is increasing, as parliaments in both Belgrade and Podgorica acknowledge their respective responsibilities. Unfortunately, the capacity of the government is not aligned with decreases in international humanitarian assistance, and thus a sizeable number of vulnerable persons is likely to remain. The Poverty

Reduction Strategy (PRSP) developed and adopted by the Serbian government (with assistance from EU, World Bank and other agencies) is addressing this issue among others. The positioning of the Red Cross as a partner in PRSP implementation will be a key focus of the coming year.

The national society itself is undergoing the transition, mirroring the transition of the society it lives in, at the same time maintaining the activities aimed at assisting the most vulnerable population. Providing assistance to some 25,000 vulnerable people (through health, food assistance and social welfare programmes), training another 1,100 team members for disaster response while at the same time devising ways to change the internal structure is a challenge and the national society relies on the Federation to help it face this challenge. The government still offers very limited direct support, although this has increased in the second half of the year (contributions for home care and soup kitchens programmes, for instance). Meanwhile, work on the relevant legislation has continued and the situation now gives more reason for optimism, with most of the laws approaching their final versions and it is expected that all of them will be passed in 2005.

The Federation is working together with the National Society on both channelling external support to the most vulnerable population in the country and restructuring and repositioning the organisation in order to find the best way of assisting the most vulnerable population.

1. Health and care

Goal: The health status of the population is improved and awareness increased, through specific health promotion campaigns and the provision of targeted services to specific beneficiary groups.

Objective: To develop a holistic approach to health and care, that utilises national society capacities and resources and incorporates health promotion and awareness-raising. The Federation will enable a repositioning of the national society, confirming its position as a credible, influential actor within the sphere of health and care. To make this happen, the Federation will continue to support the national society-implemented social welfare programmes including homecare, ensuring that issues of sustainability are addressed.

Expected Results:

- **Advocacy:** The national society's role as an auxiliary provider of health and care services is understood, recognised, valued and rewarded by the authorities.
- **Health promotion:** The awareness of health-related risks and potential hazards among the general population in HIV/AIDS and other priority areas is heightened, prompting attitudinal and behavioural changes. Such changes will contribute to improved levels of general health.
- **Social welfare:** The mental health and quality of life of 6,000 families (consisting of families in collective centres, children with special needs and their families, and Roma children and their families) improves: the refugees have a clearer picture of their future, once collective centres have closed, children with special needs are more easily able to integrate with peers and the general population, and awareness of the importance of education within the Roma community is raised ensuring that higher numbers of Roma children enter and finish elementary school.
- **Home care:** Empowered local communities working through Red Cross branches identify and reach out to 20,000 vulnerable elderly people, advocating for their rights and providing them with assistance and support to maintain the dignity of their lives in their own homes

Home Care Programme

Progress/Achievements: This year, the home care programme continued to be one of the most ambitious and effective activities of the National Society. Started in 2001 as a pilot programme, by mid 2004 Home care was being implemented in 96 municipalities throughout the country (84 in Serbia and 12 in Montenegro). Over 9,000 beneficiaries have received regular visits every month. Nearly 2,000 trained volunteers and about 180 paid professionals are active on the programme, working with beneficiaries, but also networking in the local community in an effort to ensure the sustainability of the programme in the long run.

The Federation's original plan was for 2004 to be the final year of most financial support to the Home care programme; however the assumption that three years after the programme began, the general economical, political and legislative situation in the country would improve and that the recognition of the programme's value would lead to tangible support at the local and national level, turned out to be too optimistic. The political situation is still very complex with the economy making very slow progress. Likewise, changes in legislation that will facilitate local donations (currently, there is no legal stimulation for would-be donors) are yet to be adopted even though the Red Cross law is to be brought to parliament in the very near future. Consequently, the plan to gradually phase-out the support during 2004, and stop support for service delivery completely by December and place the future focus on development was altered. The National Society is still being assisted in taking full ownership of the service delivery and management of the programme but a mid-to-long term partnership with the British Red Cross has been brokered, securing a continuing support over the next three years.

The efforts to encourage the branches to take over responsibility for the programme continue. Financial support is at a decreased level and the number of branches managing to secure supplementary finances from local government increases very slowly but steadily. The elderly advocacy network, formed early in 2004 by 15 organisations dealing with elderly issues is active in designing small-scale, yet widespread projects that will not necessarily target large funding but will increase the visibility of the beneficiary group and their needs, as well as the visibility of agencies involved, including the Red Cross.

The programme implementation was steady throughout the six months period. Most branches have managed to preserve the number of beneficiaries despite the funding decrease. Local training for volunteers was routinely done either periodically or as needed with examples of branch-organised regional trainings (e.g. Novi Sad), asking for no support in funds from The Federation. As the winter neared, activities in most branches have reflected the need of the beneficiaries to prepare for the cold season. Some of the branches have secured local donations to provide firewood, winter food reserves or clothes for the most vulnerable of their beneficiaries (e.g. Sabac), whereas others (e.g. Arandjelovac) have secured flu vaccines for their beneficiaries through referring the local health institute to those most in need.



Red Cross nurse is checking blood pressure of an elderly in Velika Plana

Thirty-five branches have, through their representatives, passed another cycle of training for volunteers during four sessions in November and December. The content of the training was designed to suit the branches that have been active in the programme for the last three years with advanced topics such as help to helpers, techniques for communication with persons suffering from chronic illnesses, supporting independence, basics of evaluation and day care centres. Another two sessions will be held in January 2005 to complete the training cycle for all the branches. Complementing these efforts, appropriate additional content for the Home Care Handbook has been produced and distributed to the branches to add to their reference and training documentation.

The software package designed to simplify and facilitate record-keeping and reporting at branch level, communication with the headquarters as well as statistical analysis and reporting in headquarters has been distributed to all the branches. While some of the branches have so far got accustomed to it, filled in the database on their beneficiaries, volunteers and activities, others are still working on it. It will take some time for the software to be fully utilised by all the branches as the programme staff need to get used to working with it. The hardware in some branches is badly in need of updating, the need for increased IT knowledge and the lack of local Internet Service Providers in some cases are slowing the implementation of this system, however it is planned that in 2005, all of the branches will start regularly keeping their records and reporting electronically.

