

BELARUS, MOLDOVA, AND UKRAINE

14 March, 2000

appeal no. 01.41/99
situation report no. 2
period covered: July - December, 1999

A lack of funds and donor support has had a long-term impact on operations, hampering implementation of disaster preparedness activity and planning of institutional development described in this appeal. A more positive response on the part of donors was noted to the specified needs of population movement and medico-social interventions by making use of the Visiting Nurses (TB/HIV/AIDS/STD Appeal of the Federation). The intended health services assistance has been maximised by merging two appeals (no. 01.41/99 and no. 08/99).

The context

The long-term cumulative effects of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 as well as the mid-1998 financial crisis in the Russian Federation have had a severe impact on Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, exacerbating the declining economic conditions and disintegrating social welfare networks. The difficult social and economic conditions now evident in each country continue to affect the respective National Societies as they struggle to cope with the growing number of vulnerable. The Red Cross Societies themselves require support to adjust to the needs of a growing number of vulnerable persons as well as in developing their response capacities.

To respond to the declining situation, the following objectives were established:

- Health: to further consolidate the Visiting Nurses Services (VNS) structure by supporting ongoing services and preparing for the implementation of the planned TB/HIV/AIDS/STD's initiative; to continue community based first aid, eventually making it a DPP activity;
- Population Movement: to expand networking to increase awareness; to obtain official recognition ultimately leading to establish a legal base;
- Disaster Preparedness and Planning: to focus on establishing clearance in the role the Red Cross plays in the scope of national plans; to increase material resources and expand the trained volunteer base;
- Institutional Development: to assist each National Society to strengthen its functions in society and to obtain a legal basis for its work.

The Societies require assistance to further develop strategic plans to diversify and strengthen their capacities through institutional restructuring and building sustainable functions. Improving public information services are also a priority.

Latest events

Belarus

The economic situation continued to decline at a dramatic pace during 1999, severely affecting industry and agricultural production, and prompting large numbers of people to emigrate to other areas to improve their livelihoods. Serious shortages of medicines due to a lack of funds for importing drugs (80% of drugs and composites are imported) has exacerbated an already critical health situation in the country.

Ukraine

According to the Ministry for the Agro-Industrial Complex, the total grain harvest in 1999 was 2% lower than in 1998, and 30% lower than in 1997. That has led to an average rise of 25-35% in domestic prices for grain and bread products during the fall and the beginning of winter. According to a report of the Joint United Nations Program and WHO, released in December, Ukraine has the most dramatic epidemic situation with HIV/AIDS among all the countries of the former USSR, with 240,000 cases of infection out of 360,000 cases reported in the former Soviet Union.

Moldova

According to the Human Development report released by UNDP in December, Moldova ranks 104th among 170 states in terms of living standards. The report states the economic crisis in Moldova continues to deepen. Production volume in the last quarter of the year dropped 7% compared to the same period of 1998, and 21% when compared to the first quarter of 1999.

As a result of the health care system restructuring carried out by the Ministry of Health Care, 14 central and 7 municipal medical units as well as two central and 8 municipal sanitary institutions were closed and sold (privatised). The number of hospitals in the country is projected to decrease from 270 to only 68.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Visiting Nurses Service (VNS) •

Belarus

More than 40,000 persons (invalids and elderly, bedridden, and seriously ill people) received various medical and social services at their homes and at the Red Cross medico-social centres.

The ECHO-project entitled "*Strengthening of the VNS, and educational, material and social support to TB patients and to HIV/AIDS patients and other vulnerable groups in Belarus*" focuses on the 3 project sites: Minsk City, Mogilev and Gomel Oblasts where TB incidence is the highest. Despite some delays in procuring equipment sets for medico-social centres and the publication of leaflets, the project has been implemented according to the objectives established in the ECHO agreement .

The program envisaged recruitment of 118 Visiting Nurses. By the end of the year, over 77% of the recruitment plan was fulfilled (91 of 118 positions).

During the months of October to November, direct treatment has been ensured for 1,873 patients. The nurses participating in the project provide TB-services at drug distribution points and by home visits. For 165 TB-patients, services have been organised directly through medico-social centres. Currently 58 drug distribution points are functioning under the ECHO program, compared to 40 in July. Thirty-eight centres are located at policlinics and 20 at the Red Cross medico-social centres.

