

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR ENDURING EMERGENCIES

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With the Government supporting the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) efforts to have its own, internationally recognised, Red Cross Society, the complex process of recognition is moving forward. Meanwhile, the various Federation programmes in support of the Entity Red Cross's (ERC's) in BiH are being prepared for consolidation or, in some cases, renewed support. An integral part of this strategy, already started this year, is to down-size the involvement of the Federation's Delegation in BiH, as and when the operational and managerial capacities of the two ERCs have reached the needed capacity.

The context

Bosnia and Herzegovina is still going through a protracted, painful and multifaceted transition process four years after the signing of the Dayton Agreement in November 1995 ended a devastating three-year war. The country continues to grapple with the political, social and economic problems inherent in constructing a single state from two ethnically divided entities, whilst at the same time continuing the process of reconstruction from the effects of the war as well as managing the transition from a centrally-planned economy to a free market system.

Despite investments of over US\$ 3.5 billion made by the international community since the signing of the Dayton Accord to ease this transition process, according to the UNDP's 1998 Human Development Report, nearly two-thirds of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) continue to live in a state of poverty (58% in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and 64% for the Republika Srpska or (RS). Unemployment remains at over one million persons out of an estimated working population of 2,407,700, and there is no significant industrial activity in either entity.

At the state level, the Presidency, Council of Ministers and Parliament are still not working together effectively and the Government of the Republika of Srpska is hampered by having no clear political

majority in the entity parliament. While the Government of the Federation entity is making some progress on transition issues, there continues to be ethnic tensions at the local and cantonal levels.

Many of the Dayton Accord provisions remain to be implemented in BiH, particularly the return of 600,000 refugees and 950,000 displaced persons to their original homes. The Human Development Report estimates that, between 1996 and 1998, only a third (516,766 refugees and displaced persons) have returned.

A large proportion of the population of BiH remains vulnerable. The war had a major and generalized impact on the standard of living and created groups who are newly vulnerable as a result of the deterioration in the social and economic conditions of the country. These people do not have adequate coping mechanisms. The main factors contributing to their vulnerability are a reduction in the basic social services, deterioration in health care, high unemployment rates and low income levels. The impact is felt widely but the groups that are made most vulnerable and those that the Red Cross are dealing with are the elderly and young people.

The focus of the international community's financial assistance has shifted to political, economic and infrastructural reconstruction. This has left the present welfare needs of the most vulnerable in BiH increasingly under-funded as the capacity of the authorities to implement welfare reform and establish a safety net for the country's elderly, sick and poor still lags far behind the needs. Home care programmes, such as those of the Red Cross in BiH, are therefore still vitally needed.

The two entities' Red Cross organisations, the Red Cross of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (RCFBiH) and the Red Cross of Republika Srpska (RCRS) have been working together to form a new National Society with the assistance of the International Federation and the ICRC. In July 1999 the first draft statutes for the new National Society were produced, in which both Red Cross entity structures would be represented by elected officers, have a General Assembly at the national level and, initially, one joint programme in Tracing Services and international representation. The two Red Cross structures would, however, continue as separate but co-operating organisations, each retaining operational programme responsibility and their own General Assemblies at the entity level.

Both the RCFBiH and RCRS need to establish a stable and adequate funding base, improve their public information campaigns and image, establish a viable volunteer network, and maintain and upgrade traditional programmes of Home Care, First Aid Training, Youth, Blood Donor Recruitment, and Public Health Education. They have recently entered into several new programme initiatives in the areas of Resource Development and Land Mine Awareness, and are at work on determining the type and extent of services in the area of Disaster Preparedness and Response.

Both Red Cross structures need to achieve realistic strategic development plans. While they have done some work in these areas over the past three years as part of the International Federation's and ICRC's yearly planning activities, comprehensive development plans have not been completed to date. A critical issue to be addressed is the need for the two entity Red Cross structures to improve their governance, management and programming capacities.

With the support of the international community, there is an opportunity for the two entity Red Cross organisations — through the formation of a single National Society and even closer operational cooperation — to play a significant role in moving communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina toward greater reconciliation and the deepening of civil society. This is also a role that would raise the profile of the Red Cross and promote the Movement's humanitarian values.

