

*appeal no. 01.36/99*

*situation report no. 1*

*period covered: January - June, 1999*

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*Destabilising events can have a particular impact on the fragile social, economic and political fabric of the entire sub-region, including economic and financial consequences of disrupted trade with neighbouring countries, to the significant refugee and IDP population issues. Despite the fact that events in the region during the first six months of 1999 were dominated by the Balkans crisis, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, both internally in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and to neighbouring countries, the programmes reflected in this Appeal have received timely support, allowing the various National Societies to further their respective goals.*

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## *The context*

With the gradual emergence of a distinct north-south gap between the 15 countries covered by the Regional Delegation in Budapest (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), the priorities of the National Societies are focusing on institutional and resource development, disaster preparedness and response, social welfare and health services, youth, communications, regional recruitment and population movements. The regional delegations current Five-Year Plan (to 2002) reflects its developing role: combining a long-term commitment to capacity building with a flexible approach to country-specific emergencies.

The Regional delegation will continue to support initiatives from the three main sub-regional groups (Central European, Balkan, and Baltic) established to address specific issues arising from common social, economic, and political developments

To respond to the needs in the region, the following specific objectives will be pursued:

- { Assisting the National Societies in attaining self-reliance through the provision of technical assistance; continuing support for the institutional development process and staff and governance training initiatives; facilitating implementation of the Nordic-Baltic Work Plan and other partnerships in the region; promoting access to English-language training at all National Society levels.
- { Coordinating implementation and revision of long-term disaster preparedness (DP) plans in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.
- { Supporting on-going National Society programmes of social welfare support in Albania, FYR Macedonia, and Bulgaria.

- { Responding to Red Cross Youth training requirements and to facilitate the development of a regional Youth network.
- { Facilitating the development and implementation of National Society communication strategies through training at all levels.
- { Providing support for the expansion of the population movements programmes in the Baltic states.
- { ensuring a prompt emergency response capacity in the region and support for country delegations.
- { Better utilising human resources from within the region.

## ***Latest events***

Events in the region during the first six months of 1999 were dominated by the Balkans crisis, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, both internally in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and to neighbouring countries. The crisis has had a destabilising impact on the fragile social, economic and political fabric of the entire sub-region: from the economic and financial consequences of disrupted trade with neighbouring countries, to the huge refugee and IDP population issues, and infrastructure damage and political instability in FR Yugoslavia itself.

As security issues remained high on the international agenda throughout the period, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic became NATO members during signing ceremonies in the spring. Military personnel from these countries later joined KFOR troops deployed in Kosovo.

Northern and eastern parts of Hungary and Slovakia were once again hit by severe flooding during the spring and early summer, affecting over 20,000 people in Hungary and some 12,000 in Slovakia. The Red Cross National Societies in the countries have been involved in distributing relief assistance to the affected communities.

Economic reform and restructuring in Bulgaria and Romania continued, although this has impacted on industrial output and export levels, which fell by 16% and 24% respectively in Bulgaria during the first quarter. The consequences of these reforms continue to be felt particularly harshly by the most vulnerable and impoverished communities. Elsewhere reform and harmonisation in line with EU standards progressed slowly, ahead of future EU membership or application for membership. This has caused some unrest and demonstrations, particularly within the agricultural sector in Poland.

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

### **Institutional and Resource Development (ID/RD) w**

#### ***Institutional Development (ID)***

The initial two year period of the British Government's DFID-funded ID/RD programme was launched in January. A first round of visits was undertaken to six of the 11 National Societies originally identified as participants of the ID programme, in order to: introduce the programme and its aims to the NS; identify NS ID facilitators and/or working groups; initiate the detailed planning and budgeting process; and identify areas and issues to work on. By the end of the first quarter, plans of action for meetings and training seminars had been drawn up with the Albanian, Bulgarian, Slovak and Slovenian Red Cross Societies. Opportunities to draw on elements of the ongoing ID process at the Yugoslav Red Cross as a resource for this regional programme were also discussed.

In May, the second phase began with targeted seminars and coaching/consultation sessions. A review of the recently expired Framework Agreement between the Albanian Red Cross and the Federation was carried out by evaluation teams travelling to the districts, despite the current refugee relief operation. The conclusions will be drafted into a report which will provide a basis for the elaboration of a Development Plan 2002. The Bulgarian, Slovenian and Slovak Red Cross Societies carried out ID workshops, facilitated by the ID and RD delegates, presenting a number of Federation tools and latest

policy and strategy developments, and leading to discussions on the application of governance and management models at national and local levels. Preliminary discussions were also held with the Polish Red Cross working group focusing on the draft organisational plan which was later approved by the board. Training in effective governance and management at all levels of the National Society will follow in the 3rd quarter. The Hungarian Red Cross also confirmed its willingness during the 2nd quarter to embark on the first phase of the ID/RD programme.

