

THE CAUCASUS

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

CHF 18,553,000

1,187,000 beneficiaries

Programme No. 01.39/98

The Transcaucasus region — Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia — is starting to make its long recovery from the challenging process of acquiring independence, settling internal conflicts, struggling with little or no health or social welfare infrastructure and coping with the effects of the transition to a new socio-economic system.

In spite of the general economic and political stabilisation in the region the groups assisted by the International Federation are still highly vulnerable. Unless the governments of the three countries find additional resources to improve the well-being of pensioners, chronically ill people, long term patients in health institutions, internally displaced living in camps and other collective centres, there will continue to be an acute need of humanitarian intervention.

Federation programmes including food assistance, medical supplies, renovation, shelter, income generation, agriculture, institutional and resource development, home visiting nurses and rehabilitation have been designed to assist those most affected by the political, social and economic changes in each of the Transcaucasus countries.

The Operation

Since the start of the Transcaucasus emergency relief operation in 1993 over one million people have been assisted and more than CHF 130 million have been mobilised as a result of Federation Appeals. With support from National Societies and other donors, all projects included in the 1997 Emergency Appeal were implemented.

During the year 14,000 MT of food assistance were provided to 90,000 lone elderly, 150,000 IDPs and 19,000 long term patients in health institutions. A total of 350,000 food parcels were produced in the region, and hundreds of thousands of people benefited from campaigns aimed at preventing malaria, intestinal and skin parasites and sexually transmitted diseases. Sixteen psychiatric institutions were renovated in Armenia and Georgia, as were six collective centres for internally displaced from Abkhazia.

1997 was a turning point as Federation's activities shifted from relief operations towards capacity building, institutional and resource development of the National Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies (NSs) of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The 1998 plan will focus on the expansion of development support to the three NSs.

The International Federation's 1998 programme is aimed at assisting the most vulnerable groups who continue to depend on international humanitarian assistance. The target groups will be similar: lone elderly, IDPs, long-stay patients in institutions, general population at high risk, but numbers will be reduced.

The following requirements have been identified as the priority for the 1998 humanitarian assistance programme in the Transcaucasus region:

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| <i>Food</i> | 60,000 internally displaced people in Azerbaijan and Georgia, 62,500 lone pensioners and 4,000 chronically sick patients in psychiatric institutions in all three countries will require supplementary food assistance. |
| <i>Shelter</i> | The same group of beneficiaries needs basic shelter and hygiene infrastructure (IDP camps, collective centres and selected health institutions). |
| <i>Health</i> | Delayed recovery of the health care system in all three countries left hundreds of thousands of people without access to quality health services. These people will benefit through preventive campaigns to be continued by the NSs in co-operation with local health authorities. Distribution of medicaments to those who cannot afford them (lonely elderly, psychiatric patients, etc.) is a priority. Efforts to fight against re-emerging diseases like malaria have already proved successful and need to be continued. |
| <i>Social Welfare</i> | In spite of improving macro economic indicators, neither governments nor NSs have been able to ensure minimum health and social welfare services to lone pensioners. The Red Cross/Red Crescent will probably continue to be the only ones with the expertise and database to ensure services for this group. |
| <i>Development</i> | Further support is required to maintain the process of institutional development, capacity building, resource development, disaster preparedness and other new programme initiatives, including participation in the CIS-wide population movement programme sponsored by PRM (Programme for Refugees and Migration of the US State Department) in co-operation with UNHCR. |
| <i>Infrastructure</i> | In spite of the gradual withdrawal from direct emergency relief, the Federation will continue to play an important role in co-ordination of the planned programme in 1998 and beyond. Much of the equipment used by delegations has become outdated and will need replacing. |

Objectives in 1998

- w** To gradually shift the focus to development activities, with a special emphasis on capacity building of the National Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, bearing in mind the still high need for relief interventions;
- w** to provide assistance to IDPs/refugees who want to return to their home areas, as and when

political solutions are found for areas affected by conflict;

- w to continue assistance to the most vulnerable groups whose very survival will to a large extent depend on international humanitarian assistance;
- w to maintain health care and social welfare assistance at 1995-1997 levels to the most vulnerable groups of the population;
- w to enlarge the capacity of the ONSs to make them responsible for planning and management of humanitarian assistance programmes aimed at assisting the most vulnerable;



- w to improve the capacities of the ONSs, enabling them to respond to existing or anticipated population movements.