Back in 2003, the Federation committed to purchase selected equipment for a number of branches but has only now obtained the funding. Based on a call for proposals to which all interested branches submitted their micro-

projects (40 applications), 24 branches (21 in Serbia and 3 in Montenegro) were selected for support. With the objective of most projects to increase the quality of services delivered to beneficiaries and additionally increase the potential for sustainability of the programme (through options for commercial application), the list of equipment is as follows: one set of food preparation equipment, 4 Kirby vacuum cleaners, one basic vacuum cleaner, one set of elderly club equipment, 17 washing machines, 13 drying machines, eight ironing rollers, three steam irons, three ironing boards, three sets of equipment for hairdressing parlours, one set of equipment for cosmetician parlour, one sewing machine, one set of equipment for home nursing training room. The equipment was distributed to the branches in December and the remaining items (obtaining bids for Montenegro branches was more difficult because of customs issues) will be purchased in January.

The International Day of Older Persons, October 1st was an excellent chance for the Programme to make a statement, increase visibility and, most importantly, address common clichés about older persons and present them as active, contributing members of society rather than just receivers of assistance. A poster campaign, a distribution of leaflets and a series of events throughout local branches have been on the agenda throughout October. An encouraging signal arrived from the government through the participation of the Ministry of Social Affairs in funding of these activities.

Impact: The programme has provided constant care and assistance to about 9,000 elderly, vulnerable beneficiaries. Since the end of the UNHCR-funded food distribution programme in March, for many of these beneficiaries the need for assistance has dramatically increased. The help that Home care volunteers are able to provide in these cases (contacting and referring to other institutions, help with paperwork, advocacy) is indispensable especially knowing the inaccessibility of primary health care for many of these people. However, the sheer poverty of many beneficiaries means that branches often have to act urgently with food or hygiene donations, sometimes doing the urgent handyman or hygiene work around the household. The pressure on the social welfare system is enormous and Red Cross volunteers often feel overwhelmed and discouraged in their efforts to advocate for their beneficiaries, which often motivates them to provide emergency short-term assistance to the most vulnerable. These activities are an obvious choice, yet a co-ordinated approach must be present at all times to ensure that long-term benefits are reached. This will be one of the priorities during 2005.

In Serbia, the work on the Law on Red Cross has been one of the most important government activities for the Red Cross and the Home care programme has been one of the key points in negotiation, demonstrating the work the organisation is capable of. As this programme easily demonstrates the difference in the quality of lives of the most vulnerable and is in line with the recommendations of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper of the Serbian Government, the Ministry of Social Affairs representatives have on several occasions expressed their high esteem for the programme. The Ministry additionally agreed to co-finance the marking of 1 October, the International Day of Older Persons which is a small but significant step on the road to full government recognition and support for the programme.

Month	Number of beneficiaries	Number of professionals	Number of volunteers	Number of professionals' visits	Number of volunteers' visits
June	8,082	133	1,248	7,366	22,536
July	8,469	138	1,367	7,490	20,759
August	8,216	128	1,304	6,926	21,726
September	9,059	143	1,646	6,798	24,490
October	9,286	159	1,543	7,082	27,034
November	8,834	131	1,517	6,925	24,053
December	8,639	122	1,549	6,108	23,856

* Note: the oscillations in figures are mostly due to the fact that some of the branches have not sent the reports in time.

Constraints: There are external and internal constraints. The unstable political situation and the slow economic recovery are the two main problems affecting the programme sustainability. Service delivery, volunteer

recruitment and management, reporting and training are all reasonably well developed at this point in the programme. The lack of substantial support on a local (and national) level, despite the awareness of the value the programme has added, mirrors the fundamental difficulties the country is still struggling with. Internally, more initiative is needed in acquiring means to ensure sustainability of the programme. Government support is not the only way to sustainability, and a range of local funding opportunities needs to be better explored.

Social Welfare Programme

Progress/Achievements: Throughout 2004, the social welfare programme has continued its well established activities, utilising well trained and skilled volunteers/ professionals. The two target groups - handicapped children and Roma pre-school children as well as their respective families have continued to be the focus of the programme. The activities continued along two complementary paths: group work with these target groups in parallel with community-based work.

The work with children and their families took the form of regular workshop meetings (once per week, at a minimum and in many cases every working day of the week). These are aimed at broadening the spectrum of children's experiences, increasing their self-esteem, strengthening their confidence, improving their communication skills, encouraging them to use their capacities and developing tolerance between different ethnic groups. In addition, some practical skills are being developed in line with encouraging socialisation: hygiene habits, painting, sports, acting, computer use etc. The parents are supported in care for their children, in engaging in more open communication with those parts of the community that offer any support. Also, they are being motivated to understand the importance and potential benefits of their children getting proper (and legally obligatory) education.

The work targeted at the local communities is important for both the improvement of the beneficiaries' position in these communities and the future sustainability of the programme. The activities range from raising sensitivity and support within the local community to creating bonds between families and various local organisations: the Red Cross branch, associations, schools and special schools, media, etc.

There are 50 projects in all, run in 49 Red Cross branches supported by their local partners (local government, Roma and disabled people's associations, companies, relevant educational and health institution, NGOs). Of these 49 municipalities in Serbia and Montenegro, 31 projects target Roma pre-school children and their parents. 18 projects target handicapped children and their parents (one branch discontinued the programme due to internal problems). The Federation has supported the National Society in identifying and representing community needs, as well as developing, implementing, managing, monitoring and evaluating the projects. In addition to technical support with evaluation, monitoring and reporting, the Federation has provided equipment for another seven branches to help them start their projects. This means that all 29 new branches in the programme have been equipped with the basic items necessary to run the projects.

In the absence of appropriate training material addressing the specific challenges and needs in working with Roma children and handicapped children, the Federation commissioned the production of two manuals from experienced professionals. The manual for working with Roma children which is in the final editing phase consists of three modules: (1) socialisation and integration of Roma children; (2) working with parents; and (3) educational activities-preparation for school. The manual for working with handicapped children is in print. It consists of four modules: (1) about handicap; (2) socialisation and integration of handicapped children; (3) working with family, and (4) education and rehabilitation

Additionally, three training seminars have been organised, in October and November, one for the branches implementing the Roma kindergarten project, and two for the branches working on the project for handicapped children. These seminars focused on topics covered by the manuals since these are the ones most branches see as essential. The 31 projects targeting Roma children and parents implemented by 30 Red Cross branches provided support to 886 children and 723 parents. The 19 projects implemented by the 19 projects helped 213 handicapped children and 138 parents. The total number of beneficiaries stands as **1,960**.