Plans have been made by the regional ID delegate to participate at the co-ordination meeting of the Nordic-Baltic National Societies during the 3rd quarter, to discuss how best the DFID-funded ID programme can integrate into and build on the ongoing capacity building work carried out within the frame of the Nordic-Baltic Workplan. Within this frame a number of seminars, workshops and meetings took place during the first six months of the year. In February the development delegate co-facilitated a seminar for branch board chairmen of the Estonian Red Cross, focusing on the role, mandate, conduct and relations of the board. This was followed by a meeting on the visiting services/nurses attended by 7 of the Nordic-Baltic National Societies to follow up on progress in this field and to decide on next steps in the process. The importance of these meetings as an opportunity for staff involved in national programmes to interact at an international level was stressed, as was the desire to involve National Society volunteers from these programmes in future meetings. February also saw the second co-ordination meeting on the Nordic-Baltic WorkPlan, which among other issues discussed the forthcoming review of the process to be based on a questionnaire to all partners.

During the second quarter the Estonian Red Cross continued its branch visits and assessments in order to map out training needs within the National Society and to up date branch to branch cooperation agreements. A series of four week long training of trainers courses was held in Latvia, as part of the phase out programme of the branch to branch cooperation between the Latvian and Swedish Red Cross. A seminar on the phasing out of similar branch to branch cooperation between the Swedish and Lithuanian Red Cross Societies was held during March, although no agreement was reached on refocusing resources to national training programmes.

Media attention on the Kosovo refugee crisis has enabled many National Societies in the region to highlight their international role as members of a global Movement, which in turn has strengthened visibility with both the media and state and local authorities. Other opportunities for involvement in international relief operations are also developing, with the Estonian Red Cross monitoring a medical aid consignment contributed by the Estonian government to the Pskov region in Russia. The Latvian Red Cross has initiated approaches to audit firms to carry out an external audit of both headquarters and branches.

### ***Resource Development (RD)***

The first quarter of 1999 saw the completion of the first phase in the resource development programme, marked by the finalisation of the assessment of the status of National Society resource development activities and needs. Recommendations were made regarding the selection of the first group of five National Societies with which to work. Based on the assessment's conclusions and recommendations, a resource development delegate with the appropriate experience and profile was recruited to take the programme forward and joined the Regional Delegation in May. The programme concept and methodology was presented to two of the five National Societies during the 2nd quarter (Bulgaria and Hungary). National Society working groups will be set up, comprising key governance and management leaders, heads of departments and branch representatives, to implement the programme through a process which builds on an introductory phase addressing ID issues, reinforcing the complementary nature of the ID and RD programme.

Financial management and control were flagged in the National Society resource development assessment completed in January as issues of particular concern and will also be addressed through the programme.

### **Regional Youth Programme w**

The first regional Basic Leadership Training Course for Red Cross Youth representatives (RBLTC) was held in Budapest in January, with 27 participants from 13 countries in the region, and prepared and run by four trainers in the region with experience in this field. The programme focused on providing basic knowledge and skills for Red Cross Youth leaders. This course was followed in February by a Regional Training for Trainers course, attended by the same participants and again led by experienced Red Cross youth trainers from the region. This formed the second step in the implementation process of leadership training systems. On the basis of the skills and knowledge developed during the courses, over the second quarter, the National Society participants looked at setting up such systems within their respective youth sections and made preparations for the first national BLTC to held over the summer. The Federation will support these courses with a contribution of CHF 2,500 per National Society and trainers from the region will support their colleagues during the courses.

### **Information w**

A major task for the regional delegation during the review period has centred on support for Red Cross Red Crescent activities in the wake of the current Balkans crisis and also the spring and summer floods in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Within days of the refugee exodus from Kosovo, the regional information delegate was working in Macedonia handling numerous media enquiries and briefings.

Reporting activities have concentrated on the donors meeting in Belgrade (end of March) included the production of various documents, including an operational review of 1998 and the delegation's annual report. Two issues of *The Bridge* have been produced in the first half of the year. In addition, an information bulletin was issued on the recent flooding in Hungary and Romania.

Within the training and seminar programme, the regional delegation co-facilitated, with the ICRC and the Croatian Red Cross, three media training workshops for branch secretaries in Vinkovci in Eastern Slavonia, Opatja in Istria and Kastella in mid-Dalmatia aimed at improving their media and communications skills, and looking at crisis management and the mine-awareness campaign. The regional delegation also participated in a media seminar organized in Jurmala near Riga in Latvia for 20 Latvian TV, radio and print journalists together with ICRC and Latvian Red Cross in June.

During the recent ID/RD planning process, information and communication training has been partly integrated into the regional programs and the delegation's information department will assist ID/RD delegates on this field in the future.

### **English Language Training w**

During the first quarter of 1999, three National Societies (Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland) were earmarked for support in continued professional English language training for staff and volunteers. The selection was made based on needs, impact, interest and commitment to the programme to date. Guidelines were drawn up concerning selection criteria for participants, based on an evaluation of the British Council-run training provided in 1998. The Latvian Red Cross will receive support for courses during the third quarter, and an additional National Society will join the programme for the fourth quarter.

