

HAITI : ASSISTANCE TO VULNERABLE GROUPS

11 November 1996

***1996 Emergency Appeal : Programme 1.15/96
Situation Report no. 1
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The present report consolidates, develops and updates information contained in quarterly reports published in the Federation's quarterly "Disaster Response '96".

The context

Despite the efforts made by the Government and the private sector in the last two years since the restoration of democracy, Haiti continues to be the poorest country in the western hemisphere and one of the poorest in the world. And due to this situation and other factors, this country still occupies the 124th place, among 160 countries, from the standpoint of human development, according to UNDP's classification, which takes into account factors like health, nutrition, sanitation, education and employment, among others.

Infant mortality approaches 100 for every 1,000 live births, at least 50% of the population has less than 75% of the required calorie intake, less than 60% of the population in urban areas has access to safe water, illiteracy rate is above 70% and GNP per capita continues to be between USD 250 and 280 per annum according to different estimates (it was already low in 1989 -USD 439- and during the 1991-1994 crisis went down to the 1983 level -USD 283-). The last indicator appears worse when it is taken into account that 1% of the population controls 48% of GNP and 80% of the people earn less than USD 170 annually. Agriculture, the mainstay activity, is very limited and shrinks day-by-day because of, among other factors, erosion due to increasing deforestation (among the worst in the world).

The political situation remains fragile and complex. Social unrest and political instability have continued to threaten during the period of this report. The level of violence and insecurity remains high. Efforts made by the Government, with the support of the UN peacekeeping forces, made possible in February the democratic, though difficult, transition to a new presidential and parliamentary periods, and the newly elected President and Parliament have been operational for 9 months. But the political and budgetary difficulties they are facing limit the possibility of the country to rapidly solve social and economic problems. The Haitian State has little or no liquidity to pay basic public expenses, and still less to make the investments needed to redeem the setbacks suffered by the country's development process during the political crisis. Even if a projected 4.5%

annual economic growth rate was to be achieved, it would be well beyond the turn of this century before the economy could reach pre-crisis levels.

The Haitian State is 90% dependent on international financial and technical aid to overcome this situation. Important steps are being taken by intergovernmental organisations, but it will take time until their programmes yield results. In the meantime, humanitarian organisations, and particularly the Federation, should relentlessly continue their assistance to vulnerable groups and to local humanitarian institutions, particularly the Haitian Red Cross (HRC).

In this context, the vulnerable groups targeted by our programme are in the same or even greater need of assistance, as only 53% of the appeal target has been funded.

Latest events

The Government has taken steps to meet the conditions for intergovernmental agencies' financial and technical co-operation. But no significant concrete change has taken place yet for the appeal's target groups concerning the areas of health, sanitation, education and disaster response, which are those on which the Federation appeal focused most.

Despite a full-fledged hurricane season in the Caribbean region, Haiti was fortunately not hit by any of the 11 tropical storms/hurricanes. But the need for a good RC disaster response system has been confirmed by the fact that during the numerous emergencies resources proved scarce and also by the serious damage caused in the north-western coast on 23rd October to many vulnerable people by a mere tropical depression. Moreover, the risk of a mass boat-people exodus is always present.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Haitian Red Cross and the Federation Secretariat, represented in the field by a reduced Delegation, have concentrated on the completion of the second phase of the rehabilitation micro-projects programme, the assistance to repatriates, the strengthening of HRC structures, the implementation of a disaster-preparedness training programme, planning of a community health project and negotiations with different donors for the funding of activities included in the 1996 Emergency Appeal, or akin to it.

• Sanitation microprojects

With funding provided by the Dutch Government through the Netherlands Red Cross, 83 water supply and sanitation micro-projects were implemented with and for 67 communities. The programme, started in the third quarter of 1995, contributed in 1996 USD 604,780 and the communities themselves USD 261,000. In 1996 these micro-projects benefited about 137,000 persons and are additional to the 81 completed in 1995 with ECHO and Dutch funding. In the two phases the programme has produced 11 booklets and two posters in Creole on latrine construction and maintenance, compost preparation, water cleaning and conservation, environmental protection and community work methods. Four other microprojects, initiated in two areas with Netherlands Government funds through the Netherlands marines who were part of the multinational force, are being completed by the HRC. They amount to USD 81,172 and benefit 9,000 people.

• Assistance to repatriates

During the first seven months of 1996, the HRC and the Federation Delegation assisted 2,002 repatriates, the majority of whom had been sent back to Haiti by the USA Coast Guard. The HRC provided them with HTG 200 cash grants and some food and medical care.

- **Disaster preparedness training**

The HRC, with technical and financial co-operation from the Canadian Red Cross, has implemented most of a CHF 270,000, 21-month, disaster-preparedness and first-aid training programme. It includes the production of modern teaching materials.

The HRC has also trained in Martinique, with French Red Cross co-operation, four first-aid instructors, during six months.

