

GUATEMALA: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

15 September 2000

appeal no. 01.18/2000

situation report no. 2

period covered: 1 April - 30 June 2000

The Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC) has, over the second quarter, focused on institutional development, and progress has been made at the level of the headquarters which has made major improvements in staffing policies and in introducing efficient internal systems. The challenge of capacity-building at branch level remains. In the area of disaster preparedness, a contingency plan was drafted, and health services in four key areas were maintained. The CRC launched its “Goodbye to Violence” campaign in June 2000 which aims to promote peaceful coexistence.

The context

Guatemala is ranked 120th in the 2000 United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), making it the second poorest country in the Americas after Haiti. According to UNDP reports, Guatemala has dropped 44 positions on the HDI since 1990. An estimated 40% of Guatemala's 11 million people live in poverty, and the growing gap between rich and poor is a threat to social stability.

The average length of schooling in Guatemala is 2.3 years, which drops to 1.3 years in departments where the Mayan population is predominant, and 33% of the population over 15 years of age is illiterate.

The challenge of the Peace Accords was to end the armed conflict, while simultaneously addressing the wide social, political and economic disparities that were the root causes of the conflict. Unfortunately, efforts so far have failed to expand the sense of ownership of the Peace Accords in Guatemalan society, which is a major cause of the present wave of violence and unrest.

Latest events

Recent events challenge the police ability to secure law and order. In late April protest against an increase in bus prices led to riots killing four civilians, including one journalist. The police were unable to control the riots. Shortly after, a Japanese tourist and the Guatemalan driver defending him was lynched and killed by the local population in the village of Todos Santos. Although the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) has succeeded in reducing cases of lynching from 10 to 3 per month, this continues to be a serious problem in the countryside. In the cities, violence is mostly related to the growing problem of juvenile crime, particularly gangs, responsible for kidnappings and robberies.

The GRC was present at a regional conference in disaster preparedness in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in May, during which the National Society presented its future DP plans.

The first aiders in GRC were on the alert in May as a result of heavy rainfall throughout the country. In coordination with the American Red Cross, assistance was provided to 12 families in the region of Sacupulas. The families were evacuated to temporary shelters or were housed with families nearby.

Youth members have been working on the school brigade programme. The global vision of the youth programme is to develop the schools' capacity in first aid, health (AIDS/HIV) and peaceful coexistence. GRC youth visited schools inside and outside the capital in the spring, and as a result, there is now an active youth group in Guatemala City, which will assist in the implementation of the "Stop the violence" activities in July and August. Youth groups outside the capital have also recruited new members, although they have yet to reach the goal of ten youth members per branch.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Human Development Programme •

The Human Development Programme aims to offer the most vulnerable a set of basic community-based health, disaster preparedness and community development services. It is currently being implemented in seven different branches, in some of the least accessible and remote communities where there are no medical services whatsoever.

The programme is due to be evaluated in order to ensure better co-ordination between the branches and a more coherent programme. An evaluation workshop was organised in July in collaboration with the American Red Cross.

- Disaster preparedness Programme

Disaster preparedness remains a priority in Guatemala and, as of July, a disaster preparedness delegate has been recruited. The delegate will support the GRC in finalising its contingency plan which has been drafted by the newly established relief department.

The programme focusing on community education in disaster preparedness started in June and is financed by CIDA Canada, after delays in recruiting a national co-ordinator for the programme. Activities were developed in June in sixteen communities in the department of Retahuleu, with a total of 36 facilitators working on the programme who ran 18 community workshops.

- Health Programme

The community-based health care programme is providing basic health services in four key areas: health care for women; child health; general health including HIV/AIDS, STDs prevention; and environmental health. Activities include health services by mobile health teams, training of health promoters and traditional birth attendants, health education, and setting up of basic community health units and pharmacies.

- Humanitarian Values Programme

On 23 June, the GRC officially launched its “adios violencia” (goodbye to violence) campaign, which will be followed with local violence prevention projects at the branch level. The programme is based on a model from the Norwegian Red Cross, but is adapted to the Guatemalan context. The GRC decided in June to develop collaboration with UN agencies (MINUGUA, UNESCO and UPAZ) for the campaign advocating the culture of peace. In August four regional seminars will be organised in order to introduce the campaign in all the branches. The activities at branch level will depend on initiatives and capacities of each branch, but will be supported from the headquarters.

A GRC dissemination co-ordinator has been hired, with financial support from the ICRC. ICRC has also contracted a member of staff from the Costa Rica Red Cross to train and support the co-ordinator during the first months.

Institutional Development Programme •

The Federation is continuing to support the change process in the Guatemalan Red Cross. The two year tripartite pilot project, financed by the National Societies and the governments of Sweden, Canada and Great Britain, ended in June 2000. This project was implemented in Guatemala, Congo-Brazzaville and Nigeria, and aimed to demonstrate how action-orientated interventions designed to strengthen Red Cross institutions can improve the quality of programmes for vulnerable groups. Another aim was to ascertain how the Federation can co-ordinate capacity-building projects most efficiently. Institutional development will remain an important component within the Guatemala rehabilitation programme, but will no longer be financed through the tripartite pilot project.

