

TAJIKISTAN: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

18 December,
2000

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situation report no. 02
period covered: July - December 2000*

In addition to the large-scale relief operation that has consumed most of the RCST and Federation delegation resources, regular disaster response, disaster preparedness and development activities are being implemented as planned. The International Federation is contributing towards the National Society's capacity building through their active involvement in operations, on-the-job training and gradual hand-over of responsibilities. At the same time, long-term donor commitment for institutional development, water and sanitation, as well as disaster preparedness is being actively sought in order for the RCST to achieve a higher level of independence in managing disaster response operations in the future, and respond adequately to the needs of the population.

The context

Tajikistan is a country impoverished by a declining economy and political instability stemming from the recent civil war and the ongoing conflict in the neighbouring Afghanistan. More than 80% of its population live under the margin of poverty. Since the break-up of the former Soviet Union, when direct external assistance has virtually ceased, people's coping abilities have been gradually decreasing. In addition to that, Tajikistan's high degree of susceptibility to natural disasters, particularly earthquakes, floods and landslides, adds to an already high level of vulnerability of the population. The last three years have been marked by drastically reduced rainfall and snowfall, which, in addition to the existing structural problems, caused a major drought and a subsequent serious shortfall in the wheat harvest, bringing almost two million people to the edge of starvation.

Today Tajikistan is balancing between the existing need for considerable external assistance and the first steps towards self-sustainability and stability. In this context, the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST) and the International Federation have developed their country assistance strategy around the main goal of building the national society's capacity and transferring knowledge, expertise and specific responsibilities, while at the same time maintaining the necessary relief assistance programmes to the most vulnerable. There has been a clear need to shift from large-scale relief operations to development-oriented programmes and activities. In some areas, such as logistics, this has been achieved to a large extent. The drought emergency operation, initiated in September this year, has been used as an opportunity for the RCST to further develop its capacity and knowledge on all aspects of disaster response. In order to keep the momentum, the National Society's capacity building has been incorporated in the operational plan, and the National Society has taken a leading role in programme implementation, thus applying the knowledge gained and allowing the Federation to focus on support.

Latest events

In July, the new United Nations Tajikistan Office for Peace Building (UNTOP) was established in Tajikistan, thereby replacing the United Nations Military Observers to Tajikistan (UNMOT), who ended their mission in May after the UN Security Council decided concluded that the general agreement between the Government of Tajikistan and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), originally signed on 28 July 1997, had been implemented. The UNTOP mandate lies in ensuring political co-ordination between the UN sub-divisions acting in Tajikistan within the framework of post-conflict rehabilitation and peace building.

International agencies have been closely monitoring population movements caused by the ongoing fighting in northern Afghanistan. At present, contingency plans are under preparation for an eventual influx of refugees in Tajikistan. No firm estimates have been made regarding a possible number of people that could cross the Tajik border, but the figures range between 50,000 and 150,000. At this stage it is still not clear whether the Tajik Government and Russian troops controlling the Tajik-Afghan border will allow the refugees to enter Tajikistan. At the same time, a number of humanitarian agencies, lead by UNHCR, are closely monitoring the situation of some 5,000 displaced people located on marshy islands of the Pyandz river on the Afghan side of the Tajik-Afghan border. A number of assessments have been carried out, and the type and modalities of assistance are currently being identified.

Following the reports of drastically reduced snowfall and rainfall, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) carried out a crop and food supply assessment in July. The results indicated that around 3 million people, approximately one half of the total population, face severe food access problems, with possible deterioration of the situation through the year. The International Federation Field Assessment and Co-ordination Team (FACT) followed with an additional vulnerability and capacity assessment in 14 districts throughout the country. As a result, the International Federation launched an emergency appeal seeking 22.6 million CHF to assist 250,000 beneficiaries with food, seeds, water and sanitation services and public health education. In spite of intense fundraising efforts, carried out jointly by UNOCHA, WFP, Federation and a number of other partners involved in this operation, a major portion of the articulated needs remain outstanding. For further information, see the situation reports related to the emergency appeal 26/00 - Tajikistan: Drought.

