

TAJIKISTAN: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

10 July, 2000

*appeal no. 01.35/2000
situation report no. 01
period covered: January - June, 2000*

The humanitarian situation in Tajikistan remains difficult. Despite progress in the implementation of the peace process, economic recovery is unlikely to take place in the near future. The current drought affecting Tajikistan will have seriously negative consequences both in terms of the Tajik economy as well as food supplies for the most vulnerable. Despite the high turnover of delegates, the programme continued to be implemented without any major drawbacks. Co-operation with the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST) remained productive, and clear progress was made in strengthening the National Societies' financial procedures as well as in coordination of activities and communication between the Federation and the RCST.

The context

Tajikistan, independent since 1991, remains the poorest of all the former Soviet republics. With a population of six million living in a country of high alpine topography, where only 6% of the land is arable, Tajikistan traditionally relied on extensive support from the rest of the Soviet Union. The severance of this link, coupled with the social and economic disruption caused by a civil war between 1992 and 1994, has had a drastic effect on the welfare of the country's population. The war itself exacted a savage cost - out of a population of six million, 60,000 were killed, and 55,000 children orphaned, while the total damage is estimated at US\$ 7 billion, including the destruction of medical structures, education facilities, and other essential services.

Despite the fact that more than three years have passed since the peace accord was signed between the Government and the Opposition in 1997, reconstruction and development is slow, with a large number of families in Tajikistan continuing to face poverty. According to the UN (National Human Development Report, NHDR, 1999), the unemployment rate is over 50%. Compared to other former Soviet Union countries, Tajikistan has a high birth rate (18.4 per 1,000 in 1998), a high

child mortality rate (30.9 per 1,000), the lowest GDP per capita (USD 215,4 in 1998), very low average salary (USD 11), the highest population per physician (490,6 in 1998), and the lowest percentage of the population with access to safe water (25-49 percent).

In this challenging context, the prospects for social and economic development are poor. In addition, Tajikistan's extreme vulnerability to natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, and landslides in particular) will pose a continuing threat to urban and rural populations already subject to intense social and economic pressures.

Country Assistance Strategy

To respond to the needs, the Federation and Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST) have formulated the following strategy: enhancement of National Society capacities in all areas of disaster preparedness and response, and the administration and monitoring of general relief programmes; volunteer recruitment (including youth programmes) and branch development; and institutional strengthening, including adequate resource development to cover the National Society's ongoing core costs to permit programme expansion in the period after 2001. The Federation will support the RCST by maintaining and enhancing the capacity to respond to both rapid onset disasters and structural poverty through increasing involvement of the National Society in Federation assisted relief and social welfare operations, the continuation of the current disaster preparedness programme, and the provision of limited inputs of vehicles, equipment and supplies. In terms of institutional development, the objective is to support an efficient and effective National Society, to improve RCST structures and procedures, management and financial training, and branch development. Lastly, resource development will be pursued through volunteer recruitment and youth programmes, fund-raising, and income generating programmes to create a foundation of human resources capable of mobilisation for disaster relief and social welfare programmes, a self-generated income sufficient to cover National Society core costs, and a capacity to solicit, administer, and report on donor support for a range of operational programmes.

Latest events

Parliamentary elections were held in Tajikistan in February. The UN/OSCE joint Commission concluded that there were less irregularities during these elections than during the course of the presidential elections in late 1999. A number of positive achievements were noted despite the flaws recorded in the election procedures, which could not be classified as "free and fair" according to the OSCE. More than 200 candidates, representatives of six different parties, took part in the process, and the observers indicated an increased participation of women and a certain access of the non-governmental parties to the media. Although there were some security incidents on the eve of the elections, they were considered as having passed rather smoothly and constituting an important step in the development of the country.

As of 15 May, the UNMOT (UN Mission of Observers to Tajikistan) finished their mission in Tajikistan. However, in his concluding address to the General Assembly, the Special Representative of the Secretary General expressed concern about the situation in the country in general. Although the implementation of the peace accord signed between the Government and the Opposition in 1997 continues, the country is still suffering from post-conflict consequences which will be difficult to overcome in the nearest future. The UNMOT political department still remains in the country under a revised mandate, maintaining a smaller office in Dushanbe.