The VNS training planned in the program has been completed in 3 pilot Oblasts. 3 one-day workshops and 3 three-day workshops were held. Nurses, trained in TB and Red Cross specifics, psychological support and methods of contacts with asocial patients, are now prepared to work with the project target groups. In order to ensure a maximum degree of compliance monitoring of TB-patients who live further away from medico-social centres and TB dispensaries, 639 monthly bus tickets were provided to the patients and visiting nurses over the month of November (485 for TB-patients and 154 for visiting nurses) 115 bicycles were distributed a swell to the nurses in the rural areas.

A manual for visiting nurses has been developed by the TB Institute, with the editorial assistance of the Belarus Red Cross VNSs and the Federation.

Procurement of hygiene kits, food parcels and second-hand clothes was completed. In total, 12,000 hygiene kits, 7,330 food parcels, and about 19.6 tons of second-hand clothes were distributed among the beneficiaries (3,000 TB patients, including 1,873 sufferers for whom compliance monitoring is ensured and 3,000 lonely and disabled elderly people attended by the BRC VNS).

Medical supplies from the Swiss Red Cross were distributed to 3 TB institutions.

The Belarus Red Cross Society together with the Minsk Delegation has elaborated two project proposals and is in the process of requesting financial assistance: a project on the Visiting Nurses Service was submitted to the Swiss Red Cross, and a project on the Pinsk Boarding Home for the Elderly was submitted to the TACIS offices in Minsk.

Ukraine

The VNS of the Ukraine Red Cross actively participated in the state programs "Care", "Health of Elderly People", in All-Ukrainian humanitarian action "Charity" and in the activities of the International Year of Elderly People in Ukraine, providing care for elderly people at home and at the medico-social centres.

Currently the VNS employs 3,200 nurses who provide medical and social assistance and psychological support to the elderly people and invalids. The Ukraine Red Cross now runs 47 medical-social centres, 322 medical-social rooms and 511 banks of clothes -- considerably more than at the beginning of 1999.

Agreements with Ukrainian companies have been signed to produce and distribute 90,000 food parcels and 30,000 hygiene parcels for beneficiaries of the programme, as well as 550 bicycles for the visiting nurses in rural areas. Custom clearance was undertaken for 1,400 VNS kits as well as for 10 equipment sets for medical and social assistance rooms and 90,000 vitamin boxes.

The ECHO-funded programme "Educational medical and social support to strengthen VNS and to counter the spread of TB, HIV/AIDS, STD in Ukraine" was started early in 1999, jointly with the German Red Cross.

After a very slow start (since the identification of beneficiaries was not ready) the implementation of the programme reached its intended objectives. Beneficiary lists were established, soup kitchens were identified, and contracts were established and agreed. Delivery and distribution has been organised, and further psychological training is needed for the nurses to ensure effective individual communication with marginalised patients and their compliance with treatment.

During the past three months the project has been implemented according to the objectives set in the ECHO applications, though with significant delays.

To prepare the nursing service workers to implement the ECHO programme on TB, HIV/AIDS, STD, 6 seminars with a total of 240 participants have been held.

Moldova

The 42 visiting nurses are providing services to 1,370 elderly and ill people. Food parcels and second-hand clothes were distributed, as well as medicines to 1,370 ill people at home or located at medico-social centres. 650 people were assisted in food shopping, 60 in hospitalisation, and 100 in the provision of wood for winter period. Although there the VNS programme lacks in Moldova, the National Society is able to employ only a limited number of nurses due to lack of financial resources.

The operation "Humanitarian assistance to lonely elderly, disabled, homeless, orphans and TB/HIV/AIDS and STDs - patients through the Red Cross Visiting Nurses Service" started in Moldova on September 15th. Regional working groups have been established in 29 rayons and 3 cities; 42 visiting nurses and 9 visiting nurses co-ordinators are involved in the operation.

In November, two seminars were organised for the doctors and Red Cross managers in the regions of Balti, Chisinau, Cahul, as well as for the visiting nurses coming from the same regions.

The procurement of 30,000 food parcels, 20,000 hygiene kits, vitamins, 2, 000 bed linen sets were initiated.

A list of beneficiaries has been drawn up, using the applicable criteria. The Moldova Red Cross plans to provide the visiting nurses with 42 medical kits as well as with 10 bicycles.

The programme provides assistance to 10,000 vulnerable people. The social and economical conditions are still bad in the Republic of Moldova. The components of the programme will for sure assist the target group and help to avoid the spread of the TB, HIV/AIDS and STD in the country.

Due to the late start of the programme and taking into account the Christmas period during the beginning of the implementation, an extension of two months should be taken into consideration.

Community Based First Aid (CBFA) •

Although the National Societies expressed the desire to continue the program, the National Societies activities need to be improved to fit to the programme objectives.