The security situation in Tajikistan has been marked by a number of armed confrontations in the Karategyn valley, and on the borders with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan involving Muslim rebels and government forces. The Tajik, Uzbek and Kyrgyz authorities have been closely co-operating efforts to neutralize the armed forces. In recent months a new security risk has appeared with anti-infantry mines being planted along the Uzbek-Tajik border. As a result, during a two month period eighteen deaths and nine serious injuries have been registered in Tajikistan. A joint Tajik-Uzbek intergovernmental commission for border problems is currently holding negotiations aimed at settling demarcation issues as well as properly registering mines placed in the border zone.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The second half of the year was mainly marked by the preparation of programme proposals for the appeal 2001-2002, and by the drought emergency operation, as described above.

Institutional development and capacity building •

Between May and September this year, the International Federation carried out a regional institutional and resource development review of all five central Asian national societies: Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. In Tajikistan, the review team conducted extensive research through interviews, visits to branches, and seminars for RCST staff. A number of recommendations were made to further develop the RCST, including prioritization of branch development, the national society taking a more active role in the management of Red Cross/Red Crescent activities in Tajikistan and an increased ownership of the programmes, a more proactive and diversified pursuit of RCST financial sustainability, and others. Following the Central Asia regional partners' meeting, held from 16 to 20 October in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the second phase of the review process has started whereby national societies are assisted in developing concrete plans of action for the implementation of the review recommendations. This process will continue throughout 2001.

The National Society is currently carrying out a comprehensive campaign of re-registration of existing members and recruitment of new ones. As at early October, a total of 914 RCST members have been officially registered. The process will continue in the coming year.

In October, the RCST Youth department was established under the leadership of a newly recruited youth programme co-ordinator. First seminars for young volunteers have already been organized, and the National Society participated in the youth week organized by UNICEF between 13 and 17 November.

As part of general plans to gradually transfer responsibilities to RCST, the Federation delegation has officially handed over its disaster preparedness warehouse to the National Society. This was a result of a detailed assessment of RCST logistics, and following a period of intense training of the National Society staff and gradual transfer of knowledge. At the same time, the Federation delegation's logistics co-ordinator carried out a detailed assessment of logistics in the remaining four Central Asian national societies: Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The findings indicate a necessity to establish logistics units in each National Society, appoint responsible managers, and organize training in computer skills, warehousing, vehicle workshop management, etc. Separate plans of action have been prepared for achieving a well-functioning logistics service in each National Society. Since the initial assessment, follow-up visits have been carried out, and a regional logistics workshop is scheduled to take place in January 2001 in Dushanbe.

Efforts have been made to strengthen RCST financial management adhering to Federation standard financial procedures. Training of the National Society staff was carried out at headquarters and branch level, and will continue on a regular basis. Increased transparency and accountability have been identified as necessary preconditions to raise the national society's direct involvement in programme management and implementation, and a special emphasis is being put on training in the area of finances, reporting and project design. At the same time, the capacity building component of the current drought emergency operation is aiming at providing the additional on-the-job training for the National Society, by encouraging it to take the lead in the programme implementation.

Food-assistance programmes •

Apart from the drought emergency operation, the RCST and the Federation continue to implement a number of other ongoing relief activities. As described below, regular food-assistance programmes have all acquired an additional dimension, in light of the drought and people's subsequent increased vulnerability.

The RCST public canteens programme has continued throughout the period, with the support of the Swedish Red Cross. At the request of the donor the RCST drafted an exist strategy aimed at diversifying the donor-base and building the sustainability of the programme. Some potential alternative funding sources have been identified, such as the American Red Cross, WFP and ICRC, together with the Swedish Red Cross, who may continue supporting the activities in the coming year. This programme is highly needed, almost entirely managed by the National Society, and the Federation will assist the RCST in ensuring continuous and adequate financial resources throughout 2001.

