

BELARUS, MOLDOVA, UKRAINE

29 July 1999

appeal no. 01.41/99

situation report no. 1

period covered: January - June, 1999

A lack of donor support has hampered implementation of the health, population movement, disaster preparedness and planning, and institutional development activities envisioned in this programme. Pending a more positive response on the part of donors to the specified needs and with the Federation's facilitation, the available resources have been effectively directed to health interventions and training opportunities.

The context

The long-term, cumulative effect 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 (PM)**: to expand networking to increase awareness; to obtain official recognition ultimately leading to establishing a legal basis;
- { **Disaster Preparedness and Planning (DPP)**: to increase material resources and expand the trained volunteer base;
- { **Institutional Development (ID)**: to assist each National Society to identify and define its role in society and to obtain a legal basis for its priority functions.

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

Latest Events

Belarus

According to the Belarusian Ministry of Statistics and Analysis, consumer prices rose by 4.2 percent in Belarus in the first two weeks of June and by 81.1 percent since the beginning of the year. At present about 45,000 medical specialists (out of the total of 156,000) are employed in the national public health system. The medical establishments operating under the authority of the Belarusian Ministry of Health owed 2 trillion rubles (12,050,000 CHF) to suppliers of power, food and drugs as of June 1, 1999. The sum includes a 700-billion debt (4,217,160 CHF) to Pharmatsiya, Belarus' state drug supplier. The public health sector faces shortages of imported medicines, especially those used for treating cancer patients. The local drug factories meet only about 30 percent of the country's demand for medicines and Belarusian drug manufacturers lack foreign currency to buy raw materials abroad.

Ukraine

There are indications that Ukraine may accede to the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, objectives which are reflected in the Presidential Decree on Main Directions for Social Policy for 1997-2000. The main obstacle is the lack of financial resources to implement rights granted to asylum seekers and refugees in accordance with the Convention. A total of 3,354 recognised refugees now reside in Ukraine, and the migration service of the city of Kiev alone has granted refugee status to more non-CIS applicants than the Russian Federation, Belarus and Poland all together.

Working in coordination with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Ukraine is making significant efforts to clear \$1 billion worth of foreign debt this year, and has indicated twice that figure will be cleared next year.

As of April 1, 1999, government estimates indicated a total of 26,000 HIV-infected people in Ukraine, but UN specialists have separately estimated actual HIV infection at 200,000 to 240,000 people. At the current rate, if HIV prevention efforts are not coordinated, HIV infections will lead to a reduction of the Ukrainian population by 2 million people by the year 2016. The government has been unable to finance the AIDS and drug addiction prevention programme adopted in March 1998.

Moldova

The regional crisis has had an adverse impact on many economic support projects (recovery of macro-economic stability, improvement of the investment climate, and corporate restructuring) implemented by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, as well as in the disbursement of credits to be used in Moldova. For this reason the financing of the infrastructure projects will be downsized from 90 to \$70 million, and the total volume in the financing of the EBRD projects in Moldova will drop from \$170 - \$150 million.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Visiting Nurses Service (VNS) w

Belarus

At present, 460 visiting nurses are providing home care to more than 10,000 persons (invalids and elderly, bedridden, seriously ill people). Assistance is also being provided at Pinsk Charity House (50 bedridden patients) and at 124 medico-social centres. The centres, mostly located far from any medical institution, are often the only sources of medical assistance.

Some 60% of nurses salaries are financed from the state budget, and the Belarus Red Cross (BelRC) are attempting to increase the level of government financial support. Most of the visiting nurses (59%) are either at a pre-retirement or retirement age. Low wages (USD 10-12 a month) and hard work make the job of a Red Cross Visiting Nurse unattractive for young people, who prefer to seek employment with the public health care institutions where the real wages are 35-50% higher than the amount offered by the BelRC.

Some 400 nursing kits have been procured (from WEA funds) for a one year period. Disinfectants for medico-social centres were also provided. An application to ECHO amounting to 1 million Euros has been jointly submitted by the Danish Red Cross, Belarus Red Cross and the Minsk Delegation.

