

PROGRAMME UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

NICARAGUA

15 June 2001

This Programme Update is intended for reporting on Annual Appeals.

Appeal No. 01.29/2001

Appeal Target CHF 2,022,010

Programme Update No. 1; Period covered: January to April 2001

“At a Glance”

Appeal coverage: 49.8%

Related Appeals: 01.26/2001 - Central America

Outstanding needs: CHF 1,015,383

Update: Over the quarter, particular progress has been made in the key areas of institutional development, health and disaster preparedness. There is increasing focus on strengthening of both headquarters and branches and a greater sense of ownership of programmes and projects on the part of the National Society.

Operational Developments

After the devastation of hurricane Mitch in 1998, the Federation and a number of PNSs were involved in various rehabilitation projects, and worked together with the Nicaraguan Red Cross (NRC) on projects focusing on renovation and re-building of houses, schools and shelters with an integrated water and sanitation component. The PNSs involved in these activities include the Red Cross Societies of Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Spain and the United States.

Rehabilitation projects have now been concluded: the Canadian and Spanish and Red Cross projects in early 2001 and the Federation and other PNS projects at the end of 2000. As the rehabilitation phase after hurricane Mitch has now come to a close, the Nicaraguan Red Cross is in a position to continue initiatives which were brought to a halt by the relief and rehabilitation operation. In a reassessment of priorities following this disaster, the National Society has given precedence to human resource training, modernising administrative systems, setting up planning systems and ensuring financial recovery.

Disaster Response

Objective

Hurricane Mitch highlighted the need for the NRC to be better prepared for disasters and to reinforce its response capacity. The Federation is therefore focusing on improvement of the response capacity of the National Society, based on a strong disaster preparedness component.

Over the reporting period, the NRC was on constant alert due to an ongoing severe nutritional deficit as a result of extreme poverty, reinforced by drought, following which various organisations carried out food distribution activities last year. The Federation remains on alert given that the situation is affecting large parts

of Nicaragua and that other critical problems such as dengue fever and incidents of leishmaniasis reported in specific parts of the country are exacerbated.

Following an initiative from the Federation, various organisations, including Oxfam and MSF, were invited to a meeting to discuss co-ordination of the response to the critical water situation in the Boaca zone. After a long period of drought, water had to be transported from remote areas. The lack of water was seriously affecting health in the area, resulting in increased risk of disease, including dengue fever. Since the government took urgent steps to resolve the problem, action was not required on the part of humanitarian organisations.

Constraints

NRC assistance after the Masaya earthquake last year showed that the response capacity of the National Society has greatly improved since the onset of hurricane Mitch, bringing to light, however, certain logistical and technical weaknesses which need to be improved. The National Society continues to work towards strengthening the response capacity of the branches, through regionally supported projects and the Cocibolca project funded by the Japanese Red Cross Society.

Disaster Preparedness

Objectives

The disaster preparedness program will support the further strengthening of the NRC, focusing on support to capacity assessments, improving policies and procedures, standardising and upgrading training curricula at headquarters and branch level, rehabilitating the NRC relief post and reinforcing the volunteer corps.

The Federation will also assist the NRC in moving ahead with the community-based disaster preparedness program, as it has been confirmed that communities involved in the program were better prepared to face Hurricane Mitch. Internal and external relationships will be promoted, improving efficiency and coordination.

The training of relief volunteers has been set as one of the priorities: activities are funded by the Federation and the American Red Cross. Delegates from the Federation and the PNSs are providing technical support for the different workshops/training sessions.

The NRC recognises that there are sufficient funds for the development of well trained human resources and intends to revise the training plan for each course. Bearing in mind the construction of the new training centre funded by American Red Cross, training facilities are in place. There is now a common understanding in the NRC concerning the need for improving the response capacity of the NRC, for the achievement of which, strong emphasis on training is an important step forward.

Community Based Disaster Preparedness

Cocibolca

The Japanese Red Cross Society, through the Cocibolca project, is currently financing community disaster preparedness education activities in Boaco and Chontales for a one-year period, focusing on organisational development, disaster preparedness and health in the community (activities implemented by the NRC will be detailed under the institutional development section).

OFDA/USAID

As all funds for the construction of temporary housing were not utilised, OFDA/USAID approved the allocation of the balance of funds to community based disaster preparedness activities. With these funds, the Federation has developed activities in four departments: Esteli, Chinandega, Leon and Matagalpa. Over a period of six months (October 2000 - March 2001) 400 workshops in 100 communities took place (100 of which were held over the reporting period). Subjects covered include: preparation for disaster; management of temporary shelter; healthy homes and a community emergency plan. The civil defence contributed to exercises related to the preparation of a community emergency plan. In addition, 100 micro projects were implemented such as: building bridges, latrines and wells; sustainability is ensured through the commitment of the communities involved who have nominated focal points to ensure maintenance of facilities. A final report on the project is available.