Impact: The significance of the programme for branches is great in terms of development and capacity building, as well as strengthening the image of Red Cross in the local community. Overcoming the initial difficulties

through establishing relationships with relevant institutions on a local level has been mutually beneficial. It can also be said that it has contributed to the development of tolerance and acceptance of basic humanitarian principles in local communities. Flexibility and initiative has been demonstrated with regard to beneficiary specific needs, as well as selection of volunteers, methods of work and time schedule of the activities.

Programme impact on beneficiaries is significant too in terms of accomplishing intellectual, social and emotional development. The development of social skills, the expansion of practical skills, the increase of self-esteem and general trust through belonging to a peer group and simultaneously obtaining new experiences equips the children with social and psychological tools that help them move away from the social margin and participate in the social life of their communities more freely. The number of children enrolling to primary school has noticeably increased in some of the municipalities since the start of the programme (e.g. Cukarica – with its three separate kindergartens co-funded by the Federation and the Danish government, the increase in number of Roma children enrolling to school has been significant: 70 children this year as opposed to 10 to 15 in previous years).

Constraints: The project has a potential to become a catalyst for change of the local communities in terms of to accepting Roma and the disabled. Since the important representatives/ stakeholders of each municipality such as local government, Roma/ disabled associations, schools, pre-school institutions, relevant NGOs etc. are involved with the project, a new approach to the issue will also be developed on a local level. Advocating for the vulnerable (Roma and disabled) in the community is an important part of Red Cross work. Discriminatory thinking and behaviour in society as well as prejudice from both sides can be overcome and replaced with a new, positive mindset. Local and national level networks of stakeholders and partners are being organised in order to advocate for improved visibility of these vulnerable groups, for policy changes to address their needs, and for sustainable funding from local sources. This has already begun and will be further developed by the end of the year.

However, the overall economic situation and the fact the branches are facing serious financial problems, accompanied by the downsizing of external donor support and local donors not being motivated by the legislation to support humanitarian activities, is putting sustainability issues on top of the agenda. The programme is still dependent on additional donor funding and does not yet have enough of its own resources to sustain the projects over longer periods. The programme in no small part depends on the support of the local community. If there are problems with one or several actors, the programme's success is also endangered.

Health Promotion

Progress/Achievements: The decision to start a Branch Capacity Building Fund, focusing closely on branch projects related to HIV/AIDS, was reached after recognising that the National Society needs to question its position and strategies regarding HIV/AIDS activities. The focus on relief and related activities over the past period meant that the involvement of other programmes slowed down, which can be seen in the health promotion area, specifically HIV/AIDS. The need to rethink the overall approach in this field is clear. Recognising the opportunity to invite branches themselves to present their views on the topic, while at the same time helping them perfect their skills in managing the project design/ implementation/ reporting cycle, a Branch Capacity Building Fund was started. Please refer to the Organisational Development section of this report for details.

2. Disaster management

Goal: The country's most vulnerable refugees, IDPs and socially vulnerable people maintain their dignity, their minimum living standards and are well nourished. The effects of local and national disasters are mitigated by a rapid, well-resourced and coordinated response mechanism.

Objective: The national society is able to continue to provide cost effective relief assistance (food and non-food) to a well-targeted beneficiary caseload, while strengthening its capacity to be prepared for, and respond to, emergency situations.

Expected Results

- **Soup kitchens:** The delegation assists the national society to ensure the effective management, monitoring and reporting for the soup kitchen project, which delivers hot meals to 15,000 soup kitchen beneficiaries per month with support from bilateral national societies, government and other donors

- **Relief development and support:** The delegation supports the national society in the effective implementation, monitoring and reporting of the final phase of the UNHCR/WFP food distribution contract for refugees
- **Disaster preparedness:** A well-integrated disaster management system is developed with a network of disaster response teams who are trained, equipped and able to provide rapid assistance and host international relief teams and emergency response units. The role of the national society within a national and regional disaster management plan is clearly defined

Relief development and support programme

Progress/Achievements: With the end of UNHCR-funded relief distribution programme that has been ongoing for more than a decade, the role of the Federation in the relief programme has mostly been limited to offering advice and support to the national society, now more focused on advocacy towards the soup kitchen programme. However, the national society is still performing distribution of humanitarian aid to the vulnerable population in Kosovo in co-operation with the co-ordination centre (government body).

The National Society has closed down all regional distribution centres as of 31/12/2003. The end of armed conflicts in the surrounding environment means the refugee influx has stopped, with the number of Internally Displaced People likewise stabilising (207,000 refugees and another 270,000 Internally Displaced People according to the UNHCR report of mid-June). At the beginning of December, the Serbian Commissioner for refugees has announced the beginning of the new census of refugees in order to update the information on refugee numbers on the territory of Serbia. The census is to be finished on 13 January 2005, and it is expected to show a decreased number of refugees.

Support has been provided to the customs clearance and delivery of various bilateral in-kind donations.

Soup kitchen programme

Progress/Achievements: The provision of food to the soup kitchen programme has not been part of the Federation Appeal, as the decision to move away from relief to community-based development programmes has been central to the delegation's strategy since the political changes in Serbia and Montenegro in 2000. However, the prevailing needs in country combined with the capacity of the national society to implement and manage this kind of programmes, as well as the interest from donors, has prompted the delegation to get involved to assist the national society in delivering food-assistance during winter 2004/2005. Under the Federation co-ordination and with multilateral and bilateral donations, the National Society has designed the Soup kitchen programme for this winter which aims to support 16,000 beneficiaries across five regions over the period of six months.

Vojvodina, Sabac, Pozarevac, Nis and Kraljevo regions are implementing the soup kitchen programme supported by the Serbian government, Norwegian Red Cross, Austrian Red Cross and German Red Cross. A total of 16,000 beneficiaries in 58 municipalities will be assisted for a period of six months starting from 1 December 2004 until 31 May 2005. This year, the Government of Serbia officially recognised the achievements of the Red Cross in this programme area, especially due to the success of last winter's soup kitchens programme, and committed to assist the current programme with the provision of six food items and a fixed amount of funds to cover distribution costs.

The Norwegian Red Cross is providing funds to cover the additional three food items. The German Red Cross has contributed in-kind 52 tons of beans. The Austrian Red Cross approved the use of the funds left over from the previous soup kitchen programme and these will be sufficient to purchase another food item. The procurement and distribution were done in December with the national society fleet delivering the food to the branches' warehouses

Beneficiaries receive one hot meal per day, five to six days a week (an average of 23 days per month). As an accompaniment beneficiaries also receive half a loaf of bread per day. All meals are prepared either at Red Cross kitchens or in contracted facilities.