- **Schoolchildren's health and environmental health programme**

At the end of several months of planning and negotiations, the Haitian Red Cross and the Federation Secretariat started in September, with ECHO support, a XEU 600,000 (about CHF 918,000), one-year, community-oriented programme to provide primary health care to 22,000 schoolchildren in the areas of Kenscoff, Pétionville, Mirebalais and Hinche, and to plan and implement small sanitation-and-education projects to create a favourable environment for the children's health. The programme includes the training of local RC committees and community leaders, and their participation in the planning, the management and the evaluation. Sources of inspiration for these small projects were both the above-mentioned sanitation-microprojects programme and a USD 12,000, two-month, renovation of a 1,000-children Canadian school in Port-au-Prince, implemented last summer by HRC with American RC and IOM co-operation (not part of the Emergency Appeal).

- **HRC'S structural development**

In co-operation with ICRC the project for the structural strengthening of the HRC, started in 1995, was extended to the whole of 1996. The Federation contributed CHF 163,000 and the ICRC CHF 48,000. The project covers statutory, administrative, financial and operational areas.

A special inter-regional commission is preparing, for the end of this month, new statutes aimed at giving the National Society the necessary autonomy and a modern organisation and procedures at central, regional and municipal levels. Another national commission has been set up on resource development, particularly in the area of fund-raising.

The composition of the 13 HRC regional committees was renewed. These recently elected bodies are very committed to the institutional development process, particularly in the area of volunteer recruitment and fund-raising.

Thanks to the project, the HRC has appointed a national planning officer, a central office administrator, a blood-transfusion service administrator, and a logistician for its first aid and relief section. It has also taken other measures concerning the improvement of its paid-staff structure. However, it is still facing great needs with regard to funding and training its paid staff and its volunteers. Since April the HRC is applying radical cut-backs in its current expenditure and these are seriously limiting its operational capacity. Solving this problem is one of the main objectives of the Resource Development Commission.

A branch-development programme, with a community-rehabilitation-microproject approach, has been planned by the HRC with Netherlands RC co-operation. Over CHF 1 million funding towards this project is currently being looked for.

At the same time, the HRC has planned three projects related to the strengthening of the Blood Transfusion Service, a National Training Centre and an Ambulance Service, which are not included in the Federation 1996 Emergency Appeal, but correspond to the decision mentioned in it to develop the HRC services to the most vulnerable. These projects, as well as those proposed in this appeal, were discussed in Port-au-Prince at a February 1996 donors meeting jointly organised by the HRC, the Federation Secretariat and the ICRC. This meeting, open to all interested PNS was attended by the National Societies of Canada, Belgium, France, Netherlands, United States and Spain, and the Federation Secretariat's Americas Department. Although not all the funding possibilities identified in this meeting have materialised yet, it is worth noting that there was a consensus that the main features of the programme under examination were valid for a pluri-annual co-operation with the HRC, given the huge needs identified.

• **Technical assistance by the Federation Delegation**

Since the end of the 1995 programme until last autumn, the Federation Secretariat, while planning and looking for funds for the 1996 programme, progressively reduced its six expatriate delegation to two expatriates: the Head of Delegation [Dr Andrei Kisselev, since May, following Mr André Legault (Canadian RC)'s resignation in January, and a four-month interim filled by Mr Bas van der Steld (Netherlands RC)] and the Finance/Administration Delegate, Miss Sylvie Dossou (initially French RC).

Mrs Nathalie Scanlon (Irish RC), arrived early November to co-ordinate the Federation-Secretariat's part of the ECHO-funded programme. Mr Damian Onses (Spanish RC) will arrive on 18th November to replace Mr Thierry Legoff (French RC) as support to HRC's institutional development programme and other developmental duties.

Mr Frank Dewez (Netherlands RC), Rehabilitation Micro-projects Co-ordinator until last August, has not been replaced, but, based now in Kingston as Regional Disaster-Preparedness Delegate, he is assisting the HRC and the Haiti Delegation with the planning of the Branch Development Programme. Dr Yves Agboton, Community-Health Delegate, was not replaced at the end of his mission late January.

Outstanding needs

39% of the CHF 3.677.000 appeal target is still unfunded.

The main uncovered need is related to the CHF 900,000 relief equipment-&-materials part of the disaster-preparedness programme. Without this material supplement, the good effect of the current disaster-preparedness training programme will progressively be lost, as the relief planning and response workers will not have the means to face emergencies, as during the above-mentioned 23 October tropical depression.

Other important uncovered needs are CHF 424,000 for NS structural and logistical strengthening and CHF 110,000 for technical assistance (Delegation).

While all pledged sums have been wired to the Secretariat, the credit balance available in Geneva as at 11 November for projects other than the ECHO-funded health project and for the delegation is only CHF 98,273.

External relations

Through both the HRC and the Federation Delegation, the Programme entertains excellent relations with the Government and its agencies, as well as with intergovernmental and non

governmental organisations represented in Haiti. Some of those intergovernmental agencies, now their programmes are better funded, would be willing to co-operate with the Red Cross to match further efforts of traditional Federation donors, in view of the results being obtained.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The part of the Programme already implemented has proved to be very beneficial to the vulnerable groups assisted, as hardships caused by both chronic under-development and the sequels of the 1991-1994 crisis not only persist but are growing worse.

Donors are warmly thanked for their contributions and urgently invited to make further contributions to the Programme, in order to support the efforts of the HRC and to meet the expectations raised in the vulnerable communities by the Federation appeal.

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Annex 1: list of contributions