

SOUTHERN CONE OF SOUTH AMERICA: ***Regional Programmes***

09 August 1999

appeal no. 01.23/99

situation report no. 01

period covered: 1 January - 30 June 1999

Relief, disaster preparedness, cross-border projects, youth and capacity building programmes were maintained, despite severe funding difficulties, a deteriorating economic background and increasing social problems.

The context

The 1998 reports and 1999 forecasts of United Nations agencies all point to serious setbacks for development in Latin America. Unemployment, according to ILO, increased from 7.2% to 8.4%, and the tendency is worsening this year, leading to an expected 9.5%. Again according to ILO, 59% of the economically active population in Latin America works in the informal sector, representing a serious problem for the economic development of the region.

In its latest report, CEPAL shows that the world economic crisis and, especially, the Asian crisis, has affected Latin-American economic development. In 1997 GNP growth reached 5.3%. Last year it fell to 2.3%. A recent Interamerican Bank meeting confirmed this trend and foresaw a continuous GNP fall.

Another negative factor is identified in a UNICEF report, which shows a worrying decrease in schooling. One out of four students in Latin America fails to reach mid-primary level. IDB figures show that last year's schooling growth-rate in the region (2.3%) is lower than in Eastern Asia (3.3%).

The return of democracy to the region has not brought a corresponding change in judicial systems of Latin-American countries. According to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, they are the most inefficient and corrupt in the world. Many are governed by laws approved before democracy became established, and so do not allow courts to investigate crimes committed in the past. The endemic nature of impunity has ruined the concept of justice for most South Americans.

In such a context, the increase in crime and criminal violence registered in most countries of the region is not surprising. A recent UNESCO report shows that Latin America is one of the most violent regions of the world. The unequal distribution of wealth, unemployment, a crisis of values, a lack of confidence in institutions, drug consumption and breaking family ties are proven causes of violence. This panoply of ills promotes social instability and creates a vicious circle which generates more violence.

Latest events

In Brazil criminality in Rio de Janeiro has led to the elaboration of survival manuals and strategies. In the city of Sao Paulo, murder is the main cause of death among youngsters.

In Bolivia, because of a recessive economic policy, the firing of almost 20,000 employees of public companies and municipal governments, and a minimal 6% increase of the minimum salary (USD 53), have caused a social crisis.

In Chile, the mobilisation of indigenous minorities has increased significantly, sometimes leading to violent situations. The minorities are fighting for their right to settle on their original land and other rights of citizenship. This is a phenomenon occurring elsewhere in the Americas.

In Paraguay, the murder of the Paraguayan constitutional vice-president brought an outbreak of violence which took the country close to civil war. After clashes of civilian and military forces that left six dead, and the resignation of the President, the crisis ended and the situation returned to normal.

In Peru, President Fujimori's pursuit of re-election has generated a social mobilisation and protests which threaten to end in a national strike. The most important event of this period was the establishment of a new border between Peru and Ecuador, ending a long conflict and a major source of tension in the region.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

National Societies/Federation Programmes •

Relief Operations •

Strong rains came earlier than usual in Peru, Bolivia and part of Argentina, producing major floods which left dozens dead and thousands affected. In Peru, two evaluations were carried out in Iquitos and the need for an operation to support more than 2,500 families was identified. A Delegate has been in the field since 1 July and the operation is planned to be carried out for two months and cover 3,076 families. In Bolivia, the NS has reported that the government was able to respond to needs. Floods in Argentina affected regions with a very sparse population.

Rains which fell in north-eastern Brazil were warmly welcomed, especially at Roraima, a place strongly affected by former droughts. On the other hand, Chile was affected by a serious drought which led to a drastic programme of energy rationing.

All these phenomena are being attributed to "La Niña". The RD Relief Delegate is monitoring the situation and giving advice to the NSs .

Disaster Prevention and Preparedness •

The budget for the ECHO Programme for non Andean countries 1999-2000 is ready for presenting to Brussels. The design of the work plan and budget for the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Programme financed by DFID has been finished.

The progress of the relief restructuring plan is being followed up in Bolivia, Argentina, Chile and Peru.

From 23 -26 June, the First International Disaster and Medicine Congress was held in Buenos Aires; the RD actively participated with four lectures. It also participated in the Workshop for Relief Delegates held in Bogotá, Colombia.

