

IMAGE BUILDING AND PROGRAMME AWARENESS

CHF 550,000

Programme No. 01.05/98

A positive public image and high awareness of activities are key to successful fund-raising in the humanitarian sphere. Operations with which donors feel familiar and 'comfortable' are likely to attract the levels of support necessary to meet objectives and achieve the intended service delivery to beneficiaries. With sudden-onset emergencies, more often than not, aid organisations which can gain early media profile in the hours and days immediately following a disaster, attract significant funding.

The purpose of this programme is to enable the International Federation to 'kick start' media activity on operations which have yet to attract attention or have dropped out of the headlines and also put in place a 'rapid response' mechanism to ensure the fast availability of properly equipped, skilled information professionals at sudden onset disaster sites. Funding support of CHF 550,000 is sought to enable a strategic approach to Red Cross/Red Crescent field-based information activities coupled with the development of a rapid response capability.

The growth of the mass media in recent years has been dramatic with 24 hour international news channels now accepted as the norm in many countries; digital technology promises a further explosive increase in the range and number of channels. In addition, the burgeoning world wide web, accessed via the Internet, is already developing into an essential information-giving/exchange medium for millions.

In the meantime, a rising number of 'single issue' aid agencies are exploiting the hunger for news by focusing their operational and publicity efforts solely on those areas where the media 'pickings' are likely to be highest, effectively diverting resources from global organisations dedicated to restoring victims' lives long after the TV cameras have left.

Ironically, in this media age, the International Federation's stock of information delegates has rarely been lower, with just two publicity professionals currently working in Africa and Asia Pacific, two in the Americas, none in the Middle East and North Africa and five in Europe and Central Asia. Conversely, the need for the International Federation to generate a regular flow of fresh, timely and compelling images of its worldwide activities on behalf of the vulnerable has never been greater. A creative and flexible solution to the chronic under-investment in the information function is urgently required.

Objectives

To develop a round-the-clock rapid response capability to ensure immediately availability of professional publicity skills in the wake of sudden onset disasters to which the International Federation is likely to respond;

to provide the International Federation - and National Societies with specific operational requirements - with a strong pool of potential information delegates, trained to undertake short-term missions to boost awareness of long-term operations or those yet to attract extensive media/donor attention.

Plan of Action

The planned activity detailed below is intended to enhance the International Federation's image building and awareness initiatives by training and equipping two distinct but inter-related groups of public relations practitioners and making provision for a series of strategic information missions. National Societies with strong publicity departments will be asked to identify/nominate a suitably qualified staff member and at least one external information professional to participate in the programme. This group will come together for a three-day training/familiarisation course in Geneva to put in place both the rapid response and programme awareness components.

Rapid Response

The intention is to work with at least 12 National Societies, each prepared to *guarantee* the immediate availability of one member of its publicity team for one month, in the event of a sudden-onset disaster.

Programme Awareness

Depending on the response to this appeal, the International Federation will draw on the 'external' group to undertake a series of information missions aimed at enhancing media profile and preparing materials to enable National Societies to publicise selected operations in their own countries. The budget for this element is premised on eight missions of 15 days (including travel) and the production of video footage and print items.

Equipment

At least six information field kits - comprising a digital video camera (DVC), a satellite telephone and a computer with modem, DVC downloading capability and text/image transmission - are needed to ensure delegates are properly equipped to meet modern media requirements, prepare print materials and uplift words and pictures for dissemination on the International Federation's Internet site. The media ERU (emergency response unit) equipment and experience will contribute to developing this method of working.

Training

A three day course will extend the group's knowledge of Red Cross/Red Crescent Principles and activities, instil the essentials for achieving a high media profile following a sudden-onset disaster, provide full training for maximising the information field kits and ensure participants can produce the required AV/print materials to the required timescale and standard.