Belarus

The Belarus Red Cross has produced advanced copies of the First Aid Manual for the general public in September. The manual is ready for final publication.

In July 1999 a Youth camp for university students was organised, with all the entrants participating in a First Aid course. The Youth Red Cross volunteers - students of the Minsk Medical Institute - train the Programme of First Aid at six schools of Minsk city. The course was also tutored at the 2nd Rally of Young Fire-fighters, followed by a contest on First Aid in emergency situations. Preparations to the winter Youth camp "Together to the New Millennium" have started. First Aid courses are envisaged at the camp activities.

Ukraine

Training manual for instructors on First Aid has been published. The First Aid manual for students is getting ready to be published but still no information has been received so far on the status of the work. Since January 1999 the RC instructors have been holding on a voluntary basis First Aid training for the public. Totally 958 people have been trained at 12-hour training courses. were College students, fire-fighters, drivers, road police, and workers of industrial enterprises and social services were the entrants of the courses.

To stabilise and provide further First Aid training of people, the Ukraine Red Cross finds it necessary to provide each oblast RC organisation with training materials and to create a training centre in order to continue training of instructors and methodists.

Moldova

The First Aid manual was translated but still requires additional editing because of the low quality of the translation and illustrations. The process of publishing was stopped due to not meeting of the contractual obligations by the Moldova Red Cross. The Moldova Red Cross unfortunately must be requested to transfer funds covering cost of publishing back to the Federation.

Disaster Preparedness and Response •***Belarus***

In July 1999, the Belarus Red Cross completed the distribution of 1,723 food parcels (959 in Brest oblast and 764 in Gomel oblast), 1,050 pairs of waterproof footwear (460 - in Brest and 590 in Gomel oblasts) and 660 blankets to the victims of floods in Gomel and Brest oblasts.

Due to allocation of additional funds and redistribution of funds from the WEA operation the flood-affected areas were additionally provided with 1.150 food parcels, 463 pairs of waterproof boots, 21.230 kg of second-hand clothes and shoes, 5.307 bars of soap, 2.892 packs of detergents, 240 bottles of shampoo and 1.000 blankets. The other 1.000 of blankets were provided by the Belarus Red Cross Disaster Preparedness Service.

An ECHO application for food assistance to 8.950 beneficiaries in Belarus during the harsh winter months was drafted and sent to ECHO through Danish Red Cross. Food parcels are to be distributed among the beneficiaries and members of their families in three rounds. Implementation of the activities was delayed since the funds had not been allocated.

Ukraine

Taking into account the current socio-economic situation in the country, the National Society considers the development and strengthening of the Disaster Preparedness Service to be one of its priorities. In 1999 the Society made efforts to increase the capacity of the rescue groups with equipment and inventory, train the staff, improve the management structure, and to create reserve stocks. The building of the central base of Disaster Preparedness Service is in progress. Construction of a feeder road to the base has been completed, inventory of the stocks at the regional bases was held. The plan of action during emergency situations for all RC organisations has been developed and approved by the Board of Governors. Two exercises on setting a camp and running field kitchens were held. A co-operation agreement was signed with the Ministry of Emergencies of Ukraine.

Moldova

1,345 beneficiaries, including 500 persons living alone, 50 multi-child families and 795 people with low income, in 11 rayons affected by the landslides were assisted. The following items were purchased and distributed: 477 bed linen double size, 851 bed linen single size, 2.690 towels and 860 blankets.

Population Movement Programme (PM) •***Belarus***

The following Appeal objectives have been achieved:

- operational support to the PM co-ordinator;
- preparations for the seminars for Red Cross network;
- developing the project proposals for emergency fund for humanitarian aid;
- exploring possibilities in refugees' integration process.

The intensity and frequency of contacts with UNHCR, IOM, OSCE and other partner organisations needs to be developed further, in principle, the contact with UNHCR is improving.

The Belarus Red Cross, in co-operation with UNCHR, continues to provide social and legal counselling for asylum seekers, facilitates medical services. The majority of the PM and Refugee activities have been funded by UNHCR and US State Department in 1999. The Belarus Red Cross completed a 3-month project funded by the US State Department providing refugees with bed linen sets, covering 18

people beneficiaries. In mid-September they were also provided with warm quilts and bed linen and towels. 77 refugee families received second-hand clothes provided by the Danish Red Cross.

