

# HAITI

## HEALTH, RELIEF AND CAPACITY BUILDING

**CHF 2,851,000**  
**70,000 beneficiaries**

**Programme No. 01.24/98**

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The Republic of Haiti remains the poorest nation in the western hemisphere, its fragile democracy unable to resolve its persistent socio-economic problems. The GNP per capita is about USD 260 and the distribution of wealth conspicuously unequal. Access to health and education is severely limited: about 70% of the population are illiterate. Major international support shores up the country: external aid covers 60% of the regular budget of the Republic and almost all of its investment budget.

Haiti's story in 1997 underlined the fragility of its new democratic institutions: the weakness of the new Haitian National Police; teachers' and doctors' strikes; and two general strikes. The tragic capsizing of an overcrowded ferry boat in which hundreds drowned symbolised for many the administrative shortcomings of the government. The scheduled departure of the UN peacekeeping mission in November 1997, after three years, gave rise to worried speculation about the possible effects on the country's security.

### *Red Cross Action in 1997*

The Haitian Red Cross (HRC) has been going through a steady process of institutional change. In February 1997, its General Assembly approved new Statutes for the Society. The Society has been able to establish 13 Regional Committees, although not all are operational yet.

The HRC, although it has not yet completed its Strategic Development Plan, has established its main priorities for a project-based approach to the many needs in the country. The State has delegated some major responsibilities to the NS, such as the National Blood Service (1986) and, in the absence of other suitable structures, most disaster response functions.

Significant donor support in the course of the year enabled the Society to make major progress in expanding its services to the vulnerable. A 30-month programme to develop three of the country's most vulnerable regions got underway in March, while a Community Reinforcement project in four regions of the country, benefiting more than 25,000 children and establishing 85 micro-projects in

water and sanitation, was completed in October. The capacity of the Red Cross Ambulance Service has been greatly extended. The start-up of a National Training Centre should provide a major resource base for NS staff and volunteers.

## *Objectives in 1998*

The overall aim of the Haitian Red Cross is to meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups in the country and to strengthen its own institutional capacity accordingly.

- | To further the National Society's institutional development;
- | to reinforce the Society's disaster preparedness and response capacity;
- | to develop the capacity of the Blood Service;
- | to structure and define a Training Policy for use in the National Training Centre;
- | to meet the needs of specific vulnerable groups through appropriate health and welfare support.

## *Plan of Action*

### **Disaster Preparedness Project**

This project will continue support to the ongoing NS Community-Based Disaster Preparedness Project, in order to strengthen and render more effective disaster preparedness in all 13 regions. It will concentrate on equipping volunteers and providing them with training to increase their capacity to respond to disasters. There is also a well-identified need to raise awareness at volunteer and community level of the hazards posed by environmental degradation.

### **Community Action and Nutrition**

The project aims to improve nutrition levels among children, the elderly, and pregnant women in four communities: Anse à Veau (Grande-Anse), Anse à Galet (Ouest), Fort Liberté (Nord Est) et Port de Paix (Nord-Ouest). It will survey the dietary habits of these vulnerable groups and the available foodstuffs, conduct basic training in nutrition at community level and seek to improve caloric intake by using community participative methods. The beneficiaries in each community would choose a micro-project which not only met nutritional needs at the family level but would also include an income-generating activity (e.g. sale of market-garden produce) to assure the long-term sustainability of the programme.

### **Environmental and School Health**

This project proposes to improve hygiene standards and in particular the dental health of schoolchildren in the Léogâne region (Ouest). Four schools have been identified for this project, which builds on experience gained in 1997 in a similar project, funded by ECHO. A second component will assist the communities of Haut Artibonite, Port de Paix and Fort Liberté in sinking wells and providing clean drinking water. Red Cross support will be directed towards improvements in sanitation, the management of garbage and education on sanitation.

### **Blood Programme**

The HRC intends to make improvements in its blood programme in order to meet the basic blood needs of the population, notably through the promotion of blood donation. New testing procedures and greater controls must be introduced — requiring additional equipment, materials, reagents, blood

bags, and training. It will also include training in prevention of HIV/AIDS transmission, counselling, and confidentiality. New measures need to be urgently adopted to ensure self sustainability of the programme though cost recovery and legal safeguards must be set up.

### **“Kay Nou”**

This social welfare project - “Our House” in Creole - began in 1997. It targets single homeless women from the countryside who live on the streets of Port-au-Prince. It provides them with temporary accommodation, simple skills and literacy training and will give them help in returning to their communities.

### **Institutional Development Programme / Co-operation Support**

Federation Delegation support to the HRC has been gradually shifting from relief to development. The Federation will commit more resources to assisting the NS in capacity-building. While the Port-au-Prince Delegation has been reduced, support from the Kingston-based Regional Delegation is increasing. The NS was one of eight in the region to participate in 1997 in the first year of the Regional Resource Development Programme. The Regional Delegate in charge continues to work closely with the Society’s Resource Development Commission and the Federation Delegation in Port-au-Prince.

An institutional development workshop will be held to examine organisational issues and to establish clear lines for co-operation in the framework of the Haitian Red Cross’s adoption into the regional Red Cross structure and its active participation in the Caribbean Co-operation of the Red Cross.

Administrative and other support will continue to the Netherlands Red Cross/Netherlands Government-funded Branch Development Project, operational since March 1997 in the Regional Red Cross Committees of Les Cayes, Jacmel and Jeremie where it is promoting capacity building, micro-projects, and income-generating activities, while at the same time increasing the HRC’s regional co-ordinating mechanism.

### **Institutional Development Programme - Training Centre**

A National Training Centre is already operational, temporarily in the office of the Federation Delegation. The NS aims to introduce a well-integrated training programme for the skills development of its staff and volunteers in all service areas. The programme has started with training for first aiders and will continue with training for community health agents.