

CARIBBEAN: REGIONAL PROGRAMMES 16 November 1999

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The on-going regional Hurricane Georges operation continued to dominate activities, sometimes at the expense of others. The start of the rehabilitation programme was slightly delayed because of changing needs. Other major events were the Inter-American Conference and the change process in the Dominican Republic. The Community Based Disaster Preparedness Programme moved forward and assessment visits were made to four National Societies.

The context

With a few exceptions, the Caribbean region was relatively stable politically, economically and socially during the reporting period. However, Hurricane George, which created extensive damage to infrastructure and agriculture in St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba in September 1998, has contributed to slowing down economic growth in the tourism and agricultural sectors. There is widespread fear that the sinking export prices for bananas produced by the Eastern Caribbean countries, particularly **St. Lucia** and **St. Vincent & the Grenadines**, will have a very serious impact on the fragile, almost monocultural economy of these small island countries.

In the **Dominican Republic** there has been a rapprochement between the ruling party, its coalition partner, and the main opposition party, which has led to relative social peace the only shadow being the many strikes among health personnel for higher wages.

The most notable exception to the impression of stability is **Haiti**: although the political crisis which erupted in June 1997 with the resignation of the Prime Minister has stabilised with the creation of a

transition government, the first six months of the year were characterised by assassinations of political leaders.

Surinam was another site of tension: demonstrators reigned in the streets for more than one month as from 21 May, calling on the government and President to resign. On 23 June the Netherlands government announced its decision to cut all development aid to Surinam. Late June brought the first positive signals regarding the constitutional impasse.

Latest events

Implementation of regional activities during the first six months of the year was affected by several factors, particularly the on-going regional Hurricane Georges operation, the Inter-American Conference and the change process in the Dominican Republic Red Cross.

The regional Hurricane Georges relief operation was prolonged beyond the planned 6-months period because of external factors such as floods in Saint Kitts and Nevis, drought in Cuba and the unstable socio-political situation in Haiti.

However, in the beginning of the year the Regional Delegation agreed to support a long term supplementary food distribution for victims in the Dominican Republic implemented by the National Society in partnership with the American Red Cross. This programme, sponsored by USAID, is supporting 26,000 of the most vulnerable affected families for nine months. With this exception, the operation is now approaching its final stages. Although the rehabilitation phase started three months after the planned time frame in four of the five affected countries, these activities should be finalised by the end of August. The Regional Delegation (RD) continued to concentrate on relief and rehabilitation activities in the Dominican Republic during this six month period. In the course of the first quarter of the year the RD gave support to the Dominican Republic Red Cross's three months food distribution programme, which provided emergency supplies to 13,000 families in the most affected provinces. The main activities were related to the logistics of the operation, distributions of relief commodities, and human resource management (e.g. training of volunteers and National Society staff).

The start of the rehabilitation programme, originally intended to be concluded by the end of March, was delayed until June, reflecting a more difficult implementation environment than initially foreseen, particularly caused by the excessive hardships experienced by the affected population and its subsequent continuously changing needs. The programme has been revised from the original proposal to better reflect current community needs and to attract support from other organisations.

As the Federation's three months emergency food assistance concluded in the Dominican Republic, the Delegation's support shifted to the start of a 9-month supplementary food assistance programme in a major partnership with the DRRC and the American Red Cross, targeting 26,000 vulnerable families.

In terms of image and visibility, the Regional Delegation has been supporting the image of independence of the DRRC and promoting its hurricane response and rehabilitation activities through institutional development training, supporting local media relations, designing and sponsoring publications as well as giving regular guidance to the NS's dissemination officer.

Image-building activities were only implemented in three of the five countries affected by Hurricane Georges. The Cuban Red Cross continues working for the approval of its amended Constitution and internal regulations. In Saint Kitts and Nevis the Red Cross is developing its HF radio communication network between the two islands, promoting the image of this National Society on the basis of its public recognition as a reliable and valuable source for disaster preparedness-related information. Most of the capacity building programme is focused on reinforcing the National Societies' skills to encourage volunteers recruitment, improving their internal policies and regulations, developing appropriate plans of action, and promoting better coordination with other relief agencies.

The Inter-American Conference represented a heavy burden for the delegation, both during the preparations in April and May as well as during the meeting itself, 2 - 4 June, and the Caribbean Biannual Regional Meeting prior to the conference (31 May - 1 June). The Regional Delegation gave important support to the Dominican Republic Red Cross in logistics issues as well as with programme content.

From April to June the delegation was also deeply involved in the last phase of *the change process in the Dominican Republic Red Cross (DRRC)*, the elections at municipal level and the preparations for the 27 June DRRC General Assembly and national-level election.

