

IRAN: BUILDING CAPACITIES TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY

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There has been little response so far towards the Appeal for further development of the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Having in mind that Iran is highly disaster prone country and still a host to a big number of refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq, more favourable donor response would enable further disaster response, disaster preparedness and other capacity building activities..

The context

Iran is located in a region which is regularly struck by disasters as the country is frequently affected by destructive earthquakes, heavy rains, sudden devastating floods and landslides. The country still hosts the largest refugee population in the world which is also affected by consequences of the disasters. The country also faces economic difficulties resulting in high unemployment rate and currency devaluation.

The Appeal has sought support for the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran for further development of their role as the main relief organisation in the country.

Latest events

Severe drought in the South Asia region affected Iran in the southern, eastern and central parts of the country and hundreds of thousands of people living there including the already vulnerable, mainly Afghan and Iraqi refugees.

The country is still hosting the largest number of refugees in the world and this issue is still one of the main concerns of the humanitarian agencies in Iran as well as the government and UNHCR. The government of Iran and UNHCR have negotiated over the voluntary repatriation of the Afghan refugees to their home country. Several obstacles, however, stand on the way. First, the political and social situation in Afghanistan and, second, the humanitarian concerns over the condition of the refugees. From the humanitarian point of view, the present situation of refugees in Iran requires stronger involvement and response of humanitarian organisations.

Iran has been also affected by several minor disasters which caused some damages to the social infrastructure in the country.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran as the main relief organisation in the country, has been active in disaster relief and rescue, rehabilitation and social services. The National Society has continued its assistance to the population affected by natural disasters and to other vulnerable people in the country.

The Federation has maintained close co-operation with the National Society in order to develop the existing or new programmes and is verifying possibilities for the implementation of the programmes related to Afghan refugees. From 19 to 30 April, the Federation conducted an assessment mission which resulted in defining some new areas of co-operation in the field of health, logistics and disaster preparedness. A workshop including disaster preparedness, logistics and health is being prepared and should take place in October 2000.

The Federation drafted a proposal in order to upgrade the telecommunication system of the National Society. The Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran approved this proposal and the project should be implemented in the second part of 2000.

As regards refugees, the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, supported by the Federation and some donor National Societies, developed a project for assistance to Afghan refugees in Iran in the fields of health (mobile clinics, psychological support) and education.

In the field of disaster response and preparedness and training, the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Federation maintained good contacts and co-operation. A Federation Representative will be posted in Iran shortly in order to assist the National Society in training, development and in upgrading the co-operation in various field.

Outstanding needs

The frequency of natural disasters in Iran requires strong response to the Federation plans to expand its support to the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Although there has been little response to this appeal so far, better services for the vulnerable and people affected by disasters still represent the objective the National Society is trying to achieve through upgrading its disaster response and disaster preparedness capacity as well as development programmes and training.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Federation and the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran have maintained contacts with the Government of Iran, UNHCR, UNICEF and MSF, mainly in connection with the issue of Afghan refugees.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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