

RUSSIAN FEDERATION: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE, HEALTH AND CAPACITY BUILDING

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With increased funding support, programme implementation is now reaching more effective levels. Training activities continue to be emphasised, particularly in the core programme areas of health and population movements. Despite staffing limitations, Russian Red Cross (RRC) members and volunteers have effectively compensated with heightened commitment, and with key support provided by the Federation.

The context

The Moscow Delegation supports the RRC 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 Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

In summary, the RRC and the Federation established the following four main objectives for 1999:

Health: to further consolidate the Visiting Nurses Services (VNS) (at the heart of a major drive against TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs epidemics);

Disaster Preparedness and Prevention/Response capacity: to develop this capacity through planning and training response;

Population Movement: Developing activities focusing on dissemination and awareness raising;

Institutional Development /Resource Development: to further rebuild and strengthen the RRC.

Latest Events

A Russian company (GFK Market Research Russia) has completed the fifth round of the Business Barometer, a survey has been conducted regularly since September 1998 to determine how business company leaders and top managers rate the current economic situation in the country. In May 1999, survey results indicated that the economic situation was regarded less negatively than in previous months. The survey results were particularly notable from Nizhny Novgorod where the business forecasts reflect a sharp positive turn.

Despite the positive indications, according to World Bank estimates the economic downturn will continue, forcing up to 20% of the Russian population into abject poverty by the year 2000 (defined as living on less than half of the official minimum living wage of RR 830, equivalent to USD 35). Up to 30 million people are expected to be living in poverty by 2000, or 18.5% of the population.

The hardest hit groups will be families with children living in small and medium-sized towns where there are fewer opportunities to grow food in family garden plots, and limited access to larger cities where extra earning opportunities exist.

Due to the unseasonably cold weather during the first part of May (damaging garden plots - the main food and money source for many Russians and for 36.3% of Muscovites) and the extreme rise in temperatures in June (up to +35 degrees C), resulting in drought conditions, Russia can expect a considerably reduced harvest this year. With just 51 million tons of grain expected, Russia at best will have just 1 million MT of grain to restock its reserves this year, according to the head of the Agricultural Economics Institute. Russia consumes around 70 million tons of grain annually, including about 26 million tons of food-quality grain. The country has been short on food due to last year's disastrous harvest of just 47.8 million metric tons as well as the August 1998 devaluation of the Russian currency, which made imports more expensive.

Finally, swarms of locusts are currently causing great damage to sunflower, pea and barley fields as well as pastures in the Western Siberia - Novosibirsk region. Different species of locusts were detected in some regions near the Caspian Sea, as well as in regions bordering Kazakhstan, in South-eastern Siberia, and even in Central Russia.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Health ●

Russia suffers from one of the highest rates of tuberculosis in the world, and TB remains the country's number one killer among infectious diseases, taking three million lives every year.

With the current economic crisis in Russia and more pressing problems such as mass poverty, crime, and servicing huge foreign debts, resources are simply unavailable to adequately address Russia's AIDS-prevention programme needs. As a result, HIV infection rates have soared in the Russian capital in recent months, and threatens to grow into a full-blown epidemic because of the lack of public awareness and prevention programmes. According to Ministry of Health figures, a total of 15,819 HIV-positive patients, including 526 children, were registered in Russia as of 30 June. A total of 377 patients, including 126 children, have developed full-blown AIDS, and 406 people, including 101 children, have died of the disease. In the first six months of this year, 4,867 new HIV cases were registered in Russia - more than double the number in the same period in 1998. Russian officials warn that the actual number of HIV cases may be up to 10 times higher than reported. The Head of the Ministry of Health AIDS Department confirmed that up to 70% of all new cases are registered in Moscow. Medical officials blame the spread of the virus on increased drug use and prostitution, combined with the public disregard of AIDS and the lack of safe-sex education and drug treatment programmes. Deep poverty in Russia's hinterlands is pushing scores of young women to move to Moscow to work as prostitutes, and few of them seem concerned about HIV risks. Drugs are also easily obtained on the streets and are relatively cheap, and intravenous drug use has soared.

Visiting Nurses Service

Regular salary payments are being transferred by the RRC to the visiting nurses of the Ekaterinburg region. However, reports on the number of assisted beneficiaries and other VNS's activities were received during the reporting period are pending.

