

IRAQ

CHF 3,965,000

Programme No. 01.40/2000

National Context

In 2000 Iraq will enter its ninth year under international sanctions following the Gulf War of 1991. According to the United Nations, some 3.5 million people in the country are adversely affected by the resulting deterioration in economic and social conditions, while UNICEF reports a malnutrition rate of some 25 per cent among children under five years old. After renewed bombing at the end of 1998, the northern and southern air exclusion zones have been the target of repeated bombing throughout 1999, creating an ongoing low intensity conflict that has added to the hardship and shortages confronting the civilian population.

The purchase of humanitarian supplies under the “Oil for Food” agreement between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations (Security Council Resolution 986) has been a slow and tortuous process and the quantities of food and medicines that have become available have been inadequate. The impact of sanctions thus remain the most important threat to the health and wellbeing of the population, producing an increase in the numbers of impoverished, and a decline in the health infrastructure and the availability of welfare services.

Country Assistance Strategy

1999 was a watershed year for Federation programmes in Iraq. While recognising the importance of maintaining assistance programmes begun in 1994 – providing supplementary food for malnourished children and medical supplies to hospitals throughout the country – it began to move towards addressing some of the structural and longterm rehabilitation needs of the country through the provision of primary health care training and the rehabilitation of health care facilities.

This new orientation recognises that the current Oil for Food arrangement, although providing relief, does not represent a complete solution to the population’s needs, and anticipates that the lifting of sanctions, still unpredictable, will lay bare massive rehabilitation needs. It is also in harmony with the shift in the National Society’s priorities towards longer term rehabilitation and development efforts: recently the Society began a process of identifying the country’s rehabilitation needs and the role it will play in addressing them. In parallel, it has opted to emphasise the long-term development of its 18 branches, most of them less than ten years old.

The major donors for Federation programmes in Iraq over the last few years have been ECHO and National Society members of the Iraq consortium formed in 1994. Now that the future direction of programmes have been clarified, the Federation will work to revive waning donor support and encourage this consortium to continue.

The Federation will maintain its country delegation in Baghdad which works in close collaboration with the IRCS and has established relations with the governmental authorities, the UN system, NGOs working in the

humanitarian sector, and of course the ICRC. Since the Federation envisages working in Iraq for several more years it is seeking a status agreement with the Government of Iraq.

Programme Objectives

Disaster Response

In the next two years, 2000-2001, efforts will be made to continue, albeit with some modifications, the relief programme begun in 1994 which provides supplementary feeding to severely malnourished children under the age of five and medicines and medical equipment to medical facilities. It will aim at providing a caseload of up to 10,000 malnourished children and their families with supplementary and general food rations every three months. In addition, basic medical kits will be distributed to at least 20 health centres throughout the country.

Disaster Preparedness

In 1992 the IRCS was assigned responsibility by the Iraqi Civil Defence department for the overall management and co-ordination of disaster response within the country. The basic preparatory work has already been completed, but requires further support from the Federation to enable the Society to assume this important role. During a two to three year programme, a buffer stock of essential relief materials will be established and DP training given to volunteers.

Health

Two rehabilitation projects already underway will continue for another two years: a Primary Health Care rehabilitation programme and support to an intravenous fluids factory. The plant, in Mosul, will continue to receive spare parts and raw materials, with the aim of making it autonomous. The Primary Health Care Centre Renovation project will renovate ten centres yearly, concentrating on structural repairs, water and sanitation systems, electrical rewiring and temperature control systems, and follow up with equipment and medicines.

To prevent any further rise in infant malnutrition, primary health care training, addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition, was introduced in 1999. A Primary Health Care Education programme, a joint Federation, IRCS and UNICEF initiative, will focus on training for health workers on a country-wide basis and community health education on safe water and sanitation, mainly in primary schools.

As part of a programme of support to Land Mine Victims, small-scale, grass roots initiatives will provide advanced training for Community-based First Aid (CBFA) trainers and volunteers and appropriate first aid equipment in both the South/Central regions and the Autonomous Northern Governorates.

Humanitarian Values

The Federation is co-operating in an IRCS/ICRC Dissemination programme to be conducted over the next two years throughout the branches by providing training on its organisation and its activities.

Capacity Building

An IRCS/Federation assessment team was scheduled to work on the outline of a 2-3 year plan in late 1999 which would assist in introducing some of the concepts of institutional and resource development to the Society. A comprehensive ID/RD programme should thus be ready to be presented to donors by early 2000. Assisting the National Society to assume its national disaster preparedness role is viewed as contributing to the National Societies overall capacity.