The Federation and the RCST have started the implementation of a new ECHO-funded food assistance programme to 37,000 people in and around Dushanbe. The programme represents a continuation of the previous year's ECHO-funded operation, and is composed of a free-food component targeting 25,000 people and a food-security component aiming at assisting 12,000 beneficiaries with fertilisers and food. The Finnish Red Cross acts as a sub-contracted partner responsible for the procurement of food. Some difficulties have recently been encountered with a considerable increase in the prices of food on international markets due to a fall of the value of the euro. This will undoubtedly have a negative effect on the implementation of the set goals and the Federation will be forced to reduce its target group in the coming period. However at the same time, in view of the current drought crisis, ECHO has decided to allocate an additional amount of 200,000 EUR to the Federation within the framework of this programme. This amount will be sufficient to assist between 6,000 and 7,000 vulnerable people. At the same time, ECHO commissioned a number of humanitarian organizations, lead by Action Against Hunger, to carry out a nutritional survey in order to assess the current level of vulnerability of the population caused by the drought in addition to existing problems. RCST staff and volunteers, as well as the Federation delegation's relief officer, took part in the survey which represented a learning opportunity as well as an image-building exercise for the National Society.

In October, the Federation received a contribution worth approximately 500,000 CHF from the Finnish Red Cross, composed of 550 MT of wheat flour and 110 MT of oil, as well as a cash component. The in-kind donation has been allocated to assist 10,000 people in the Rayons of Republican Subordination (RRS) around the capital, with two food-parcels composed of 25 kg of wheat flour, 5 litres of oil and 1 kg of salt each. This represents an extension of the current ECHO-funded supplementary feeding programme. The cash portion of the contribution is used to procure locally 195 MT of wheat flour, 12.2 MT of oil and 2.43 MT of salt. It will serve around 1,300 beneficiaries in hospitals and internats of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), who will receive daily food rations.

Other relief activities •

In October, the Federation and RCST received two consignments of second-hand clothes from the Finnish and Swedish Red Cross Societies respectively. Approximately one third of the total amount has already been distributed, mainly in the Rayons of Republican Subordination (RRS). The main beneficiaries are orphanages, internats, boarding and vocational schools. Since the official hand-over of the DP warehouse and stocks to the RCST, distribution procedures have changed. Accordingly, the rest of the clothes will be distributed based on specific requests from Red Crescent branches and institutions, and a joint decision of the RCST and Federation delegation programme co-ordinators. However other criteria will be considered on an equal footing.

Health and care •

The medical programme funded by ECHO through the Netherlands Red Cross commenced in July, aiming at assisting some 300 health facilities in the Khatlon region with necessary medicines and medical material and at promoting the shift from curative to preventive health care through training of around 450 medical staff on the case management of the most common diseases and first aid. In the first phase of the programme the first aid training has started as planned. Medical supplies, procured through Pharmaciens Sans Frontieres, are expected to arrive before the end of the year. The RCST and the Federation teams carry out regular monitoring visits to health facilities to verify the utilisation of the donated material, application of knowledge gained from the training, and patient satisfaction.

Plans for health activities in the coming year have been finalized. Apart from this ongoing ECHO-funded programme, a pilot project on the treatment of tuberculosis (TB) will be initiated as part of the regional TB programme encompassing all five countries. Implementation of the TB programme will be dependent on the provision of long-term financial support, as well as government's commitment to support a nation-wide D.O.T.S. programme.

In the first half of the year, the water and sanitation programme was funded by ECHO and partly by the Swiss Red Cross. Its completion in July brought an interruption in funding for this important activity. In the meantime, the Federation hired an external consultant to carry out an evaluation of its activities in the water and sanitation sectors. The evaluation resulted in a number of recommendations, mainly addressing the issue of setting realistic

objectives and involving local Red Crescent branches in the implementation of projects. In September, the newly appointed water and sanitation delegate began to explore possibilities for future action and to develop appropriate programme proposals. Most activities in this period were related to the drought emergency operation as sufficient funding was immediately secured for this component allowing the timely start-up of activities. At the same time, the proposal for next year's water and sanitation programme has been developed within the framework of the 2001-2002 appeal. Activities will concentrate on providing access to safe drinking water, and on introduction of hygienic principles and practices, resulting in reduced incidence of water-borne diseases.