More copies of the training workbook and manual have been distributed to the Czech, Latvian, Estonian and Bulgarian Red Cross Societies to facilitate home study for secretariat and branch staff. This will continue with an emphasis on supporting groups of youth members/volunteers to set up study groups.

### **Disaster Preparedness w**

During the first quarter, all three National Societies involved in the programme were visited by the regional delegation to discuss their project proposals and plan the implementation phase and steps. Preparatory steps have been prioritised and material support postponed at this stage. The Polish Red Cross is strengthening its cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organisations in the field of disaster preparedness and the involvement of branches in the process is increasing. The Czech Red Cross will proceed with the production of a disaster preparedness manual as a first step in the

programme. Discussions continue with the Slovak Red Cross to identify a counterpart responsible for the programme at the National Society headquarters

Preparations were also made for the planned move of the Regional Logistics Centre from Zagreb to Budapest on 1 July.

### **Regional Delegate Recruitment and Training Programme w**

The third and final workshop to introduce the global recruitment programme and procedures to National Society representatives in the region was held at the beginning of the year. During the spring, 11 National Societies confirmed their commitment to joining the programme and using the procedures and tools presented during the workshop. The Belarus Red Cross, which also joined the regional training session together with the Ukrainian Red Cross, confirmed its participation in the programme.

With the support of the Regional Delegation, the National Societies and country delegations are now involved in identifying and selecting candidates for a regional Basic Training Course (BTC), which will take place in December 1999. Selection is proceeding on the basis of the Federation Standard Interview Module introduced and practised during the training sessions. Support is also being provided to country delegations which were not able to participate at the original programme training sessions, but which have expressed an interest in the programme. The selection procedure for BTC training will also be opened up to national staff of the Regional Delegation and Regional Logistics Centre in Budapest.

### **Measles Vaccination in Romania w**

The Regional Delegation participated in the Final Evaluation of the Measles Vaccination Campaign in Romania, which ended in January 1999, together with representatives of the Romanian Ministry of Health, Romanian Red Cross, WHO, CDC-Atlanta and UNICEF. The Romanian Red Cross was responsible for the social mobilisation campaign, and its role in mobilising out-of-school children was identified as a major contributory factor to the success of the programme, which achieved a 93 per cent pick up rate amongst the target group.

### **Population Movement w**

Funding from UNHCR and IOM Helsinki was confirmed during the first quarter for four projects of the Lithuanian Red Cross focusing on the provision of social welfare and legal assistance, and social and educational activities for children in refugee reception/registration centres. In Estonia, preparations continued for a series of workshops for branches within the programme and negotiations continued with UNHCR on the funding of a Red Cross lawyer to address the legal needs of asylum seekers.

During the first quarter of 1999, the Lithuanian Red Cross examined the possibility of offering private housing to refugees in designated regions to assist with integration into the community. Local Red Cross committees were involved in information collection on the housing situation and, in spite of a limited response, seven apartments were found for refugees. In Estonia, this programme has been revised into a population movement and dissemination programme, financed by the Federation and ICRC.

### **Constraints and Problems w**

The Balkan crisis and National Society involvement in the extensive relief operation continues to impact on the speed of the ID/RD programme implementation. This also holds true for other regional programmes. However, the Albanian and Yugoslav Red Cross Societies have indicated their desire to continue with the programme when possible.

A modification in the selection of the National Societies for the DFID-funded ID programme may be necessary in view of new developments which make the readiness of some for inclusion in the programme doubtful. However, assistance will be redirected to other National Societies who have shown a willingness to address institutional issues.

The difficulty in recruiting qualified volunteers to run English language training courses is limiting the possibility of extending the programme at branch level. The regional delegation proposes to extend the

funding available to branches to include salary costs for recognised teachers from approved English language training schools. In most cases the British Council does not offer courses in the provinces but may be able to assist in identifying qualified teachers to run such courses. The branches will also be encouraged to combine classes with other business or organisations to keep salary costs to a minimum.

Progress within the Disaster Preparedness Programme has been limited due to the involvement of the delegate in responding to the Balkan Crisis. A decision has been taken to make the DP post a full-time position to re-launch the impetus in the programme and to extend support throughout the region.

## ***Outstanding needs***

While most of the regional programmes are well funded this year, additional funds are still urgently needed for the Regional Communications/Information Programme, Regional Youth Programme and Regional ID Programme, in order that all the planned work in the region can be completed by the end of the year.

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

The regional delegation was represented at a number of National Society anniversary celebrations, regional meetings and workshops during the first two quarters. In March the delegation participated at the donors meeting in Belgrade, presenting the regional strategy, programmes and plans for the coming year. The Lithuanian, Estonian, Polish, Czech and Slovak Red Cross Societies have all celebrated 80th anniversaries during the first six months of the year. The youth delegate participated at the European Cooperation Meeting in Spain, which provided an excellent opportunity for the exchange of experiences and information between European Red Cross youth sections.

First contacts to introduce Red Cross activities and values to the faculties of Journalism in the Universities of Zagreb and Central European University Budapest have been positive, and there will be opportunities to give lectures at these institutions later in the year.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

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