

Programme Update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Serbia

Appeal No. MAARS001

31 August 2009

This report covers the period 01/01/2009 to 30/06/2009.



A Roma kindergarten in Paraćin. Photo: Red Cross of Serbia

In brief

Programme purpose: The International Federation's support focused on development through long-term programmes. It aimed to increase the capacity of the Red Cross to provide services to the vulnerable population, while at the same time meeting humanitarian needs, and enhancing the preparedness to respond to emergencies and disasters. These efforts also included addressing the National Society's structure, procedures, staffing and organizational thinking. These components directly and indirectly strengthen the communities' ability to recognize, assess and address their own needs with the Red Cross as an integral and recognized partner. Sustainability of existing activities and development of a basis for future programmes are also priorities.

The National Society continues to gradually expand its activities from exclusively being a provider of assistance to also being an advocate for the vulnerable, through its role as a partner and driving force behind processes of civil society building at both national and local levels.

Programme summary: Some large-scale activities from previous years have been scaled down and are being phased out as the National Society takes over the responsibilities for further development (such as home care and organizational development). Disaster management remained a large programme concerned both with building preparedness and response capacity of the Red Cross at all levels as well as with strengthening the ties between the Red Cross and other national and local level stakeholders. This programme will branch out and incorporate more risk reduction activities if funding is available in the second part of the year.

The health and care activities are scaled down to reflect limited funding, however they are well designed and are meaningful parts of a bigger whole (with a focus on HIV and AIDS and voluntary

blood donation). Meanwhile, the work with vulnerable Roma children and young people living with disabilities has entered a new phase and is progressing very well showing a promising start of the three-year project.

Financial situation: The initial budget for 2009 was CHF 1,872,866. It was slightly revised to 1,952,439 (USD 1,840,153 or EUR 1,277,482), of which 63 per cent is covered. Expenditure versus received funding was 43 per cent.

The coverage of 63 per cent in the first half of the year is good, however, withdrawal of the British and Norwegian Red Cross Societies announced for the second part of the year means that there will be a huge funding gap for the second six months and this is the reason the expenditure for the first half of the year was slightly slowed down.

[Click here to go directly to the attached financial report.](#)

No. of people we help:

Serbia - Programme Update January – June 2009		
Programme	Target groups	People reached
Disaster Management	RC disaster management units' members, volunteers	130
Organizational Development	RC staff and volunteers	50
Humanitarian Values	Vulnerable Roma children, children living with disabilities, vulnerable older people	13,359
Total number of people reached		13,539

Our partners: The British, Danish and Norwegian Red Cross Societies and the governmental Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development contributed as multilateral or bilateral donors and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) contributed as a bilateral partner. Two ministries were programme partners and some 60 local governments and services were active as partners.

Context

The political situation in Serbia has been fairly stable in the first six months of 2009. The burning issues- full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, the inactive economic agreement with the EU, the status of Kosovo- are all still on the table but there was no dramatic progress or change related to any of them.

The global economic crisis has had its impact on the society and the economy as unemployment is on the rise (estimated to reach 21 per cent by the end of the year, in comparison to 18 per cent in 2008). The GDP is estimated to decline by 2.5 per cent by the end of the year as the level of international investments go down from 1.9 (2008) to 1.1 billion euros (2009).

The humanitarian situation is thus not improving while the level of international funding for humanitarian activities is decreasing. The amount of funding channelled through the International Federation was notably reduced this year with the second half of the year expected to be very thin on funding as long-time partners like the British and Norwegian Red Cross Societies announced their withdrawal. The International Federation tightened its planning, involving the National Society fully, to ensure that funding gaps are accounted for and worked around in the best possible fashion.

Progress towards outcomes

Disaster Management

Programme purpose: Reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters

Training

100 first responders were trained in communication and coordination in case of disasters. The following training sessions also took place: training of disaster response units at branch and republican level; training of a national mobile technical team with 30 participants; training of national water and sanitation team; training for a national shelter team and two disaster response units.

