

# COUNTRY FOCUS - PARAGUAY 2004



## 1. Introduction

Paraguay is one of the less populated countries of the region. The river Paraguay divides its territory in two natural regions, the Oriental and the Occidental, also called Chaco, which suffers from a semiarid climate and is sparsely populated. This region is prone to drought; in fact Chaco has been affected by a severe drought for more than two years. The population is concentrated in the eastern region, in rural areas.

Paraguay seeks integration in the global market. Although the neighbouring countries of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay boosted exports, this was not the case in Paraguay given weaker industrial capacity. Recent studies show that poverty has increased, particularly in rural areas and the income distribution has become more unequal. This situation presents a potential threat to the political stability of the country.

To date, international cooperation has concentrated on rural development, economic management and social development, and France, Germany, Japan, Spain and Taiwan have been the main donors. Assistance is provided by the European Union, the International Development Bank, the UNDP and the World Bank.

The increase in unemployment as a consequence of the Argentine crisis, the return of migrants, social unrest, the weak democratic system, legal insecurity and political corruption form part of the current Paraguayan context.

## 2. National Context

### Human Development Indicators 2003

Country Ranking – HDI	84
Total population (millions)	5.2
Life expectancy at birth	70
Annual population growth rate %	2.2
% population under 15 yrs of age	39.2
% population aged 65 and above	3.5
% urban population	57
% of the population living below \$1/day	19.5
% of the population living below \$2/day	48.8
GDP per capita (US \$)	1,279
Infant mortality per 1,000 live births	39
Under 5 mortality per 1,000 live births	30
Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births	114
% of births attended by skilled health staff	58
% of population using improved water sources	78
% of population using adequate sanitation facilities	94
% of population with access to essential drugs	0-49
% of adults living with HIV/AIDS	-
Women living with HIV/AIDS	-
Children living with HIV/AIDS	-
Net primary school enrolment ratio %	111
Adult literacy rate % MALE age 15 yrs +	113
Adult literacy rate % FEMALE age 15 yrs +	110

(Paraguayan General Directorate of Statistics, Surveys and Census 2002, UNDP 2003 / World Bank 2003)

The Home Permanent Survey of 2002 reveals that some 2,690,000 thousand Paraguayans live in poverty (48.8% of the population).

### 3. Priorities of the National Society

Foundation PRC	1919
Recognized by the Movement	1922
Number of regional branches	11
Number of sub-branches	15
Staff	15
Active volunteers (estimated)	425

The Paraguayan Red Cross (PRC) has a tradition of work in the field of health and a significant number of activities are related to the mother and child hospital that the Red Cross owns and runs in Asunción. The National Society also has health promotion programmes, one of which is focused on teenagers and reproductive health and which has been distinguished by UNESCO as one of the most successful practices of the Southern Cone. The PRC also has developed a national plan to fight stigma related to HIV/AIDS.

Since 1999, the PRC has been working on development projects in the most vulnerable communities in the country, supported the Federation and also by bilateral agreements with the Spanish Red Cross, with a focus on health and disaster preparedness. Following the drought which affected the Chaco region in 2002, the Federation launched an appeal to assist the department of Boquerón. As a result of this appeal, more sustainable and long-term projects in the communities were developed.

The PRC functions along democratic lines, with frequent, systematized assemblies, and does not experience difficulties in maintaining an independent stance vis-à-vis the government. The National Society has a national development plan which was approved in 1999 for the period 1999-2004, and which covers the entire country. This focuses on two main goals which are interrelated: institutional strengthening and social intervention (community work). The National Society is currently undergoing a process of review and evaluation.

The PRC has a fund-raising programme. The most important event in this field is the annual collection of the *Fiesta de la Banderita* (the flag party) which is held at national level.

Although the NDP was developed before the *Strategy 2010*, the PRC works essentially in the core areas of *S2010*:

#### Health and Care

- Priority: the *Reina Sofia* mother-and-child hospital, one of the largest maternity hospitals in the country, with capacity of 75,000 patients per year.
- Programmes centered on health hygiene, mother and child health, reproductive health for teenage girls (project *Kuñatai*).
- Community IMCI.
- HIV/AIDS.

#### Disaster Management

- Strengthening the capacities of the branches, particularly in the regions of Chaco and Boquerón.
- The *Camalote* Programme (micro community projects).
- Community-based disaster preparedness.

#### Organizational Development

- Dissemination and Communication Programme (supported by the ICRC).

- Revision of the national development plan.
- Self assessment of the National Society.
- Strengthening of the project office.
- Diagnosis of the PRC to improve the focus of its action.

#### Humanitarian Values

- Gender programme.
- Non-violence (focused on gender).
- Dissemination of international humanitarian law.
- International understanding.

#### AT A GLANCE

PRC	COMMENT
<b>Statutes</b>	1996
<b>National Development Plan</b>	NDP:1999-2004
<b>Cooperation Agreement Strategy (CAS)</b>	-
<b>Self Assessment</b>	In process
<b>Last Elections</b>	1999
<b>Next Elections</b>	2003
<b>Yearly audit</b>	2002
<b>Youth representative in the National Society governance</b>	Yes
<b>Disaster response plan in National Society plan</b>	In process
<b>Disaster response plan integrated with the government plan</b>	Yes

#### Main strengths

- Ÿ Mother-and-child hospital.
- Ÿ Positive image.
- Ÿ Successful programmes such as the project Kuñatai, recognized by other humanitarian organizations.
- Ÿ International cooperation.

#### Main challenges

- Ÿ Increase the number of professionals at the headquarters.
- Ÿ Decrease the excessive dependence on the hospital.
- Ÿ Increase the number of volunteers.

#### 4. Red Cross and Red Crescent Priorities

The Spanish Red Cross is supporting several PRC projects such as: environmental projects in the branches of Alto Paraguay, Concepcion, Itapua and Misiones; preventive health care in the branches of Alto Parana, Ñeembucu, Amambay; assistance health programmes in the branches of Concepcion, Ñeembucu; and reproductive health programmes in the Guaira branch.

The Federation provides support to the National Society through the Camalote programme. Since 1999, five branches have been involved in the implementation of micro projects for community development with activities focused on disaster preparedness, development of risk maps and infrastructure for sanitation. The Federation also supports projects in the areas of health and disaster preparedness, focused on the Boquerón department (Chaco).

Partner	Health	Relief	DPP	Humanitarian values	Organizational Development
ICRC				Yes	
Federation	Yes		Yes		

Swiss Red Cross	Yes				
Spanish Red Cross	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Swedish Red Cross		Yes			

## 5. Priority Programmes for Secretariat Assistance

### Health and Care

- Ÿ Support for the national HIV/AIDS plan.
- Ÿ Prevention campaign for vector-transmitted illnesses.
- Ÿ Redesign of health activities in line with *S2010*.

### Disaster Management

- Ÿ Support for the strengthening of the relief department.
- Ÿ Camalote programme.
- Ÿ Support to the CBDP Programme.