Constraints

The OFDA project was particularly difficult given the limited time frame in which to hold 400 workshops and implement 100 micro projects. Delegates succeeded in meeting the commitment to the donor and in supporting the NRC role in the project. There is interest from other donors to continue such a project which would require an improvement of teaching materials, as well as a thorough analysis of costs. The regional disaster preparedness delegate is currently looking at possibilities to improve teaching materials and the use of more appropriate teaching methodologies.

Health and Care**Objectives**

The Federation will continue to support the NRC in the planning, preparation and implementation of effective and efficient health programmes aimed at target communities, In addition to strengthening the capacity of the National Society's health department, the program will provide technical support to ongoing and new health initiatives in line with Strategy 2010. These include the Golfo de Fonseca project and an integrated branch development project, as well as regional campaigns focusing on voluntary blood donations, HIV/AIDS and mother and child health. The Federation will also assist in the coordination of PNS-funded health activities.

The main activities in the field of health relate to the Gulf of Fonseca project and provision of technical support to promote voluntary blood donation. As of mid April 2000, a Federation health delegate was assigned to facilitate strengthening of the NRC health department and provide support for the Nicaraguan Red Cross participation in the Gulf of Fonseca project. Following the earthquake in El Salvador in January 2001, the health delegate was temporarily placed in El Salvador to support the Salvadorean Red Cross Society's health department in the coordination of activities in the disaster zones.

Since April 2001, the delegate has been working at regional level. He continues to be located in Nicaragua which has facilitated the continuity of activities implemented by the NRC.

Gulf of Fonseca

The Gulf of Fonseca pilot project was set up in 1997 for a geographical area which includes territory in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras and is made up of components in community development, disaster preparedness and training in various branches, with special emphasis on health. The project in El Salvador and Nicaragua is funded by the British Red Cross. Close coordination is ensured with the Swiss Red Cross which is funding a bilateral project in Honduras according to a similar concept.

In January and February, preparatory work was finalised and the budget revised. Discussions were held at branch level to complete the selection of communities, identify project staff and to fully involve the branch team in the project. The director of the health department chaired such discussions with the participation of the Federation HoD and the health delegate. It was decided to review the selected communities given difficult access from the Chinandega branch. Five field workers were selected who are Red Cross relief workers from Chinandega. They will live in the selected municipalities and coordinate activities under the supervision of the national coordinator in Chinandega. The coordinator is funded partially by the Nicaraguan Red Cross and partially by the Ministry of Health, ensuring vital links between the Federation and the Ministry. Furthermore, relations between the national level and the branch of Chinandega have been strengthened through the preparation of the project. There is a sense of ownership within the health department of the Nicaraguan Red Cross. Furthermore, the project provides an opportunity to assist the health department in initiatives related to national project coordination.

Within the project budget, there are funds to purchase a car. In discussions with the National Society, the possibility of renting a car from the NRC is being explored. With the money generated from such an initiative, the Nicaraguan Red Cross would have the possibility to maintain two cars at national level and one at the Chinandega branch. This initiative, if successful, could demonstrate areas in which the National Society may generate internal funds through a better use of resources.

Discussions were also held with the Spanish Red Cross institutional development delegate regarding branch development since the Spanish Red Cross has an office in Chinandega for coordination purposes. As a result,

monthly meetings with the Spanish Red Cross have been planned to review the branch development in the region.

Blood

The promotion of voluntary blood donors continued during the quarter with the support of the regional health delegate. A debate forum has been set up in respect of a new national law for blood transfusion which was recently introduced in Nicaragua. This law will be taken into consideration in carrying out the blood quality project. The NRC's initiative to begin training of a new kind of "social volunteer" will result in volunteers available to assist in campaigns for voluntary blood donation and other development oriented projects within the NRC.

PNS supported health projects

The Nicaraguan Red Cross through its Rivas branch and with the financial support of the French Red Cross, is developing projects in health. A delegate from the French Red Cross carried out a survey of the health needs of the population. Activities include the rehabilitation of existing health centres and the construction of "crematories" in the centres. Construction of wells in health centres is also being carried out, with technical assistance from American Red Cross. The Rivas branch office is also being rehabilitated. The Canadian Red Cross with funding from CIDA is developing a health program in the departments of Estelí and Tipitapa - this program has funding for a three year period.