Ukraine

In the second half of 1999 the National Committee of the Ukraine Red Cross has implemented and started the implementation of the following programs:

- Seminars on PM for the personnel of oblast Red Cross organisations;
- Provision of medical assistance to the camp-isolator in Mukachevo, Zakarpattya;
- Summer camp for children from the families deported in Crimea;
- Provision of medical assistance to the camp-isolator in Mukachevo, Zakarpattya;
- Hot meals for the refugees in Kiev;
- Provision of medical assistance to the camp-isolator in Lviv, Zakarpattya;
- Mobile technical teams to provide assistance to deported people in Crimea.

Implementation of the programme “Provision of medical assistance to the camp-isolator in Mukachevo, Zakarpattya” was started in April, 1999, with a programme assistance was provided on a monthly basis. During implementation of the programme the following supplies have been distributed: individual hygienic parcels (soap, tooth paste and tooth brush, toilet paper, women’s hygienic parcels, hygienic items for children), disinfecting materials, medicines, disposal dishes.

In September 1999 implementation of the project “Provision of medical assistance to the camp-isolator in Lviv, Zakarpattya” was started.

In the summer 1999 the programme “Summer camp for the children from deported families in Crimea” was implemented, with 48 children from multi-children, low-income and one-headed families spending their vacations in the recreation and rehabilitation camp in Crimea “Dolphin”.

Preparations for the implementation of the programme “Hot meals for refugees in Kiev” was completed, with canteens identified and assistance planned for 80 refugees during a period of 6 months.

From November 1 the implementation of a programme “Mobile technical teams to provide assistance to deported people in Crimea” was started. Contracts with suppliers of vehicles and computers were established, and basic equipment and materials needed for programme implementation was purchased. The rayons of Crimea where mobile technical teams will be working have been identified (Simpheropol, Krasnogvardeysk, Lenin rayons). The main groups of beneficiaries have been also identified. It is expected that the implementation of the programme will be started on December 15th, 1999 right after the vehicles are supplied.

Moldova

In October, an operational contract for the Population Movement Programme (duration 12 months) was signed by the Vice-President of the Moldova Red Cross and the HoD in accordance with the Framework Agreement between the Federation and the Moldova Red Cross.

A PM sub-project was signed between UNCHR and the Moldova Red Cross, and a meeting on refugee issues was held. Other grassroot workshops, previously planned for the second half of 1999 were prepared. An ECHO application for emergency assistance to IDPs and refugees in Moldova was drafted and sent to ECHO through Belgium Red Cross in November. The project aims at alleviating the situation of 1,500 vulnerable people by providing them with food and hygiene parcels, clothing, bedlinen and kitchen sets. Implementation of activities are delayed since the funds have not been allocated.

Institutional/Resource Development •

Ukraine

To provide sufficient information dissemination on the 3d stage of the Winter Emergency Appeal, press-releases were sent to information agencies and central and local media by the UkrRC and regional

Red Cross Committees. Press-conferences on the results of the completed and ongoing programmes as well as on the goals of this year Winter Appeal were held.

External Relations -- Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Effective working relationships with the relevant Governmental and non-governmental agencies such as UNHCR, IOM and OSCE are maintained by the delegates in the region. These contacts are recognised as vital for the programme's success.

In November, the Minsk Delegation distributed to the Ministers of Emergency of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) document for 2000-2001. In December a project proposal on the Pinsk Boarding Home, run by the Belarus Red Cross Visiting Nurses Service, was forwarded to the TACIS Coordinating unit and the TACIS Branch Office in Minsk by the Minsk Delegation.

Belarus

In October-November, two Quarterly newsletters (Population Movement in Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova and the National Red Cross Societies response; News from the International RC and RC Movement) were produced. A PM newsletter was distributed to the Governmental institutions, embassies and representations of the international organisations based in each country as well as to the donor community.

In November, a media campaign "TB and AIDS challenge (people's fates)" started. Preparations for the publication of 30,000 leaflets as well as discussions of their contents and message are ongoing. 18,200 stickers for food and hygienic parcels as well as pocket calendars containing information on TB prevention were produced. Two videos, produced before the launch of the TB-appeal, have already been used in the media campaign and shared with Ukraine and Moldova at the meeting on November 3-5 in Kiev.

Ukraine

A delegation of representatives of several commercial companies visited the Federation office in Kiev as well as the ICRC office and the UkrRC on August 30-31. The visit was organised by the Secretariat and was held in the framework of a management development programme "International Masters in Practicing Management". The group of visitors was briefed on the activities of the three RC Movement components.

Moldova

On September 22, the ID Delegate in Moldova met with the Assistant Representative of UNICEF to brief on the Red Cross programmes in Moldova. A working contact was established between the Federation's Office in Chisinau and a new local NGO which has been established to promote a healthy life style, and to conduct counselling for people living with social hardships.

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