

# OPERATIONS 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

## ***PALESTINE RED CRESCENT SOCIETY***

*29 November 2001*

*Appeal No. 15/2001*

*Launched on 3 May 2001 for CHF 2,946,689 for 6 months*

*DREF Allocated: CHF 0*

*Beneficiaries: 900,000*

*Operations Update No. 2 Period covered: June - October 2001 (last update issued: May 2001);*

### ***“At a Glance”***

***Appeal coverage: 14.9%***

***Related Appeals: 01.64/01 Middle East & North Africa regional programmes***

***Outstanding needs: CHF 2,507,094***

***Update: The intifada has created huge pressures in the region and the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has struggled to maintain its humanitarian assistance while struggling to raise funds. It is important that the Federation and its members continue supporting programmes in the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon.***

### ***Operational Developments:***

The Palestinian uprising (Al-Aqsa Intifada) is now in its 14th month. The conflict has seen several deadly clashes and has affected whole communities physically, socially, economically and emotionally. The intifada has left more than 800 people dead, including 200 under-18s, in the Palestinian autonomous/occupied territories (A/OT). It has been more bloody and violent than the previous intifada in the late 80s. More than 18,000 people have been injured, of whom 3,000 have permanent disabilities. The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has been very active and in the frontline of many efforts to assist vulnerable people.

Restrictions on movement have been severe. All humanitarian organisations, as well as the Palestinian Authority, are hindered in delivering vital medicine and medical equipment to health care centres around the territories.

The impact of the Intifada on the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon has also been major. Psychological pressure, poverty and the denial of access to work or other alternatives has left them even more vulnerable and dependent

on external aid. Along with UNRWA (UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) the PRCS remains the main provider of health care services to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

## **Red Cross Red Crescent action**

### ***West Bank & Gaza Strip***

During the Intifada the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in the A/OT continued their programmes under increasingly difficult conditions. With fewer organisations able to run their humanitarian operations in the territories more pressure has fallen on the PRCS to fill the gap left behind. Thanks to its well developed structure and good coverage around the A/OT - and with the support of the Federation and ICRC delegations - the National Society (NS) has been able to continue its programmes. The main focus has been on Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Primary Health Care services (PHC), Rehabilitation programmes for people with disabilities, Community Based Special Education and Disaster Preparedness & Response.

The Women & Child Health (WCH) care project in eight PHC centres, supported by Australian Red Cross (AusRC), has been evaluated by an external consultant. Implementation was found to be efficient and effective in the difficult situation experienced in West Bank and Gaza since late September 2000. The AusRC is preparing for the extension of the programme support for a new period of three years.

French RC started in September 2001 to support the WCH programme in 4 PHC centres for 9 months, with one delegate based in PRCS HQ. It has been agreed that the input will be in line with the general guidelines for the programme and will function as a geographical extension of the programme and not a new set of activities.

## **Red Cross and Red Crescent Society**

### **Health**

The most important of health care services provided by the PRCS in the A/OT is the PHC. In particular in the West Bank this is the priority. However, in the Gaza Strip this programme needs more support and improvement. Health Care provided from hospitals has for some time received most attention and taken most resources.

Development of the community-based approach through its network of branches and PHC centres has continued and is addressing vital priorities endorsed by the communities. The PRCS EMS has, due to the extended closure of villages and towns in West Bank Gaza expanded its network with opening new dispatch centres.

As for the PRCS Lebanon branch, hospitals have always been receiving much support, due to the insufficient services provided to the Palestinian refugees by other organisations. PHC services will, however, in the future be receiving more attention, with input and support from PHC department in Al-Bireh.

### ***Number of directly affected patients.***

Referring to the Emergency Appeal 15/2001 donations under this appeal are valuable support to already existing programmes in the West Bank and Gaza, and in Lebanon. These programmes, available for a population of about one million, are yearly providing health care services to approximately 340,000 patients with different diseases. In Lebanon most of the patients are received in hospitals, while in the WB&GS all are attending PHC centres or receive treatment as part of the PRCS Home Care Nursing programme. Therefore, the number of patients treated or beneficiaries from this appeal will be part of the total statistics of the entire PRCS programmes.

### ***Objective 1:***

#### ***Provide and improve Primary Health Care Services (PHC) to the vulnerable people***

With an increasing number of cities and villages in the A/OT under siege, leaving the population without any alternative but to look for health services in their closest neighbourhood, the PRCS PHC centres have become even more important. The 21 PHC centres in the West Bank Gaza have, however, all been facing major challenges. For some, closed roads and insecurity have sometimes prohibited staff and patients from reaching the facilities. Distribution of medical supplies and equipment has been another challenge for the Society. Despite all constraints encountered the general picture of the PRCS PHC programme is that it has been able to provide essential and lifesaving health services to people reaching the centres.

Community Health Committees (CHC) being an important part of the PHC programme have in some areas played an increasingly important role in facilitating the programme. The CHCs attempt to improve the health of the population through facilitation of community health education, health awareness campaigns, First Aid training, and dissemination / information about the RC/RC Movement has been welcomed. A major idea is to promote a popular feeling of responsibility for public and individual health. A vulnerability profile has been developed for each of the communities.