Constraints

It is recognised that the NRC health department needs strengthening in the area of human resources. The NRC tends to rely on traditional health services such as blood banks and an ambulance service. It is hoped that the training of social volunteers can help to change this.

It is clear that the flexibility of the Gulf of Fonseca project and the participation of the branch is a new concept for the branch staff. In the coming months, further discussions will be needed to assist the branch to develop a vision and strategy for future development.

Institutional and Resource development

Objectives

The Institutional development program focuses on strengthening management and governance, strategic planning, fund-raising and income generation, human resource development, youth and image building. A pilot project (the Cocibolca project) will contribute to building the capacity of the National Societies, both at headquarters and branch level, in order to enable it to efficiently and effectively mobilise support and carry out its humanitarian mandate in favour of vulnerable groups.

Institutional Development of the Nicaraguan Red Cross

In the last quarter of 2000, initial funding from the Spanish Red Cross for the organisational development (OD) program was obtained for implementation of the following projects: strengthening of the accounting system, expanding the planning office, strengthening of programmes and strengthening of the financial and administrative control system.

During the reporting period, progress has been made and the accounting system has been reinforced and there has been a general improvement in the administrative and financial procedures.

The organisational development program includes an external audit with consultants in strategic planning and fund-raising and the development of systems and manuals for different functions within the National Society. The necessary changes in order to develop a modern well functioning organisation much depend on the political will of the Society. With this in mind, the Federation, together with the PNS, are looking at opportunities to promote understanding of the importance of structural change and to emphasise the importance of completing the national development plan for the next five years and the revision of the National Society's Statutes.

The National Development Plan

The process of drawing up the national development plan is continuing; one national planning workshop and one national workshop in budgeting was organised in the period. The goal of these workshops is to support the branches in the development of their own budgets. As a result of the current transition period, since the national development plan was designed for the period 1996 to 2001, an operational plan has been drawn up for each NRC office and each program which will serve as a basis for a new strategic plan.

The four core areas of Strategy 2010 have been considered and referred to in the planning process and in the daily discussions concerning the strengthening of capacities and strategic planning, ensuring a coherent approach in activities and programmes.

Thanks to meetings organised between organisational development counterparts in the Movement, there is now a mutual understanding between the different components of the movement present in Nicaragua of the importance of co-ordinating OD activities.

Statutes

The National Society has begun a process of reviewing its Statutes and two commissions have been set up, one for the revision of the Statutes and the other for formulating the new provisions. The first commission consists of representatives from the governing board and volunteer groups, while the other consists of program directors.

The commissions hold weekly meetings where changes in the Statutes are discussed. It has been proposed that the commission should have a representative from the Federation, and this will be discussed in meetings of the governing board and the management team. It is hoped that a proposal for new Statutes will be presented at the General Assembly at the end of the year for final approval.

Although the participation of the Federation in this process has been limited, the Federation has contributed with the provision of reference materials such as guidelines for drawing up National Society Statutes and "CAPI 2".

National Training Centre

A marketing study for the construction of a national training centre has been concluded, with the support of the American Red Cross. The results are positive, concluding that a national training centre will strengthen the volunteer participation through the training implemented, as well as generate income through rental of the facilities.

The Cocibolca project

As mentioned above, this is an integrated branch development project, which apart from aiming to improve the management structure of the branches, has a health and disaster preparedness component.

The Japanese Red Cross is funding the project for a one year period in the departments of Boaco and Chontales, whilst the Italian Red Cross is funding the project in the department of Rio San Juan. The project will also be implemented in other communities in the region of Cocibolca if further funding is available. The project aims at reducing the impact of a disaster and at building and strengthening local organisation and local structures. Activities which include organisational development, disaster preparedness and health and care necessitate a change in mentality with respect to the role of the NRC, from the traditional focus on the blood bank, the ambulance service and rescue to a focus on capacity building, both at branch and at community level. At branch level, it is stressed that in order to develop a modern functional organisation able to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable, a basic internal management structure must be in place, with trained and equipped personnel.

The project shows the importance of the participation of women. Through micro projects, preventive health information and local contingency plans, women actively participate in reducing the risks and effects of a disaster in their communities. The project illustrates that well organised schemes targeting the most vulnerable which build capacity at community level, also work to improve the image of the National Society.

Over the reporting period, project priorities have been identified in the different branches through a series of meetings and the branches have been given the responsibility of selecting the communities they wish to work

with. Rehabilitation of branch offices has begun in two of the four branches concerned: Camoapa and Santa Thomas. Budgets and working plans have been discussed. The participation of directors of the branches and technical input from NRC headquarters has resulted in constant dialogue during this process. In Santo Thomas the communities where projects in health and disaster preparedness will be implemented have been identified. The project has been extended to a branch in Masaya, Tisma, where, despite limited resources, a small fund-raising project has been implemented.