The Ministry of Emergency Situations of Tajikistan estimates the loss caused by natural disasters during 1999 to be \$69.5 million. It is also estimated that 90 thousand hectares of agricultural land was adversely affected by rain and hail, while 712 kilometers of the bank-enforcement structures, 244 bridges and 1,400 kilometers of roads and highways were damaged or partly destroyed. In total 129 people were killed. It is further envisaged that the harvest of 2000 will be 25% of former years,

and the results of this year's drought, affecting large parts of Central and Southern Asia, will add to the already disastrous economic circumstances of the rural poor. The combined effects of natural calamity, together with contingent emergencies arising from population movements resulting from conflict, requires detailed contingent planning and implementation of relief programs.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

General •

The 1999/2000 ECHO Supplementary Food Distribution, the Medical Relief Distribution, the Water and Sanitation as well as Disaster Preparedness programmes were extended by three months, operations thus to be finalised by the end of July 2000. New applications for funding were submitted to ECHO and to USAID to continue the Medical, Relief and DP programmes for 2000/2001. The ID programme was still in need of funding for 2000/2001 by the end of June.

Currently, the Delegation is staffed by six delegates, supported by 80 locally recruited staff. A new Logistics Delegate as well as a Reporting Delegate will join the Delegation in July 2000, bringing the number of delegates up to a total of eight.

Relief, Disaster Preparedness, and Response •

The RCST and Federation Response to Disaster Preparedness

The overall goal of the programme is to assist the RCST in strengthening its disaster preparedness ability, hardware, and human resources, enabling it to play the central role in responding to future disasters.

Disaster Preparedness workshops and seminars during the period have been carried out as follows: one in Dushanbe, four at Oblast level (Kurgan-Tyube, Kuljab, Khujand, and Khorog (GBAO) and five at the rayon level (Tajikabad, Darband, Faizabad, Jirgital, and Kofarnigan). At the latter location, participation has also included individuals at Jamoat level of local administration.

These workshops have concentrated on providing First Aid in disaster and emergency situations, and have involved chairmen of the branches concerned, their staff, and selected volunteers from the community at large. The subjects covered have included; organization, bleeding, drowning, shock, fracture, poisoning and respiratory revival. Disaster Preparedness and the mitigation of risks at the community level was also carried out.

Disaster preparedness stocks have been dispatched to six DP centers throughout the country These include; Kurgan-Tube, Kuljab, Khorog, Khogent, Ainy, and Dushanbe. The goods included: 1,994 quilts, 1,998 blankets, 1,903 bed linen sets, 1,675 mattresses, 1,667 pillows, 1,142 bundles of used clothes, 622 kitchen sets, 1,162 hygiene kits, 365 tents, 1,178 plastic buckets, 400 roles of plastic sheeting, and 97 sleeping bags.

A detailed proposal has been submitted to USAID for continued funding for Disaster Preparedness. The Federation aims to further assist the Tajikistan Red Crescent Society in developing its disaster preparedness and response capabilities, together with material resources, so as to enable the National Society to cope with humanitarian challenges prevalent to the region.

The RCST and Federation Response to General Relief •

Supplementary Food, Food security, and Food to Psychiatric Institutions (ECHO-funded):

The major part of the project was implemented by the end of April 2000. However, the distribution to institutions in Khojent was delayed due to complications from frontier formalities to Uzbekistan.

The Supplementary Food component of the program comprised wheat flour, rice, vegetable oil, and salt (a total of 2,868 Mt.. and 398,983 litres respectively) distributed 76,182 elderly people and families without a breadwinner selected by community committees.

The Food Security component of the program comprised a distribution to three Rayons covering 9,964 beneficiaries with 192 Mt.. of wheat corn seed and 115 Mt.. of assorted fertilizers. The objective of this project over a three year period is to assist beneficiaries in establishing a sustainable agricultural livelihood.

Food for institutions was largely completed at the beginning of the period and comprised: 33 Mt. of rice, 8,300 litres of vegetable oil, and 5 Mt. of salt to GBAO, and, 55 Mt. of flour, 22 Mt. of rice, 2.2 Mt. of salt and 10 Mt. of oil to western Tajikistan. The program supported 1,012 patients at eighteen psychiatric hospitals nation wide.

The joint RCST and Federation program for 2000 - 2001 is structured in a similar way to last years, with the distribution of supplementary food rations to 25,000 most vulnerable beneficiaries within four Rayons of central Dushanbe. Within the food programme a further component for food security which targets three agricultural communities of some 12,000 people over a three year period. The beneficiaries are considered in urgent need of support by way of supplementary food, seed, and attendant fertilizers.

RCST and Federation-run Public Canteens •

The RCST is managing eighteen public canteens, six of which are in Dushanbe, four in Rayons of Republican Subordination, two in Khatlon oblast, three in Leninabad and three in the Karategin valey sponsored by the ICRC. The canteens cater for approximately six thousand people and target elderly people who are living alone, orphans and homeless people. The Swedish Red Cross visited Tajikistan at the beginning of the year, and promoted the idea of a critical analysis for the programme. The National Society continue to seek ways in which these canteens can be made to be self-sufficient

RCST and Federation Refurbishment of Hospitals in GBAO •

The Federation posted a Delegate to Khorog in Gorno-Badakhshan (autonomous oblast of GBAO Tajikistan) at the end of May, who will be responsible for a project funded by the Norwegian Red Cross, facilitating the heating systems and refurbishment of four Central Rayon hospitals at Roshtkala, Murgab, Shugnan, Ishkashim. Procurement was completed by the end of the reporting period. The project is planned to continue until the end of 2000.