Municipal disaster preparedness programme

Preparatory meetings for municipal disaster preparedness simulations were held in Vlasotince, Lebane, Doljevac, Trstenik, Uzice, Lucani, Zrenjanin and Aleksinac municipalities. The simulations were held in four municipalities- Vlasotince, Lebane, Doljevac and Trstenik. Three follow-up meetings were held in Šid, Bačka Palanka and Rača municipalities. The municipal disaster preparedness programme was presented to the Police Academy in Belgrade based on their expressed interest to integrate the simulation module into the curriculum. Further cooperation will ensue. Discussions with USAID/ DAI PPES¹ programme about future financing of the simulations are continuing.

Vulnerability and capacity assessment

Two vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) manuals were translated and are ready for putting on CD that is scheduled for July. Currently, the International Federation is negotiating with USAID/ DAI about financing a VCA exercise in one municipality by the end of the year.

Other programme activities

The International Federation and the National Society are negotiating with USAID/ DAI/ PPES programme about the opportunity of the Red Cross of Serbia to deliver training at municipal level in selected communities. The scope of this training will be assessment methodology and roles and responsibility of the Red Cross in disasters. The contract should be signed in July and last for one year initially.

One meeting of the National Society disaster management commission took place this year, and among approving the plan for this year the most important decision was to create a sub-commission in charge of creating and following up on the disaster management projects (such as municipal disaster preparedness and future school-children risk reduction project), standardizing and approving the newly established training curriculum of disaster management units (such as shelter training and mobile technical teams), standardising and approving all standard operative procedures and establishing new ones at the level of headquarters and branches.

Achievements

The activities related to the municipal disaster preparedness programme and general disaster management are progressing as planned. The risk reduction and VCA-related activities are still planned for the second half of the year but are subject to funding and negotiations with partners.

Constraints or Challenges

The funding gap has not yet affected the activities but will in the second part of the year. Negotiations with partners, primarily USAID, and reduced Federation presence in the near future mean that the plan for the second part of the year is yet to achieve its final version.

¹ Preparedness, Planning and Economic Security Programme

Health and Care

Programme purpose: Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies

Public Health

An initiative has started in the framework of the Red Cross of Serbia health programme in order to align activities in the field of public health with the existing relevant national strategies and to improve demonstration of impact the National Society makes with its activities by providing the qualitative and quantitative information from the field to the Ministry of Health. A workshop has been designed and conducted with the members of the health committee of the Red Cross of Serbia to outline the proposal for the public health framework.

The draft framework is now being finalized. Besides links with the national strategies, the International Federation's Global Agenda, and UN Millennium Development Goals, the framework will also contain objectives and indicators of the Red Cross of Serbia's corresponding activities. This will allow periodical prioritisation of key activities by the health committee and focusing of Red Cross public health activities in line with the ever-changing environment, enabling the establishment of an efficient system for data gathering from the field and reporting.

Blood Donation/ Club 25

The Red Cross of Serbia has established two more 'Clubs 25' – associations of young volunteers/ blood donors. The new clubs were founded in the municipalities of Kraljevo and Bujanovac (in addition to the one in Kikinda that was previously established and that provided support to the newly established clubs).

These municipalities were selected bearing in mind regional aspects, hoping that once the substantive number of these clubs is established, the rest of the Red Cross branches will form their own 'Clubs 25' without financial support from the headquarters – similar to the experience the Red Cross of Serbia had with youth field units in the past. These three branches will act as regional support centres.

In addition, promotion materials (leaflets and T-shirts) were prepared for the implementing branches. Some 200 youth volunteers – blood donors who are involved in this project have in these three municipalities organized public activities within the campaign 'World Day of Blood Donors' on 14 June. The Red Cross of Serbia provided significant funding assistance for this initiative.