Institutional Development •

In June, the Development Delegates visited the NS of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay with the aim of analysing the current situation of each NS and defining a regional strategy for the RD's action.

Health and Social Welfare Workshop

In the second week of March the Regional Health and Social Welfare Workshop took place in Buenos Aires. Representatives of Peruvian, Bolivian, Paraguayan, Chilean, Argentine and Uruguayan NSs, together with staff in charge of Health and Social Welfare from the Secretariat and Regional Health Delegate (RD Guatemala), participated.

Project Implementation and Assessment Workshop

In March, The RD held a Project Implementation and Assessment Workshop in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, supported by the Spanish Red Cross and the Ibero-american Training Center of the Spanish Co-operation Agency. Representatives of the Argentine, Bolivian, Chilean, Paraguayan, Peruvian and Uruguayan NSs participated, together with RD staff. Its main aim was to unify implementation and assessment criteria among the NS staff and to provide follow-up tools related to these issues.

Working group on gender

The RD organised a working group on gender, to draft a gender strategy for the whole Americas region. Two meetings were held, in March and May, in which the NS of Chile, Colombia and Paraguay participated. Both the representatives of the NS and the RD received training from an external consultant. As a result, a document on gender perspective was elaborated. It was presented to all NS of the region at the XVI Interamerican Conference.

Argentine Red Cross

The RD collaborated in carrying out a situational analysis of the NS. A working document on "Strategic Policies in ARC direction" has been elaborated.

A Social Welfare workshop was organised in March for representatives from several branches in the country. The Social Welfare co-ordinator from the Federation Secretariat was in charge of the training.

In April, the National Development Plan of the NS was reviewed and the working priorities for 1999-2000 were identified. In May, a service and support programme for branches was co-ordinated. A course on project elaboration was held in June for the Youth Department.

Bolivian Red Cross

The Bolivian Red Cross hired a Director of Financial Resources Development, financed for six months with Swedish Red Cross funds raised by the RD. After that period, it is hoped that funds raised will cover her salary and other NS fixed expenditures.

Chilean Red Cross

In March, a Social Welfare workshop was organised for representatives of several branches in the country. The Social Welfare co-ordinator from the Federation Secretariat was in charge of the training.

Paraguayan Red Cross

The Paraguayan Red Cross finished the review of its National Development Plan. The document was sent to the Federation and to the Finnish Red Cross, which confirmed its support to the implementation of the NDP in 1999 with US\$ 19000 by the end of June.

From 24 - 25 April, the PRC organised a meeting for the presidents of branches. Despite the ending of outside funding, the presidents agreed to continue with the meetings, considering them an important forum to exchange and learn from the experiences of others. The Development Delegate participated in the meeting.

Peruvian Red Cross

The RD supported and actively participated in the "Co-operation Forum" organised by the PRC. A number of proposals which need international support were presented during the event.

Uruguayan Red Cross

In March, the RD in collaboration with the URC organised a Social Welfare Workshop for representatives of several branches in the country. The Social Welfare co-ordinator from the Federation Secretariat was in charge of the training.

New efforts are being made to finalise the NDP. The review of the statutes which emphasises renewal and democratisation encountered some opposition. The aim is to complete both by August.

Brazilian Red Cross

A process to encourage the institutional recovery of the National Society began in June. The President of the Maranhao Branch has been appointed by the Board of Directors to co-ordinate dialogue among all the Branches of the Society -- a role that has been accepted by all parties. The Secretariat in Geneva and the Regional Delegation are ready to give the appropriate support to this process.

Regional Programmes •

Amazonico Programme The programme held its second regional co-ordination & planning meeting from 25 - 27 February. The meeting had three main objectives: to learn from the experiences of the participatory planning process during 1998, to plan activities to be carried out during 1999 and to approve the Programme's Operating Regulations. The very fruitful discussions showed that an institutional development process has started within the NS and the branches. The Operating Regulations were approved, and administrative and operating procedures and an action plan for 1999 were established.

During March, branches and NS reviewed their plans and budgets. A meeting was organised of the five new branches which are going to be incorporated to the Programme in its second stage during 1999. The co-ordinators of these branches (Cobija/Bolivia, Nauta/Perú, Leticia/Colombia, Macas-Puyo/Ecuador) participated in the Project Implementation and Assessment Workshop held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Immediately after this workshop, a meeting with the local co-ordinators and RD staff was organised, with the aim of reviewing the planning processes already initiated and promoting the participatory planning within each branch.

