

# ARABIAN PENINSULA/GULF

CHF 577,000

Programme No. 01.67/2000

## *Context*

All the Arab Gulf States of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are monarchies, with Kuwait having the only elected parliament. All their economies are dominated by oil, natural gas, and petrochemicals.

Expatriates, mostly lowpaid workers from South and East Asia employed in service industries, outnumber nationals in all countries except Saudi Arabia. Their living conditions, level of education, access to health care, and per capita income are much lower than that of nationals, who enjoy health levels largely comparable to that of industrialised countries.

Only Yemen has a significantly different profile. Mountainous, with relatively insignificant and largely unexploited petroleum reserves, it is a poor country where life expectancy at birth is only 54 years and the infant mortality rate is 96 per 1,000 births. The country has still not recovered from the loss of foreign remittances and increase in unemployment caused by the mass expulsion of Yemenis working in the Gulf area because of Yemen's support for Iraq at the beginning of the Gulf War in 1991.

Although the Arabian peninsula is not subject to major natural disasters (apart from Yemen which is annually affected by flooding), it lies in an important geo-strategic area which has been the scene of conflict. The most important in the last decade was the Iraq invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing war which engulfed the entire region and has still not been resolved. Moreover, border tensions exist between the UAE and Iran, and Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Because of the region's rich petroleum reserves many of the countries fear aggression from less well endowed neighbours and the involvement of regional superpowers.

## *Assistance Strategy*

Most of the Gulf countries and their National Societies are regular international donors. While the Federation has benefited from this assistance, both through bilateral programmes and aid channelled through its Secretariat, it recognises that an established presence in the area and stronger and closer relations with the National Societies would enable it to develop an external relations strategy directed at potential funding bodies in the region, and enhance fundraising for its programmes. At the same time it would be in a better position to respond to National Societies' requests for help in technical, management and governance areas. To achieve this, the Federation plans to establish a Representation Office in Kuwait, covering the region.

For the first year, 2000, the focus of the Office will be on regional issues, rather than projects at the country level. The only country project scheduled to start up in the first year is that of support to the Disaster Preparedness programme of the Yemen Red Crescent.

Also as part of its efforts to develop its services in the region the Federation will set up a Regional Logistics Centre (RLC) in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, a location selected after several feasibility studies. The Centre will provide logistical back-up for Federation operations in the Middle East region as well as for other neighbouring regions, principally southern Europe and western Asia.

Unusually, the Federation's resource mobilisation strategy is directed at raising funds within the region, for other areas of the world. However, it needs initial seed money – from both inside and outside the Gulf – to start initiatives that, it is expected, will bear fruit in the years to come.

## ***Programme Objectives***

### ***Disaster Response***

This will be performed on an *ad hoc* basis. Internationally, the Federation will encourage the region's support for its international appeals. The Federation is also working with the National Societies to make available training opportunities in disaster management procedures in general and, specifically, in Federation procedures.

### ***Disaster Preparedness***

***Regional Logistics Centre.*** A Regional Logistics Centre will be set up in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates). Besides managing supplies, the Centre will ensure a Federation response to the training requested by the National Society in the fields of logistics, relief and reporting.

The Yemen Red Crescent Society, which is co-ordinating its planning for a Disaster Preparedness programme with UNDP, will be given help in realising the programme through training support and assistance in establishing warehouses and stocks.

### ***Humanitarian Values***

The Federation will co-operate with the ICRC in a dissemination programme and will incorporate a humanitarian values component into the main training projects detailed below.

### ***Institutional and Resource Development***

***Representation Office.*** The resource development objectives of the Federation's projected Representation Office will be to target regional funding bodies located in the Gulf region and to encourage the channelling of external assistance through the Federation. The Office will also contribute to institutional development and capacity building in the National Societies by providing: training support to National Society leadership; management and governance training; and training in specific areas of relief management. In parallel, it will promote the assignment of National Society volunteers to Federation relief operations. The Kuwait Red Crescent Society will provide accommodation and support services for the Office.