

# ***RUSSIAN FEDERATION: WINTER SUPPORT FOR SIBERIAN AND NORTHERN TERRITORIES***

*15 May 2000*

*appeal no. 29/99*

*situation report no. 3*

*period covered: 23 February - 12 May 2000*

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*The winter 2000 operation was launched by the Russian Red Cross (RRC) and the International Federation on 29 October to assist 770,000 beneficiaries in 22 Far North and Siberian regions. In March, a new programme coordinator was assigned to maximise the operations already underway and planned, including the distribution of seed sets, family food parcels (FFPs), and second hand clothing which assist some 7,000 beneficiaries every month, as well as soup kitchen operations in seven regions. Despite the success of the operation so far, additional cash support is needed to implement the full range of activities planned in the appeal.*

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## ***The context***

From a humanitarian point of view, Russia's financial crisis of 17 August 1998 exacerbated an already critical situation, worsening the cash economy in many areas, causing salary payments to be frozen, putting hundreds of thousands out of work, and highlighting the government's inability to provide adequately for vulnerable groups.

The Siberian regions found themselves in the most difficult situation with a failure of the Far North Route, which, in the Soviet times, channelled vital supplies (fuel, medication and food) to the most remote Russian regions territories, enabling their people to survive the long winters. At present, 31 indigenous ethnic groups live in the territories of Siberia. Although most populations differ in their origin, language, and culture, they are characterised by common types of activities: hunting, fishing, reindeer-breeding and herding. Their traditional occupations are linked to their nomadic way of life.

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These areas are especially vulnerable to the vicissitudes of an unstable economy and where coping mechanisms have already been severely strained. High transport costs in Siberian regions inflate prices for basic goods up to three times higher than in other areas of the Russian Federation. There are severe problems of tuberculosis among youth. A major problem facing the people and the government is how to assure a sustainable future for indigenous peoples.

Governmental services and individual coping mechanisms are insufficient to meet many basic needs, and the Russian Red Cross has a responsibility to provide support for the most vulnerable. To respond to the humanitarian situation, the Federation launched an appeal to support the Russian Red Cross to address the following specific objectives:

- to provide humanitarian assistance to 770,000 of Russia's most isolated and vulnerable, primarily focusing on children and elderly living alone;
- to procure, transport, deliver and monitor emergency aid (food parcels, bulk food, hygienic items, seeds and soup kitchens) to lone elderly, multi-child families, single-headed families, bedridden invalids, residents in elderly homes, abandoned or orphaned children and specialised hospitals;
- to protect and nurture indigenous coping mechanisms through initiating ten pilot small-scale community development/income-generation programmes in order to achieve self-sufficiency;
- to prioritise healthy lifestyles focusing on nutritional support, sanitation, personal hygiene and health education; and,
- to promote the development of the Russian Red Cross.

The Russian Red Cross has used data from assessment missions, monitoring reports and state statistics to target 21 regions (Nenetsk AO, Altay kray, Altay Republic, Taymyr AO, Evenk AO, Tyva Republic, Chukotka AO, Koryak AO, Magadan, Kamchatka, Sakha Republic (Yakutia), Khakassia Republic, Buryatia Republic, Chita, Komi Republic, Komi-Perm AO, Kirov, Kurgan, Tyumen, Yamalo-Nenetsk AO, Khanty-Mancy AO, Irkutsk and Kemerovo) in West, Central and Eastern Siberia.

In conjunction with the programme, the RRC and Federation are implementing the Far Northeast operation which started in 1999 in Kamchatka, Koryak AO, Chukotka and Magadan, to assist 82,000 beneficiaries in the polar remote regions.

The TB programme, which started on 12 March 1999 is ongoing in seven regions of Astrakhan, Buryatia, Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Kemerovo, Tomsk and Pskov in Russia as well as in Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. Visiting Nurses training seminars are being held, food and hygiene parcels distributions are ongoing in all four countries, and soup kitchens are operating.

## ***Latest events***

On 15 March Russia's acting President Vladimir Putin criticised Russian governmental officials for failure to deliver USD 12 million allocated in aid to Chechnya. The aid was intended to be disbursed to small farmers for planting seeds.

On 14 March Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov said that Russia will need to borrow more foreign funds in the next three months due to a seasonal budgetary downturn.

Russian bank officials have proposed a restructuring of the banking system. The government expects GDP to grow by four to 4.5 percent next year and inflation to be around 10 percent.

