

COUNTRY FOCUS - ARGENTINA 2004



1. Introduction

Argentina was one of the largest Latin American economies during past decade, but in December 2001, a severe economic crisis compounded by social disorder and political chaos affected the country. Unemployment and poverty, hand in hand with declining investment, flight of capital, debt and, above all, a lack of confidence among Argentines and the international community, are the on-going results.

However, the government of Nestor Kirchner (who took office on 25 May 2003) is proving its effectiveness and confidence is slowly being restored. Important steps are being taken by the government in order to prosecute criminals from the former military regime and to regulate the country's situation in relation to the International Monetary Fund.

90% of the Argentine population is concentrated in cities and is mostly of European origin; indigenous people account for slightly less than 3% of the total population. Health problems, malnutrition and poverty present alarming figures in the Northern provinces, where 80% of children live below the poverty line. Agriculture and livestock farming, the mainstay of economy and the pride of the country in the past, still account for a significant share of the country's exports. Argentina has abundant natural wealth, in particular, energy and with a skilled and dynamic labour force.

2003 saw the worst floods in the history of the province of Santa Fé which affected more than 100,000 people and resulted in the launch of an international appeal by the Federation. The international appeal launched in April 2002 in response to the social crisis concluded in November 2003.

2. National Context

Human Development Indicators 2003

Country Ranking - HDI	34
Total population (millions)	37.5
Life expectancy at birth	74.2
Annual population growth rate %	1.0
% population under 15 yrs of age	27.5
% population aged 65 and above	9.9
% urban population	88.3
% of the population living below \$1/day	-
% of the population living below \$2/day	-
GDP per capita (US \$)	3,321
Infant mortality per 1,000 live births	16
Under 5 mortality per 1,000 live births	19
Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births	41
% of births attended by skilled health staff	98
% of population using improved water sources	-
% of population using adequate sanitation facilities	-
% of population with access to essential drugs	50-79
% of adults living with HIV/AIDS	0.69
Women living with HIV/AIDS	30,000
Children living with HIV/AIDS	3,000
Net primary school enrolment ratio %	107
Adult literacy rate % MALE age 15 yrs +	96.9
Adult literacy rate % FEMALE age 15 yrs +	96.9

(UNDP 2003 and IMF World Economic Outlook 2003)

Overall, Argentina shows positive social indicators, but since 2002 rapid impoverishment and social deterioration have escalated significantly. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Surveys (INDEC), the technical government agency responsible for the coordination and supervision of all public statistical activities taking place in the Argentine territory, the situation relating to poverty as of May 2003 was as follows:

- 54.7% of population living under poverty line
- 26.3% of population living in extreme poverty.

3. Priorities of the National Society

Foundation ARC	1880
Recognized by ICRC	1882
Number of branches	77
Staff	180
Active volunteers (estimated)	6,000

The image of the National Society is positive, although much linked to the nursing schools which it runs. The National Society is therefore making considerable efforts to diversify its activities and build a new image which is also enhanced by the work of its relief volunteers and staff. The ARC is mainly dependent on voluntary contributions and student fees from the nursing schools. Infrastructure is basic and the National Society has only four vehicles.

A network of 77 branches covers the main cities but is insufficient to cover all regions of this large country. As a result of scarce resources and large distances, technical support and branch coordination from national headquarters is limited. A main aim is to consolidate the administrative structure that will ensure coordination between the headquarters and branches. Governing bodies include representatives from all population groups with a strong representation of women.

The National Society has developed a Strategic Plan for the coming years, following *Strategy 2010*. In addition, the ARC is investing to achieve more transparent and efficient financial administration. Staffing has also been strengthened in the area of communications and marketing where efforts are being made to build strategic alliances.

Over the last year and a half, the ARC has implemented an intensive modernization process designed to develop the structures and skills to enable the institution to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. The social crisis which hit the country in December 2001 forced the ARC to reflect on its role and to initiate the necessary changes in order to contribute more actively to civil society.