HIV and AIDS

'Chriss Database' was developed by the Ministry of Health of Serbia with the aim of gathering and maintaining relevant information about HIV in Serbia, as well as the actions of various institutions and organizations taking place all over the country in this field. The system was designed based on indicators outlined in the national strategy for responding to HIV. The central database is located in the National Institute for Public Health, while all relevant partners have the software installed in their headquarters, the Red Cross of Serbia among them. The International Federation supported the Red Cross of Serbia in gathering the relevant data from local branches and storing them in the database system for the first time. Approximately 70 per cent of the data was so far processed and stored in the database.

Achievements

The Red Cross of Serbia is consolidating its health programming and presentation of activities. More strategically developed and more clearly presented to the public and the appropriate authorities, it will lead to the health programmes of the Red Cross being more efficient and relevant to the changing environment.

The Club 25 campaign of the Red Cross has so far managed to increase the number of young blood donors in the selected communities by a considerable margin, however the main

achievement here is the building of an active base of volunteers who not only commit themselves to regular blood donation but also to promotional activities designed in and supported from the secretariat of the National Society. It is planned to support the existing clubs and forming of the new ones until branches across the country can help each other start these clubs without much support from the secretariat.

The Red Cross managed to collect a large amount of data related to the HIV and AIDS activities in the field and it is estimated that the Red Cross Chriss Database will be fully up-to-date by the end of the year. This will contribute to better overall coordination of HIV and AIDS activities in Serbia as envisioned by the Ministry of Health.

Constraints or Challenges

Limited amount of funding available for health related activities meant that more ambitious activities could not be planned for and the activities implemented in the first half of 2009 will only be producing significant change in future.

Organisational Development/ Capacity Building

Programme purpose: Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability

Improvement of public image and public relations

One goal of the Red Cross of Serbia is to ensure that its activities are recognised and followed by the broad public as well as to ensure the principles and values of the Movement are recognised and adopted as widely as possible, granting in turn more support to the organization and the activities targeting vulnerable population.

This is done in two ways: through own media propagating essential messages and through ensuring systematic and comprehensive promotion of Red Cross activities through work with other media.

The first instance was assisted through upgrading the Red Cross of Serbia's information department with necessary equipment including two photo cameras, one laser printer/ fax and one portable voice recorder.

The second part of the programme is a year-long campaign related to HIV and AIDS awareness. The organizational development component of this campaign is the learning process of preparing campaigns, creating promotional material and dealing with the media. It is a first of its kind for the Red Cross of Serbia and envisioned as both a learning experience and a blueprint for future promotional work.

Two training sessions for HIV and AIDS peer educators were keystones of this campaign. Held in Užice and Kikinda, these sessions covered 50 young volunteers and incorporated street-actions, distribution of materials, television and radio guest-spots, newspapers and magazines interviews as well as direct work with young people in cafes and dance clubs such as condom distribution and broadcasts of the 'The Boy who was shy' DVD film.

Achievements

The Red Cross of Serbia information department is now well equipped to present information of the Red Cross work efficiently and with high quality. The department now produces regular news updates for the media. At the same time, it now works closer with the programme department and the programme managers in the Red Cross of Serbia are now accepting that contact with the media is now a standard duty in their agenda.

The lessons learned from the HIV and AIDS campaign are to be collected in a simple toolkit by the end of the year, detailing in several steps the activities linked to each Red Cross action/

programme. The long-term results (increased number of volunteers and partners of the Red Cross) will depend on the discipline the National Society demonstrates in following the steps at all levels.

Constraints or Challenges

Funding shortage means that the completion of the one-year public campaign cycle might be more low-key than planned. As mentioned above, the long-term results will depend on the awareness of the National Society at all levels of the importance of information. The activities related to other National Society management issues such as programme design and staffing have not taken place due to the lack of funds and partial coverage of these areas by other programmes supported through the Federation (e.g. home care).