The Federation has funded printing of 2,000 posters to mark the International day of Eradication of Poverty, which was an awareness-raising activity, linked to the work of the Red Cross branches and the Soup kitchen programme, in particular. The branches, on their part, have organised local events, inviting the media, marking the day and presenting their own activities in the soup kitchens programme – an opportunity to advertise the work of the organisation as well as to raise awareness of the needs in the local community.



A Red Cross poster on world poverty

Impact: The soup kitchen programme was designed to meet the needs of vulnerable people in regions recognised as socially depressed (especially true for southern part of Serbia). The beneficiaries are assisted with one hot meal a day, which alleviates the effect of high winter food prices (compared to their income) and ensures a minimal calorific intake needed for this season.

Discussions will continue with the government about the future of the programme. An alternative is to move towards home-delivery for those who are unable to cook for themselves, and link this to the home care and social welfare programming. Meals on Wheels and other similar social support activities, which the Red Cross is well-placed to provide as an auxiliary to government, are being considered too.

In the meantime, the Red Cross of Serbia has conducted an assessment of the branches involved in the soup kitchen programme to establish the number of beneficiaries serviced with an estimation of funds needed to improve and reach all beneficiaries in need.

Constraints: The economic and social developments in the country are still very much linked to the political climate and even the slow improvements noticed in recent months might be swept away if political clashes increase. Recent economic developments have largely by-passed the most vulnerable.

Disaster Preparedness

In the absence of a national response plan with an agreed role for the Red Cross, the national society has, with Federation support, set about strengthening its network of volunteers and branches to maximise capacity in times of crisis. To this end, the Federation has and will continue to support an intense programme of training, developing local, municipal, regional and national response teams that are compatible with national and international disaster response mechanisms. The national society demonstrates ownership of the programme and an eagerness to shape it along the lines of regional and European standards through numerous activities not funded through the Federation. The continued talks with the government and the non-stop information exchange/ networking with other national societies in the region testify to the national society's intention to play an important role in national and regional disaster management.

The massive training programme for municipal disaster preparedness teams was completed in June with the remaining 28 teams (20 in Serbia and 8 in Montenegro – 234 volunteers in total) receiving training. Started last year, this ambitious enterprise aimed at forming and preparing teams in almost all municipalities in Serbia and Montenegro to react to different disasters and emergencies. Implementation through Red Cross branches and their volunteer resources was the most logical way to go in the absence of an official national disaster response strategy. In 2004, 101 municipal disaster preparedness teams have been trained, with 1066 people receiving training, which, added to the work already done in 2003, amounts to the impressive figure of 150 municipal and 31 regional teams having received basic training.

The training covered a broad spectrum of topics and skills, from first aid, water sanitation, containment of chemical spills and mountain rescue techniques to psychological first aid. The unpredictable nature of emergencies and likely disasters means that preparedness has to be as diverse as possible.

Additionally, 100 members of republican and federal level teams received training in October on topics ranging from disaster management, co-ordination between federal, republican and municipal disaster management teams, and radio equipment maintenance to water sanitation and camp management.

There are remaining obligations to supply equipment for municipal disaster preparedness teams to the national society that the Federation has not been able to meet due to the lack of funding. Discussions with several national societies are ongoing and bilateral support for this part of the programme may be obtained. However, to ensure transparency, the Federation has initiated an assessment of the existing disaster preparedness stock of the national society. The LCRS computer system, that has been devised for relief distribution record-keeping is now being used to record disaster preparedness stock and equipment. All the branches have entered the data into the system. With the limited funds available, the Federation has managed to procure some basic items. Namely, 400 sets of uniforms (raincoats, vests and caps) and 100 First Aid backpacks.

The Municipal Disaster Preparedness (MDP) project was started to strengthen the municipal-level co-ordination of disaster preparedness, mitigation and response in 36 particularly vulnerable municipalities by addressing the issues of co-operation, responsibilities, reporting and communication within and between different services and agencies at municipal level. It is hoped that success on this level will significantly contribute to reaching other, long-term objectives such as the establishment of a new legal framework for national disaster response in both Serbia and Montenegro, the establishment of state-level disaster response plans as well as the development of effective state-level disaster management units to ensure effective and appropriate preparedness and response.

In 2004, the MDP project has built on the baseline assessment and municipal disaster response simulation exercises done in the first phase. Between June and December, four MEMI (Municipal Emergency Management Improvement) Methodology tabletop simulations have been organised in three Serbian and one Montenegrin municipality. The simulations bring all key players at municipal level together and put them through a series of simulated situations, letting them do their respective duties and observing the results. One of the objectives is to identify weaknesses in co-ordination and communication and develop a plan of action to address those weaknesses, but also to ensure the participants learn of each others' capacities, duties and responsibilities, as lack of knowledge has been identified as one of the key weaknesses in the baseline study.

This process has initiated substantial support from key ministries (Interior, Health, Defence – civil protection sector and Local governments) both in Serbia and Montenegro, in their efforts to actively address the issue of disaster management. It also served to raise the profile of the Red Cross both at national and municipal level as a key agency and important partner to government with great capacity and skills in disaster response.

The project has started its implementation at the right time as the municipal-level elections in Serbia were completed in September. The new national law gives local government the responsibility for disaster management and response, but the newly elected officials often do not have the knowledge or skills to fulfil this function and often lack the financial capacity and management tools to assume this role. Stepping forward with a project aiming to improve local disaster response co-ordination and unify available local capacities, the Red Cross has taken the lead on a very important issue.

The representatives of both the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence - Civil Protection Unit have been present at the simulation exercises and this was followed by serious discussions with the National Society DP co-ordinator. The co-ordinator was subsequently invited to participate in a working group tasked to lay out plans for the future National Disaster Management Agency in order to define the role of the Red Cross in this body and the national disaster management system as a whole.

Impact: The capacity of the National Society to respond to potential disasters and emergencies has been increased significantly through forming 101 new municipal teams with 1066 members, plus another 100 members of republican and federal level teams in 2004. Furthermore, the Municipal Disaster Preparedness project has demonstrated the importance and value of establishing and/ or strengthening the ties between Red Cross and other agencies (Police, Fire Department, Medical Emergency Department) whose mandate is to be involved in disaster management. Combined with the ongoing talks with the government and ties with neighbouring national societies, the national society of Serbia and Montenegro is moving towards becoming the key player in national disaster preparedness strategy. More importantly, the overall disaster response capacity of the country has been increased over the past year through increasing the Red Cross capacity, the establishment of firmer links between key agencies and activities towards establishing a national disaster management system.

