

IRAN: DROUGHT SUPPORT TO AFGHAN REFUGEES

6 March 2001

appeal no. 21/2000

situation report no. 2

period covered: 22 September 2000 - 15 February 2001

Although affected by delays, programme implementation is now beginning to gain momentum. The water distribution component, currently reaching 13,000 beneficiaries per day, will become more effective once new equipment has been delivered. The waste disposal component and health campaigns are in the early stages of development. An agreement is to be drawn up between the UNHCR and the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRCS) in view of potential influxes of refugees from drought-stricken regions of Afghanistan.

The context

The widespread drought which has been affecting large areas of the Caucasus, South Asia and Central Asia over the last three years is continuing to take its toll in Iran. In order to help meet the considerable needs, on 22 August, the International Federation launched an appeal for CHF 2,268,146 to provide assistance to 100,000 beneficiaries for a twelve month period. The objectives of the appeal are as follows:

- Increase the water supply to Zahedan and Zabul camps which accommodate Afghan refugees, together with surrounding urban and rural areas, as appropriate and feasible;
- Carry out community based sanitation campaigns in the camps;
- Establish a community based preventive health care scheme and promote hygiene awareness.

Latest events

This winter season has benefited from slightly more precipitation in the mountains which will feed into the rivers and the wells, giving rise to irrigation of fertile agricultural fields. The Hirmand river which feeds Zabul and the surrounding area is, fortunately, at a higher level than in the previous two disastrous years and there are hopes for an improved harvest.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Water Distribution •

The operation is under implementation by the IRCS, with support from the Federation. During the reporting period, the National Society's provincial branch carried out identification of strategic water distribution points in Zahedan and Zabul and made purchase agreements for water with the owners of the two wells in Zahedan and Zabul, from which all water is collected. In addition, the IRCS regularly provided information to private water distributors about the project and constructed solid concrete containers for the 20 mt water tankers.

The launch of the water distribution project took place in mid November 2000. Transportation of water is carried out by three tanker trucks with a capacity of 20,000 litres serving all the fixed water-tanks. In addition, five tractors trailing water tanks with a capacity of 7,000 litres distribute water directly to the beneficiaries. The entire fleet makes at least two trips daily and the distributions thereby reach some 13,000 families per day. The water distribution does not currently meet the targeted number of beneficiaries since it did not prove feasible to implement the original plan of action. It has not been possible to undertake five distributions per day, as a result of the time needed to queue for water collection and to ensure transportation and distribution to the fixed tanks (or direct to beneficiaries) which takes some four hours in Zahedan. It is hoped that the delivery time will be shortened when new vehicles and pumps are delivered. Purchase of new trucks and tractors was agreed prior to the launch of the operation, but did not take place. In February it was decided that an exception would be granted in order to allow direct purchase from the "open market" to facilitate programme implementation. As a result, delivery of ten trucks with water tanks and integrated pumps and ten tractors with separate pumps is scheduled by mid March.

Other difficulties which have hampered programme implementation were the late arrival of funds and delays in the deployment of a reporting/monitoring delegate which took place in January 2001. Furthermore, at local level, there were limited resources for effective management of an operation of this scale, following which some managerial changes were made and the assignment of a delegate was agreed. Problems have arisen with damage to fixed water tanks (through dismantling of the taps and breaking of the pipes) as well as with harassment of tanker drivers by private water distributors who previously provided the only source of fresh water to the camps. Water sellers' business has been negatively affected by the programme and reactions to the information provided on the aims of the initiative have been mixed, with some vendors showing a clear understanding that the IRCS is helping the most vulnerable and others resenting the impact on their business.

As regards water distribution in Zabul, given promises of support for distribution from the authorities' water department, action was taken at a later stage. In February, a decision was, however, taken to implement the initial plan; two new distribution points are now in operation and another three have been identified.

Solid Waste Disposal •

A major clean up campaign started in November, but requires further follow up. Since January 2001, however, the project has been running in Zahedan, involving a full team of workers removing solid waste which is transported by two tractors and trailers to allocated garbage pits outside the camp areas.

Preventive Health Care (PHC) •

This project is yet to be implemented. The National Society is carrying out identification of personnel and researching appropriate information material which can be distributed to the beneficiaries. During the PHC information campaign, hygiene items such as soap will be distributed to the beneficiaries. Lists of potential beneficiaries are being drawn up with help of the elders.

Outstanding Needs

The appeal is fully covered and there are no outstanding needs.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Regular meetings are held with UN agencies. UNHCR has a sub office in Zahedan and there is good cooperation with the National Society and the Federation delegate. In a recent meeting, it was decided that UNHCR and the IRCS will sign a memorandum of understanding in order to be in a position to respond to a potential influx of refugees from Afghanistan to the regions of Sistan and Baluchistan. Assessments have been carried out by the UNHCR, the National Society and the Federation delegate regarding flows of Afghan refugees to the province, either from the Afghanistan border (which is guarded by military forces) or via the Pakistani border. To date, no increase of Afghan refugees has been officially recorded. A contingency plan for a major influx of refugees is being prepared by involved parties.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The implementation of the programme, although subject to initial constraints, is gaining momentum and all the departments involved at IRCS (both centrally and locally) are doing their utmost in order to compensate for delays incurred at the beginning of the operation. The quantity of water distributed will gradually increase as soon as new vehicles and water-pumps arrive, since the time required for distribution will be reduced. An additional factor which will increase the output of water is the preparation of more distribution points (water tanks) which will begin functioning once the new vehicle fleet is in place.

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IRAN - Drought - Afghan refugees						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No 21/2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED			03/05/01	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				2,268,146		TOTAL COVERAGE 108.2%
ECHO		400,000	EUR	611,120	05.10.00	
ECHO/SRC (19004)		500,000	EUR	769,200	09.02.01	
FINNISH - RC		33,637	EUR	52,383	11.09.00	
ICELANDIC - RC		200,000	ISK	4,295	22.09.00	
JAPANESE - RC				75,000	30.08.00	
KUWAIT - RC		7,500	USD	13,301	15.08.00	
NETHERLANDS - GOVT/RC		472,760	NLG	322,634	02.10.00	
NORWEGIAN GOVT/RC		657,498	NOK	124,447	05.12.00	
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		1,500,000	SEK	280,650	22.09.00	
SWISS - GOVT				200,000	19.10.00	PURCHASE OF TRACTORS AND WATER TANKS, AND PSP
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				2,453,030	CHF	108.2%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						
PIR521, PIR522, PIR523, PIR524						