Humanitarian Values

Programme purpose: Promote respect for diversity and human dignity, and reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion

Vocational training for refugees

The Red Cross of Serbia, supported by the International Federation, have been implementing a vocational training programme targeting refugees from Croatia and Bosnia to facilitate their access to the labour market. The Red Cross is coordinating the training, the selection of beneficiaries and, most important, the follow-up. The National Society has been cooperating with the National Employment Agency to determine training courses to match labour market needs.

A training cycle ended in March 2009, and of 90 participants that followed the courses 31 have been employed so far. Courses covered during the cycle include business secretary and management courses, accounting courses and courses for fiscal cash register service, computing and driver's license.

Achievements

This project has consistently been successful with the number of employed trainees within six months after the training regularly being over 60 per cent. This year, the rate of employment is increasing more slowly (30 per cent in three months) but this is in line with the rising unemployment in the country. In all, 31 refugees have managed to find official employment and thus to improve their own and their families situation with another 59 having increased their capacity for employment.

Migration (Asylum seekers/ Rejected asylum seekers)

Within the migration programme, detained irregular migrants in Serbia, waiting for repatriation, are the main beneficiaries of the programme. In the first half of 2009, 118 irregular migrants have been accommodated in the detention centre for irregular migrants and some of them deported back home. The Red Cross of Serbia visited irregular migrants in the detention facilities once a month to monitor their situation as well as to provide hygiene items. Furthermore the staff at the centre received first-aid training.

The number of rejected asylum seekers returning to Serbia has stayed low with approximately 20 returnees per month. Most returnees have opted for voluntary return, which implies financial support from the country they return from. The government has established a readmission service at the Belgrade airport which means that currently there is no need for the Red Cross of Serbia to include airport presence in its programme.

Achievements

118 people have been assisted in the detention centre for irregular migrants in the first six months in Serbia, their hygiene maintained through the provision of hygiene items and clean clothes and the respect for their human rights ensured through monitoring by the Red Cross.

Home care

The multi-year support for the home care programme has come to the end. The British Red Cross funded some of the field-level costs during the first six months of 2009 (on bilateral basis) and this meant that the number of older vulnerable people assisted was only slightly lower than in 2008 (11,003 older people assisted in 2009). However the main focus of the activities was producing a project design toolkit for branches. This document, currently in the visual design stage is based on the local level projects that the Red Cross branches in the home care programme have been designing and implementing in the past several years (as part of the 'Bonus Module' initiative). It uses best practices from these projects as examples, but it also takes into consideration the experiences of other organizations working in the same field and is a comprehensive guide for creating local level projects related to social welfare.

The Red Cross of Serbia, as part of the HumanaS network consisting of 15 NGOs working with older people has participated in a survey of the awareness of discrimination, neglect and abuse of older people. The results of the survey were presented to the public during the marking of 15 June, the International Day of Awareness of the Abuse of Older People.

Achievements

The Red Cross of Serbia is individually and through HumanaS scaling up its advocacy efforts, bringing the issue of discrimination, neglect and abuse of older people to the focus of public attention and also advocating for the introduction of social pensions in Serbia.

At the same time, the local level capacities for independent and sustainable programme design, implementation and fund-raising is being significantly increased through the provision of tailor-made tools sourced from the best Red Cross practices in the home care programme but also from the experience of other comparable local level organizations.

Open kindergarten for Roma and other children from marginalized families/ Work with young people living with disabilities

The implementation of the new phase of the previously called social welfare programme under the name *Joint programme for inclusion of marginalized groups through education* started as planned in January 2009. The new set-up includes five entities of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement – the Red Cross of Serbia and the Montenegro Red Cross as operating National Societies, the Danish and Spanish Red Cross Societies as supporting partner National Societies and the International Federation with overall coordination role, and partnership with UNICEF, NGO 'Pomoc Deci' and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The programme itself includes three separate projects targeting vulnerable Roma children, their peers in school and children and young people with disabilities. The programme included 1,000 vulnerable Roma children in 32 municipalities in Serbia and 4 municipalities in Montenegro (and 504 parents), one of them being Camp Konik in Podgorica for internally displaced persons, mainly Roma, Aschally and Egyptians, and 866 children and young people with disabilities in 30 municipalities of Serbia and 6 municipalities of Montenegro (and their 505 parents).

