

BELARUS, MOLDOVA, UKRAINE

CHF 8,908,000

Programme No. 01.34/2000

Context

This decade has been characterised by a difficult transition from the break-up and decreasing influence of the former Soviet Union, plus efforts to implement a more dynamic political process and legal systems, as well as a move to more stable market economies which are capable of benefiting the entire society.

During this period millions of people have relied on or adapted various survival techniques to subsist. Health care systems in each country have been severely affected, and this, together with the need to protect the most vulnerable from the sharp side of transition, have made well targeted humanitarian programmes in each country essential. The collapse of the health and social services has had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, especially with newly emerging diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) reaching epidemic proportions. Most recently, the crisis in and collapse of the Russian financial system has compounded the problems throughout the region. In addition, Belarus has been afflicted by a particularly devastating and long-term problem: the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster in 1986 which caused radioactive fallout in large areas of Belarus as well as in the neighbouring countries of Russia and Ukraine, rendering some 20 per cent of the nation's land no longer viable. Approximately two million Belarus residents still live in the contaminated areas, and the Federation has established a long-term programme and appeal to provide assistance (see separate strategy).

Natural disasters (earthquakes, severe storms, flash floods and mudslides) take a tremendous toll each year on the entire region, and a key concern is updating disaster preparedness strategies so that effective responses can be organised. Various categories of unstable populations (migrants, asylum seekers, IDPs and refugees) are a serious problem.

In view of these circumstances, the role of the Red Cross as one of the auxiliary bodies to the humanitarian services of the respective governments has dramatically increased.

The National Societies of all three countries are signatories to the "Almaty Declaration" (Almaty Conference, December 1996) establishing the Federation's focus on support to four key areas: Institutional and Resource Development (ID/RD) reform and legal advice, Disaster Preparedness and Prevention (DPP), Population Movement (PM), and the Visiting Nurses Services, while continuing to assist in acute disaster response situations.

All three National Societies have concluded agreements with their respective governments or are negotiating agreements seeking to obtain "Legal Mandates" (official recognition for their expertise in key activities).

Belarus Country Assistance Strategy

The Federation and the Belarus Red Cross (BRC) have drawn up a strategy to ensure the continued implementation of the Society's priority programmes, including medico-social aid, the Chernobyl assistance



programme (CHARP, which forms a separate Federation Appeal), disaster response, utilising the skills and experience of sister societies and the Federation as a whole, and providing technical assistance for the Society's first aid education programmes, and its TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs prevention action. In addition, the Federation will work with the Society to ensure its activities are in harmony with those of the Movement, assist the Society in its capacity building and reform, and provide an essential link with sister societies in the implementation of relief programmes.

Programme Objectives

Disaster Response

Besides the socio-economic crisis, in recent years the Belarus population has also suffered from natural disasters, particularly floods; in 1999 alone over 20,000 people were affected by floods. Ongoing programmes are providing relief. The Winter Emergency Appeals are a key instrument to address the enormous needs resulting from extreme poverty. The Society's disaster response programme is therefore currently targeted at providing food in the form of food parcels for 16,000 destitute persons, supplying daily hot meals in soup kitchens to the homeless and discharged prisoners in Minsk and Mogilev, training a group of volunteers to give psychological

support, and setting up clothes and bed-linen stocks for the most destitute persons. The implementation of the Population Movement Programme will continue.

Disaster Preparedness

To develop its disaster preparedness service, the Society plans to define its role in the state structure. It intends to participate in the provision of emergency relief, create the necessary infrastructure (including a network of regional branches), provide regular training for volunteers and activists as well as members of rescue teams, provide staff with the necessary disaster preparedness tools and equipment, and maintain emergency supplies. To enhance its ability to provide assistance to victims of catastrophes, the BRC recently launched a first aid training programme.

Health

The Society's visiting nurses service (VNS) has a crucial role to play where there is no other provision for regular medical care for sick people, invalids and the aged in their homes. Currently the VNS comprises 460 visiting nurses, who provide assistance to nearly 10,000 beneficiaries. This is done through a network of 124 Red Cross medico-social assistance centres. Challenges facing the VNS include lack of training and equipment and low salaries. The focus of programme support is on the TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs programme.

Humanitarian Values

This programme will promote knowledge about the fundamental Red Cross Red Crescent Principles and international humanitarian law to various target population groups particularly young people, the military, teachers, government officials, physicians and the media. In co-operation with the ICRC, the programme aims to establish a document production centre which will centralise printed materials on IHL and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in one location and also provide a place for students to study. It will organise publicity campaigns to promote the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and its activities, give advice on the lawful use of the emblems by different organisations, and produce a series of publicity brochures, commemorative booklets and postcards focusing on Red Cross Red Crescent ideals, and a manual on the Red Cross Movement and on IHL, with specific recommendations for different types of teachers.

Capacity Building

This programme aims at improving the Society's capacity in terms of staff, office space and related equipment to enhance services delivery to the vulnerable. All capacity building will be developed in line with criteria identified in the Federation's 'Characteristics of a Well-Functioning National Society', with particular attention to fund-raising initiatives, project planning, implementation and reporting, training, logistics and communications. The Institutional Development (ID) programme aims at making improvements to the Society's organisational structure, and to the logistics base of regional, district and municipal Red Cross branches, and the establishment of new links with the public, private organisations and businesses.