Constraints: Serbia and Montenegro still lacks a defined agency that will be responsible to manage disasters as well as a national disaster management plan. It is uncertain when this fundamentals will be achieved and which ministry (Interior or Defence/ Civil protection) will be leading the process. At the same time the political turbulence at the Federal level and the uncertainty of the future of the joint state is now making it unclear whether there will be a national disaster management plan at all. It is probable that there will be two agencies at republican levels to assume this function. The lack of funds also complicates efforts to establish this agency in the near future.

The MDP project is now leading a municipal level process of strengthening local capacities in disaster management and preparedness without a clear national framework to define where and what their future role will be. The Red Cross continues to advocate to be part of the solution to this issue.

3. Humanitarian values

Goal: Civil society in post-conflict Yugoslavia has become more tolerant and respectful of humanitarian values; the needs of the internally displaced, refugees and the socially vulnerable are recognised and met as far as possible.

Objective: Serbia and Montenegro Red Cross Society as publicly recognised as a neutral and impartial promoter of humanitarian values and a key provider of volunteer-based services to the vulnerable at community level.

Expected results: Serbia and Montenegro Red Cross with support from the Federation has developed a communications strategy and operational plan to strengthen its image in the media and elsewhere as both an effective deliverer of relief assistance and an organisation that delivers essential volunteer-based community-level services especially in health and care. Humanitarian values are effectively disseminated in training courses, web sites, the media and publications, in order to promote tolerance and diversity and foster conflict resolution.

Progress/achievements: The National Society, together with the Federation and Danish Red Cross, has undertaken extensive research and consultation on the issue of assistance to the Roma population. Roma people face significant stigma, social exclusion and discrimination, as well as adverse conditions in terms of social welfare, housing, health care and education. These issues are being addressed through the International Decade of Roma Inclusion, of which the health and education sectors are of specific interest to the Red Cross, and extensive discussions have taken place with government and with partners in the Poverty Reduction and the Roma strategies of the government supported by donors. The rights and conditions of failed asylum seekers, returning to Serbia Montenegro from Western Europe, have been the subject of detailed research and advocacy.

The promotion of humanitarian values, human dignity and the fight against discrimination are integrated into the programmes of home care, social welfare for handicapped children, Roma open kindergartens, youth and volunteer training through unified training system

The organisational development planning process in autumn 2004 has identified the affirmation of the National Society's public image as one of the five key priorities, and an action plan is being prepared to address this issue

Impact: The National Society's image with government has substantially strengthened in the second half of 2004, and its position as auxiliary and partner both to government and the civil society has been enhanced. For example, the Red Cross-NGO home care advocacy network is earning government recognition, and home care is looking increasingly likely to attract government funding. The National Society's press coverage is almost all positive, compared to almost all negative two years ago. International donors have an increasing confidence in the national society and are willing to enter into direct programming contracts.

Discrimination against Roma and other marginalised groups is well publicized and the need for action is increasingly supported

Constraints: There has been no specific funding for the Federation's Promotion of Humanitarian Values programme appeal.

The National Society's mandate and position as auxiliary depends to a large extent on the adoption of new Red Cross laws. There have been many positive discussions with the government, leading to final drafts of these laws, which should be presented to the parliament in early 2005.

4. Organisational Development

Goal: Before the end of 2004, the national society has a significantly improved image and reputation among its key stakeholders (including beneficiaries, local government, the Red Cross Movement, media, and Ministries of Social Welfare and Health) for the quality and integrity of its work.

Objective: The national society has improved its management of human and financial resources, its ability to make and implement strategic decisions, and its capacity to develop delivery of community services.

Progress/Achievements:The Organisational Development (OD) programme has been through a very dynamic period with its numerous projects – some of them nearing their finalisation. Following the OD evaluation recommendations and the management response meeting held with the National Society senior management and governance representatives, the National Society has gone through an OD planning process - a series of three workshops resulting in a two-year National Society Organisational Development plan and five identified areas of priority. These priorities are: human resources, funding and fundraising, programme focusing, legal base and public image (PR). "Organisational development" work in this context means projects or pieces of work that will improve the way the National Society delivers its services – either its primary services such as disaster preparedness/ response, social welfare and home care, or support services such as financial administration or public relations. After analysing the events and changes that happened in the last 14 years, and assessing the current strengths and opportunities, the workshops ended with a list of recommended activities that will serve as the basis for the development of plans of action. The overall OD plan was approved at the Federal Executive board at the end of December.

Finance Development Project expected result: The National Society has improved financial systems and management of its financial resources, with new financial management procedures, trained staff and standard computerised accounting systems.

The project has achieved all of the set objectives in Serbia. In Montenegro, it has just started.

The National Society has started to use a new computerised accounting system at headquarters and 17 pilot sites around the country. The system was selected with the assistance of expert consultants, and is modified to ensure that it can cope with managing donor funds—not a standard function for most business softwares. The staff from 47 branches have been trained in basic computer literacy and software implementation, in preparation for using the new system. The roll-out to 100 planned branches began in October and will be finished in March 2005. It is planned that the finance systems in each branch are connected via internet (see under Communications & IT project). The branches will start utilising the new system in 2005. This is the only activity within the plan of action that will be finished after the planned closing date (December 2004).

The Serbia and Montenegro Red Cross Society (SMRCS) Secretariat office and the Red Cross of Serbia (SMRCS) committed themselves to external audits of the financial years 2003 (SMRCS) and 2002 and 2003 (SMRCS). The audits were performed in October and November. This was the first time that the National Society has undergone a regular annual external audit, and is a significant step towards greater financial transparency and accountability. The audit recommendations will be incorporated in the future plan of action for the continuation of the Finance development project in the National Society. From 2005 on, it will be a legal requirement for both organisations to conduct such audits.

As a final activity in this project the National Society has produced – together with an external consultant – detailed finance business procedures (including accounting procedures and policies, detailed chart of accounts and four-level coding system) that reflect the changes in the local legislation and accompany the implementation of the new finance information system. These procedures were produced to meet the specific organizational requirements of various organizational structures in the Red Cross (ranging from large branches with more than 50 staff to organizations with one or no employees).

After finalising assessment and drafting of a proposal for setting up regional accounting centres, the Red Cross of Montenegro has started project implementation. Currently the process of identifying the best software solution for their accounting system is in progress. It is expected to be selected and implemented in the first half of 2005.

The National Society is taking a full ownership for the continuation of finance development activities beyond 2004. Donors are sought to support the project implementation. The British Red Cross has already expressed interest in long term partnerships to provide technical support in finance development.