An important event was the signing of the *Federation's Status Agreement* with the Government of the Dominican Republic.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Institutional Development

Objectives: To initiate and follow up change processes within National Societies and help draw up realistic development plans, with particular emphasis on the Societies prioritised for 1999.

Dominican Rep. Red Cross

A Electoral Guide was developed to ensure a proper development of the electoral process, especially at municipal level.

A part-time secretary was hired and office equipment, including computer and printer, was acquired to support the elections' organisation and follow up.

A data base of active volunteers was developed, to have an accurate list of volunteers and to provide the future membership database of the National Society.

A total of 19 local committees organised elections during May and first half of June. The President and members of their boards were directly elected by their volunteers for the first time in the history of this National Society.

On 27 June the first democratic General Assembly took place according to the NS's Constitution. The approval of the new Constitution and Internal Regulations were confirmed and the new President and members of the National Council were elected directly by the Municipal Presidents and, in consequence, by the volunteers.

The NS's Law of Recognition and Constitution have been published in a handy brochure and distributed among all Provincial and Local committees.

Two regional meetings on the change process and elections took place and volunteers from East and Central-North of the country attended.

Cuban Red Cross

The NS has been working on the revision of its Constitution and Internal Regulations, consolidating a process of decentralisation of the decision-making process, activities and resources. The Cuban Government approval of a Law of Recognition of the NS is under way. This new legal base will permit the NS to organise a General Assembly and elect the NS's Executive Committee members and President.

The Plan of Action for 1999 was revised, emphasising Youth, Water Safety, Emergency teams, CBDP and Institutional Image projects.

Through the assistance offered by the Regional Delegation, the Cuban Red Cross is gaining local, national and international recognition for its successful planning, implementation and reporting related to its recent image-building, relief, rehabilitation and disaster preparedness programmes. In addition the Cuban Red Cross has taken the initiative to start up an important constitutional change process. These combined factors will probably contribute to making the Society a very attractive operational partner within the Red Cross Movement, but also for international organisations working at the community level in the country.

Jamaica Red Cross

The regional ID delegate facilitated a two-day workshop with the new NS Executive Committee to draw up a realistic development plan for the period 1999-2002. The participants revised current programmes, prioritising the NS's action for the most vulnerable.

The Regional Delegation expects to be more focused on the change process of the Haitian RC and expand ID support to the eastern Caribbean NS during next two quarters of the year.

Community Based Disaster Preparedness Programme

Objectives

The Regional Disaster Preparedness programme has three core components.

The Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) Training component; the Disaster Management Training component, aiming at improving the disaster management and disaster response capacities of key staff at headquarters and branch levels in Caribbean National Red Cross Societies;

Micro-projects to improve the capacity of vulnerable communities to cope with disasters through financing of small-scale projects with mitigation and/or preparedness elements.

After meeting with the local DIPECHO office in May, certain amendments have been proposed to the CBDP project to reflect the change in the number of target countries, reduced from sixteen to ten, a concurrent reduction in the number of sub-regional focal points and a reduction in the number of micro-projects. Due to the late start of project activities, an extension of phase 2 of the programme, from November 1999 to April 2000, was also requested.

Regional activities

Assessment visits were made to four National Societies, needs identified and training materials developed for senior management personnel, and a consultant identified to produce a documentary video on the CBDP.

Additionally amendments have been made to the original project and budget to reflect the change from a three to a one year project implementation schedule. A review of the project was also conducted in March.

At the community level all target countries with the exception of Antigua continued the expansion of their programme and have attracted the attention of other international agencies.

The projected start up of CBDP activities in five new countries (Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Belize and St. Kitts & Nevis) did not materialise as planned. Only Cuba began activities. And while Belize, the Dominican Republic and Barbados are scheduled to come on-stream in July and August, St. Kitts & Nevis has been shifted to phase 3 (year 2000). A firm commitment is awaited from Haiti.

Thirty five community training workshops have been conducted across the region with the result that disaster committees have been formed in 21 communities in Dominica and sixteen in Jamaica. Eight communities in St. Vincent and seven in St. Lucia have had contacts with the programme.

During the first quarter, a Cuban Red Cross technical team was appointed to develop and implement a Community Based Disaster Preparedness programme. The plan of action '99 for the CBDP project has been drafted as well as its budget. Training material on Disasters has been developed for the community level.

The plan of action '99 and budget for Emergency Response Teams and Water Safety projects has been drafted.