Priorities and Objectives for Federation Assistance •

The International Federation, in cooperation with the ICRC, continues to work with the two entity Red Cross organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina to form a single National Society as soon as possible. At the same time, it will maintain its capacity-building programmes over the next two years (until the end of 2001) to help the Red Cross structures assist vulnerable groups in both entities with increasing efficiency and effectiveness. These activities will include:

- W** Assisting the local Red Cross structure in maintaining and improving homecare services to around 13,000 vulnerable elderly people through the current Social Welfare Programme until the end of 2001 — by which time the local Red Cross should have the capacity to maintain this service provision from its own resources.
- W** Completing a Disaster Preparedness Assessment; then identifying the Red Cross role and developing the programme policy, regulations, structure and resources needed to successfully perform their responsibilities by December 2001.
- W** Developing strategic and development plans with the two entity Red Cross organisations, based upon the *Characteristics of a Well-Functioning National Society*, that identify future directions and clearly defined roles and expectations for all Movement components operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- W** Positioning the two entity Red Cross structures as the primary providers of First Aid training in BiH; enhancing their Blood Donor Recruitment Programme; and supporting Public Health Education initiatives as funding opportunities permit.
- W** Expanding the current Red Cross Resource Development programme, but with a greater emphasis on fundraising and selected support for income generation activities, such as First Aid courses, that are closely linked to the Red Cross mandates.
- W** Promoting humanitarian values through more than 45 Red Cross youth groups which have been established over the past two years; through internal and external communications; and through the establishment of new Red Cross programmes by June 2001.
- W** Improving still further the International Federation's operational efficiency and effectiveness through the restructuring of current operational structures, the development of local staff and their secondment to the local Red Cross.

Latest events

Elections which took place in Croatia in January were watched with considerable interest in Bosnia and Herzegovina as the process of democratisation in Croatia is expected to have a positive influence on the country.

The OSCE confirmed that local elections in BiH will be held on April 8, 2000, while general elections will take place some time in October, 2000.

The Brcko District inauguration ceremony held in March was an initiative which could mark a new phase in the democracy of multiethnic institutions and serve as an example to the rest of the country, in March.

The newly elected president of Croatia visited BiH on 23 and 24 March, signifying improved relations between the two countries.

The three-member Trial Chamber of the International War Crimes Tribunal for former Yugoslavia sentenced the commander of the Croat Council of Defence in Central Bosnia, General Tihomir Blaskic, to 45 years of imprisonment.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Community Services •

As UNHCR support for collective centres will cease at the end of March, the whole issue of collective centres has again been raised. The Delegation has voiced its concern over what is considered to be

unacceptable conditions in some of the collective centres, many of which have received virtually no support for years. Many of the collective centres have become de facto centres for elderly as the younger people have moved on but the vulnerable elderly remain. Some of them have been in the collective centres for seven years with no hope of moving elsewhere or going home. Efforts are underway to discuss and identify a long term solution for the future of these vulnerable elderly people.

Several meetings took place between the Youth and Health departments concerning the UNFPA project scheduled to begin in March 2000.

In view of the serious funding situation for the Home Care Programme this year and in view of the need to find long term solutions to the sustainability of the programme, a series of strategy meetings are planned in the coming weeks.

An informative meeting was held with the EU representative responsible for health, social and education sectors, with a briefing provided on the activities of the International Federation and LRC in the country.

Donors and the Federation Delegation have made it clear that the separate Red Cross entities must develop a realistic programme for the long term sustainability of the Home Care Programme, and the role of the Red Cross in providing care to vulnerable elderly as well as the commitment of government to this programme.

Social Welfare Programme (SWP) •

A total of 27,013 beneficiaries were assisted from January - March, with a total of 147,307 visits during this period.

The SWP Department held several meetings in January with Secretaries General and entity Home Care Co-ordinators regarding the financing of the programme. An agreement was reached with the entity Red Cross's concerning a reduced budget for the first few months of 2000. Following discussions related to the Empress Shoken Fund, a request is being submitted for support for the Elderly Aid Parcels for Home Care beneficiaries.

Strategic Planning for Home Care will start earlier than the year before. As part of this planning process, HCP Co-ordinators from entity Red Cross organisations will meet to exchange and contribute data for planning.

