

KENYA: HEALTH, DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

5 August 1999

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situation report no. 1/99
period covered: 1 January - 30 June 1999*

A complete lack of funding has severely limited implementation of this programme. The Kenyan Red Cross Society (KRCS), with Federation support, has undertaken a process of reviewing programme objectives and revising the budget, and has recognised the need to reinforce internal management. Notwithstanding the difficulties encountered during the first six months, several of the planned activities have been implemented in a limited scope.

The context

For over a decade Kenya has been responding to a series of emergencies resulting from both natural and man made disasters, including seasonal outbreaks of disease (particularly cholera and malaria), famine, floods, the El Niño phenomenon, refugee influxes, and internal population movements. Furthermore, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has had a similarly drastic impact in Kenya as with other sub-Saharan countries. To date, the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) has assisted some half a million disaster victims, as well as some 150,000 people infected (or affected) by HIV/AIDS.

While the KRCS has made successful interventions in such situations in the past, there has been a growing awareness that such a reactive approach needed to be reviewed in the face of a steady decrease in external support of such activities. To counter this, the KRCS came up with a three-year strategic plan covering the 1999 - 2001 period. The strategy emphasises prevention and preparedness in a manner that strengthens the coping and intervention capacities of respective communities and local Red Cross structures.

The KRCS would thus build on its success in past interventions by strengthening the response capacity and preparedness of Red Cross Branches in those areas which are susceptible to disasters, as well as the co-ordination capacity of the Headquarters. This would be achieved through the streamlining of the National Society's organisational structure to reduce bureaucratic delays in decision making during emergency situations, as well as making senior management more professional. In addition, the governance would be strengthened at both the national and branch level, with local fund-raising efforts reinforced.

Latest events

Despite a very poor response to this appeal the KRCS has managed to implement some of the proposed activities, in particular those relating to capacity building. This was accomplished mainly through the activities included in the Nairobi Bomb Blast Emergency Appeal and the Regional Water and Sanitation programme.

In May the vacancy of a Federation Programme Co-ordinator was finally filled. The delegate works in very close co-operation with the KRCS, and is physically located in the National Society's Headquarters.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Disaster preparedness: The Nairobi Bomb Blast Appeal launched in September 1998 provided for disaster preparedness activities as a component of capacity building. Several workshops on Disaster Management and Training were held in Kisumu, Nakuru, Nairobi, and the coastal region.

Cholera intervention: In January there was an outbreak of cholera in Kenya involving twenty two of the sixty five Districts. In response to a request from the KRCS, the Federation released a total of CHF 7,000 from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to assist the National Society to respond to the emergency. This operation, which covered the February - March period, involved joint Federation/KRCS needs assessment missions to the affected areas, and the distribution of emergency medical supplies in three locations (Kitui, Vihiga and Mombasa). A total of 500 patients benefited from the cholera kits and 7,500 people benefited from the distribution of Oral Rehydration Solution and water purification tablets through the local health authorities. The ICRC made a contribution in kind by providing transport for the Mombasa consignment of supplies.

Water and sanitation: there were no activities to benefit communities directly due to the lack of funding. However, through the Regional Water and Sanitation programme, two volunteers benefited in terms of skills enhancement through participation in two emergency watsan response workshops, and a further eleven attended a hygiene promotion workshop.

Outstanding needs

Since there was virtually no response to this Appeal it has been decided to reduce and re-direct the Appeal activities. The objectives set for the rest of 1999 are now to:

- { Improve the management structure of the KRCS, particularly in the areas of personnel and finance.
- { Clarify and strengthen the roles of and relationship between governance and management.
- { Work on the integration of the KRCS programme activities.

The funding required to complete these activities in 1999 is CHF 85,000.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Bilateral agreements exist between the KRCS and the Swedish and Norwegian Red Cross in the areas of Branch Development, Youth, Disaster Preparedness and Primary Health Care.

Close relations have been developed with ICRC, particularly in the areas of dissemination, tracing and institutional development. The Federation also supports the KRCS with the commercial first aid programme, as well as activities in the field of information and public relations.

Contributions

See Annex 1 attached.

Conclusion

There is general acknowledgement that the poor response to this appeal is in large measure due to two major factors: programme-related issues, and internal difficulties experienced by the KRCS. Several changes in the National Society's management and overall structure have been undertaken, with more under consideration. The Federation is assisting the KRCS to bridge this difficult period, and with a revised budget to lay the groundwork for future growth for which further support is required.

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