Human Resources Project expected result: The National Society has more effective staff performance; the human resources project has developed commitment to good human resource management practices, including recruitment, reward and development of key staff.

There has been little progress with the human resources project. The key precondition (“demonstrated willingness of Secretaries and boards to implement reform in human resource practice”) has not been achieved. As a result only relatively small actions could take place. The project has been financially supporting the salary of the Red Cross of Serbia finance director and training in business planning for twenty staff at headquarters.

Human resources have again been identified as one of the priorities in the organisational development programme for 2005-2007. An action plan is now being drawn up, together with a clear monitoring system through a Steering Committee.

Youth and Volunteering project

Volunteering Project expected result: More suitably qualified and motivated volunteers are available, and the use of volunteers in services is improved; the volunteering project has developed better volunteer management practices at the level of service delivery.

Youth Development Project expected result: The National Society delivers improved community services by and for young people.

The youth and volunteering projects have merged, partly in recognition of the fact that much of the National Society’s work is carried out by young volunteers, partly as a measure to recognise young people as volunteers,

and partly to ensure that the work done in developing volunteer training for young people also applies and extends to older volunteers.

An extensive consultation involving 62 branches was completed, and the findings were presented to the Secretary General, senior staff and the youth commissions. A conceptual model for a modular training system has been produced. This is in line with the government's vocational education reform programme, and emphasises the standardisation of learning outcomes over teaching methods. This concept: a) encompasses training needs for all programmes carried out by the national society; b) stresses the link between volunteers' roles in programmes and training needed; c) highlights the importance of co-ordinated training design and delivery among different programmes of the national society; and d) stresses the role of the Red Cross in non-formal education in Serbia and Montenegro.

The project team produced drafts of eight training modules for youth, to test the process and methodology of the training design developed in 2004. These modules will be finalised in 2005 and will represent the core of the future integrated modular volunteer training system. The training programme for volunteers who work with disabled children has been modified according to the new approach defined by the modular training system concept.

The Federation has provided support for the implementation of youth summer camps. The Youth officer of the Serbian Red Cross raised additional funds from local donors to support the implementation of youth summer camps.

The OD evaluation in 2004 recommended to continue the project in 2005 and develop a more extensive training system. Donors are sought to support the continuation of the project implementation.

Funding & Fundraising Project expected result: The National Society has an increased level of reliable and sustainable funding; the funding project has analysed the total funding requirements of the National Society, and identified work to be done to ensure the sustainability of the National Society after the end of the relief distribution.

A final detailed analysis of the feasibility of delivering first aid training as a means of income generation was produced. This identified one existing potential market — the workplace in certain types of organisations — and one potential market that will exist once the proposed legislation is passed — that for learner drivers. This feasibility study was discussed with senior staff and governance members, and a project proposal was prepared aimed at strengthening branch capacities for delivering commercial first aid training service for workplaces (tailor-made in-house training) and learner drivers in driving schools. Previous experiences of other National Societies from Europe (and particularly in the region - Croatian RC) have been used in identifying the realistic scope of the work. The National Society is in process of preparing the national first aid training manual and respective training programmes.

Donors and partners are sought for the implementation of the project.

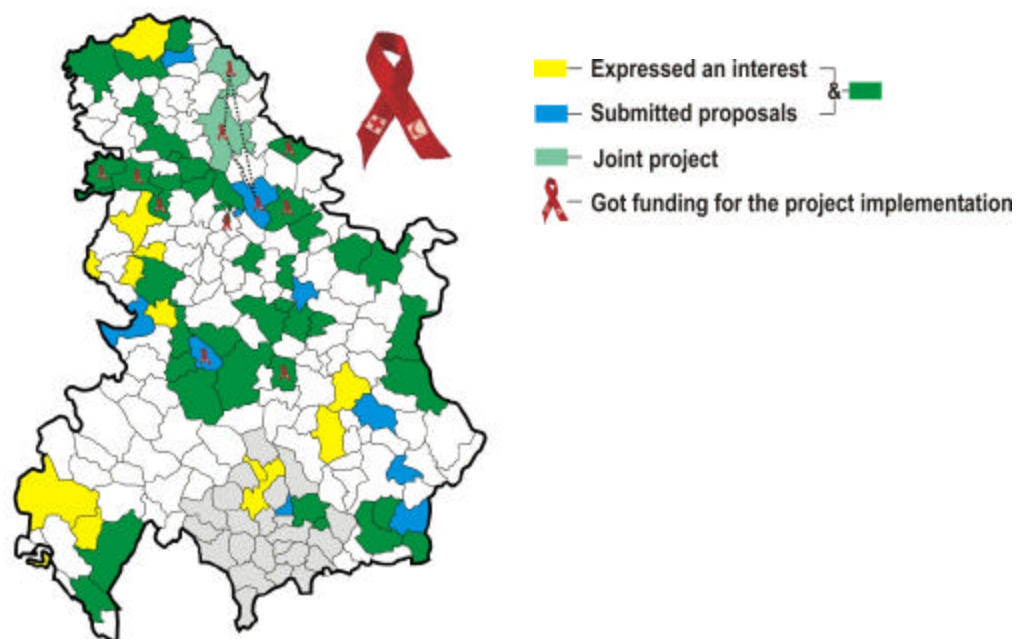
Branch Capacity Building Fund expected result: The National Society has a transparently managed fund which supports the development of new and existing community services in the branches; the Branch Capacity Building Fund has developed the National Society's decision-making capacity, distributed funds according to its strategic priorities, and ensured the accountability of decision-making.

In 2004, the branch capacity building fund was set up to support branches to implement projects on HIV/AIDS prevention from the donation received from the Norwegian Red Cross. All branches of the national society were invited to an open competition jointly organized by the national society and Federation Delegation.

The project team produced and distributed a compact disc with a project-design toolkit to all branches of the national society to build the capacity of branches' staff and volunteers to write good quality project proposals. The disc contains documentation such as proposal writing templates, guidance on project proposal writing, propositions for the open competition including the decision-making process, as well as PPP, the Volunteer programmes design toolkit, the Federation volunteering policy and the latest information on HIV/AIDS in Serbia

and Montenegro. This project promoted the use of electronic media and communication channels to complement the efforts of the IT and communication project of the OD programme.

As part of the decision making process, the project proposals evaluation method was designed and a selection committee was set up which included representatives of the national society, donors and two external consultants. In total 52 branches submitted 59 project proposals. Grants were allocated to nine branches that submitted the best proposals. The approved projects will be implemented in 2005.



