

# ***ETHIOPIA: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE***

*4 January, 2000*

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*situation report no. 1*

*period covered: January - September, 1999*

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*A low level of funding has caused delays in programme implementation, and the Federation, in concert with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS), has adjusted the programme activities accordingly and in the process provided effective, selective support for the ERCS's Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDP).*

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## ***The context***

Ethiopia is one of the most disaster-prone countries in Africa. Over the last two decades, there have been numerous large and small-scale disasters, both natural and man-made. The most common natural phenomena include drought, famine, floods, hail storms, plant pests and insects. Earthquakes are less frequent but lurk as potentially devastating disasters.

The Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS), with strong support from the Federation, has been continuously engaged in disaster response programmes over the past 20 years. As a result, the National Society has developed its infrastructure and facilities nation-wide in an effort to respond in time to the needs of the most vulnerable.

Although the National Society has developed the skills for disaster response programmes, the disaster preparedness (DP), prevention and mitigation programme activities of the Society have not been equally developed or well-integrated to generate the desired benefits. In addition, the Society has experienced problems retaining skilled staff - a problem which is currently being addressed through the Institutional Development programme. The Society is seeking to build its preparedness and response capacities through a strategy of decentralisation in an attempt to retain qualified staff closest to disaster intervention points. The Society's renewed emphasis on prevention and preparedness is in line with the country's Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Commission (DPPC) strategy of promoting integrated disaster management activities to respond effectively to the drought and famine-related disasters that frequently hit the country.

The overall objective of this one-year programme is to boost disaster preparedness capacities of the ERCS through technical relief support from the Federation in order to set up standardised needs

assessments and early warning information gathering systems, communications, emergency materials, and the pre-positioning of relief items for immediate response to 25,000 disaster victims.

The programme aims at maximising use of existing capacity and expertise in disaster relief to contribute to the establishment of integrated national disaster preparedness and response programmes in conformity with DPCC national policy guidelines and the mission statement of the ERCS. The following specific programme objectives were established for 1999:

- provide on-the-job training and orientation for ERCS staff in management of disasters before, during, and after the event.
- pre-position a minimum contingency stock to respond to small-scale interventions.
- install Federation-standard radio/communications systems in strategic locations/ branches and to conduct training on standard operating procedures for telecommunications and logistics for branch and relevant headquarters staff.
- develop the capacity to gather and disseminate relevant, timely, and accurate information which will enable ERCS to respond rapidly and effectively to emergencies.
- revitalise youth and volunteer involvement in disaster response interventions.

The ERCS also planned to continue its Comprehensive Development Programme (CDP), the ultimate goal of which is a Red cross Society fully capable of improving the situation and quality of life of the most vulnerable in the water and sanitation, community based health care, shelter, and environmental sectors.

## ***Latest events***

The most event significant which impacted the humanitarian situation during 1999 was the border conflict with Eritrea which had resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, with thousands more directly or indirectly affected.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

The Federation focus is on capacity building and system development in all the various core functions and departments of the ERCS. The country delegation, through its delegates, works closely with and from within the ERCS' key departments and top management, participating in specially created Management Groups responsible for programme preparation, co-ordination, implementation and monitoring.

The support from the Federation includes an element of technical support from the Regional Delegation, particularly in water and sanitation, Disaster Response and Preparedness, and Information.

### ***Implementation and Achievements*** ●

The activities originally planned for 1999 were merged at the beginning of the year with those activities carried over from the CDP Phase-in period (August-December 1998). This caused a delay in the implementation of activities, thereby moving most of the programme implementation to the second half of the year.

Since implementation of the Federation's activities takes place in support of ongoing and emergency ERCS activities, there was a large shift in human and logistical resources to deal with the consequences of the ongoing Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict as well as a natural disaster in the form of a severe drought. The country delegation and its resources were also very stretched at some points during the year, particularly May and June, when the drought response and its concomitant planning were at their height.

While the ongoing planning and implementation of the CDP is progressing under some of the new systems being piloted, other systems necessary for certain components of the CDP and for the organisational structure itself are either not in place or are yet to be developed. For example, the

development of the Management Information System (MIS) for the whole organisation is a significant task that is being prioritised in terms of departmental/organisational needs.

Many of the new department heads and core staff were recruited and in place in the new organisational structure and attended induction courses in June 1999. The induction courses were largely developed and facilitated by members of the country delegation, in their areas of competence.

The basis for the new financial systems were developed during the year, with testing carried out in June, including the introduction of a completely new financial coding system and new procedures. Standardised financial reporting formats were introduced for the last half of the year.

A consolidated Branch Capacity Assessment was undertaken in three branches was facilitated by the Regional Delegation. Pilot branches were oriented into the CDP by means of a workshop for 25 people.

An office manager was recruited in June for the Federation Delegation, to allow the finance delegate to devote more time to ERCS development.

### ***General Constraints.*** ●

The major programme constraints have been:

- Delays and resistance towards creating an acceptable salary scale that would attract a reasonable quality of staff.
- Difficulties in reducing staff.
- The shortage of qualified staff during the first 6 months of the year resulted in the country delegation being overloaded.
- The low skill base in the ERCS has meant more time had to be devoted to training staff in basic skills than anticipated. Delegates spent a large amount of time on this type of activity.
- Commitments of the ERCS to the relief operation in the north of the country have meant delays in implementation and unavailability of key managers.

## ***Outstanding needs***

This appeal received a little over 47% funding, and programme adjustments were made accordingly. Donors are now requested to provide support to the Federation's 2000 appeal for Ethiopia.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

Effective contacts were established and maintained with respective government Ministries and agencies, UN agencies and NGO's, and the media.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

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