

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE, HEALTH AND CAPACITY BUILDING

CHF 3,867,000

1,100,000 beneficiaries

Programme no 01.44/99

The Context

The crash of the Russian rouble in August 1998, plunging Russia and her neighbours into economic and political uncertainty, created new depths of poverty for a population already suffering from the socio-economic collapse bequeathed by the Soviet era and the hardships of transition to an alternative system. The growing privations have increased their vulnerability to disease, alcoholism and malnutrition. Hyper-inflation again threatens to swallow up salaries and savings. Backlogs in payments systems and other consequences of restructuring have further reduced incomes, forcing millions to live on or below the poverty line. Government health and welfare structures have virtually disintegrated. Drugs, when they are available, are beyond the purchasing power of either health authorities or individual patients.

The harsh living conditions of many vulnerable people are aggravated further by disasters such as floods, drought or fires. In some parts of the country displaced populations face extreme hardship. People living in the areas bordering Ukraine and Belarus continue to suffer from the effects of the Chernobyl accident.

The transition period has particularly affected those on fixed incomes, such as the elderly and disabled, families with several children, the unemployed, single parents, low-income families, pregnant women and young mothers. Efforts to modernise the economy have reduced Russia to a largely pre-modern subsistence economy. In remoter regions, production in agriculture and industry has halved this decade. Millions of people rely on a barter system and much of the population, including those in cities, survive only by growing their own food – for barter, sale or subsistence.

The Operation

Towards the end of 1997, the situation had become so severe that a Federation appeal seeking assistance for one million of the most vulnerable was launched for the coldest months of the winter. Even during the Winter Emergency programme, and before the 1998 crisis struck, it was clear that a similar programme would be needed for the 1998-1999 winter.

The Russian Red Cross (RRC) is facing a difficult challenge: it must introduce reform and restructuring within itself and at the same time respond to steadily increasing humanitarian needs. The Federation Delegation which expected to shift its emphasis from relief to development, has had to continue focusing on relief, with built-in development components.

Among the many uncertainties about Russia's future, one fact is undeniable - the needs of the vulnerable will grow inexorably. To meet those needs, the National Society itself must grow and evolve.

Despite underfunding, the Moscow Delegation has achieved some of the objectives set out in the 1998 Emergency Appeal. The State Duma has approved the RRC's legal status. The Russian Red Cross now has its own three-year Strategic Development Plan, and an associated Plan of Action. The separation of governance and executive, reorganisation of the management system and establishment of eight sub-regions foreseen by the plan are already underway and will continue.

The Community Based First Aid programme has proceeded well. The training of trainers was expanded from 8 to 13 new regions. The FA manual was reprinted in another 60,000 copies; a pocket FA book has been designed and 20,000 copies printed. Implementation of the programme was co-ordinated with the Population Movement Programme.

The Population Movement Programme, rooted in the CIS Involuntary Population Movement Conference (CISCONF 1996) and the Almaty and European Conferences, and one of the Russian Red Cross key activities, has recruited a qualified local officer who has improved contacts with other agencies, and held workshops throughout Russia as well as in Tallinn and Tbilisi.

The development of Health programmes has continued with project planning and gathering of information and data on TB, HIV/AIDS and STDs. Linking programmes with the Visiting Nurses Service, Youth activities and FA programme (through the promotion of a healthy lifestyle) remains at the heart of future health strategy.

A major initiative against TB will be launched in 1999, also covering Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

A Financial Management project which consolidated the computerisation of several Red Cross committees, has led to greater transparency and efficiency. These financial management initiatives will be expanded throughout the country.

The operations are implemented within the parameters set by the European Conference, the Europe Strategy and the Europe Health Plan as well as the Almaty Conference and the Mandates on ID/DR, VNS, DPP and Population Movement.

Objectives

- Health

To further consolidate the Visiting Nurse Services (VNS); the VNS will be at the heart of a major drive against TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs epidemics - now at emergency disaster levels; addressing HIV/AIDS through RRC Youth is another priority.