Ukraine

More than 356,000 pensioners and invalids are registered with the Ukraine Red Cross (UkrRC). Among them, nearly 22,000 are bedridden. These categories are served by 3,200 UkrRC Visiting Nurses. Nurses salaries are funded by the state budget, and local authorities support the Red Cross Nursing Service by providing premises for medico-social rooms and centres.

In addition to home-based services, the visiting nurses run 40 medico-social centres, 303 medico-social rooms, and 485 clothing banks (mainly located in remote areas where no other medical assistance is possible).

Moldova

During January-June, 42 visiting nurses assisted 800 people, providing medical and social services during the home visits (more than 35 thousand visits were made). It is planned to increase the number of visiting nurses in order to cope with additional duties (new TB/HIV/STD appeal).

Community Based First Aid (CBFA) w

The CBFA programme, initiated in January 1998 for 1 year, was extended until end-March 1999 and finally until the end of June 1999. While a new Health Delegate was in place by March 16, 1999, the interruption in the programme has been disruptive, and re-initiating activities has been difficult.

Belarus

The CBFA steering committee continued to meet, and has benefited from the Federation's administrative support. The main objective for the BelRC was to complete and publish the student manual, but issues involving the copyright were only solved in early June. The BelRC has published 10,000 manuals and printed 10,000 First Aid certificates. Some 420 First Aid kits were procured through German Red Cross support. The remaining funds are being spent organising Teaching -Training materials for the RC Oblast committees, enabling them to continue training after the completion of the programme.

The First Aid training continues, aiming for more First Aiders in the various Oblasts and to train more instructors. Up to 20 June, 10 three-day training courses for the general public were conducted, with 25 participants each. One week First Aid training for the general public (also with 25 participants) took place in June, with one of the aims to select instructor trainers.

Ukraine

A 10-member steering committee within the UkrRC was established, aimed also at rendering assistance and support to the First Aid training activities in all the regions of Ukraine.

Similar to the BelRC, the main objective was the publishing of the First Aid manual. The Ministry of Health has approved the manuals to be used by the Red Cross for training, and 5,000 student manuals and 1,000 instructors manuals are currently in process.

Volunteer training has been ongoing in the RC Oblasts committees. Several 12-hour training courses were conducted in Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Zhitomir, Odessa, Kiev, Kirovograd oblasts and in Kiev city. Altogether, 219 people were trained (workers, pupils of technical schools, firemen, drivers, road police, RC visiting nurses, social workers).

Moldova

The RRC manual has been translated, edited, and is ready for publishing. Efforts to purchase First Aid materials for Red Cross committees are underway, as well as training materials.

Disaster Preparedness and Response w**Belarus**

The Civil Defence law is under preparation in Belarus, with a major component calling for the Disaster Preparedness Service of the BelRC to be integrated into the state Civil Defence system. It is expected that the position of the BelRC will be strengthened with the adoption of this law.

During 1999 the BelRC rescue team assisted the flooded villages in Zhitkovichi rayon, distributing food parcels and blankets. Blankets, water-proof footwear, detergents, and food parcels were also provided to victims of floods also in Moghilev and Brest oblasts.

In May, 1999, training courses on Disaster Preparedness were conducted (with the assistance of the German Red Cross).

Ukraine

The Ukrainian government has launched a Medical Service for Emergencies programme, with a well-defined role for the UkrRC.

Following the floods in Western Ukraine, the Federation facilitated a review of the UkrRC disaster response operation, identifying main strengths to build on and weaknesses and gaps to improve.

The Minsk Delegation assisted the UkrRC to submit a project proposal on Disaster Preparedness. With support provided by the German Red Cross, the project is currently being implemented.

Population Movement Programme (PM) w**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 and educational programme for refugee women; exploring possibilities in refugees' integration process.

Under the Winter Emergency Appeal programme, 200 refugees received aspirin and vitamins; in March, 100 food parcels were provided to 230 refugees. Almost 600 refugees have received clothing and footwear. In the framework of the BelRC programme the most vulnerable refugees are being provided with food assistance, toys for children, and medical services (health rehabilitation and recreation in Svitanak Sanatorium for 25 refugees: elderly, children, middle aged people with cardiac disorders, asthma and gastric-enteric cases). The BelRC, in coordination with UNHCR, is also providing social and legal counselling for asylum seekers.

