

# GUATEMALA

## REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

CHF 1,550,000  
78,000 beneficiaries

Programme no 01.22/99

### The Context

Guatemala is the third poorest country in Latin America: in the human development index for this region only Nicaragua and Haiti rank lower. An estimated 75% of the population live in poverty, while 46% lack the most basic services. Mortality rates are high, with a large incidence of deaths from cholera, malaria and malnutrition.

After 36 years of civil unrest, peace was restored to the country when peace agreements were signed in 1996. They included a commitment to the reintegration of displaced people, ex-combatants and returnees in order to build democracy and to modernise structures and the economy. Although the conflict is over, violence persists and social disruption is widespread, threatening the country's fragile stability. Humanitarian organisations like the Guatemala Red Cross (GRC) can play an important part in the peace process, by strengthening civil society and addressing fundamental needs through well-targeted activities.

Guatemala is a disaster-prone country. It has 30 active volcanoes, one of which showered ash on the capital city in 1998. Frequent earthquakes and heavy rainfall cause serious erosion and environmental degradation, while fires devastated large areas of prime forest in the northern department of El Petén in 1998, destroying unique ecosystems. But the biggest disaster of the year was Hurricane Mitch in late October: Guatemala was one of the four Central American countries that suffered severe, countrywide destruction. A separate appeal (33/98) covering post-hurricane emergency relief assistance was issued on 4 November and another appeal, encompassing rehabilitation, has just been released. The two rehabilitation programmes will be carefully co-ordinated.

### The Operation

The Federation launched an emergency appeal (23/97) in November 1997, seeking support for a Rehabilitation Programme made up of two components. The Human Development component was designed to provide targeted populations with a set of basic services in community-based primary health care, disaster preparedness and community development. A parallel Institutional Development component aimed at strengthening the capacity of the National Society. Both are now well under way. In an extensive and highly participatory planning process from March to July 1998, the GRC developed a detailed plan of action for

the rehabilitation programme, outlined below. Similarly, a national development plan is being produced, following a series of diagnostic workshops in every branch.

### Objectives of the Operation

The primary objectives of the Guatemala Rehabilitation Programme are:

- To improve the health and the standard of living of vulnerable communities in selected target areas
- To strengthen the organisational capacity of the Guatemala Red Cross.

### Plan of Action

- Human Development

The objective of this programme is to respond to the needs of the population through programmes in three closely related areas – community-based primary health care, disaster preparedness, and community education and training. The programme was initiated in 1998 in seven branches in three geographical areas or departments (Alta Verapaz, Quetzaltenango and San Marcos). It will be expanded to include other departments during 1999.

The community based health care programme focuses on four key areas: health care for women, child health, general health including HIV/AIDS/STDs prevention, and environmental health.

Two branches have signed contracts with the Ministry of Health (MoH)/ SIAS (Sistema Integral de Atención en Salud) to provide basic health services to a total of 28,800 persons.

Activities include mobile health

teams, training of health promoters and traditional birth attendants, health education, and setting up basic community health units and pharmacies. All other branches are following the same MoH guidelines, but without formal contracts.

The community based disaster preparedness programme, which forms part of a regional programme, includes training in disaster preparedness, first aid, rescue and the most common accidents in daily life. The programme is closely linked to the strengthening of emergency and disaster response capacity included in the institutional development programme.

Community education and training prepares communities for their participation in technical projects such as water and sanitation, self-help activities and socio-economic micro-projects. In addition, the GRC has a project to disseminate International Humanitarian Law and the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. This project is supported by the ICRC, and is closely co-ordinated with all other activities.

- Institutional Development

The institutional development initiative undertaken during the past year will continue in 1999 when the focus will gradually shift towards the branch level, both directly and through national programmes. A number of priorities have been defined:

Strengthening governance will be based on a clear definition of roles and function, distinct from management. A number of workshops will be held for board members at central and branch levels.

Improving management capacity will enable the GRC to effectively plan and implement suitable programmes. The management team will be expanded, and project management, administration and accounting procedures will be further improved.

Branch development will target existing branches, as well as some areas or departments not yet covered by the GRC. Individual branch development plans will address institutional development, programme development and resource development. Training of staff and volunteers and upgrading of infrastructure and facilities will continue to be key components. New branch buildings will be constructed in at least four locations (with funding from the Spanish Red Cross). Additional external funding may be sought for the construction of basic structures for newly opened branches. Relationships between branches and with Headquarters will be strengthened.

Resource development will enable the National Society to gradually take over responsibility for the funding of its services. Activities will include national campaigns, donor and membership recruitment, increased cost recovery for selected services, and improved fund-raising at both national and branch levels. A national training programme has been set up to develop human resources, in order to expand the skills base and improve services. Training of staff and volunteers will continue in 1999.

Resource Planning. To increase and strengthen human and financial resources and so ensure the smoother running of the institution, the recruitment and training of volunteers and the carrying out of fundraising programmes will be carefully planned.

The Youth programme, initiated in 1998 at the central level and in four pilot branches, will be expanded to include more branches.

Building up a national capacity for emergency and disaster response is a key element of the programme; it will create a network of well-trained relief workers, with the necessary communication, transport and logistics systems.

## Capacity

- The Operating National Society

In the early 1990s the GRC went through a crisis period when a slow decline of activities, and a deterioration of its financial situation compounded by internal conflicts, weakened it. However, the branches managed to maintain some activities throughout this period, and in mid-1996 a reorganisation process began, with advice and support from the Federation.

The GRC currently has 21 branches, a few of which are non-operational. There is no separate branch in the capital city. Some departments have more than one branch, while other departments (including El Petén) have no representation at all. Territorial coverage will be expanded during the year. The GRC has a small but dedicated volunteer base, and recruitment

and training is a priority issue. Membership needs to be increased, as does the participation of women and minority groups.

Headquarters management was strengthened in 1998, but lack of project staff remains a problem. The participatory planning process has evolved gradually, and proved useful in shaping more realistic operational plans as well as the National Development Plan of the GRC.

- The Federation

The Federation's National Co-ordination Office for Guatemala is based in the Guatemala Red Cross Headquarters, with two development delegates working directly with the GRC on a full-time basis. The regional finance delegate is also based there on a part-time basis, in order to provide budgetary support to the programme, and work directly with the National Society on the development of financial and administrative systems and procedures.

In addition, the Federation's Regional Delegation is based in Guatemala and provides managerial and technical support through its Head of Delegation, its Regional Health, Disaster Preparedness and Information Delegates, as well as its Regional Youth Consultant.

#### Co-operation

Good working relationships have been established among the various components of the Movement present in Guatemala: the Federation, the ICRC, the Guatemala Red Cross and representatives of participating National Societies.