Plan of Action

ARMENIA

Relief

Only the most vulnerable groups will be given direct relief assistance in 1998. A specifically designed supplementary food basket will be provided to 2,500 lone pensioners and 2,000 long-stay patients in psychiatric institutions on a regular basis. Some 500 MT of bulk food will be required.

Health

Anti-Malaria Campaign

Malaria is becoming a major cause of concern in the Caucasus. To counter the potential of a situation similar to Azerbaijan (see below), the Federation, Armenian Red Cross Society (ArmRCS) and Armenian Health Authorities have prepared a campaign to be launched before the situation gets out of control. The programme's main components are training of local medical personnel, medicinal supply and chemoprophylaxis, spraying in the communities most at risk, community mobilisation, preventive measures and a public awareness campaign.

Campaign Against Intestinal and Skin Parasites

Lack of clean water and overcrowded accommodation are the main reasons for an explosion of intestinal and skin parasites in Armenia. In 1996-1997, the Federation and ArmRCS in co-operation with the Armenian Ministry of Health implemented a successful project to fight the diseases, which should be continued in 1998. It comprises health education, community mobilisation to improve sanitary conditions, provision of medicines and basic laboratory equipment and media campaigns.

Campaign Against Sexually Transmitted Diseases

A baseline survey conducted in the frame of the 1997 programme revealed that anti-STD medicines are not available and that doctors diagnose and treat STDs using outdated laboratory tests and treatment methods. The 1998 programme aims at halting the rising growth of STDs among the main target population (age 15-25) and to raise general public awareness about STDs and how they can be prevented.

Rehabilitation of Spinal Cord Injured

As a result of the 1988 earthquake, there are many people with spinal cord injuries in Armenia. The Federation built the International Post Trauma Rehabilitation Centre in Yerevan to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society, and to change public opinion concerning the handicapped. It can rehabilitate 140 patients a year, and waiting lists are far in excess of capacity. Those paralysed in road and other accidents, or due to illness are also eligible for treatment at the IPTRC, which now belongs to ArmRCS, and serves as their biggest resource, both for the country and for the whole Caucasus region. In 1998, a public awareness campaign on road safety will be planned and executed by the staff of the IPTRC.

Social Welfare

Home Visiting Nurses Programme

The HVNP is one of the main services of ArmRCS and has great potential. It provides lone elderly — the most vulnerable group in Armenia — with social and medical care. Most elderly people lost their pensions and savings when the Soviet Union collapsed and are in desperate need of support. ArmRCS is the only organisation providing for them and plans to increase the number of beneficiaries from 1,650 to 2,500.

Disaster Preparedness

Disaster Preparedness and Response

In 1988 an earthquake killed 25,000 people, and in 1997 more than 50 minor quakes were registered, causing limited damage to infrastructure. On the outskirts of the capital, Yerevan, a controversial nuclear power plant provides the city with electricity. Floods and land slides are frequent. The country still is entangled in a conflict with Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. This programme aims at developing an ArmRCS Disaster Preparedness Plan based on the strengthening of communities and regional Red Cross branches.

Emergency Stocks

No national Disaster Preparedness Plan exists in Armenia. As a part of the Red Cross disaster

preparedness activities, a stock of basic emergency items (tents, stoves, water purification tablets, candles, blankets etc.) is urgently needed to enable ArmRCS to react in the event of small scale disasters and to increase Red Cross visibility.

Community Based Disaster Preparedness

This programme aims to utilise existing ArmRCS resources in first aid and disaster knowledge to strengthen communities most at risk. Some 300 volunteers and 18 trainers will be trained to be part of the future ArmRCS Disaster Preparedness/Response Network. In addition, the programme envisages starting four Disaster Preparedness/First Aid response schools in the four most exposed regions in Armenia.

Development

Institutional Development

ArmRCS has been the Federation's implementing partner for many years, which has helped the NS to become an organisation with a structural emphasis on logistics and a very centralised management. Few resources remain to focus on the development of regional branches, decentralisation of authority and development of a foundation based on volunteers and youth. In 1997 a restructuring programme was started, emphasising decentralisation, income generation, governance, development of new community based programmes and restructuring of existing programmes. This effort needs support for two more years.