By the end of June, Finnish Red Cross financial support for 1999 was confirmed as approximately US\$ 95,000. To date, four of the branches which initiated the implementation of their first local plan (Trinidad/Bolivia, Iquitos/Peru, Tena and Zamora/Ecuador) have received the requested funds. Mocoa branch (Colombia) is finishing its participatory planning process.

Camalote In February a visit to Formosa took place, to analyse the situation in the province. The project stopped its activities due to a lack of funds, among other reasons. However, thanks to Swedish Red Cross co-operation, the programme will be recommencing its activities in the second semester of the year.

Strong People As a part of the Seminar on Fund Raising held in La Paz, Bolivia, the regional co-ordinator of the project and the RD met several times to define the ID priorities and activities for the first six months of this year.

The Strong People Project is carrying out numerous health activities in all three countries and particularly in Bolivia. It has decreased its regional profile, adopting a more pragmatic working line in which a more unilateral and national action is prioritised.

In May the development Delegate visited two of the Bolivian branches involved in the SPP: Tarija and Tupiza. A mini-workshop on Institutional Development was held in Tarija and a national participatory planning workshop was held in Tupiza, in which 25 representatives from almost all the branches of the country participated.

Resource Development •

A seminar on Fund Raising was held in La Paz, Bolivia, 5 - 6 February, supported by Strong People Project funds. The participants were representatives from all BRC branches and the Central Office.

Youth •

From 21 to 29 January, the RD and the Chilean Red Cross organised workshops on "Introduction to Fund Raising" and "Basic Institutional Training" at the National training School of the Chilean Youth Red Cross in Canelo de Nos, Santiago de Chile.

At the same place, the first Regional Course on Development of Leadership Capacities was held from 1 to 7 March with 38 participants from Southern Cone NSs. The course was organised with the collaboration of the Chilean Red Cross.

The Sur Joven Plan's activity report has been elaborated as requested by the NS of the region.

The RD collaborated with the Bolivian and Uruguayan Red Cross in the design of the Regional Youth Committee Regulations.

A research project for the Federation's Youth Commission was carried out jointly with the RD. The RD also helped with preparations for the planning and assessment course; worked on the design of the programme for the second National Action and Training Workshop and collaborated in the Youth Bulletin.

Information and Public Relations •

The RD encouraged the efforts of NS of the region to celebrate 8 May and to launch the Millennium campaign. Press releases to local and national media, and dance shows, stamp and web site launches were some of the activities organised for the Millennium campaign.

The RD's web site has been updated with information about its regional programmes and Relief activities. It also presents information about how the user can collaborate with the institution, gives facts about volunteering, a page with the latest news, and information about the celebrations held on 8 May. It also has a directory from which the user can link to other sites related to Red Cross activities.

The Uruguayan Red Cross launched its web site: <http://cruzroja.mainpage.net> as a way of celebrating 8 May.

No publications were produced since there was no-one in charge of information and communications. However, an appointment was made to this position, beginning in July. The 19th *News from Latin America* magazine was published in co-ordination with the RD Guatemala and distributed on 8 May.

Regional Delegation

The whole RD staff actively participated in the planning, preparation and implementation of the XVI Interamerican Conference held in June in the Dominican Republic. During the organisation process, the RD gave special support to the NS in charge of presenting working documents at the Conference.

Regular relations were maintained with the ICRC, especially during the difficult political situation in Paraguay.

The Regional Delegation staff was severely reduced due to the hurricane Mitch relief operation. The Relief Delegate was lent to Honduras, to serve as Head of the of the Federation Secretariat team and the project assistant went to Guatemala to strengthen the team which is working with the NS, for a period of six months. A new Development Delegate has joined the team.

Outstanding needs

The most serious problem is still the lack of funds to finance Regional programmes. The RD has made an analysis of the deficit situation and has forwarded it to Geneva for discussion.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The objectives of this first semester have been reached despite the serious economic difficulties of the Regional Delegation and despite the absence of staff assigned to Central America for Hurricane Mitch.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Santiago Gil
Director
Americas Department