In May, training in financial systems in order that branches adopt the headquarters' system, will be provided. When this system has been implemented at branch level, those branches involved in the Cocibolca project will be the first to be take on the headquarters' accounting system.

Youth Programme

At the beginning of the year, a focus on two areas of community work (school brigades and education, and prevention of HIV/AIDS), was decided upon. The Nicaraguan Red Cross participated in a regional workshop for school brigades in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, from 28 - 31 March, during which three new facilitators from Nicaragua were trained. During the workshop, the regional guide for school brigades was revised and a fourth manual for the training of youth was presented. The decision was also taken to set up 15 school brigades in each country of the region, with Federation funding. To improve the communication between youth directors and to boost the functioning of the regional network, it has been decided to hold virtual chat meetings every two weeks.

Constraints

The organisational development program is one of the most difficult to implement since it aims at bringing about change in order to strengthen the overall structure of the NRC. Resources for this program have been at the disposal of the National Society since 1999, with the Spanish Red Cross as the main donor funding six different projects, together with the Cocibolca project funded by the Japanese Red Cross Society.

In spite of organisational improvements, major changes cannot be expected as long as the necessary human resources are not in place. There is an urgent need for the National Society to look closer at the human resources needed in order to implement changes, particularly in the area of finance. In spite of improvements and an automatized system, there is still a need for the accounting system to be put correctly into practice.

The main difficulty has been the management of resources since the accounting and finance departments need to be strengthened in order to be efficient and effective. The implementation of new measures progresses at a faster pace than the capacity of these departments to internalise them. The Federation is very much aware of these difficulties and has dedicated human resources to help the National Society to overcome such problems.

Implementation of the Cocibolca project was delayed until March 2001 given late transfer of funds from the headquarters to the branches. This problem was caused by a lack of appropriate financial procedures at the level of headquarters. Nevertheless, a system providing for the transfer of cash from the headquarters has now been established and it is expected that an increased funding flow will be available for the project in the months ahead.

Regional Cooperation

The Nicaraguan Red Cross receives support from the Federation regional delegation in strengthening its youth networks. The regional delegation is also supporting the Nicaraguan Red Cross through the communications capacity building pilot program and the distance learning for communicators' program". The regional delegation also provides support in relation to disaster preparedness and support services such as finance and reporting.

Coordination and Management

Objective

The Federation country delegation in Nicaragua will manage all Federation supported programmes and support the National Society through technical advice and follow-up, providing an effective and efficient framework through coordination and the optimization of available human, financial and material resources.

Regular contacts are maintained with various organisations working in Nicaragua, especially ECHO partners with whom Federation representatives meet once a month to coordinate activities. Regular contacts are maintained with the media through the NRC press office. External relations include continuous exchange of information together with distribution of situation reports and other Red Cross/Red Crescent publications.

The National Society holds weekly meetings with representatives of the Federation delegation and bilateral National Societies in order to ensure information flow and further improve co-ordination. As PNS bilateral programmes in Nicaragua are increasingly focusing on long term development, the profile of delegates has also changed accordingly and co-ordination between all partners has become more effective.

There is a need for the Federation to commit to a longer term presence in Nicaragua. Having in mind that the National Society is at an significant stage in a process of change, it is felt that there is a need for continued Federation presence in Nicaragua.

Outstanding Needs

The Federation in Nicaragua has reduced both its human resources and the level of costs. The delegation is currently made up of two delegates and six local employees. The organisational development delegate is also taking on the role of Head of Delegation, which prevents him from focusing exclusively on organisational development issues.

The National Society is currently undergoing a critical phase in its development as it is in the process of drawing up the new development plan, undergoing restructuring and amending its Statutes. Although the institutional and resource development program is fully funded, there remain needs especially in the area of coordination and management, particularly in view of the vital role of coordination with both the PNS, the regional delegation and external partners.

For further details please contact Olaug Bergseth; Phone: 41 22 730 45 35 Fax: 41 22 733 03 95; email: bergseth@ifrc.org

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Head a.i.
Relationship Management Department

Santiago Gil
Head
Americas Department

Nicaragua						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 01.29/2001		PLEDGES RECEIVED				12.06.2001
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				2'022'010		TOTAL COVERAGE 49.8%
CASH CARRIED FORWARD				804'154		
BRITISH - ANONYMOUS		53'000	GBP	127'730	29.03.01	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				931'884	CHF	46.1%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
Finland	Delegate(s)			14'784		
Japan	Delegate(s)			59'959		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				74'743	CHF	3.7%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						