Disaster preparedness (DP) •

During the reporting period two main DP programmes, one funded by ECHO and the other one by USAID, have been completed. The ECHO-funded programme concentrated on the provision of key DP commodities in seven strategically selected regional warehouses, as well as training of RCST staff and volunteers in first aid, and community training on risk awareness and mitigation. In addition to these traditional DP activities, the USAID-funded programme also included small-scale pilot projects on tree-planting and riverbank reinforcement aimed at involving the local community in disaster preparedness activities. In spite of considerable delays in implementing the pilot projects they have been completed within the operational period. Lessons learnt from these trials indicate that the National Society's commitment to such programmes, as well as the local community's sense of ownership in them, are indispensable preconditions for their success. Since November, no further funding for DP activities has been available. However, the present drought emergency appeal has an important DP component aiming at developing the disaster management capacities of RCST branches, through on-the-job training and targeted workshops.

Plans for the DP programme in the coming two years include continuation of material and technical support and training of RCST staff and volunteers, and disaster mitigation activities in Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) aiming at reducing the risk of landslides through slope stabilisation. Depending on its success the disaster mitigation programme may be extended to other regions of Tajikistan corresponding to the level of vulnerability and the specific needs of each area.

Activities in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) •

Since May this year, a Federation field delegate has been based in GBAO in order to assist the RCST GBAO branch in their ongoing activities and to provide guidance on the management and implementation of new projects.

The project of refurbishing the four central rayon hospitals in GBAO was carried out with support from the Norwegian Red Cross. The work included replacement or repair of roofs, electrical works, repairs on walls, installation and repairs of wooden floors, painting, as well as provision and installation of generators. The project is in its final stage, and will be completed within the set time-frame, before the end of the year.

The RCST shoe-making workshop completed its commitment to the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), by producing and delivering a total of 500 pairs of shoes. Possible continuation of co-operation is currently under discussion with the Mountain Society Development Support Programme - an AKF affiliate organisation (MSDSP - AKF).

Among general relief activities, by November the Federation completed the distribution of two containers of Swedish Red Cross-donated second hand clothes to around 16,000 beneficiaries in all eight rayons. The remaining clothing will be distributed in December 2000. The beneficiaries include orphans, internally displaced persons, lonely elderly, disabled persons and families with very little or no income. Procurement of food as part of the Finnish Red Cross donation has been completed, and the first round of distribution to hospitals is underway, while the second round is scheduled to take place in Spring 2001.

As part of capacity building activities, RCST branch staff undertook basic computer training. In addition, English language training to all branch staff has been ongoing since October. The Federation finance delegate organized training on the Federation accounting and financial reporting standards and procedures. In addition to that, refurbishment of the existing nine RCST DP warehouses in GBAO is underway with the aim of enhancing the branch disaster response capacities.

In view of this region's extreme economic vulnerability, as well as the high incidence of natural disasters (earthquakes, floods and landslides), the Federation's support to the GBAO will continue in the next year. The programmes will be in line with the RCST development plan and the regional ID/RD review recommendations on branch development. The main activities will remain in the sphere of capacity building and institutional development with training of RCST staff on project design and implementation, financial accountability, reporting, the use of media and English language. In addition to that, a new pilot project proposal has been prepared in the field of disaster mitigation involving the local community in efforts to prevent landslides in selected areas through slope stabilisation with the construction of new irrigation canals and tree-planting. The programme is designed for a three year period, depending on the funding secured.

Population movements (PM) •

During the reporting period, the RCST population movements unit, assisted by the Federation regional PM delegate, carried out a series of training workshops to the RCST branch staff at oblast level aiming at strengthening and upgrading their knowledge on forced migration. Furthermore, a ditch-cleaning community development project was implemented successfully involving the returnees' community.

Apart from planning regular PM programmes and activities for the next year, as part of the Appeal 2001-2002, the RCST and the Federation delegation, together with other humanitarian agencies in Tajikistan, are closely monitoring the population movements in northern Afghanistan and are preparing contingency plans for an eventual refugee influx.

Outstanding needs

With the completion of funding for the water and sanitation programme in July and for disaster preparedness in October, the RCST and the Federation have no further resources to continue these activities apart from minor funds in the drought emergency operation. Some support has been pledged by various partner-societies, however, a stronger and long-term oriented commitment is an absolute precondition for achieving positive results in this field. Furthermore, recruitment of an experienced disaster preparedness delegate is a priority in order to overcome previously experienced difficulties and to provide closer monitoring and management of RCST DP programmes.