- Disaster Preparedness and Prevention / Response Capacity

To develop this capacity through planning and training response will include humanitarian needs arising from extreme mass poverty.

- Population Movement

To further develop activities, focusing on dissemination and awareness raising.

- Institutional Development / Resource Development

To further rebuild and strengthen the RRC through the implementation of its strategic plan and related plan of action designed to reform the management set up and organisational structure.

Programmes

- Health

Under the RRC's strategy for its role in improving the health of the population, various health-related programmes – Visiting Nurses, First Aid, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Youth – are being brought together to underline their mutual interdependence. It is essential that the RRC develop one general approach, based on information, education and communication, to facilitate increasing public awareness about health, disease and the importance of personal responsibility for health. Visiting Nurses, First Aid instructors, Youth leaders and RRC members and volunteers should participate actively in disseminating information to promote healthy lifestyles. Life expectancy remains well below European norms and the Russian health authorities consider only 32% of new-borns "healthy" at birth.

Health Planning

A strategic plan for the RRC's health and social activities is being developed. A RRC Health Officer, responsible for gathering Russian expertise outside the RRC, as well as co-ordinating and implementing RRC health activities, is required. In the future, a RRC health advisory committee will take on strategic planning of health and social activities.

Visiting Nurses Service

The RRC Visiting Nurses (2,087 in 1997) continue to provide a unique service to some 636,000 sick, elderly, handicapped and often house-bound people. The demand for such assistance already far exceeds present RRC resources and will no doubt continue to grow in the current economic crisis. Besides their traditional activities, new roles are emerging for Visiting Nurses including prevention and care of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and tuberculosis. This requires further recruitment and training.

The programme aims:

- to reach more vulnerable people – elderly, handicapped, refugees and displaced, as well as those suffering from HIV/AIDS or TB.
- through recruitment, training and upgrading of visiting nurses, to enhance the capacity of the RRC to provide services.
- continue support to four existing VNS training centres.
- equip a further 22 medical-social rooms, thus increasing the number of patients each Visiting Nurse can attend.
- employ a VNS programme officer to co-ordinate, support and monitor VNS activities, as well as to develop goals and guidelines, facilitate funding and cost-recovery.
- encourage and train more student "auxiliaries" and Red Cross volunteers and Youth to participate in peer group action.

HIV/AIDS - Youth/VNS

In recent years, the incidence of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in Russia has increased enormously. Since those affected are mainly young people, preventive efforts should concentrate primarily on youth peer education through the RRC Youth, as well as on Visiting Nurses who are likely to face greater demands for care of AIDS patients at home. The programme – to be implemented in three areas: Kaliningrad, Krasnodar (including Novorossisysk) and Moscow (3 districts) – has two components:

1. Youth component - aims:

- strengthen the Russian RC Youth and promote the concept of "healthy lifestyle" among young people.
- reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS and STDs among youth through raising awareness of risks concerning injecting drugs.
- establish a Youth/AIDS desk at the RRC headquarters.
- establish one RRC youth office in each targeted region.
- set up 10 youth clubs in schools in each region and begin peer education.
- assess and update the "Action for Youth" manual on HIV/AIDS.

2. VNS component - aims:

- develop capacity for psycho-social support and care for people suffering from HIV/AIDS through strengthening the VNS.
- establish a VNS/AIDS desk within the RRC Programme Department.
- establish/improve RRC capacities for VN training in the targeted regions.
- develop a comprehensive curriculum and training materials for VN training.
- train a core group of 12 nurses from the project area in psycho-social support and apply their new skills.

First Aid

The RRC has received assistance in updating its first aid programme, including the production of student and instructor manuals and an instructor educational programme. However, by the end of 1998 it will only have been introduced into 24 of 89 oblasts, leaving 65 oblasts without this vital programme.

