

NICARAGUA: Humanitarian Assistance

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During the first three months of the year, the Nicaraguan Red Cross continued with its reconstruction and rehabilitation activities.

The on-going capacity building process is directed towards further strengthening of the National Society and its structure at national and branch levels.

The context

Due to its geographical location and high concentration of active volcanoes and faults, natural disasters are a well-known phenomenon in Nicaragua. Hurricanes, tsunamis and minor volcanic eruptions were raging during the last decade, but the disaster with the highest impact on the country's recent history was Hurricane Mitch in 1998. The country was devastated. For the population, still vulnerable after the civil war which ended a few years before, the hurricane represented yet another obstacle on their way to post-war recovery.

Latest events

As the millennium takes off, the activities of the Nicaraguan Red Cross (NRC), bilaterally participating National Societies (PNSs) and the Federation delegation continue with the same dynamics. Fairly stable current situation allows uninterrupted activities in the field of rehabilitation and institutional development. Disaster response training i.e. preparedness for the next hurricane season, represent, however, one of the major objectives, at the moment.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Country assistance strategy •

Another revision of the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) was done in January. This document is now available upon request.

Rehabilitation •

With support of the Federation delegation and the National Societies participating bilaterally, the Nicaraguan Red Cross has prepared its Country Plan for Rehabilitation. The Federation delegation is presently involved in several rehabilitation programmes with previously available funds from the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and OFDA/USAID.

Rivas Project

The ECHO funded emergency assistance programme in Rivas Department has been successfully concluded. With technical support of the Federation delegation, the Rivas Red Cross branch was responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this project.

This project targeted the population affected by last winter's floods. Around 1,350 families were assisted through distribution of food, hygiene kits, water containers, chlorine, filters and plastic tanks, hammocks and mosquito nets, and medical assistance including dental care and supply of medicines. Seven wells were constructed while three others were rehabilitated.

This project reinforced the co-operation between the Nicaraguan Red Cross, SILAIS, the Church and Fire Department. The municipalities of Rivas, Tola, and San Juan del Sur were also involved in distributions.

Temporary Housing Project

This project is financed by OFDA/USAID and monitored and partly implemented by the Federation delegation in cooperation with the Nicaraguan and American Red Cross Societies.

This project provides temporary shelter for the displaced population identified by the Nicaraguan Red Cross. Around 4,000 families affected by Hurricane Mitch and with no possibility to return to their places of origin are benefitting from this project.

As the construction of permanent homes is almost finished, this project will be concluded in August.

Bilaterally participating National Societies in Nicaragua are also involved in various rehabilitation and construction projects including the construction of houses, schools and shelters:

Organisation	Temporary Shelters	Percentage
Dutch Red Cross	299	
French Red Cross	60	
Spanish Red Cross	1000	
Sub-total:	1,359	50.7%
Jubilee House Community	400	
CARE	350	
CHICA	300	
HABITAR	109	
Ruben Darío Foundation	2	
MOVIMONDO	160	
Sub-total:	1,321	49.3%
TOTAL	2,680	

A Cooperation Agreement for the construction of another 941 temporary shelters is under consideration with the UNDP.

Disaster preparedness •

Community-based Disaster Preparedness

This regional programme which started in 1996 is now in its third phase. It covers Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama with funding from DIPECHO. The overall objective of the programme is to strengthen vulnerable communities in disaster preparedness and prevention through micro projects prepared and implemented by the selected communities with the support of the trained, local Red Cross branches. More than 40 micro projects have been already implemented in Chinandega, Leon, Masaya, and Managua.

A workshop evaluating the programme implemented in Nicaragua will be held in Esteli in April. It will be jointly coordinated by the Federation Country delegation, the Regional delegation and the Federation external consultants.

Health •

Golfo de Fonseca Project

The Golfo de Fonseca project was initiated as a regional project for El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua in 1997.

Three years later, a new assessment of its feasibility and relevance is required. An assessment jointly funded by the Federation and the British Red Cross will be done in June.

Technical support to blood bank

An architect has been appointed to prepare the rehabilitation project for the National Blood Bank. The American Red Cross funding will contribute to the blood donor promotion and will provide better technical conditions.

Humanitarian values •

ICRC has funded and supported two workshops for the Council of Departments. The workshops included issues such as the Reference Framework for Capacity Building, Governance Direction and Strategy 2010. Similar workshops will be organized for the branches supported by bilaterally participating National Societies.

Capacity building •

Activities related to capacity building are well underway. With funds from the Spanish Red Cross, the Federation delegation supports the National Society and its branches in strengthening their financial system as well as in training in project management, including planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Upon request from the National Society, the Federation has taken up the responsibility for the capacity building in three Departments surrounding the Nicaragua Lake and in Masaya. No bilaterally participating National Societies are active in those Departments.

The American Red Cross presently supports the preparation of a feasibility study for the construction of the Capacity Building Center. The Centre will be used for training as well as for NS income-generating.

Outstanding needs

To be able to continue the Country Plan for Rehabilitation, the Nicaraguan Red Cross needs an improved response to the Appeal. Disaster preparedness, institutional development and health activities all depend on the availability of funding.

Training in temporary shelter construction continued in the first three months of 2000 with a total of 160 participants from four local communities. The planned training of relief managers and first aiders has been postponed due to the lack of funds.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Meetings with different organizations working in the country are held on regular basis.

The National Society holds weekly meetings with the representatives of the Federation delegation and bilaterally participating National Societies in order to ensure information flow and further improve their co-ordination.

Regular contacts with the media are maintained through the Nicaraguan Red Cross press office.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

With the rehabilitation and construction projects being in the final phase, the efforts are increasingly turning to health, ID and DPP issues. It is particularly important to pay attention to these issues in the second quarter of the year, before the next hurricane season.

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