HIV/AIDS - Youth/VNS

Moscow

A meeting with district authorities was held to discuss summer camps in and around the city related to educational AIDS seminars planned for June-July. On 29 April a team of volunteers headed by the programme co-ordinator held a two-hour seminar on HIV/AIDS precautions for 27 high school students.

On 30 April a workshop to discuss training activities was held for 6 young people. A lecture on medical and psycho-pathological aspects of AIDS was conducted for 10 volunteers on 7 May, and another one on communication was given for nine people on 14 May. Both lectures were led by social and psychological assistance for youth experts.

A team of Youth Centre representatives participated in a broadcast cable TV programme together with a South-eastern district prefect. On 14-16 May, Youth Centre volunteers took part in a Quilt exposition in Moscow devoted to the people who have died from AIDS.

A library, containing informational and educational literature on HIV/AIDS and drug addiction was established in the Youth Centre.

Kaliningrad

A field trip to Kaliningrad was conducted by the programme co-ordinator on 15-18 June to review programme implementation. The regional committee established contacts with local health authorities, including those dealing with HIV/AIDS and Youth. In efforts to draw volunteers among high school students in the city and region, local co-ordinators have held regular seminars on AIDS, communication, psychology, and the history and structure of the Movement and Red Cross principles. Educational workshops promoting a healthy lifestyle and HIV/AIDS precautions are being held for teachers.

First Aid

The following training activity (under a Canadian Project) has been undertaken in the regions during the reporting period:

Training Activities, Phase I and Phase IIa Oblasts

Location	Number of Public Courses Held	Number of Persons Trained	Number of Commercial Courses Held	Number of Persons Trained	Number of Instructor Courses Held	Number of Instructors Trained
Arkhangelsk	23	339	13	153	--	--
Chelyabinsk	No reports were received from the region					
Irkutsk	7	112	1	2	3	40
Khabarovsk	2	16	--	--	--	--
Krasnodar	11	175	3	31	--	--
Murmansk	13	186	--	--	--	--
N.Novgorod	4	65	1	16	1	6
Novosibirsk	3	38	--	--	--	--
St.-Petersburg	20	320	--	--	1	8
Tomsk	9	142	--	--	--	--
Tula	11	109	--	--	--	--
Ulan-Ude	3	36	--	--	1	10
Vladivostok	8	98	2	22	--	--

General, instructor and instructor-trainer courses were also undertaken in each of the Phase IIb oblasts (Kazan, Kemerovo, Krasnoyarsk, Khakasia and Yakutia). The table below indicates that the needed level of training instructors has been reached to initiate public training.

Location	Public Trained	Instructors Trained	Instructor-Trainers Trained
Kazan	35	9	5
Kemerovo	32	16	3
Krasnoyarsk	30	14	4
Khakasia	25	15	2
Yakutia	32	15	1

In combination with the Instructor-Trainer Course, all candidates received Institutional Development (ID) training to provide them with skills necessary for the successful implementation of the First Aid programme and comprehensive knowledge of the organisation. The same ID Courses have been held for FA Instructors and Red Cross staff in Kazan and Khakasia.

All five Phase IIb oblasts have hired FA Co-ordinators; the positions are filled by the newly prepared Instructor-trainers. All the regions are in the process of obtaining training licenses to become the authorised providers of First Aid Training in their regions.

Delivery of all training equipment, including adult and baby dummies and accessories, overheads, white boards, transparencies and other teaching means for the Phase IIb oblasts was completed.

All regions currently involved in the RRC's FA Programme received certificates, new FA Instructor and Instructor-Trainer manuals, and health pamphlets with information on alcohol, smoking, tuberculosis, and violence, designed and printed with the sponsorship of the Latter-Day Saint Charities. These pamphlets are to be distributed among the community through the First Aid Courses.

Based on a review of the existing laws, a legal entity under the auspices of the RRC was established in order to promote First Aid to a wide range of professionals and the general public. The proposal is now being considered by the RRC.

Together with the RRC Rescue Team, a mass demonstration of First Aid Skills and Techniques was organised during the celebration of World Red Cross/Red Crescent Day on 8 May.