Moldova Country Assistance Strategy

The Federation and the Moldova Red Cross (MRC) have formulated an assistance strategy which will primarily focus on strengthening capacities and available human resources, facilities, equipment and means to raise local funds. With Federation assistance, and acting as an auxiliary to the government in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable, the MRC performs tasks in the welfare services and plans to take on additional responsibilities such as the TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs campaign, and the enhancement of the Visiting Nurses structure. But to organise and implement these services, an integrated Institutional Development segment must be part of each relief and welfare programme. A wider reform aiming at strengthening the National Society – not yet recognised by the ICRC nor admitted to the International Federation – is envisaged.

Programme Objectives

Disaster Response

Federation-organised emergency assistance to people in need during winter (Winter Emergency Appeals) will continue as growing numbers of vulnerable depend on assistance through the provision of food parcels, hot meals and hygiene items. Experience gained in recent years has shown that disaster prone areas of Moldova need humanitarian aid after landslides and other emergencies when due to the economic crisis local capacities cannot cope. Together with the district units of the MRC, the National Headquarters has to be strengthened in its disaster response and it is hoped that this will be achieved through developmental activities in the next years. A key activity will be the Population Movement programme, addressing needs amongst IDPs resulting from the conflict over Transnistria.

Disaster Preparedness

The Federation and the MRC will promote the permanent readiness of relief volunteers to assist those affected by natural disasters and accidents, increase the availability of VNS staff to train rescue teams and attend to those affected. In addition, the National Society is keen to develop its community-based first aid programme in conjunction with the Federation and is aiming to establish a network of instructors and instructor trainers.

Health

The key priority for the Society is the Visiting Nurses Programme (VNS), the basic aim of which is to fill the gaps in state health care and social welfare for the lonely elderly, disabled and invalids, and to ensure these groups benefit from proper medico-social assistance, particularly TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs sufferers, cancer patients and disabled invalids without relatives. The service suffers from shortages of medico-social stations, nursing kits, training and transport, and lack of funds for salaries. Currently 42 visiting nurses provide medical care for 823 invalids and elderly persons.

Humanitarian Values

The Federation and the MRC will disseminate knowledge about the Fundamental Principles of the Movement and International Humanitarian Law among National Society members and the population, as well as maintain a positive Red Cross profile, involving Red Cross youth, by the publication of literature about the National Society and its activities. Advocacy functions are an important part of, for example, the TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs programme. Protection forms a key element of the Population Movement Programme.

Capacity Building

This programme aims at improving the Society's capacity in terms of staff, office space and related equipment to enhance service delivery to the vulnerable. All capacity building will be developed in line with criteria identified in the Federation's 'Characteristics of a Well-Functioning National Society', with particular attention paid to fund-raising initiatives, project planning, implementation and reporting, training, logistics and communications. A Red Cross Law is in the drafting stage.

Ukraine Country Assistance Strategy

The Federation strategy is based on providing humanitarian assistance to those affected by the country's severe economic situation, and the reform of the Ukraine Red Cross (URC) through the Institutional and Resource Development process.

Programme Objectives

Disaster Response

The winter relief programme (Winter Emergency Appeal) has been implemented in Ukraine for the past two years. The serious downturn in the country's financial and economic situation and the likelihood of a poor harvest in 1999 indicate that many people will need continued support. In this programme, the VNS will be used as skilled manpower. In general, the VNS is the backbone of all programmes in the medico-social field.

The Population Movement programme aims to train members of the URC at the grass-root level to deal with the plight of refugees and migrants, with a special focus on legal issues and other protection-related activities. (For the Chernobyl CHARP programme, see separate strategy).

Disaster Preparedness

In a country beset by a growing number of natural and technological disasters (e.g. Chernobyl incident, mine accidents), the URC disaster preparedness programme is an essential activity. In the coming two years, the programme will aim at setting up, training and equipping Red Cross teams of volunteers for regional rescue and relief work, preparing training at the regional level, carrying out first aid training for voluntary teams in oblasts, and creating and maintaining adequate warehouse stocks.

Health

The Visiting Nurses Service (VNS) is a major activity of the Society, providing social and medical assistance to the disabled and lonely elderly in their homes and at local centres. Currently the service employs 3,200 nurses, supported by a network of 297 medical and social assistance centres and 290 clothes banks. Each year, Visiting Nurses help some 200,000 beneficiaries, whose only access to health care, often, is provided by the service. The VNS has now started to focus on the TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs initiative.

Community based first aid is another essential URC activity. Some four million people are injured each year in accidents at work and in the home and levels of first aid skills and training are low. Within the Ukraine Red Cross 27 regional committees and 659 district committees have the capacity to organise first aid training.

Humanitarian Values

The dissemination of International Humanitarian Law is carried out in co-operation with the Foreign Affairs and Defence ministries and with strong support from the ICRC. The programme targets diverse population groups and also comprises publishing informational and methodological materials, organising conferences and competitions, and training high school students in various Red Cross programmes. The Society also carries out advocacy functions under the TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs initiative as well as protection issues under the Population Movement Programme.

Capacity Building

The Institutional Development (ID) programme aims at improving the Society's organisational structure, and making improvements to the logistic base of regional, district and municipal Red Cross branches. It will also encourage the establishment of new links with the general public, other organisations and businesses to accelerate the transition of the Society to self-funding. A Red Cross law is being processed through parliament.