Plans for the first aid programme in 1999 are to:

- carry out training in the 24 oblasts, reaching 1,000 people per oblast.
- develop health education materials to be distributed through first aid programmes plus Visiting Nurse and Youth programmes.
- extend the programme to an additional 15 oblasts (16 instructors and 4 instructor trainers per oblast).
- assist the RRC to broker training agreements with public and private enterprises, leading to revenue generation and sustainability.

Funds are needed to maintain an oblast first aid co-ordinator and provide incentives to both the local committee and volunteer instructors until the transition to sustainability is completed.

Blood Donor Recruitment Programme

In the past, the Soviet/Russian Red Cross had considerable experience in running donor recruitment programmes. In 1991, the Ministry of Health took over responsibility for donor recruitment, introducing paid blood donation (In 1997, 32.2% came from paid donors). However, the new system proved both unsuccessful and risky. In 1996, when the supply of blood reached critically low levels, the Health Ministry invited the RRC to participate again in blood donor recruitment.

This programme aims to increase donor recruitment, and at the same time revitalise the RRC's image and advocacy in blood donation by:

- updating and developing educational/information material.
- distributing such material, especially in regions where RRC branches have maintained co-operation with the blood transfusion authorities.
- Disaster Preparedness and Response

Russia suffered numerous natural disasters over the past year. Although the RRC, with the Federation, responded to these emergencies, action was often delayed because of the lack of a Disaster Preparedness Programme (DPP). The RRC needs assistance to:

- develop a national Disaster Preparedness and Response plan.
- develop a DPP training curriculum, based on the plan, for training RRC staff and volunteers.
- establish a stockpile of emergency shelter and medical supplies for rapid deployment (within 24 hours).

The process of assisting the RRC to assume an effective and active role in DPP will take 3-5 years. Initial support in developing a plan will require a DPP delegate; the recruitment of a RRC DPP co-ordinator; and support for the designing and printing of a national plan and training curriculum.

- Population Movement Programme

The RRC has signed a co-operation agreement with the Federal Migration Service (FMS), which has prioritised strengthening of regional stability and improvement of the situation of migrants. Russia has 1,500,000 people from NIS and Baltic countries registered as "forced migrants", but an estimated 4 million remain unregistered – without legal status and therefore unable to benefit from any state support. In 1997, the UNHCR registered 32,000 asylum seekers from non-NIS countries.

In 1998 the RRC Population Movement programme assessed needs, and liaised with governmental and international humanitarian agencies (UNHCR and IOM). A plan of activities was designed for RRC headquarters and local Red Cross committees. A medical room was set up in a forced migrants' centre in Kaluga and psychological and social rehabilitation was provided for refugees in Moscow. Support for the programme has come from the Federation – in technical and human resources – and from the IOM, which contributed financially towards a medical programme in three RRC centres.

In 1999, the project aims to:

- support the National Society in capacity building and training in refugee assistance.
- provide direct assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and forced migrants in six temporary accommodation centres.
- create a social/legal counselling unit within the RRC to increase awareness of refugees' human rights.
- increase co-operation with the FMS, UNHCR, IOM and NGOs to further RRC's auxiliary activities.

- Institutional Development/Resource Development and Capacity Building

The Russian Red Cross aims to continue its process of reforms initiated in November 1996, and formalised in the Strategic Work Plan for development extending to 2001, which was adopted by its second plenum in Spring 1998. It has established a monitoring group and appointed an acting Director General to implement the structural changes from 1 January 1999, supervise the RRC Work Plan and ensure realisation of reforms.

Development of RRC Youth

A survey of RRC committees revealed that 59% of those who responded have youth groups, but only 15% have any local youth activities. There is a lack of organisation or structure. Since youth represents the single most likely potential for volunteers among the population, as well as offering perspectives for the Society's development, the creation of a unified RRC

Youth movement is essential. This was the main purpose of the Youth Department set up in the RRC headquarters in 1997.