AZERBAIJAN

Relief

Southern Camps (35,000 beneficiaries)

Since the end of 1994 the Federation has been involved in providing comprehensive assistance (food, shelter, water/sanitation, health, etc.) to 45,000 IDPs in the Southern Camps. New registration conducted in the middle of 1997 revealed that approximately 25% had left, either to the liberated areas in the South of Azerbaijan or to other areas of the country. At the beginning of 1998 the number of beneficiaries will be reduced to 35,000. Approximately 3,300 MT of food will be required to cover needs in 1998.

Assistance to the camps in 1998 will include: distribution of a monthly food ration (275 MT a month); maintenance of shelter conditions (plastic sheeting for roofing of mud houses is to be provided every year); promotion and further development of self-sustainable economy by providing economic opportunities to the camp residents; promotion of food production through agriculture/income generation projects to supplement the food ration provided by the Federation; assistance to IDPs with mini-credits, building material and working equipment; creation of jobs and services for the camp population; maintenance of water/sanitation, roads and drainage infrastructure at the minimum required level; provision of basic health care/health education; continuation of the anti-malaria campaign; community development; assistance to those who may voluntarily decide to return to the liberated areas.

Socially Vulnerable (30,000 beneficiaries)

30,000 lone pensioners in urban areas will receive four food parcels a year. The 65 kg of food they each receive annually will not save their lives by itself, but substantially adds to their otherwise meagre sources of food. An evaluation of the programme by one of the Federation's major donors confirmed that this group of beneficiaries will require continuous assistance for one more year.

Health

Anti-malaria Campaign (Southern Camps)

Malaria, eradicated in Azerbaijan in 1960, has reappeared. The Southern Camps region saw a high incidence of the disease and a successful anti-malaria campaign was launched by the Federation/Azerbaijan Red Crescent (AzRCS) in 1995. One of the most important elements is the coverage of not only IDPs, but all 200,000 residents in the districts where the camps are located. Information is disseminated nation-wide through the National Society's branches and mass media, reaching around 500,000 persons.

Basic Health Care (Southern Camps)

In 1998 the International Federation/AzRCS plan to continue supporting six health care posts, addressing the most acute health care problems (scabies, malaria, diphtheria immunisation), through organising public health education activities, First Aid courses and training of national staff. An Integrated Sick Child Management approach is planned to be introduced.

Medicaments for Chronically Ill Elderly

AzRCS Visiting Nurses will supply one year needs of essential drugs to 25,000 chronically ill elderly.

Social Welfare

Home Visiting Nurses

Provision of basic medical and social home care to 7,000 elderly living alone will be continued nation-wide by direct funding support, technical training and training in first aid.

Development

The Institutional Development programme will continue technical assistance in relief and medical activities with an emphasis on building internal management capacity and a long-term resource base. A wide range of training activities for all departments, press and media support to enhance AzRCS's image, and further development of the resource base will be carried out. Direct beneficiaries will be headquarters and field personnel, while various sectors of the population will benefit through the expansion of present programmes: Visiting Nurses Programme into urban areas and institution of new programmes building on existing strengths and linking departments (youth volunteers receiving first aid training from the medical department etc).

The Income Generation programme will be linked to Institutional Development and probably expand to 12 more branches in 1998. The Federation will work with the chairpersons and closely monitor proposals, purchases, budgets and reports.

GEORGIA

Relief

Food Parcels for Lone Pensioners and Handicapped

From the most up to date reports, the bulk of the vulnerable pensioners and handicapped served appears to be in the urban and high mountain areas in the north of Georgia. In 1998, by targeting these two areas of high food vulnerability alone, the total number of beneficiaries the Federation would need to cover is 30,000 with four rounds of distributions.

Institutional Feeding Programme for the Most Vulnerable in Institutions

Throughout 1997 a total of 68 institutions with 7,000 patients received bulk food. In 1998 the Federation plans to continue supplementary feeding, but reduced to target the most vulnerable

institutions and ensuring basic supplementary feeding to up to 2,000 long stay patients. This will cushion the institutions least able to cope with ongoing health care reforms.