The work in the first six months of implementation focused on establishing the set-up and coordinative mechanisms, quite similar to the Federation Operational Alliance model. A cooperation agreement for the Red Cross partners was developed outlining clear roles and responsibilities of each Red Cross partner and working routines in regard to planning, follow-up, monitoring, reporting, evaluation and coordination. Detailed plan of action for the project team was developed in January and two project team meetings took place for follow-up purposes. Progress in implementation of activities was recorded and the plan of action revised as necessary. A narrative and financial reporting system was developed and agreed.

Achievements

- The development of a proposal for advocacy framework for the project has started and will result in a comprehensive manual by the end of 2009.

- Revision of the programme documentation templates is in progress with the aim of standardisation and harmonisation.
- The participatory community development methodology was adapted and training of trainers completed in order to improve the cooperation of the implementing Red Cross branches and relevant local stakeholders by involving them in local project planning, implementation and monitoring.
- Preparations for a baseline study are in progress.
- Registration of beneficiaries for this implementation period was completed and data gathered from the field are now being analysed.
- A resource group including mainly associates from the field and headquarters managers was established in Serbia with the aim of setting up regional resource centres whose role will be to provide practical support to the implementing branches in the region and to facilitate experience and knowledge sharing among the implementing Red Cross branches.
- Field monitoring plan was developed and monitoring visits are taking place accordingly. The field monitoring plan is revised as necessary.

Working in partnership

The Red Cross of Serbia worked in partnership with the International Federation and received funds from the British and Norwegian Red Cross Societies through the Federation secretariat plan and bilaterally from the British Red Cross and Danish Red Cross. Besides Red Cross donors the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation also contributed with funds. USAID is a supporter of the disaster management programme and is still looking into supporting activities within the health and care programme. The health and care programme is further implemented through several partnerships at local level including local authorities, centres for social welfare, schools, Roma NGOs and pensioners' associations. At the national level HumanaS, the Pomoć deci NGO and UNICEF are partners contributing to the programme.

Contributing to longer-term impact

The work with vulnerable populations in Serbia through addressing health practices, access to health and social support institutions and education, and ensuring a community-wide response to needs, is in line with the International Federation's Global Agenda and its emphasis on preventing deaths and illnesses as well as the building of communities' capacities to combat their own vulnerability.

Programme components are aligned with the Global Agenda and compatible with local and regional initiatives such as The Decade of Roma Inclusion and the Poverty Reduction Strategies. Work towards disaster preparedness pursues the Global Agenda goal of reducing the number of deaths and injuries and impact from disasters, a much needed endeavour in both countries as large-scale disasters, both natural and man-made, seem to become more frequent.

All programmes have gender as an integrated and important component. Within disaster preparedness the psychosocial component puts special emphasis on gender to ensure that the needs of each family member are adequately assessed and met. In the vocational training for refugees project, professional training is provided to meet the needs of both genders. In health promotion gender balance is presented as one of the priorities resulting in projects addressing reproductive health as well as sexual hygiene and specific activities for target groups of both genders. In volunteering and youth activities, the organizational development programme promotes humanitarian values through a young volunteer project with a clear gender focus.

Looking ahead

The reduction of funding means that a lot of the planned activities will have to be rethought or taken off the table. The Federation secretariat and the National Society will create a plan of action based on the existing funding and the utmost priorities in an effort to use the funding most efficiently. A one-year contract was signed with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation for a new phase of the implementation of the social welfare programme (focusing on Roma children and children living with disabilities) with the participation of several other partners (Spanish and Danish Red Cross Societies among them) and the possibility for extension to three or more years. Other activities in other programmes will depend on potential funding (e.g. USAID supporting disaster management) and the National Society priorities.

How we work	
The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".	Global Agenda Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.• Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.• Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.• Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.
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