Decentralisation of CBDP project management

In order to increase NS participation in all aspects of the programme and also to develop a greater sense of ownership by NS, Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) were developed with two National Societies, Jamaican Red Cross and Dominica Red Cross. Under this agreement Jamaican Red Cross will assume responsibility for implementing the community aspect of the project in Cuba, Dominican Republic, Belize and Haiti: it will provide technical support and guidance to NS in the planning and execution of community activities, including serving as workshop facilitators; assist NS in identifying external resources which can be used in the implementation of local activities; strengthen the capacity of NS to manage projects at the sub-regional and eventually the regional level.

The MoU with Dominica Red Cross was signed in June, covering Antigua & Barbuda, St. Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, and St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

Development of training material

The production of a documentary and training video on Community Based Disaster Preparedness for the general public has begun. It will include examples of successful community disaster management committees.

Assessments were made in seven of the ten target countries: Antigua, Barbados, Belize, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Jamaica, to determine the progress of the CBDP, the government expectations of the National Societies in disaster relief and the Societies' capacity to respond. Training materials have been developed for community based disaster preparedness training and introduction to shelter management. Contacts have been made with the American Red Cross and with PAHO for assistance to develop stress management training material.

Cuban Red Cross has developed a total of four training manuals on Disaster Preparedness -- Disaster Preparedness, Safety at Home, Primary Health and Shelter Management -- for the community level. It has started purchases of individual and team equipment for the 14 selected emergency response teams. It is planned to finish the distribution before September when the hurricane season reaches its peak.

Four Motivation Workshops were organised at provincial level to motivate people involved in the Disaster Preparedness programme, to explain its objectives and plan of action for the next year.

Logistics

Of the four NS identified as beneficiaries under the Japanese Red Cross Logistics programme, two have received containers (Dominica and St. Vincent), while St. Lucia is awaiting duty free concession for clearance.

The Cuban Red Cross purchased individual equipment for its lifeguards and training material for the Lifeguards School in Guanabo (east of Havana). and distributed it among the selected beaches and swimming pools in June. It is planned to start the special summer season water safety programme in July.

The National Societies

Antigua.

The impact of Hurricane Georges is still being felt in Antigua. As a result the National Society has fallen behind in the implementation of the project. However, training activities continue in the two communities implementing the CBDP programme. With the addition of a full time coordinator, the number of communities implementing CBDP should increase.

Barbados

The destruction of the Red Cross building in Barbados by fire has severely affected the National Society's operational capacity, but the two trained coordinators continue implementation of the programme in the St. Johns area.

Cuba

The number of volunteers is expected to increase as a result of the direct impact of the Community Based Disaster Preparedness Project (based on workshops for trainers and facilitators at community level). Results, especially in the water safety project, will be evaluated after the summer season.

Dominica

To-date 21 communities are involved in the project in Dominica. The National Society is also training community workers for the government. Based on the success of this programme it has approached the government regarding the possibility of accessing public funds to expand the Society's community activities.

Jamaica

Ten communities in Jamaica have now established Disaster Management Committees. Training continues in six others, with the expectation that these will establish committees in the immediate future.

Full implementation of the Hotel Safety Programme started in November 1998, but was affected by the slow response from the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association which did not notify its membership of the programme until February 1999. During the interval a training workshop for Red Cross volunteers was held in Ocho Rios, one of the major tourist destinations. Other activities included the development of an assessment guide for conducting a safety audit of hotels, development of training outlines and local publicity in the print and electronic media.

To date safety audits have been conducted on five hotels and training workshops held at two properties. Following these workshops both properties started developing their disaster plans.

Experience is emphasising the significant disparities that exist among the Caribbean National Red Cross Societies. The bigger Societies, such as Jamaica, Haiti, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Belize all have full-time staff with various expertise. This is not true of NS of the small island states and consequently it is not always possible to develop one activity or the same approach for all countries. It is therefore necessary to consider each country as a separate entity, and develop a specific approach to project activities based on geography, staff complement and competency, resource availability (personnel and material), basic needs and the ability of the Society to absorb the training provided.

St. Lucia

The project is currently operating in seven communities in St. Lucia, and the St. Lucia Red Cross is also assisting in training the local Disaster Committees established by the government. In order to increase the number of local facilitators, the NS has conducted its own training course, using local resource persons trained earlier by the CDBP programme.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross is currently working in eight communities, in six of which Disaster Management Committees have been established. As a result of the disaster management intervention of the Red Cross, the government has identified lands which it will donate to the Society for the construction of a warehouse for emergency supplies. The Japanese Red Cross will cover the cost of procuring, modifying and installing the containers to be used as warehouses as well as initial supplies. In addition the government has indicated that it intends to increase its annual subvention to the National Society to enable it to reach more communities.

