

TAJIKISTAN

CHF 11,758,000

Programme No. 01.35/2000

National 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 inputs of fuel, capital, equipment, subsidies, and expertise 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.

While a tenuous political settlement was reached in 1997 between the previously warring factions, the peace process remains fragile. A Commission on National Reconciliation mediates between the government and the opposition, but its proceedings have been marked by recurrent crises. A side-effect of the war has been a rampant escalation in the crime rate.

In this challenging context, the prospects for social and economic development are poor, and 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.

In these circumstances, the range of coping mechanisms open to the vulnerable is limited. Many households resort to eating fewer meals or buying cheaper food, which in turn impacts negatively on overall nutritional status. Selling family assets, begging, or, finally, migration from Tajikistan to other states in the CIS are other coping mechanisms frequently used.

Country Assistance Strategy

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.

Objectives

Disaster Response

The Federation/RCST programme in this sector will assist the victims of both rapid-onset disasters such as floods, landslides and earthquakes, and the catastrophic deterioration in the economy and the state of social welfare services. Projects under this general heading include provision of supplementary food to the elderly and other vulnerable groups in Western Tajikistan, with beneficiary numbers totalling 63,400. A food-security element in this project will provide seed and fertilisers to 12,000 beneficiaries. Food relief will also be provided to approximately 1,100 patients in psychiatric institutions, and a public canteen programme will serve 6,000 elderly people at 15 locations in urban areas in Western Tajikistan. Finally, a programme of fuel management and coal-briquette making will assist hospitals in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBO) to remain open through the winter of 2000/2001.

Disaster Preparedness

The Federation will continue during 2000 to strengthen the capacities of the RCST in the field of disaster preparedness, utilising training materials and procedural manuals developed during an earlier region-wide programme. Activities will include the creation of an effective radio network, the replenishment and expansion of emergency relief stocks, and the establishment of a small all-terrain vehicle fleet. Further training will be carried out, and innovative community-based initiatives in the area of disaster prevention and mitigation will also be explored. Links with the regional DP programme and CBFA will be developed.

Health

In the Khatlon and Kurgan Tube regions, a total of 350,000 beneficiary patients in 75 rural and district hospitals will be provided with medicines distributed through the RCST. A catchment population of approximately 3 million is expected to benefit from the distribution of health kits and hygiene supplies to 750 primary health care facilities in Khatlon Oblast and the Rayons of Republican Subordination (RRS). The water and sanitation component of the health programme will seek affordable and sustainable methods of supplying clean water to rural populations, with beneficiaries estimated at 15,000. A public health education campaign conducted through the RCST will address such issues as prevention of waterborne diseases and sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs). There will be further coordination with the Regional Health Programme and the CBFA link to Disaster Preparedness.

Humanitarian Values

With the support of the Federation and the ICRC, the RCST will continue its dissemination of humanitarian principles and promotion of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The Federation will include training in the fundamental principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in its support for the recruitment and retention of RCST volunteers and youth members, and will assist the Information Department of the RCST to implement a programme of publicity initiatives designed to illuminate the plight of the most vulnerable in Tajik society.

Other programmes

During the period 2000-2001 the Federation will continue support to three additional RCST programmes – a project to assist street children in the capital, Dushanbe; a shoemaking programme in GBO designed both to generate income for the NS and to provide a source of cheap footwear for the population of the region; and the continuation of a programme, previously carried out through the Regional Delegation, Almaty, to enable the RCST to respond to the needs of unstable populations.

Capacity Building

The Federation will work during 2000-2001 to strengthen RCST leadership and management skills, both at the headquarters and local level, in order to enhance the organisation's capacity to assist the most vulnerable. This in turn will feed into a comprehensive income-generating programme designed to render the RCST more financially self-reliant, and will form part of a comprehensive resource development programme whose other aim will consist in the recruitment, training, and retention of RCST volunteers.