Home Care Statistics:

January 2000

No. of	FBiH	RS	TOTAL
Activists	600	483	1,083
Beneficiaries	6,232	8,668	14,900
Visits	28,507	23,763	52,299
Medical referrals	1,855	1,137	2,992

February 2000

No. of	FBiH	RS	TOTAL
Activists	500	400	900
Beneficiaries	6,238	7,012	13,250
Visits	28,970	20,876	49,846
Medical referrals	1,751	864	2,215

March 2000

No. of	FBiH	RS	TOTAL
Activists	500	400	900
Beneficiaries	6,163	6,850	13,013

Visits	28,255	16,937	45,192
Medical referrals	1,508	294	1,802

Frequency of visits per beneficiary - % breakdown

January, 2000

	FBH	RS	Combined
Frequency per week	15%	11%	13%
Daily	4%	3%	3.5%
Once per week	28%	27%	27.5%
Twice per month	24%	21%	22%
Once per month	29%	31%	30%

February, 2000

	FBH	RS	Combined
Frequent per week	16%	18%	17%
Daily	4%	4%	4%
Once per week	27%	29%	28%
Twice per month	24%	22%	23%
Once per month	29%	27%	28%

Youth Development (YD) •

During January and February, the Youth Development Department have focused on preparing the external and internal assessments in order to further the YD Programme.

A preparatory meeting with the entity Red Cross Youth (RCY) Co-ordinators took place on February 15 to discuss summer camps, Red Cross-entity meetings, the internal and external assessment, and Reproductive Health Education peer counseling project.

Working groups representing both entity Red Cross organisations met in Pale on February 9 regarding the RCY Handbook, and agreed on the content.

The UNFPA Regional Officer for Social Matters, based in Amman held preparatory meetings with the Delegation’s Health and Youth Departments, as well as with RCY of Sarajevo and Pale, regarding the Youth involvement in Reproductive Health Education Peer Counselling Project.

Health •

First Aid Programme: The narrative part of the new First Aid manual for learner drivers has been completed, as well as the illustrations for the manual. The manual will have to be approved by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education before publishing. Printing of the manual is expected to be completed by the end of March in both entities of BiH.

Blood Donor Recruitment: World Health Day (7 April) was used to initiate a long term advocacy programme titled “Safe Blood Starts With Me”. In 2000, National Societies were invited to share the campaign at both the grass roots and national level, collaborating with the WHO.

Public Health Education: Preliminary meetings on the implementation of the UNFPA project on Reproductive Health through Peer Counselling in BiH were held with respective Ministries of Health

and Education in both entities. The project has been positively assessed and the official approval was verified in mid-March.

Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response (DP) •

The aim of the newly established unit within the BiH Delegation (Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response Unit) is to assist and support the entity Red Cross organisations in defining and designing a disaster preparedness role of the Red Cross. At the same time, contingency plans and preparedness for a possible influx of refugees should be updated by the end of March 2000.

Meetings were held during February with the ICRC regarding future co-operation and defining the roles in DP activities within 2000 activities; the International Federation will play a leading role in assisting and supporting the local Red Cross in future DP activities.

During the month of February 2000, all purchased relief items arrived in the central warehouse in Banja Luka, replacing items already distributed parcels (food, hygiene parcels, and blankets). During the month of February, the fifth distribution of relief items for FRY refugees took place, and was finished at the beginning of March.

Meetings were held in January and February 2000 in order to discuss issues relevant to FRY refugees, including distributions, logistical support, further assistance, and outstanding needs.

A Disaster Preparedness Workshop was held on 21- 22 March.

Development •

Institutional Development

Operational Capacity Support: Operational capacity support agreements for the year 2000 were drafted in early January on the basis of the International Federation's guidelines for development and cooperation contracts, reviewed within the Delegation, and submitted to the Secretariat shortly afterwards.

In recognition of the cash flow problems caused by the delay in finalising the year 2000 contracts, advances for capacity support were provided to both entity Red Cross organisations. The new agreements incorporate more rigorous accountability requirements, including the condition that entity Red Cross organisations provide with their financial and narrative reports. The payment schedule has been revised according to the Country Assistance Strategy: branch support will be phased out by the second quarter of 2000, and headquarters administrative and counterpart support to the RCFBiH will be reduced progressively, so that by early 2001 there will be parity in support between the two entities. The RCFBiH has expressed serious concern over this reduction.

ID Assessment: The local Red Cross public image survey project progressed with interviews of 1,500 members of the general public commencing in mid-February. Results of the survey will be ready on 10 March. Surveys of staff ID training needs were also distributed. Although the RCRS has agreed to deliver the survey responses at the start of March, the RCFBiH had organisational difficulties in collecting the responses, and follow-up telephone interviews will be required.

The Institutional Assessment framework was translated and presented to various Commission members of both entity Red Cross organisations, with a very positive response. In addition to the requests for resource transfer, the framework helped to generate discussions of institutional development possibilities in governance reform, financial systems development, reporting and communication systems improvements..

Communications Systems improvement: Implementation of the communications systems improvement project progressed on schedule, with the procurement of 5 new computers, installing modems and standardising software in Cantons/Regions, connecting Cantons/Regions to the internet and email, and providing training in internet and email use. A training and implementation schedule was received for

the RCRS in late February, and funds were disbursed accordingly. The installation and training will be completed in the RCRS by the end of March.