The open competition enabled the National Society to demonstrate to key stakeholders in Serbia and Montenegro its interest in HIV/AIDS prevention, as well as to define the scope of activities for branch volunteers which will lead to the development of the national society strategy on HIV/AIDS. Moreover, the experiences gathered through this process, especially at branch level, will serve as a basis for the improvement of the project design cycle in future.

IT & Communications (IT&C) Project expected result: The National Society has improved communications between branches and headquarters

The steps for improvement of communication between the national society branches and the headquarters have been as follows:

- The identification of technical or non-technical models to improve communication: internet connection at all branch offices; E-mail as a standard communication tool; Website as a showcase for all Red Cross activities; Internal mail box system as an improvement over physical distribution of documents when possible.
- The implementation of the new technologies.
- Provision of appropriate training for the new technology (including Win XP, MS Word, MS Excel and Internet training).
- Capacity building in order to increase the sustainability of the project.

The Federation has supported the installation of telephone and a computer network for Serbia & Montenegro Red Cross Society, Red Cross of Serbia and Belgrade City branch, which share the same building. The second phase of the project, which aims to connect all 180 branches to Internet and provide them with e-mail has started, based on an IT strategy proposed by the consultants working in the Finance development project. The second phase would benefit greatly from co-operation with PTT, the national telecommunications company and the negotiations with

them are ongoing. These are based on an existing growing partnership that brings together effective communications and disaster preparedness (PTT has a significant role in the Civil Protection system). So far, sixty branches have been connected.

In this phase the activities related to the integrated accounting software set-up from the Finance development project were closely linked with the activities within IT&C project. This is especially true for Montenegro where these two projects will be implemented simultaneously.

At the beginning of December, a joint tender for the purchase of integrated financial software and hardware as well as the internet access equipment for the Red Cross of Montenegro was started.

The Federation provided sixty sets of manuals for PC user training to be used at training for branches of the Red Cross of Serbia and the Red Cross of Montenegro. This training will be organized by IT technicians and skilled members of the National Society.

The Federation has assisted the Red Cross of Montenegro to establish contacts with the "Internet Montenegro" (a local internet service provider) and obtain a significant discount for Internet access as well as free of charge web presentation hosting.

At the moment, the National Society and the Red Cross of Serbia headquarters do not have clear IT regulations. Nor do they have an IT officer to address the issue. The Federation will participate in the selection of a new IT technician in the Red Cross of Serbia.

The project will continue in the first half of 2005 for the Red Cross of Serbia (mainly aimed at rolling out e-mail to remaining branches and assisting with the redesign of the website) and until the end of the year for the Red Cross of Montenegro (equipping and establishing Internet connections and e-mail, the redesigning the website).

Donors are sought help the National Societies address the outstanding issues and complete the project

Impact: The National society, particularly in Serbia, has moved a long way towards openness and accountability. It seems that finally the development processes will not be merely a reaction to the external events but that there is evidence of internal forces striving towards organizational change. This is apparent in daily practice: external audits are now accepted as necessary and normal, procurement is competitive and open according to stringent local legislation, more transparent competitive project proposal selection is accepted, open staff positions are routinely advertised, agreements are signed between different levels of Red Cross organizations in the country that stipulate individual roles and responsibilities in project implementation. All this will contribute to greater Red Cross self confidence and trust among local and international donors. The National Society's relationship with government and local partners has significantly improved. Internally, communications and particularly information and document sharing have improved dramatically, and this is expected to rapidly improve further as more branches get e-mail and Internet access. It is important to stress that all these positive things are happening at the time of the biggest financial crisis and uncertainty the Red Cross has faced since the beginning of the 90s.

Constraints: The sustainability and progress largely depends on the good governance and good human resources. These are the two areas where there has been little change. The National Society has, however, now agreed on a proposal to revise its statutes. The move indicates that: 1) there are still too many staff on the governing boards, 2) governance is complex and focused on operational rather than strategic matters. Legal ownership of the society and ultimate responsibility for performance and accountability between staff and governance remain unclear. The new Red Cross law will clarify the role and significantly improve the funding situation for the headquarters and branches. The national government, with its heavy emphasis on law as the solution to most problems, is committed to helping the National Society in this area. But the unstable political situation does not make this process certain. The possible break-up of the state union would result in splitting the National Society into two Red Cross organizations.

There has been little progress in addressing the issue of human resources, though this has now been identified as a priority for the organisational development in 2005-2007. Reducing salaries at the Red Cross of Serbia headquarters also reduced motivation. A strong staff association is seen to resist change, while senior managers'

attention is focused on other important issues such as the new law and funding problems. Dealing with human resource issues would be stressful and difficult in the short-term, but rewarding in the long term and would need strong board support. The results of the OD planning conducted this autumn, show that this issue remains of the highest priority for the National Society.

5. Co-ordination, Co-operation and Strategic Partnerships

Goal: In partnership with civil society and the Red Cross Movement, the National Society is able to deliver appropriate, needs-led, volunteer-delivered assistance to persons in need, in a cost-effective and transparent manner

Objective: To develop a set of clearly defined National Society operational priorities that accurately reflect National Society capacity and added value, which are understood, respected and supported by a diverse range of partner organisations

Expected Result: Restated National Society priorities serve as the platform for improving co-operation within the Red Cross Movement and with other partner organisations. A process for improving co-operation is initiated. The process may result in a co-operation agreement strategy (CAS) document.

Progress/achievements to date: The period from mid-2001 to mid-2004 marked a three-year programming phase which was intended to help the National Society move from relief distribution to sustainable needs-led programming in health, care and disaster preparedness delivered by volunteers through branches. The move from relief has largely been achieved, though soup kitchens continue to be required as a final safety net following the end of bulk food distribution; and relief distribution to isolated communities in Kosovo continues. Service delivery in health, care and disaster preparedness has been effectively developed. Political uncertainty, changing governments and the poor performance of the economy have meant that the financial sustainability of these activities is still questionable, however. The lack of a revised Red Cross law and poor prospects for local funding mean that continued external assistance will be needed to ensure that essential service delivery continues, while focussing on the underlying need to broker partnerships and obtain funding from local sources to ensure sustainability. A more active Federation presence than had been anticipated will still therefore be needed in future; a Head of Delegation and an active team will be maintained during 2005, to broker and co-ordinate external funding, partnerships and technical assistance as well as taking the lead on advocacy with government, international organisations and assisting the National Society with strategic planning, and the adoption of improved statutes and laws.