Partnerships Resource Development, Information & Dissemination

Objectives

Further develop the regional RD programme, with emphasis on improving NS image and developing relations with locally based corporations.

Help identify and research possible revenue generating projects for National Societies and support their planning and start-up efforts.

Develop local and regional marketing resources and activities to promote the image of the Red Cross.

Help NSs establish and strengthen fund raising/resource development committees.

At the Caribbean Regional Meeting in late May and early June, the National Societies listed resource development as one of the region's three top priorities and recommended forming an active regional resource development team.

During the first six months of 1999, the Caribbean Resource Development Programme advanced in developing marketing tools and creating opportunities for National Societies to strengthen their resource development activities and image in the community. Individual technical assistance was provided to National Societies with missions to Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, and Trinidad & Tobago. In addition to conducting national workshop in many of these Societies, extensive discussions were held with National Society leadership.

During the technical mission to St. Vincent 20 Red Cross members participated in a resource development workshop which identified key constraints to their fund raising and volunteer recruitment efforts.

A joint mission with the American Red Cross to Grenada conducted, through a series of meetings and interviews, an extensive review of the needs of the vulnerable population, the capacity of the Red Cross to address these needs, and the feasibility of public support. As a result a comprehensive capacity building plan - "Service Delivery Excellence" - is being developed to establish an income generating health and safety unit to support and expand the community initiatives of the NS. Through a pairing programme with the American Red Cross Philadelphia chapter and in coordination with the Federation, technical and financial support will be provided in developing an extensive training and education curriculum with an initial focus on work place safety, and then expanded to include home nursing and community public health. Not only will this programme address a key vulnerability of the country, it will provide sustainable funding for the NS to address other key issues, including Youth development.

Information and Dissemination

Red Cross Millennium year regional coordination is becoming a greater focus of the programme, with efforts spent during the period to generate excitement and participation among NSs.

A special '*Power of Humanity*' newspaper print advertisement kit was prepared and distributed to Societies along with 2,500 key chains. More than 3,500 'Power of humanity' T-shirts were printed and sold at cost to National Societies.

Regional telecommunication provider Cable & Wireless furthered their relationship with the Red Cross by including Red Cross Hurricane Georges appeal flyers in their phone bills to 130,000 households in the Eastern Caribbean. Plans are underway to include regular Red Cross disaster safety information in

their mailings regionally. In addition, Cable & Wireless which also sponsors West Indies Cricket will donate a portion of every ticket sold to the local Red Cross for the match against Australia.

The Regional Delegation selected an advertising agency in April to develop professional quality promotional material for the Caribbean. A creative strategy and schedule for the year were developed during the second quarter.

Promotional material was prepared for the Caribbean Red Cross annual month-long Disaster Preparedness Campaign in June - *'Better Be Ready!'* A series of newspaper print ads, press releases for local modification, radio spots, and other resource material were distributed to all Societies in the region. On June 22, a one-hour Red Cross radio show on disaster preparedness was broadcast regionally to provide the public with practical safety information and promote the image of the Red Cross.

Wendy Fitzwilliam, the current Miss Universe (a native of Trinidad) has become the first-ever Caribbean Red Cross Ambassador for Youth. Miss Fitzwilliam will be used as a Red Cross spokesperson promoting HIV/AIDS prevention among young people in the region, as well as supporting regional fundraising efforts for the new Caribbean Red Cross Youth Development Programme. A news conference was held in Trinidad in late May and received regional and worldwide coverage.

The Red Cross Hotel Safety Programme gained support in early 1999 with both Sandals and Super Club signing up to participate in the programme's piloting in Jamaica. As the largest hotel chains not only in Jamaica but the entire Caribbean, their participation brings greater credibility to the programme. While technical support is provided under the Regional Disaster Preparedness Programme, the initiative has considerable resource development elements, including the international marketing of Red Cross "certified for safety" hotels and income generating activities to support local and regional Red Cross programmes.

The Caribbean Red Cross web site - www.caribredcross.org - continued to be updated on a near weekly basis and now receives more than 7,500 visitors weekly.

CANA, CBU, Caribbean Week (regional business publication), and BBC Caribbean Service -- top regional media outlets -- receive regular updates on Red Cross newsworthy activities in the region and have maintained interest in Red Cross Hurricane Georges response.

The Regional Delegation provided local and international media support for the Inter American Conference held in Santo Domingo. It also conducted a three-day communication training workshop for the Dominican Republic Red Cross.