A development delegate is also needed to ensure a successful implementation of the National Society's strategy in this area in line with the RCST development plan and the recommendations of the regional institutional and resource development review.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

This period has been marked by intensified external relations activities aimed at drawing donor attention to the ongoing drought crisis in the country. At the same time, regular co-ordination meetings with the Government ministries and international organizations have been taking place to ensure the smooth exchange of information and co-ordinated planning of activities. The RCST and Federation's principle partners are ICRC, WFP, UNHCR, Action Against Hunger, German Agro-Action, Mission East, Aga Khan Foundation, MERLIN, and others.

Between 16 and 20 October, the Federation regional delegation for Central Asia hosted a regional partners' meeting in Almaty. The meeting was attended by all five central Asian national societies, as well as a number of partner-societies. Plans for the coming two years have been presented and a number of issues discussed among the partners. The following main recommendations were made:

- improve regional co-operation and exchange of knowledge between the national societies;
- national societies in the region need to take ownership of the country assistance strategies and develop initiatives for their implementation;
- develop plans of action for the implementation of the regional ID/RD review recommendations.

During the meeting, the RCST and the Federation's Tajikistan delegation held a number of separate meetings with partner-societies and external donors regarding their current and planned programmes.

During this period, RCST and the Federation delegation were visited by the Swedish Red Cross desk officer who reviewed the ongoing programmes funded by the Swedish Red Cross and discussed possibilities for co-operation in the coming year. Further, the Canadian Red Cross desk officer paid a short visit to Tajikistan in November, and held discussions with the Federation and ICRC on possible future co-operation.

The ECHO desk officer for Central Asia visited Tajikistan in October, to review ongoing ECHO-funded programmes and discuss the ECHO strategy to respond to the drought crisis and possible influx of Afghan refugees. Following the visit, ECHO allocated an additional amount of 900,000 EUR to the Federation, of which 200,000 will be used to expand the current food programme and the remaining 700,000 to start the drought relief operation in Leninabad.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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

Tajikistan						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 01.35/2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED			12/18/00	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				11,758,000		TOTAL COVERAGE 49.5%
Balance carried forward from 1999				1,980,845		
AMERICAN - GOVT/PRM		29,630	USD	52,490	18.09.00	POPULATION MOVEMENTS
AUSTRALIA - RC		50	AUD	49	23.05.00	
ECHO		1,100,000	EUR	1,713,030	26.09.00	SUPPLEMENTARY FOOD DISTRIBUTION
FINNISH - GOVT/RC		142,371	EUR	223,750	21.08.00	OPERATIONAL COSTS AND FOOD
FINNISH - RC				95,343	05.10.00	SECOND HAND CLOTHES
NORWEGIAN - GOVT/RC		250,000	NOK	47,351	08.01.00	GBAO, RELIEF DELEGATE
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		350,000	SEK	65,905	30.05.00	COORDINATION & MANAGEMENT
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		3,000,000	SEK	564,900	30.05.00	PUBLIC CANTEENS
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		500,000	SEK	94,150	14.06.00	RCST YOUTH PROGRAMME
SWITZERLAND - RC				2,580	03/27/00	
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - RC		4,980	USD	7,839	19.01.00	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				4,848,232	CHF	41.2%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SWITZERLAND - RC				108,100	03/27/00	10 MT Milk powder to Dushanbe, 10 MT m powder to Osh.
FINNISH - GOVT/RC		226,975	EUR	356,714	21.08.00	550 MT WHEAT FLOUR & 110 MT VEGETABLE OIL
Finland	Delegate(s)			93,305		
Netherlands	Delegate(s)			79,671		
Sw eden	Delegate(s)			6,735		
SWEDISH RC		600,000	SEK	112,620	30.05.00	
Sw itzerland	Delegate(s)			66,365		
Great Britain	Delegate(s)			149,321		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				972,831	CHF	8.3%
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:						
PTJ001, PTJ002, PTJ160, PTJ161, PTJ162, PTJ500, PTJ506, PTJ508, PTJ518, PTJ519, PTJ520, PTJ521, PTJ522, PTJ523, PTJ525, PTJ526,PTJ003.						