Social Welfare •

RCST Program for the Street Children Centre.

This program ceased operations in the early spring owing to the end of the one-year funding. An evaluation of the project is foreseen in the next reporting period, with the objective to draw lessons learned and possibly identify recommendations for a follow-up programme.

Shoe-Making Project

The shoe-making projects in Kulyab and Aini are no longer financially supported in 2000, as the funding from the Spanish Red Cross has ended. The shoe-making workshops still exist in both locations, but have failed to reach a level of self-sustainability and are currently running on a very low level of activity.

The shoe-making project in Khorog, GBAO, is, however, being supported and implemented according to plans. During the reporting period, the GBAO branch of the National Society purchased and moved in to new premises, which are large enough to host also the shoe-making workshop. At the end of the reporting period, the workshop had the capacity to produce 6-8 pairs of

shoes per day. With the placement of a Field Delegate in Khorog, the monitoring of these project activities will become easier, and the direct support given to the programme enhanced.

Health •

Medical distribution to rural, district, and specialised hospitals, ambulatory health posts, and dispensaries

The Ministry of Health (MoH), in co-operation with the World Bank, WHO and others, is preparing a health care reform plan. An essential part of the reform plan will be the emphasis on primary health care.

The distribution of medicines, medical supplies and some medical equipment took place in February and March. While the distribution had been planned for December 1999/January 2000, the delay was caused by difficulties in obtaining the necessary documents from the manufacturers needed for the registration of the medicines, and the sudden change of visa regulations in some Central Asian countries during the transport. A second consignment is expected to arrive in Tajikistan in June/July.

Twenty eight RCST monitoring teams, each consisting of one physician and a medically trained person (nurse - medical assistant) continued to conduct monitoring visits during the second half of the project period. Monitoring combined with training is used to rationalise the utilisation of medicines and introduce key primary health care issues, in a system with a strong emphasis on hospital care. The training of hospital physicians is complemented by seminars where experts from the Medical Faculty of Dushanbe University are invited to hold lectures on selected topics. The selection of topics is done in co-operation with the MoH and RCST. The training efforts are thus anticipating several essential changes in the reform plan such as a strong emphasis on primary health care.

Seminars were conducted for the RCST monitoring team, with an emphasis on transferring knowledge to health staff. Key issues are also preventive health measures and treatment of the most common diseases seen in these facilities. Specialists from the Medical Faculty of Dushanbe University are involved in the training efforts.

Public Health Campaign/Training of Monitoring Teams and Health Staff

One of the most important elements of the Federation and RCST Health programme is dissemination of public health information. This is being implemented by the Health Departments of both the Federation and the RCST, in close co-operation with the Ministry of Health, through training of RCST monitoring teams, and of volunteers and physicians from the hospitals. Health materials, including posters and video clips are produced and used in schools, kindergartens, and health institutions, and for public broadcasts on radio and television.

Water and Sanitation •

The overall aim of the programme is to provide technical assistance to improve the safety of the domestic water supply and provide support for health education in selected rural areas under the existing CBFA programme in Khatlon Oblast.

The current program is a continuation of the 1998/1999 ECHO program, with an extension running until the end of July 2000. Driven bore-holes with hand pumps are being installed in the following districts: Pyanj, Khojimaston and Kolchozabad. From January till the end of May, a total of 98 hand pumps have been installed and 30 slow sand filters. However, the construction of bore-holes is hampered by low water tables, rock and gravel layers and at times poor water quality. As a consequence of poor water quality (high saline or iron content) some bore-holes and hand pumps had to be dismantled. As part of the sanitation program 13 latrines were built, mainly in schools.

A total of 9 seminars were held during the reporting period (January and May). The seminars were held for Red Cross volunteers, women groups in villages, school children and communities. The main topics covered are hygiene and preventive health measures.

During the reporting period, a total of 38 hand pumps were also installed and 10 seminars were organised for schools, women groups, communities and Red Cross volunteers. The program is facing the same construction difficulties as the parallel water and sanitation program funded by ECHO (rock/gravel layers, low water tables, poor water quality).

