

RUSSIAN FEDERATION: WINTER SUPPORT FOR SIBERIAN AND NORTHERN TERRITORIES

27 June 2000

*appeal no. 29/99; launched on 2 November 1999 for 10 months
situation report no. 4
period covered: 12 May - 21 June 2000*

The Siberian Winter Appeal was launched on 2 November to assist 770,000 beneficiaries in 22 Far North and Siberian regions. Activities are going well; several field trips were conducted to the regions by the members of the Delegation's relief team and Russian Red Cross (RRC) representatives to monitor the implementation and control the distribution process. Soup kitchens are functioning, second hand clothes are being distributed, the ECHO project is in the second round of family food parcel (FFP) distributions, several contracts with the suppliers of relief commodities were signed. Weather and climate conditions have affected the implementation of the programme, and the main concern remains transportation of relief items to the remote regions targeted in the appeal.

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.

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

According to the deputy prime minister in charge of social affairs, Russia is now struggling to cope with the task of helping some 620,000 orphans and abandoned children. The number of orphans and "social orphans" (children either abandoned by their parents or taken from them by authorities) had been growing by some 120,000 per year. Only 25% of these children are cared for in public institutions. The state owes some RR 29 billion (USD 1 billion) in overdue welfare payments to needy families with children.

Russia's parliament approved an amnesty bill on 26 May to free some 120,000 inmates in the nation's overcrowded prisons to mark the 55th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany. Eligible for release are prisoners who fought in Russia's various wars, including the two

Chechen conflicts, women who are pregnant or have handicapped children, and the prison system's numerous tuberculosis sufferers.

There is a rapid growth in AIDS cases in Russia's Siberian city of Yekaterinburg. A total of 240 people contracting AIDS have been revealed in the region since the year's start, including 148 in Yekaterinburg alone. The head of the regional sanitary and epidemiological centre said that such a rate is an indication not only of the spread of AIDS, but also poor preventive measures. Last year, only 26 AIDS cases were registered in Yekaterinburg, while other AIDS-infected people and those contacting them were not revealed. Drug addiction is one of the main reasons for the alarming spread. However, official reports on the scale of drug addiction do not reveal the true picture. On 5 June, the chief doctor at the city sanitary and epidemiological centre signed a resolution which officially characterised the situation with AIDS as an epidemic. The resolution urges emergency measures as soon as possible.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Soup kitchens: A fixed number of beneficiaries continue to receive hot meals in 72 RRC soup kitchens in the eight regions of Nenetsk AO, Altay Kray, Altay Republic, Taymyr AO, Evenk AO, Tyva Republic, Magadan and Kamchatka, as follows:

Region	Number of kitchens	Number of beneficiaries	Number of meals
Nenetsk AO	2	353	5 693
Altay Kray	26	2 090	31 650
Altay Republic	17	2 538	39 393
Taymyr AO	<i>Opened recently, no reports as yet.</i>		
Evenk AO	2	345	5 250
Tyva Republic	5	1 933	18 865
Magadan region	13	1 570	18 827
Kamchatka region	7	1 252	17 090

Second-hand clothes: Swedish second-hand clothes have now been delivered to 13 regions. Distributions have started in most of the regions. The table below shows the number of wagons delivered and the number of beneficiaries, who have received second-hand clothes as of the middle of June:

Region	Number of wagons	Number of beneficiaries
Altay Kray	2	18,815
Altay Republic	2	21,666
Evenk AO	1	-
Tyva Republic	1	-
Komi-Perm AO	1	20,938
Kirov region	2	20,238
Tumen region	1	-
Khakassia Republic	2	45,830
Buryatia Republic	1	-
Chita region	1	23,037
Kemerovo region	2	13,412
Irkutsk region	1	15,374
Kurgan region	1	-

Seeds: Some 100,000 seed sets were delivered to six RRC committees - Altay Kray (33,000 sets), Altay Republic (18,000 sets), Evenkia (3,000 sets), Tyva Republic (18,000 sets), Magadan region (14,000 sets) and Kamchatka (14,000 sets). Distribution to individual beneficiaries was completed in May in time for the planting season.