Due to the emergency situation new and better equipment has been provided to most of the centres, which in general are staffed with one physician, one qualified nurse, one social worker, a dentist and supporting staff. A health data collection system has been developed and is being tested. Extensive training and health education of personnel at all levels is still being implemented despite constraints.

Several other activities are being planned or are in various stages of implementation for the PHC centres. A common property of these activities is that they utilise the existing PHC centres for community based access to the population and for the purpose of developing a suitable portfolio of activities for the centres. Already the EMS services and the centres are offering First Aid courses for the general public out of these centres, and the centres themselves are being developed to be able to handle health emergencies such as First Aid and as screening centres before hospitalisation in mass casualty situations.

### ***Objective 2***

#### ***Community Based Home Care (CBHC)***

Community Based Home Care is providing nursing care in the individual homes out of the existing PHC centres. The work includes traditional nursing such as change of dressings, health education for families, massage, mobility training, and promotion of healthy habits for people with lifestyle diseases. Beneficiaries were recruited from collaborating hospitals and clinics. The project has been run in 7 centres. Home care kits are being issued to the centres. The longer term plan is to initiate this CBHC also in all the other PHC centres. The programme is even more important these days with more wounded people from the Intifada and other patients in the West Bank and Gaza unable to reach a hospital or other in-patient facilities.

### ***Objective 3***

#### ***HIV/AIDS awareness***

PRCS has for the last months been preparing for an HIV/AIDS programme to be implemented in the A/OT. Two PRCS employees have been involved in the regional initiative undertaken by the Regional Delegation in Amman (RD). Introduction of this initiative and literature has been provided to the health staff of the PHC centres around the territories. Next step will be for two of the PRCS key personnel to attend a training of trainers (ToT) workshop arranged by the RD before the end of 2001.

### ***Objective 4***

#### ***Mental Health Care (MHC)***

As part of the PRCS MHC programme under the Bethlehem branch and the planned expansion to other areas, two leaders of the NS have been in Denmark to discuss possible support to and implementation of new projects in the field of mental health care. The Danish Red Cross is preparing for a mission to follow up on the ideas and to adjust their CABAC programme to the Palestinian context. The implementation phase is supposed to start early 2002.

Under PRCS Bethlehem branch there are also other programmes in the field of mental health, of which one is for children, focusing on the problem of violence in different levels in the community, at home and in the street. The importance of such initiatives has become even more obvious under this time of Intifada and hostile situation.

For the last months also another initiative has been taken in the field of mental health. The Society will, with funding from German Red Cross, soon be offering a psycho-social programme for those PRCS staff working in the PRCS Emergency Medical Service.

### ***Objective 5***

#### ***PRCS Lebanon***

Support to the PRCS Lebanon branch under the Emergency Appeal 15/2001 has added to the efforts of avoiding a collapse of the PRCS Lebanon health care system by providing the branch with essential medicine, on which refugees are reliant. It is important to offer services at a low cost and without charging those in difficult economic circumstances. As such, contributions have fitted into the Health Care programme and been utilised to procure and distribute medicine to seven PHC centres and five hospitals, according to a list of essential medical items. The project was implemented according to standard procedures for tendering, procurement and distribution.

### **Coordination**

The Intifada has gradually turned out to have a serious impact for the provision of humanitarian services in the WB&GS. In particular the rural areas have been badly affected by closure of roads and denied access, not only for the patients but also for national and international humanitarian workers. Even though the RC/RC Movement has not been an exception in that respect, it has still been able to keep programmes going. For most other organisations the difficult situation has forced them to reduce programmes to the minimum or even cease work. In this context there has been no overlapping problem. We are far from covering the needs, but the security situation and closure remains an obstacle to expansion. There are, though, occasional meetings between different international actors attempting to coordinate, but what is possible to implement is sometimes limited. Between the different components of the RC/RC Movement we have throughout the whole period seen an good cooperation.

### **Outstanding needs**

The NS is facing a major challenge. New funding is required for meeting needs. After more than one year of constant unrest the economy of the Palestinian community has reached a desperate level. Most services offered by the authorities have scaled down or been stopped. Huge expectations have been turned to the PRCS as the most reliable provider of humanitarian services. However, with the collapse of some of its income generating programmes as well as cost recovery systems the financial burden has become difficult for the PRCS.

It is likewise important to expand support to the PRCS through country and regional programmes, such as Health and Disaster Preparedness, as these are crucial for the PRCS and the most vulnerable people. To be able to continue support to the development of the PRCS, with a focus on building an even stronger national society and to improve its programmes, it is necessary to raise funds to cover running costs of the Federation Representative Office in Al-Bireh as well as the Lebanon Delegation in Beirut. Without a quick injection of funds to the Federation offices in the A/OT and Lebanon the Federation will be forced to reduce its presence in the region or even close down its offices.

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*Donors providing in-kind relief in response to large-scale emergencies are urged to contact the Federation's Logistics and Resource Mobilisation Department to avoid any unnecessary delays in the clearance and delivery of emergency relief assistance.*

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

*This operation seeks to administer to the immediate requirements of the victims of this disaster. Subsequent operations to promote sustainable development or longer-term capacity building will require additional support, and these programmes are outlined on the Federation's web site.*

*For further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation web site at <http://www.ifrc.org>.*

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