Population Movement •

The RCST completed the implementation of income-generating projects for returnees during the previous reporting period (activities supported by donors identified by the Regional Delegation in Almaty). The completed projects were a chicken breeding project in Kurgan-Tyube for returnees from Turkmenistan, and a project for the reconstruction of roofs of the returnee homes. During the current reporting period, the programme was extended by twelve calendar months, until the end of the year, in order to enable the finalisation of the remaining activities included in the project plan which had not yet been implemented. The component regarding ditch cleaning in order to increase crop capacity at the collective farm "Nawruz" in Kurgan Tyube Oblast, funded by UNHCR, still remained to be implemented at the end of the current reporting period.

A Regional Conference on Population Movement in the CIS and the Baltic States, was held in Georgia in May 2000. The President of the RCST attended the conference together with the RCST Population Movement Coordinator. A PM training seminar on Oblast level was held in Kurgan Tyube on 29-30 June.

Capacity Building •

Institutional Development (ID)

The National Society's membership card project for updating the current RCST membership register as well as enhancing the image of the RCST started at the beginning of the year. New membership cards had been printed, but the campaign itself had not as yet been launched by the end of the reporting period.

Based on the new Federation Volunteering Policy adopted in October 1999 and other available Federation documents on the matter, the RCST developed its own manual for Headquarters and branches on the recruitment of and working with volunteers. This was a first step towards a thorough review of the RCST's work with volunteers in Tajikistan. The next step foreseen is the development of an RCST volunteering policy.

The RCST continues the British Red Cross-funded English language training for selected members of its headquarters staff. Teaching methods and materials were revised in conjunction with the recruitment of a new teacher in May, to better target and meet the needs of the students. The English language training project continues until October 2000.

In line with the key priorities of institutional development of the RCST in 2000, and having been planned since early 1999, a new staff member was finally jointly recruited by the RCST and the Federation in May 2000. The new staff is expected to work partly with the Federation Finance Department, although the main efforts will be put into strengthening of the RCST Finance Department. It is foreseen that the new position will bridge the current gaps between the two offices, increasing the understanding and skills of financial management within the RCST.

The first, preparatory visit of the Team Leader for the Federation Regional ID Review of Central Asia took place in May, with the follow-up visit with the full Review Team planned for the end of the reporting period (late June/early July 2000). A report including recommendations for further

activities and Federation support in the area of ID support to the RCST is expected in August/September 2000.

The first in a series of ID workshops was carried out in GBAO at the very end of the reporting period. The workshops will focus on the impact of the workshops held a year ago, and assess the current situation and needs. The results of these workshops will feed into the results of the Regional ID Review, facilitating the identification of needs for support to the RCST Headquarters and branches in 2000-2001.

Good co-operation with the ICRC continued, and regular meetings were held with the cooperation delegates. The jointly produced millennium calendar was very well received, increasing the visibility of the National Society and its programmes through a wide distribution in the country. The 8 May celebrations were prepared and carried out jointly by the RCST, the ICRC and the Federation. Close consultations were held with the ICRC regarding the Federation's and the ICRC's current and future cooperation policies and practices with the RCST. An agreement was reached with the ICRC to ensure the efficient continuation of the RCST information and media activities upon the ending of the Regional funding in mid-2000. The position of information officer of the RCST will thus be supported by ICRC starting summer 2000.

The RCST and the Federation took an active part in the new process of elaborating mechanisms for social partnership on gender issues in Tajikistan. The development delegate was elected as one of three members (IFRC, OSCE, Swiss Development Fund) to represent the international organisations in a working group for the coordination of gender programs in the country, with other members of the working group being representatives of different levels of government structures as well as NGOs.

Outstanding needs

Funding for the Institutional Development programme for year 2000 is still needed to ensure the successful continuation and progress of RCST management structures.

The Delegation is currently seeking a Water and Sanitation Delegate to finalise the current programme and to develop new initiatives in the area of Wat/San., as well as a specialised Training Delegate for the training of First Aid trainers.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Delegation regularly attends various inter-agency meetings, security meetings and UN briefings, and maintains good relationship with the ICRC Delegation in Tajikistan. Meetings with various NGOs concerning programme co-ordination are also attended regularly, particularly with CARE, AAH, Mercy Corps International and WFP on relief assistance, and with WHO, MSF, PSF, MERLIN and the Aga Khan Foundation on health issues. A number of co-ordination meetings took place between ECHO, ACTED, UNOPS, OSCE and others. Regional Management Meetings held at the Federation Regional Delegation in Almaty every two months were attended regularly.

Effective relationships are also maintained with government departments at all levels, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Emergencies and Ministry of Health. Local Television, radio and newspapers regularly provided media coverage of ECHO-funded programmes and the work of the Federation and RCST.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Bjorn Eder
Director
Europe Department

This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>