The Regional Delegation continues to promote the involvement of business people as National Society leaders. This was especially encouraged during a technical assistance mission to Grenada where the Resource Development Delegate met with corporate representatives from all the leading businesses. The National Society is now developing a Corporate Advisory Committee and is planning to recruit more business people onto its Central Committee.

The Regional Corporate Partnership Programme initiatives were delayed during the first quarter, as the Resource Development Delegate continued to provide assistance to the regional Hurricane Georges response. This has pushed back the time frame for the programme by three months, although efforts are being made to make up this loss.

Caribbean Regional Corporate Partnerships

Objectives

Strengthen the capacity of NSs through developing and coordinating mutually beneficial corporate partnership and other strategic alliances.

Encourage greater involvement of corporate leaders with the Red Cross.

Establish a regional corporate advisory committee.

McCann Erickson, one of the world's largest advertising agencies, was selected as the marketing agency for the Red Cross in the Caribbean. The agency has an extensive network of offices in the region (11) and has already begun developing a creative strategy to promote the ***Red Cross Brand*** essence and secure sponsorship support from the corporate community in the region. It is also developing a campaign to promote the image of independence of the Dominican Republic Red Cross and has begun developing creative concepts for regional promotions on volunteerism, disaster preparedness, and AIDS prevention. The use of the ad agency received the endorsement of the Caribbean National Societies during the Caribbean Red Cross Regional Meeting in early June.

As an example, within the Dominican Republic, Esso is interested in selling Red Cross first aid kits and another corporation wants to construct a series of Red Cross hurricane shelters -- all arranged by McCann.

Following an informal meeting and a Red Cross presentation at a conference attended by the President of Burger King, the fast food chain announced a donation of \$100,000 to the Dominican Republic Red Cross. The Regional Delegation is following up with Burger King to explore developing a regional partnership for the Caribbean and Latin America.

A \$250,000 partnership strategy was presented to Caribbean corporate partner Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance for the next 12 months. Most of the funding request is for the expansion of the Caribbean Hotel Safety Programme, but support is also sought for the Caribbean Disaster Fund and administrative support of the Regional Delegation.

The Jamaican Red Cross has appointed a new Fund Raising Chairman who is an experienced financial planner. The new Director General of the Barbados Red Cross is also interested in developing his Society's fund raising activities and comes with considerable experience heading other national organisations.

Youth

The development of Red Cross youth programmes was cited by regional Red Cross leaders as one of the three priorities for the Caribbean during the Regional Meeting. The implementation of the Caribbean Youth Development Programme scheduled to begin in January was delayed until June to lack of adequate funding support. UNAIDS pledged its funding support to the programme in April and discussions began regarding programme technical support in May. As the programme has still not received full funding it will be modified slightly.

During the first year, the programme will focus on developing the Youth departments of the Bahamas, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Societies, as these countries suffer from some of the highest AIDS rates among youth in the Caribbean. Guyana now will be part of the expanded second year of the programme.

A Regional Youth Delegate responsible for implementing the Youth/AIDS programme was appointed in mid-June and has begun developing a detailed plan of action for the programme.

Conclusion

The extensive and prolonged support from the Regional Delegation to the Dominican Republic Red Cross in the relief and institutional development fields during the first six months of the year was to the detriment of the delegation's support to the other 15 National Societies (as well as to the 16 local branches of overseas National Societies in the region). Regional Delegation programmes and operations in DR in the future must be organised in such a way that it will be possible for the delegation to serve the whole region appropriately.

The emergency and relief phases of the regional Hurricane Georges operation were well organised and implemented by the five National Societies involved, with Regional Delegation support. External as well as internal factors created, however, important constraints for the planned rehabilitation-, image- and capacity-building parts of the operation. One result was that the long term regional development

work of the Regional Delegation was seriously constrained by the prolonged efforts to assist a National Society with no previous experience in handling a large-scale disaster.

The Regional Delegation's intensive support over a three year period to the change process in the Dominican Republic Red Cross achieved its aim when the Society carried out its first free elections of a democratically elected National Council at its General Assembly. Hopefully, the Society's thousands of well motivated volunteers in municipal branches all over the country, now have the necessary organisational tools to strengthen their National Society at local and national levels and improve the response of the country's many communities to the few, but serious hazards prevailing in the Dominican Republic.

The XVIth Inter-American Conference (IAC) was planned, organised and implemented by CORI and the Dominican Republic Red Cross with support from the Federation Secretariat and its three regional delegations in the Americas. The extensive support over six months offered by the Santo Domingo Regional Delegation to the host Society contributed greatly to the success of this conference. The conclusion of this undertaking has freed delegation resources for ongoing regional programmes.

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