In 1999 a project to promote the development of RRC Youth will cover five regions: Central, Central-Chernozem, North Caucasus, North-West and Volga regions. The project's aims are:

- unification of regional youth groups into an RRC Youth structure.
- creation of a Youth Coordination Council for the RRC.
- development of common objectives and tasks.
- preparation and printing of RRCY legal documents.
- training of RRCY leaders in Institutional Development and youth activities throughout Russia.

RRC Membership Card Project

From 1990-96 the RRC saw a sharp decline in its membership, with virtually no fees coming in. The 1998 Membership Card project recruited 110,000 members, raising USD 350,000. Of this, 80% was returned to local RRC Committees to support their assistance to the vulnerable. The remaining 20% was used for more membership cards. By the end of 1999 it is expected that 1,000,000 cards will have been issued and income to the Society will have increased correspondingly. Funding is needed for this project to continue.

Financial Management

Further development of financial management within the RRC follows the 1997-98 computerisation and installation of an accounting programme to improve timeliness, quality and transparency in three RRC Committees in and around Moscow. This project will be extended to four regional RC committees and, in a second phase, three further RRC committees will be provided with computers and later with accounting software. The upgrading of accounting software in the RRC Central Committee is also planned, in line with the RRC Strategic Development Plan, to ease the workload and facilitate speedier reporting. This, in turn, should encourage donors.

Information/Media

The RRC must rejuvenate its image if it is to be seen by potential donors and beneficiaries as being energetic, transparent and above all effective in rendering support to the most vulnerable. Modernisation must occur from the headquarters downwards to every branch and department.

Activities to promote the RRC's information sector during 1998 included: the membership card project (see above), supply of fax machines to 10 regional RRC committees, 2,000 collecting boxes, and ICRC funding for the re-launch of the RRC magazine. However a two-year (1999-2001) information project, similar to the "sliding scale" of funding adopted in Central Asia and the Caucasus, is essential if the headquarters and all eight regions are to be fully equipped and staffed. In accordance with the RRC's Strategic Development plan, this project envisages:

1. Recruiting 11 new information staff and fully funding their salaries during 1999, funding half their salaries in 2000.
2. Purchasing 10 computers (one with a DTP programme for the headquarters).
3. Training workshop.
4. Resource workshop.

Capacity

- Operating Society

The process of reforms and strategic development that the Russian Red Cross is currently undergoing will last until 2001. Experience already gained, through the implementation of a variety of relief and development programmes, suggests that while individual branches have the capacity to mount significant projects (e.g. Winter Emergency Appeal 1997/98) there are in general some deficiencies in staff and volunteer resources, which the current reform process hopes to address. Logistics and communication facilities are also being strengthened. Nationwide, the RRC employs 3,250 people, 56 of them at headquarters. The National Society has 6.9 million members across 11 time zones.

- Federation

The Moscow Delegation supports the Russian Red Cross across the 21 republics, 49 oblasts, six krais and ten okrugs that make up the Russian Federation. The delegation also serves as a regional financial management base for Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine and supplies logistical and information support to other Federation delegations and National Societies in the NIS. The Chernobyl Assistance and Rehabilitation Programme (CHARP) is also assisted from Moscow.

Resource Planning

The Federation plans to maintain its delegation at its current strength – a Head of Delegation and five delegates covering First Aid, Health, Relief, Information and Resource Development – and to add a Youth/Health delegate in the course of 1999.

Co-operation

Co-operation with the ICRC will continue in the context of the Seville Agreement and the Federation's Strategic Plan 2010 process. As part of the Population Movement activities co-ordination with UNHCR, IOM, OSCE

and FMS will be expanded further. For DPP activities, closer contacts will be sought with OCHA and UNDP. On health-related activities, co-operation with WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, the International Nurses Council, plus the World Bank and the Arctic Council, will be intensified.