Management re-organisation - As a part of the tripartite project, a workshop, facilitated by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, was held in March this year and focused on the organisational framework of the GRC. As a direct outcome of the workshop and the evaluation process beforehand, the governing board decided at their next meeting to release four persons from central management positions. At a later date, the governing board also decided to make further changes in order to have a fully functioning management team. Personnel issues have been very time consuming and, as a result, the majority of planned activities and seminars for the management team in the GRC have been postponed. When the new team is complete, as of August, these delayed activities and seminars will be implemented.

As part of the change process in the management structure, in May the GRC requested support from a staff-on-loan from another National Society in the region. In June, a staff-on-loan from the Costa Rica Red Cross was contracted who played a key role in the recruitment of personnel. In this process, the GRC also employed a Guatemalan firm “GAP” to select the candidates.

The staff-on-loan from the Costa Rican Red Cross is a part of a *Management Advisory Group* consisting of three senior officials from National Societies in the region. In June, the new Secretary General of the GRC visited the National Societies making up the *Management Advisory Group*.

Revision of Statutes - The commission reviewing the GRC Statutes is meeting twice a month and will have its first draft ready at the end of September. Workshops will then be organised in the branches and the headquarters, in order to ensure a participatory process and contributions from the different components of the National Society. The final statutes will be presented at an extraordinary General Assembly at the end of 2000. The branch structure and gender issues will be addressed in the new Statutes.

Staffing - It is essential to recruit further personnel, particularly with a view to satisfying the training needs in the branches.

Finance - GRC needs a new system for book-keeping and accounting and has decided to introduce a financial system proposed by an experienced company which has developed systems for National Societies in Central America. The system will be implemented in mid August.

Fund-raising - In July a fund raising co-ordinator will be recruited, whose role will be essential towards ensuring financial recovery.

Youth - In April schools both inside and outside the capital were visited in order to set up a youth group of at least ten members. The long-term vision is to develop school programmes in first aid, health (HIV/AIDS) and peaceful coexistence. Since the end of May, the programme has not had the benefit of a youth co-ordinator, and has therefore not made the anticipated progress. However, a youth co-ordinator will join the National Society in August.

Co-ordination

All Federation activities in Guatemala are now well co-ordinated, and receive support either multilaterally through the Federation Secretariat, or bilaterally. There is a close relationship between the Federation and the PNSs (Spanish Red Cross, the Netherlands Red Cross, American Red Cross), particularly in the area of institutional development. Weekly co-ordination meetings of all Red Cross partners are held to discuss the projects and programmes.

The American Red Cross, the Netherlands Red Cross and the Spanish Red Cross co-financed the Price Waterhouse Coopers consultancy finalised in May 2000. After almost all personnel in key positions in the management structure of GRC have been changed, and the Federation has close functional co-operation with the new team.

There is a clear work division regionally between the Federation and the PNSs. The Spanish Red Cross is working in the area of Izabal and has some projects with demobilised soldiers. The American Red Cross is working on a water and sanitation project in the area of Jalapa and Chicumula (Mitch affected areas), while the Netherlands Red Cross is working with the Mitch affected population in Coban and Peten.

Outstanding needs

The capacity of the local branches and training offered within the branches varies greatly. To start a capacity building process at branch level, the Federation is supporting the GRC in the development of an integrated capacity-building programme for all GRC branches. A draft of such a plan has been made and will be presented to the governing board. At present, the Federation has only the third of the necessary funding to implement such a programme. The Spanish Red Cross and the American Red Cross will be in a position to fund the activities in their core areas, and pledges from Swedish Red Cross and Spanish Red Cross will be valuable contributions to the programme; however, funding remains insufficient.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Contact with the National Co-ordinating Body for Disaster Reduction (CONRED) has been maintained and improved. Co-ordination with the Ministries of Health and Agriculture is also ensured, and links with the Ministry of Health's SIAS (Integrated System of Health Assistance) programme have been particularly useful. As a result, in future, if implemented in all branches, SIAS will provide the opportunity of long term sustainability for the Human Development programme. Co-ordination with the UN system and networks of NGOs has, to date, not been prioritised by the GRC, but collaboration has now been established between UN agencies (UPAZ, MINUGUA and UNESCO), and the GRC is also working within the UN "culture of peace" programme.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The main focus on institutional development over the last quarter has been related to follow up as regards the major changes in the headquarters management structure. The main goals of the GRC over recent years have been financial recovery, development of human resources, national coverage and an improved public image.

Over the next quarter, further emphasis will be made on the development of the branches and the development of an integrated capacity plan for the branches. Before the plan is implemented, it is necessary to make a follow up of the survey of the branches carried out in late 1999, which provides a useful database on branch infrastructure, membership, activities, organisation and levels of training.

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Guatemala						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 01.18/2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED			09/15/00	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				2,600,000		TOTAL COVERAGE 45.2%
Balance carried forward from 1999				230,000		
Reallocation of Income				192,186		
SPANISH - RC		45,000,000	ESP	436,005	07/02/99	
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		350,000	SEK	65,905	03.07.00	CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		1,000,000	SEK	188,300	03.07.00	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				1,112,396	CHF	42.8%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
Norway	Delegate(s)			54,045		
Sweden	Delegate(s)			9,692		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				63,737	CHF	2.5%
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:						
PGT000, PGT506.						