Bulk Food Assistance to Socially Vulnerable in Western Georgia

Following the successful feeding programmes carried out by the Federation in Western Georgia in early 1997, it has been agreed that the Federation will no longer target traditional vulnerable groups such as IDPs and multi-child families. Instead, it will aim to target assistance to the most vulnerable individual families in the Samegrelo region - an area that has been traditionally supported by the Federation and which is not covered by any other agency.

Whilst noting that IDPs *per se* should not be seen as a target group, it is understood that the project should seek to improve the lives of the most vulnerable IDPs who have been forced by civil war to relocate to collective centres in the west of Georgia. All agencies operating in this area agree that these IDPs (as opposed to the privately accommodated) are by far the most vulnerable. If there is a spontaneous movement back to some areas of Abkhazia during the course of the programme, stocks could be diverted to give families Red Cross 'care packages' which could help support returnees in the early stages. The target population is estimated at 25,000 (including 10,000 in collective centres in Samegrelo) to be included for four distributions.

Health

Medicines for Chronically Ill Elderly

A programme to improve the general health status of lone elderly suffering from chronic diseases will continue to provide essential medicines for treatment of 25,000 for the year through the out- and inpatient facilities of the Georgian Red Cross Society (GRCS). Dissemination of up to date information on rational use of essential drugs among doctors and nurses working in 33 GRCS outpatient departments nation-wide and hospital wards in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Rustavi will take place within the framework of the Visiting Nurses Programme.

Prevention of Sexually Transmitted Diseases

This programme will aim at prevention of STDs in the 15-25 age group (particularly secondary school and university students) by promotion of behavioural changes that reduce risk of STD acquisition and ensure early symptom recognition. The target population throughout the year is 30,000 high school and university students. Secondary prevention of STDs will be provided through the specialised units at primary health care level (polyclinics and dispensaries).

Social Welfare

Home Visiting Nurses Programme

Continuing the 1997 programme basic medical and social services will be supplied to housebound lone elderly living alone. GRCS/Federation will maintain the VNP network throughout the country and, to increase its efficiency in providing basic home care to approximately 5,000 lone elderly, continually upgrade the quality of medical services to beneficiaries in 33 Red Cross polyclinics and three hospital wards, ensuring access to basic diagnostic services.

Development

Institutional Development

In 1997 a programme was started to restructure GRCS to cope with the realities of the

post-emergency phase. The programme has emphasised decentralisation of power from headquarters to the regions, income generation, governance, development of new community based programmes based on voluntarism and restructuring existing programmes.

Development of the Georgian Red Cross Financial Department

The goal is to support the strengthening of the GRCS financial department to enable the NS to become financially self-sufficient through its own fund raising activities.

Development of a Georgian Red Cross Self-Sufficiency Pilot Project in Kvemo Kartli Region

The aim is to finance a pilot programme for the development of a self-supporting GRCS Regional branch. The objectives set are to input sufficient resources into a GRCS Regional branch to allow a pilot study to be carried out, by measuring the achievements the Delegation and GRCS expect to be able to track, in the specific regional context. The pilot programme would be centred on Rustavi, the region administrative capital of the Kvemo Kartli region.

Capacity

Whereas operational capacity of the NSs of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia still need to be strengthened, 1997 demonstrated further expansion of their participation in direct planning, management, implementation of and reporting on ongoing relief, rehabilitation and development programmes. Except for the Southern Camps operation in Azerbaijan and reconstruction projects in Armenia and Georgia, the role of the operating NSs in implementation of the ongoing programmes has been considerably enlarged.

This process has been facilitated by the regional Institutional Development project which also included assistance in establishing resource mobilisation practices. As a result ArmRCS has undertaken a major reorganisation of its administrative infrastructure to decentralise and optimise available human and other resources. However, one of the major challenges for the NSs continues to be creating the ability to mobilise core resources internally.

These developments have been largely initiated and supported by the Federation which, in turn, has been adjusting and will continue to adjust to the changing situation. The structure of the Delegations has evolved with a decreasing number of expatriate staff directly responsible for management of relief programmes. The number of expatriate staff assigned to assist in development of the NSs in the region will continue to grow.

Co-operation

While the number of international humanitarian agencies operating in the Transcaucasus has fallen, the Federation continues to work closely with major providers of international humanitarian agencies of the United Nations system and with the ICRC.