Co-ordination and dialogue with sister National Societies remain strong priorities, though the production of a CAS document has been abandoned in favour of a Europe-wide CAS process. The Belgrade delegation has co-ordinated closely with the development of the Regional Strategy for Central Europe and discussions continue about working in future more as a regional team particularly in areas of common concern such as Roma programming.

Impacts: Programme focus and co-ordination was a key priority identified during the OD planning process for 2005-7, and an action plan is being prepared accordingly. This process marked a much more strategic approach to planning, which will lead into the review of the National Society's Development Plan 2002-5 during the coming months.

Red Cross laws at republican level in Serbia and Montenegro have been prepared together with government, and should be presented to parliament in early 2005; support to the role of the Red Cross as auxiliary to government has been enhanced significantly following intensive advocacy. The new laws will clarify the Red Cross role in key strategic initiatives such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and in donor government and international agency strategies.

Lottery Law in Serbia was passed, providing significant funding to the Red Cross Society; advocacy for other laws and tax exemptions related to the Red Cross work continues.

The National Society has agreed the final draft of its new statutes, which are ready to be approved by the governing bodies.

Valuable discussions have taken place with Swiss Development Co-operation, the European Agency for Reconstruction, the World Bank and the government, which have resulted in new funding, the submission of a range of new project proposals, improved coherence of programming and good prospects for continued positive developments.

Constraints: Local funding has been slow to materialise, due to the continued poor performance of the economy. Gaining recognition from government for the National Society's role has been slow, and progress on the Red Cross laws has also been slow - though recent political stability has been a positive factor.

6. Population Movement

Introduced in the last couple of years at the headquarter level of Serbia and Montenegro Red Cross Society, the Population Movement Programme has become recognized as an important humanitarian tool for Red Cross activities covering migrants in and to the country. This has been accepted by partners and stakeholders, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, NGO sector, and also by Red Cross volunteers. Red Cross presence at the Centre for Detained Asylum-Seekers, which was completely impossible five years ago, is a regular practice now. Networking at international and domestic levels has brought the NS into the position to be a pro-active player in the field of international refugee law and a disseminator of the latest standards vis-à-vis migrants in Europe.

Goal: Asylum-seekers detention period in Serbia and Montenegro has been alleviated thanks to the visits of national Red Cross and the provision of its humanitarian assistance.

Objectives: A working relationship with the government is established, regarding the issue of detained asylum-seekers; the visibility of the programme is enhanced and the awareness of the vulnerable population raised; international position of the National Society is improved.

Progress/Achievements: Serbia and Montenegro Red Cross Society has conducted regular visits to the shelter/centre for detained asylum-seekers in Padinska Skela, near Belgrade, every three weeks since March 2004. During the visits, representatives of the national society are entitled to speak with the occupants of shelter in privacy and find out their needs. As a result, the Red Cross now provides relief assistance to detained asylum-seekers in Padinska Skela, namely bed sheets, mattresses and phone cards (important for restoring the links with their families).

On 24 February, the National Society signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Serbian Ministry of Interior on Red Cross visits to detained asylum-seekers. A practice of mutual briefings has been established. In this process, Red Cross has taken the opportunity to inform the authorities on recent developments in terms of international refugee law and contemporary tendencies in the practice of the Council of Europe towards migrants in Europe. In March 2004, the Serbia and Montenegro Red Cross became a member of a working group drafting a national law on asylums. The group is chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro and its objective is to finalize the draft by the end of 2004.

Impact: Principal beneficiaries of the programme are detained asylum-seekers. Due to the commitments about confidentiality, agreed with the Ministry of Interior, the Red Cross is not allowed to speak publicly about its impressions after visiting the detention centres and speaking with asylum-seekers. Nevertheless, by enabling the asylum-seekers to access telephone (through the provision of phone cards), the Red Cross has contributed to decreasing the level of frustration these people might feel. By advocating for their rights and promoting humanitarian standards for detained asylum-seekers through the working group drafting a national law on asylums, the national society has invested into improving the treatment and status of the beneficiaries.

Constraints: The revision of the National Society's Statutes has not been finished yet. The main objective of the revision is to delegate more responsibilities from the headquarters to Montenegro and Serbian Red Cross

organisations, leaving programmes with international attributes to the Serbian and Montenegro Red Cross Society headquarters. It has been expected that the management of the detention visits to asylum-seekers will be coordinated at the headquarters' level, although this must be formalised in order to start long-term planning.

Externally, a slow pace of harmonisation of national legislation with the European Union legislation has affected the progress with the national law on asylum. For politicians, the law on asylum is not a priority and this leads, among other things, to the decrease of interest in humanitarian activities for asylum-seekers in the country although the needs of this group are great.

Skills Training for Refugees

Local community development (LCD) was a part of the Population Movement Programme of the Serbia and Montenegro Red Cross Society, but implemented exclusively by the Red Cross of Serbia. In the beginning, both levels were involved in all population movement activities, but very soon the Serbia and Montenegro Red Cross Society started to focus on assisting detained asylum seekers and international networking, while the Red Cross of Serbia concentrated on programmes for refugees and internally displaced people. In this way, both the Serbia and Montenegro Red Cross Society and the Red Cross of Serbia have kept pro-active roles in assisting all types of migrants.

The decision to streamline the LCD programme came as a logical step in trying to increase the impact of Federation-supported activities while at the same time encouraging Red Cross branches to take over ownership of the projects being implemented. The Skills Training Programme for Refugees is a better-focused, more ambitious version of the same activity.

The objective of the Skills training programme is to provide, through local planning and implementation, direct services to refugees. This population is helped to reach economic self-sufficiency and reduced welfare dependency through vocational training to help them find a job. Recognising the strengths but also the limits of the Red Cross in this regard, the programme team made sure that important actors such as local authorities and the National Employment Service are part of the programme. Vocational training schemes depend on the background of refugees as well as their skills and wishes.

By December 2004, the five branches implementing the project completed beneficiary selection for the first cycle of the skills training. Selection of training courses in each municipality was done together with Government Employment Centres to ensure availability of workplaces for the selected trades.

The training will be mainly provided by the Adult Education Centres. The first cycle of the training for 64 people will start in January 2005. The courses will include driving (bus and truck driver), computer literacy, construction and other according to the skills of attending students and needs of the local employers. At the end of the training, participants will receive an officially recognised certificate/degree, depending on the objectives of an individual training programme. The Red Cross will also help training attendants, through employment centres, to find a job. By the end of the year, three cycles of the training will be contributed and a total of, 150 people will have completed them.