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## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

### **ECHO •**

A proposed amendment to the ECHO contract (ECHO/RUS/215/1999/03003) was accepted, increasing FFPs for Altay and Tuva Republics from 37,000 to 70,000. An MoU between the Federation and the German Red Cross was signed on 7 March. A contract to supply all 70,000 FFPs has been signed with a local supplier from the Altay Republic.

The new project co-ordinator will be based in Kyzyl in the Republic of Tuva.

Distribution is being carried out in three rounds with a total of 35,000 FFPs distributed in each of the two Republics. Each food parcel contains: 2 kg of wheat flour, 2 kg of buckwheat, 2 kg of beans (red or white), 2 kg of macaroni, 2 kg of sugar, a litre of vegetable oil, four cans of beef (1.3 kg), two tins of sweet condensed milk (800 g) and 0.5 kg of tea.

Some 6,703 FFPs were delivered to the Altai Republic warehouse and 3,600 arrived in the Tuva Republic. A training session was held for all responsible persons in Tuva, including Red Cross personnel and representatives from the Social Welfare department to discuss beneficiary selection and distribution procedures.

Distributions began on 15 April and are planned to be completed by the end of September.

### **Soup kitchens •**

Seven thousand beneficiaries receive hot meals every month in soup kitchens in Nenetsk AO, Altay Kray, Altay republic, Evenkia AO, Tuva Republic, Magadan and Kamchatka regions. During the reporting period, some 105,000 planned meals have been provided to 7,000 beneficiaries.

### **Second hand clothes •**

The Russian Red Cross continues to receive and distribute the Swedish Red Cross donation of second hand clothes. Eleven rail wagons have arrived, with the clothes distributed in the regions of Altay Kray, Altay Republic, Kirov, Khakassia, Chita, Kemerovo and Irkutsk.

### **Seeds •**

The purchase of 100,000 seed sets is proceeding, with the choice of seeds based on local cultures and growing conditions. The contract with the supplier is now signed and seed sets are being delivered to the following Red Cross Committees from where they will be distributed to individual beneficiaries: Altay Kray 33,000 sets, Altay Republic 18,000 sets, Evenkia Okrug 3,000 sets, Tuva Republic 18,000 sets, Magadan region 14,000 sets and Kamchatka 14,000 sets. Distribution is well underway and will be completed by the end of May in time for the planting season.

A meeting was held with the chairpersons from Taymyr AO and Yakutia Republic. During the meeting the chairpersons have been asked to approach their local authorities and discuss a proposal to assist 23,000 beneficiaries in Taymyr, Yakutia and Nenetsk with bulk food, hygiene items, children's shoes and clothes. Based on a British Red Cross and Department for International Development (DFID) unearmarked donation of 1,500,000 pounds sterling to the Winter appeal, assistance will be provided to the 23,000 beneficiaries in the above mentioned regions.

Following consultation with the Russian Red Cross, the Delegation's relief team is planning supplementary support for 2,000 beneficiaries in various institutions identified by regional

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Red Cross committees in Taymyr, Nenetsk, Tuva, Koryak, Kamchatka, Yakutia and Komi-Perm. Support will be extended for six months beginning in May.

The Swedish Red Cross has indicated further support in the form of SEK 1,500,000 to cover operational costs and for the purchase of hygiene parcels to be distributed in the Republics of Altay and Tuva.

Three members of the relief team undertook two week field trips inside the Arctic circle during the reporting period. Logistic assessments were carried out in Taimyr, Nenetsk and the polar districts of Yakutia to ascertain the most appropriate means for delivering food, hygiene items and clothing. The regions are extremely remote and although it was late April temperatures were between minus twenty and minus ten. Local authorities and media were met and informed of the programme's objectives.

## ***Outstanding needs***

Despite the fact that the programme is being successfully implemented and the planned operations are underway, the appeal is only 20% covered and more funds are needed in order to provide the intended beneficiaries with the planned level of assistance.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

Contacts with local authorities and administrations take place on a regular basis (primarily by fax and phone). Media coverage of the operation has taken place in most of the targeted regions through local newspapers, TV and radio.

During the reporting period a meeting with ECHO representatives in Moscow was held with the participation of the RRC and Federation representatives and chairpersons from the Altay and Tuva Republics. The implementation of the German Red Cross and ECHO programme was discussed, the ECHO project co-ordinator was introduced and the RRC/Federation procedures were discussed and agreed upon.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Director  
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Bjorn Eder  
Director  
Europe Department

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