ECHO: The first round of family food parcels distribution was completed with 11,600 FFPs distributed each in Altay and Tyva Republics. The reports from the Altay Republic show that 11,536 vulnerable families (37,638 individuals) benefited from distribution. No reports were received from the Tyva Republic yet, although the distribution process is completed there as well. The second distribution round of 11,700 FFPs for each Republic has started. The content of each food parcel is the same as in the first round: 2 kg of wheat flour, 2 kg of buckwheat, 2 kg of haricot bean (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.

Hygiene parcels: The Swedish Red Cross made a cash donation with which it was decided to procure hygiene parcels for the two Republics. A tender was held among different companies and the same supplier which produces FFPs was chosen for the production of hygiene kits. Each kit will contain: 2 bars of soap, 2 bars of household soap, 900 g of washing powder, 420 g of shampoo, 2 tubes of tooth paste and 2 tooth brushes.

USD 33,600 was saved from the Swedish Red Cross donation due to a preferential contract with the supplier, and it was decided to procure 10,500 hygiene kits for Altay Kray also. The content of hygiene parcels will be the same as for Altay and Tyva Republics.

The procurement is planned to end in the middle of July at which time hygiene parcels will be transported to the regions and given out to the same beneficiaries who are due to receive FFPs in the third round.

Chukotka, Magadan, Kamchatka and Koryak: the Canadian Red Cross made a donation to procure FFPs (each will consist of: 4 kg wheat flour, 1 kg of buckwheat, 1 kg of rice, 1 kg of macaroni, 2 kg of sugar, 900 g of butter oil, 2 cans of beef, 4 cans of sweet condensed milk and 0.5 kg of tea) for individuals in Magadan and Kamchatka and bulk food (dried fruit, sweet condensed milk, butter oil, tea and cocoa) for children in institutions in Chukotka and Koryak AO. Negotiations with suppliers are ongoing to negotiate the best price for FFPs. A supplier of bulk food was chosen and all the documents sent to Geneva for approval.

Cash support to institutions: Cash support to institutions in seven regions of Nenetsk, Taimyr, Tyva, Koryak, Kamchatka, Yakutia and Komi-Perm AO started in May. Some USD 18,500 is being transferred to 24 institutions (1,800 children) every month.

British Red Cross donation: Nine types of commodities will be procured from the British Red Cross donation for Nenetsk AO, Timyr AO and Yakutia (the Sakha Republic). The following table shows the types and number of commodities to be procured:

Region	FFPs	Hygiene kits	Warm suits	Rubber boots	Felt boots	Fisherman's boots	Children's clothes	Fist aid kits
Nenetsk	7,000	7,000	2,285	835	835	2,285	2,285	3,495
Timyr	11,000	11,000	3,600	1,330	1,330	3,600	3,600	5,450
Yakutia	14,000	14,000	4,115	1,835	1,835	4,115	6,115	7,055

Outstanding needs

Most of the relief team's concerns are now connected with transportation of all the commodities to the remote regions targeted in the appeal. That is why it is important to receive authorisations for procurements from the Federation's Secretariat as soon as possible due to short navigational period within the Arctic areas and complicated ways of delivery. In the best scenario, the first beneficiaries will get aid in August-September with the commodities transported by sea to the main distribution points in the regions; but if there is a delay in authorisation, the relief team will have to wait till winter roads are operational to send the cargo to the most remote districts, meaning that the aid will reach some beneficiaries only in January next year. Local distributions are quite complicated as well, and very often depend on weather conditions.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Information Delegate conducted a field trip to the Tyva Republic in the middle of May to meet with local administration, Red Cross committee representatives and beneficiaries. Three "Direct From the Field" pieces were produced on the results of the trip for the Federation's Internet page.

In the targeted regions, local media as well as representatives of the local Health, Welfare and Social Protection Ministries are provided regular updates on programme events as well.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Despite a heavy working schedule and lack of staff, the programme has been implemented in an effective and timely manner. Soup kitchens are operating, relief items are being procured, second hand clothes are being distributed. With the remote nature of the targeted regions, Red Cross assistance is often the only support provided to vulnerable persons.

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