The CBFA/Population Movement programme conducted a total of 43 courses in Astrakhan, Volgograd, Voronezh, Moscow city and region, Orenburg, Rostov and Samara for 613 people; two instructor-trainer courses were also held for 12 participants.

Since no activities have been carried out in Saratov, the RRC Central Committee Presidium took a decision to exclude the Saratov Red Cross Committee from the FA Programme, and withdrew all training equipment and materials.

Blood Donor Recruitment Programme

No funding has yet been received for this programme.

Disaster Preparedness and Response •

The Disaster Preparedness Department (DPD) is assisting the Bryansk regional committee in organising the activities for a Mobile Diagnostic Laboratory. A comparative analysis of diseases in the polluted

areas was made for the Federation assessment team. An application was made to deliver hygiene items to polluted regions.

The Head of the Minsk Delegation was also requested to consider establishing a Mobile Diagnostic Laboratory in Orlov region with a help of the RRC's Disaster Preparedness Department.

On 31 May a workshop was held by the International Red Cross Chernobyl Committee in Gomel with the participation of the RRC's DPD representatives.

Responding to the risk of spring flooding across the Russian Federation and the CIS, a plan of action to assist the victims of flooding was developed and sent to the regions.

A monthly field trip to examine the regional committee's preparedness for flooding and other potential disasters was conducted in Stavropol, Krasnodar, Kurgan, Saratov, Tomsk, Tatarstan and Yakutia regions by the DPD's main expert on 30 March-30 April.

A meeting with EMERCOM was held during the reporting period to discuss further collaboration. A seminar for the regional committees' representatives to discuss procedures in emergencies was held on 27 April.

Population Movement Programme •

Psychosocial rehabilitation rendered to refugees by the Moscow city Red Cross Committee: assistance was provided in April to 195 people in the rehabilitation centre, 57 letters were answered, and 31 individual private talks were held with the centre's lawyer.

Some 64 beneficiaries (mainly men and families) received psychological assistance in the RRC Reception point for forced migrants in April. The reception point is working five days a week and RRC psychologists are making weekly visits to the beneficiaries (a school for child-refugees and a refugee centre for women).

A workshop with eight regional RC committees was held on 12 May to discuss the launching of the project *Regional RRC Reception Points for Forced Migrants*, resulting in the establishment of eight reception points in Omsk, Orenburg, Rostov-na-Donu, Tambov, Kirov, Voronezh, Sochi and Oryel (effective on 1 June) intended to assist the recipients with psychological help and legal advice.

A training workshop for regional committees' staff members working in the field of population movement operating in Sochi and Orenburg (the most problematic areas) was held on 17-18 June. Seven people participated including four volunteers from Oryel and Marks (Saratov region). The Delegation's Information Officer gave a lecture on the history and structure of the Red Cross Movement.

The *Psychological Rehabilitation Network for Forced Migrants* project started during June. On 17-18 June a training seminar was held by Moscow State University psychology teachers for eight psychologists and one volunteer, who will be working in regional reception points. The RRC is planning to establish a network to assist migrants with psychological help and legal advice, since no other structure in Russia is providing such assistance. It is planned to extend the network to Pskov, Ivanovo, Omsk, Orenburg and Saint Petersburg.

The RRC Population Movement co-ordinator conducted two visits to Ivanovo region on 5-6 May and on 31 May-1 June, to conduct initial assessments and to organise a summer camp for 155 child-migrants from eight to 12 years old. The children were assisted by student-psychologists and

Moscow City Committee Youth Department members. The RRC museum staff gave lectures on the history and structure of the Red Cross Movement.

On 18-21 May a field trip was conducted to Pskov region to meet with local authorities, Migration Service department and Social Protection administration representatives in order to launch two projects: *Social and medical assistance for forced migrants and refugees*, which started on 1 June, and *Communication School* - a summer camp for child-migrants, that will start in August. A visit to the Russian Fund for Refugees and a meeting with the representatives was also held during the field trip to exchange experiences and discuss possible ways of future collaboration.

On 21-25 June an annual CIS Migration Conference took place in Geneva with the participation of National Red Cross societies. The RRC Population Movement co-ordinator briefed the meeting about the main activities of the Russian Red Cross Population Movement Department and its programmes.