Ukraine

The URCS-prepared Memorandum of Understanding is under review with the State Committee on Nationalities and Migration. The UkrRC is actively lobbying to insert a paragraph into the new refugee law regarding the role of the National Society.

Medical assistance for the illegally apprehended migrants in Mukachevo started in the beginning of February following the grass-root PM seminar in Uzhgorod. A similar project in Lviv is pending the outcome of negotiations between the local authorities and UNHCR regarding the selection of the site, and has therefore not yet commenced.

The Red Cross summer camp for the formerly displaced people (FDP) and non-FDP children in Crimea from all different ethnic groups inhabiting the peninsula will take place in August focusing on tolerance, RC/RC principles and human values. The camps will be operated under the auspices of the Red Cross with participation from ICRC, UNHCR and various NGOs.

Responding to the changed circumstances and the recommendations of the UNHCR assessment mission to Crimea during December, 1998, the health screening project is currently under revision by the URC. The project is expected to commence in the second half of 1999.

Out of the 6 envisaged grass-root PM workshops, three have already taken place (Zakarpatyie, Kiev, and Simferopol/Crimea). Three more workshops will be held in the second half of the year, focusing on an awareness network of the Red Cross in Ukraine and establishing co-operation modules with the local authorities and international organisations. The workshops are primarily focused on local Red Cross branches, but also local authorities and being conducted jointly with UNHCR, IOM, and the State Committee. The three workshops received positive evaluations.

Moldova

The PM programme is pending the establishment of a focal point for the programme. It is expected that the 4 grass-root PM workshops will be conducted jointly with UNHCR during the second half of 1999.

Institutional / Resource Development w

An Institutional Development Programme workshop was held in May in Minsk, with the participation of the Federation, ICRC and the National Societies of Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova as well as other countries. Discussions were held on challenges and perspectives for capacity building of NGOs, lessons learnt from managing the organisational reform process, strategic and operational planning, resource development, volunteering, evaluation of the Federation's Strategic Workplan for the 1990's, as well as the Federation's Strategic Plan up to 2010.

Belarus

A workshop for the BelRC staff and volunteers was held in Vitebsk in March. The participants shared their experience and elaborated on the National Society programmes and projects.

Ukraine

On March 25, a co-operational Agreement between the UkrRC and the IFRC concerning development and Relief Programmes was signed by the President of the UkrRC, Ivan Usichenko, and the IFRC Secretary General, George Weber.

A workshop for the UkrRC staff was held in February this year, to train staff on fund-raising, outlining programmes, and strategic planning.

An IFRC Relief Administrator working in Uzhgorod has been training staff of the Zakarpattyia Red Cross branch on procurement, purchasing, identification of beneficiaries, preparation of distribution plans as well as preparing reports.

Moldova

An ID Delegate arrived in Chisinau in May, providing assistance to passing the Red Cross law, and supporting the process of acceptance of the Federation Status Agreement.

The role of the MoIRC as a national relief and welfare organisation needs to be addressed, as well as issues of organisational and personnel structures.

At present the ID Delegate together with the Vice President of Moldova Red Cross (MoIRC) is developing the Plan of Action, covering all areas of co-operation between the IFRC and the MoIRC.

Belarus

Young RC volunteers are assisting visiting nurses in providing care to the lonely elderly, invalids, and collecting money for the RC branch committees.

A summer camp for some about 30 teenagers, mainly from low-income families, was arranged by the Grodno oblast RC Committee together with the oblast education department.

Ukraine

Within the programme "Youth against AIDS", regional Red Cross Committees in Odessa and Zaporozhje arranged a number of mass events for young people, with distribution of special educational leaflets and booklets on AIDS prevention.

Moldova

It is planned to start Youth Red Cross activities in Moldova: by November a Youth Red Cross programme is to be developed.

Outstanding needs

The weak donor response to the Appeal (2.23% or 99,855 CHF) has caused major problems for the three National Societies. All planned activities have been adjusted accordingly, and further donor support is anticipated before significant programme revisions are considered.

External Relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

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

A joint ICRC/IFRC/UkrRC seminar on the Seville Agreement was held on February 19, with the involvement of all the Oblasts in Ukraine.

Following a decision by the EU to allocate 20 million Euros for humanitarian needs in eight NIS countries (outside Russia), evaluations were conducted by EU representatives. Applications have subsequently been submitted to ECHO, with an emphasis on VNS/TB-HIV-STD.

In February, the Minsk PM Delegate met with a Representative of the Dutch government (section development fund or MATRA programme) to discuss long term development programmes for the BelRC.

In April, the Head of Delegation met with Italian, Japanese and German Embassies in Minsk, and (together with the President of the Ukrainian RC) the embassies of Sweden, Austria, Spain and Finland in Kiev. The

aim of the visits was to discuss the potential for further co-operation with a particular focus on Winter Emergency, Disaster Preparedness, Capacity Building, Population Movement, CHARP, and TB/HIV/AIDS.

On May 19, the Relief Delegate and the Information Officer participated in a roundtable organised by the World Bank in Kiev, to discuss support to the health care reform process in Ukraine. A brief presentation of the following health programmes was made: Chernobyl Humanitarian Assistance and Rehabilitation Programme (CHARP); Visiting Nurses Service (VNS); TB/HIV/AIDS Programme; Community Based First Aid (CBFA) and Population Movement. Some printed materials were issued and distributed.

On June 15 and June 24, the Head of Delegation met with EBRD and World Bank officials in Minsk to discuss activities outlined in the Emergency Appeal. In both cases heads of the offices promised to brief their Headquarters in London and Washington respectively on Red Cross activities in our region.

The Federation Information Delegate visited Minsk in April to establish working relationships with the newly organised information/reporting department. Discussions were held on the following main topics: reporting (schedules, time lines, reporting lines, sharing of tasks); common information activities; planning regional newsletters.

The Information Department is also focusing efforts on collecting short human interest stories to increase the visibility of the Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine National Societies, as well as to tell something new about the plight of the most vulnerable, profiling Red Cross in action in this region.

A Press Release on the Institutional Development workshop held from 2-7 May in Minsk for representatives of all CIS National RC / RC Societies was produced and delivered to four big information agencies in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. The information about the workshop was subsequently mentioned in Ukrainian and Moldovan mass media.

A circular letter on the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP) Project was prepared to inform the National Societies about this important initiative launched by the World Bank, as well as the significant role to be played by the International Federation. This should help to better position Societies in the future implementation of the GRSP at the field level.

Belarus

The launch of the TB initiative took place on April 1 in the Minsk Press Centre. Seventeen media representatives (news agencies, newspapers and television) attended this event as well as the Minister of Health, health specialists, officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and WHO. Promotional video material was produced for the television and about 10 articles on the problem of tuberculosis were printed in the local newspapers.

The Delegation's Information Department was actively involved in the preparations and logistics support to provide video footage on the WEA operation in Minsk and Minsk District, with a focus on soup kitchens, food parcels and second hand clothes distribution.

On the eve of the World RC/RC Day, the winter operation as well as other programmes carried out jointly by the BelRC and the Federation received wide coverage by the mass media. The BelRC Headquarters initiated a round-table discussion and a series of TV and radio programmes, and similar activities were organised by the RC branches. Press-conferences, extended task force meetings, and sessions with other NGOs are also planned for the Oblast Committees upon the completion of the operation.

Ukraine

The international seminar "Community against TB and AIDS" in Kiev received positive media coverage in Ukraine. The information was sent to central, regional and municipal newspapers through the national information agencies DINAU and UNIAN. Ukrainian TV journalists interviewed the Federation's representative and the President of the Zakarpattia Regional Red Cross Committee. The World News Service of

Ukraine has broadcast the information abroad. Interviews with the Federation's representatives and the President of the Belarusian Red Cross were broadcast on the Ukrainian radio.

A nation-wide charity action "Help the vulnerable" was initiated by the UkrRC in the beginning of March, 1999, and gained wide-spread public support.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Renny Nancholas
Director
Europe Department