The appeals launched for the social crisis in the country together with the appeal for the operation in response to the floods in Santa Fé which occurred in late April 2003 provided resources and impetus to move forward with the modernization process.

The ARC Division of Programmes has been divided in four programmatic departments:

- Department of Health and Community Development
- Department of Disaster Preparedness, Prevention and Response
- Department of Volunteers and Training
- Department of Youth

In addition there are two specialty operational units:

- Missing Persons Service
- Projects

In terms of the core areas, the emphasis of the ARC is placed on:

Health and Care:

- There is an agreement with the Ministry of Health to carry out beneficiary monitoring in relation to the distribution of medicine in government run health centres and dispensaries.
- An agreement with the Global Fund to fight AIDS was signed in October (15 branches involved).
- Integrated management of childhood illnesses (IMCI) strategy.
- First aid.

Disaster Response and Preparedness:

- The Camalote disaster preparedness programme is in its fifth year of implementation, strengthening branch and community capacities to respond to disasters including community education and the drawing up of local contingency plans.
- The formation of a national intervention team (NIT).
- A number of projects have been presented to the ICRC regional office in order to strengthen capacity to cope with potential conflict situations, which shows the interest of the National Society in improving its response.

Promotion of Humanitarian Values:

- Development of new, relevant programmes.

AT A GLANCE

ARC	COMMENT
Statutes	In process, should be completed by 2004
National Development Plan	Finalized in August 2003: NDP 2003-2007
Cooperation Agreement Strategy (CAS)	Planned for 2004
Self Assessment	Done in 2002
Last Elections	2002
Next Elections	2006
Yearly audit	2002
Youth representative in NS governance	Yes
Disaster response plan in NS plan	Yes
Disaster response plan integrated with the government plan	In process

Main strengths

- Political commitment to change.
- Strong support from the Federation.
- Good cooperation with PNSs (German, Spanish and Swedish).
- Increasing willingness for international cooperation in Argentina (since the social crisis of 2002 there is an increased donor interest).
- NDP approved.
- New alliances and partnerships with public and private sectors.

Main challenges

- To strengthen the linkage and coordination with the branch network.
- To renew the governance at local level.
- To give sense of National Society identity to isolated branches.
- To scale-up local activities to national plans.
- To develop non-traditional fundraising mechanisms.

4. Red Cross and Red Crescent Priorities

Previous to the social crisis, the Argentine Red Cross and Argentina in general did not attract a great deal of international cooperation which obliged the National Society to develop a fundraising mechanism. The Argentine Red Cross has successfully developed several strong strategic alliances with PNSs, such as the Italian and Spanish Red Cross Societies. The field of international cooperation field is relatively unexplored and there are many opportunities to develop community based programmes.

Partner	Health	Relief	DPP	Humanitarian values	Organization Development
ICRC	Support to health programme targeted at young people				Support for revision of Statutes / governance training
Federation		Santa Fé Appeal launched. Funds received from American, Austrian, Finnish, Japanese, Norwegian and Swedish Red Cross Societies	Camalote programme mainly financed by Swedish Red Cross, New Zealand Embassy		Capacity building fund for supporting revision of Statutes / ARC change process / governance training / NDP.
Spanish Red Cross		Bilateral contributions for food and non food assistance (Santa Fé appeal)			Financing of National Society staff
German Red Cross		Bilateral contributions for medicine and non food items (Santa Fé appeal).			

5. Priority Programmes for Secretariat Assistance

Health and Care:

- Reduce the vulnerability of the population living with HIV/AIDS.
- IMCI strategy.

Disaster Management:

- Consolidate the Camalote programme as a tool for the National Society to work on disaster preparedness and mitigation at the community level.
- Ensure lessons learned from the relief operations of 2002/2003 are integrated into disaster management work.

Humanitarian Values:

- Consolidate and launch a national dissemination programme focused on Humanitarian Values.

Organisational Development:

- Update ARC Statutes.

- Train governance.
- Develop strategic alliances.
- Strengthen branches.
- Provide the distance education programme for communicators.

Federation Coordination:

- Support and facilitate the CAS process.