Finance Training: The ID Department supported a one day finance training seminar on meeting government financial regulations for RCFBiH Canton and Municipal branch staff. Technical support in design and organisation of the seminar was provided with the assistance of the Training Support Manager, including a definition of clear objectives, specific skills to be learnt, appropriate methodologies, preparation of adequate materials and an agenda, and an evaluation of the training according to the objectives. Feedback from the seminar was extremely positive.

Meetings were held with the RCRS to commence planning and organisation of a similar seminar for Regional and Municipal branch staff in the Republika Srpska. An agreement was reached to organise a one or two day training during late March or early April for meeting government financial regulations.

Activities in support of forming a National Society:

A significant step towards creation of a National Society has been reached, with meetings to discuss the status of forming a process and identifying the steps that were to follow. Based upon the work of the Federation/Entity Red Cross Building Commission in 1999, the ID Department produced an initial draft of a Special Appeal which could be launched upon formation of a National Society. The purpose of the appeal is to provide a foundation for ongoing reconciliation, development, and independence of the new National Society.

Other activities: Regular meetings between the ID department and the ICRC Cooperation Department for identification of ways to strengthen coordination and joint efforts continued. Agreements were reached to re-establish the forum meetings between various components of the Movement, and also to produce a joint policy on payments of expenses for training events, such as per diems, transport costs, meals and accommodation.

Resource Development Programme (RDP) •

The Slovenian Red Cross, in co-operation with the Federation's Regional Office in Budapest, organised a Resource Development Operational meeting in Debeli Rtic, Slovenia from 9 to 11 February 2000. Both entity Red Cross organisations were represented. The RCFBiH plans to appoint a responsible person for the RDP, which will significantly ease communication with the RCRS and the International Federation on these matters.

The second phase of the ID project will cover the period from April to December 2000. The plan has five Strategic objectives:

- Support the development of Red Cross structures.
- Help to build the ERC capacity for sustainable resource development.
- Develop the capacity for Red Cross branches to manage local programs.
- Improve communication and information systems.
- Facilitate the ID process by ensuring adequate capacity and integration of ID in programs.

Outstanding needs

The financial situation for the Federation's 2000 activities in BiH are unfavorable, with an estimated shortfall of approximately 50 percent of the CHF 7 million appeal. Donors are encouraged to identify and provide the cash and in-kind resources to maintain the programmes.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Head of Delegation and the Senior Programme Co-ordinator for Development organised a meeting related to the establishment of a Red Cross Society of BiH with representatives of the ICRC, the two entity Red Cross's, and the Minister of BiH for Civil Affairs and Communications.

The Delegation met twice with the Refugee Affairs Coordinator at the US Embassy to discuss issues related to the ERC's and the establishment of a future, internationally recognised, society as well as possible support. The Federation's Liaison Delegate in Banja Luka have established contacts and is building relationships with several of interlocutors, both local and international, in Banja Luka.

Information, Media, and Public Awareness

Efforts continued to improve the efficiency of the information service with entity and local Red Cross structures. Within the Sarajevo delegation, further efforts were conducted to develop better communication and to improve the quality of the Public Awareness Department's support. The information working group met on 7 February and considered ways of better communicating with and understanding Information Department tasks. The current priority concerning the information delegate is to encourage the institutional development of Entity Red Cross organisations and to increase their involvement in the process of policy development.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

In spite of positive changes on the political front in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the fundamental needs of the Society remain. Given the fact that the authorities and public sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to find it difficult to provide the needed social protection, sustained support from the international community will be required for the foreseeable future. With the continued reduction or withdrawal, however, of humanitarian assistance by the majority of the donor governments and international organisations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is increasingly called upon to address the needs of the most vulnerable people, with the Entity Red Cross organisations coping with the increased pressure both from the community and from the respective authorities.

The future National Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be able to focus fully on regaining its image and position as the foremost humanitarian and relief organisation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This would, hence, ensure that it will be earning the trust and support of the government and the public at large, as an integral part of the country's social welfare system and as a valid partner and auxiliary to the public authorities in emergency relief. To achieve this, institutional development, including resource mobilisation capacities, is a necessary compliment to visibility and efficiency in programme implementation and service delivery. These capacities of both Governance and Management of the different Red Cross structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina will need further support. The Federation, with support from the ICRC in its specific areas of responsibility, will continue to consolidate its efforts in these areas to assist the most vulnerable people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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