Institutional / Resource Development and Capacity Building •

A five-day "Organisational Development" workshop for 15 representatives of all CIS National Red Cross/ Red Crescent Societies, organised by the Federation, was held in Minsk on 2-7 May. The workshop raised the topic of capacity building for Red Cross Societies at all levels.

The Delegation, together with the RRC, are planning to establish a regional committee office in Vladivostok. The Head of Delegation and the RRC president will also conduct a field trip to the city to assess the situation.

A three-year programme to support eight regional RC committees and strengthen local branches is being developed.

The Resource Development work progressed in accordance with plans and expectations. Successful preliminary talks were held with Russian, Finnish and Swedish dairies, which have agreed to participate in a fund-raising campaign during the fall of 1999, with a donation provided through the Swedish and Finnish Red Cross Societies for every package of milk, kefir and yoghurt, and the proceeds intended to support the RRC. An agreement for the donation of 180 million packages of dairy products for the next Winter Emergency Appeal (WEA) was reached with a Swedish Dairy company.

The Delegation successfully negotiated with the Johnson & Johnson health care company, resulting in an initial donation of 750,000 hygiene items for other Appeals (the Far Northeast programme, Yakutia operation, WEA 2000, and other programmes). The donation is valued at more than USD 1 million. Preliminary talks were held with other private commercial companies on further collaboration and their participation in various RC humanitarian programmes. Unilever agreed to donate 150 pallets of hygiene products.

Work with the Moscow City Youth Group to address its perceived problems of lack of focus, direction and resources has begun. A thorough evaluation of the regional resource development work carried out under the WEA programme commenced. A "tool box" of resource generation and management concepts to support future Resource Development consultancy is being developed.

Development of RRC Youth •

There are now 11 Youth departments and volunteer groups in Ivanovo, Oryel, Kaliningrad, Arkhangelsk, Nizhni Novgorod, Lobnya, Ulan-Ude, Orenburg, Abakan and Saransk, with a total of 748 members. Activities include: promoting Red Cross activities among youth; spreading the knowledge about International Humanitarian Rights; AIDS precautions; promoting a healthy life-style; and drawing youth to RC activities.

An educational manual for youth leaders is being developed, as well as a working schedule for the programme “Social rehabilitation of child invalids” in Moscow. The Petrozavodsk youth committee organised a disco with an entrance fee of one toy, and some 200 toys were collected and distributed to handicapped children. An information youth centre was established in Oryel, and a humanitarian programme to assist young vulnerable mothers under 21 years of age was launched in Ivanovo.

RRC Membership Card Project •

About 477,200 membership cards were delivered to 78 regional Red Cross committees and are being sold to the public.

Outstanding needs

Most of the programmes continue to experience low funding, particularly the Blood Donor Recruitment programme. The Delegation/RRC will evaluate planning for the Emergency Appeal 2000, as well as making efforts to attract increased funding from other sources.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Information/Media •

A BBC team conducted a five-day field trip to Magadan in the Far Northeast on 5-10 April, involving the Delegation Information Officer and the regional Red Cross chairlady. The trip served to highlight the excellent Red Cross assistance to an area facing extreme levels of poverty.

The launch of the World Disasters Report was held on 24 June near Yaroslavsky station. A media campaign for the Johnson & Johnson donation was organised, and the press-conference appeared in the Russian press, on four TV programmes, and all of page 4 of Friday’s popular English-language Moscow Times was devoted to the event.

The Information Delegate and Reporting officer conducted a trip to Minsk in mid-April where the new Information/Reporting officer was trained on Federation standard reporting procedures. A mini-workshop on media relations, contacts with Geneva, contributing to Federation publications/website was also held.

In May, the Information Officer participated on a visit of Christopher Black, Federation photographer, visiting the Moscow district Red Cross committee, the Red Cross medical and social assistance facilities in the South-eastern district of Moscow, a school in Lobnya, a small town outside of Moscow, and a soup-kitchen in the South-western district of Moscow.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Programme co-ordinators who had received some funding for their programmes are performing exceptional jobs under difficult circumstances, often with limited staff. While most programmes are far from full implementation due to the severe funding constraints, RRC members and volunteers have compensated for the lack of funds with their commitment and enthusiasm.

Director
Operations Funding and
Reporting Department

Director
Europe Department