

REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN: RELIEF, HEALTH AND CAPACITY BUILDING

30 June 1999

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ECHO funds provided in late 1998 and carried-over to the 1999 programme resulted in a highly successful implementation rate for this Appeal. The available funding, along with effective programme management on the part of the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST), with support provided by the Federation, has clearly led to improvements in the lives of the targeted beneficiaries. The basic assistance provided by different international humanitarian organisations continues to constitute the main source of support for a large part of the country's population, as well as for medical and educational structures. With economic projections remaining negative, it will become increasingly important to support and strengthen the Institutional Development objectives of the RCST.

The context

At present, the political situation in Tajikistan is undergoing a critical phase. The peace process, agreed on in the 1997 Peace Accord, has so far not been fully implemented. Although negotiations between the government and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) achieved some progress, the main political issues have not yet been resolved. Before the economy can start its recovery, political stability needs to be established. Meanwhile, with an ongoing deterioration of the country's infrastructure, the most vulnerable continue to experience hardship.

The internal conflict, which started in 1992, has taken an appalling toll, both in the number of human casualties and in the destruction of medical structures, education facilities, and other essential services. The collapse of the medical infrastructure caused the reappearance or sudden increase of diseases such as TB and hepatitis. Preventable diseases are also on the increase, including diarrhoea, respiratory tract infections, sexually transmitted diseases and malaria. There are serious shortages of general basic medical supplies and equipment.

An increasing number of families in Tajikistan are facing poverty. According to the UN, 80% of country's population lives below the poverty line and almost 50% are unemployed. Compared to other former Soviet Union countries, Tajikistan has a high birth rate (26.7 per 1,000), a high child mortality rate (30.9 per 1,000), the lowest GNP per capita (USD 350), the highest population per physician (430:1), and the lowest percentage of the population with access to safe water (25-49 percent).

Since the start of its operation in Tajikistan in 1994, together with the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST), the Federation has been providing humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable individuals and communities. This includes emergency relief supplies consisting of food, medical and other relief assistance, as well as support to the RCST with DP and training programmes, in order to strengthen its capacities.

In order to respond to current needs, the Federation and the RCST developed a joint programme for 1999, structured as follows:

Relief:

- { Supplementary food rations to 74,500 most vulnerable beneficiaries in West Tajikistan;
- { Food to patients in 47 hospitals and psychiatric institutions in Gorno-Badakshan, Dushanbe, Khatlon and Rayons of Republican Subordination (RRS);
- { Support to 15 RCST-run public canteens, providing 6,000 beneficiaries with a daily meal;
- { Coal for heating of 295 schools and refurbishment material for 305 schools and 32 medical institutions in GBAO.

Health:

- { Medical distribution to 50 Rural (SUBs), 22 District (CRHs) and 7 specialised hospitals in Kurgan-Tube and Kulyab rayons;
- { Medical distribution to 855 Ambulatory Health Posts (FAPs) and Dispensaries (SVAs) in Khatlon Oblast and parts of RRS;
- { Public Health Education Campaign;
- { Water and Sanitation activities in Dushanbe and Kurgan-Tube regions.

Social Welfare:

- { Support to Street Children and Shoe-Making programmes;

Disaster preparedness:

- { Through several simultaneous DP activities (training on all levels, provision of DP stocks, etc), strengthening the capacities of the RCST, enabling it to respond to future disasters;

Capacity Building:

- { Strengthening of capacities of the RCST in the areas of management of human, material and financial resources.

Latest events

The 8 May celebration of Red Cross and Red Crescent Day went ahead as planned across the country. The RCST organised a public event in Dushanbe's Central Park. Attendance from the public was high, giving the National Society a high visibility profile. Financial support for the event was provided by both the ICRC and the Federation. One hundred and thirty t-shirts with the RCST emblem and the millennium logo were distributed to staff and volunteers.

In April, the entire Delegation was involved in preparing applications for ECHO budget modifications and extensions for the existing programmes, as well as preparing applications for 1999/2000 programmes. Currently, the Tajikistan Delegation is staffed by ten delegates, supported by 86 locally recruited staff.

The second distribution of supplementary food to beneficiaries in West Tajikistan started on 20 May. Up to the 21 June, a total of 26,568 beneficiaries were provided with the second food basket. Due to considerable savings made in the programme so far, the second distribution will reach an increased total

number of 3,000 beneficiaries. The procurement of an additional 243.16 MT of food commodities has already started.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Relief w

Food to the Elderly and Other Vulnerable Groups

The objective of this ECHO-funded programme is to distribute two supplementary food baskets to 74,500 most vulnerable beneficiaries in West Tajikistan. Each food basket consists of 25kg of wheat flour, 5 litres of vegetable oil, 10 kg of rice and 1 kg of iodised salt. Most food commodities were procured within the region, through the Federation Regional Logistics Unit in Almaty. Vegetable oil was purchased from Europe.

After considerable delays experienced with the delivery of rice, the first distribution was completed by mid-May, with commodities distributed to 67,060 beneficiaries in the following rayons: Turzunzade, ShakhriNAV, Leninsky, Varzob, Kofarnihon, Frunze and Dushanbe. The distribution was carried out by the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan, under the guidance and supervision of the Federation delegation. Beneficiaries were selected by the RCST, in close co-operation with local authorities (Hukumats), according to the following criteria: isolated elderly, widows, multi-children families, disabled persons and families without a breadwinner.

As part of the Food Security Programme, a further 4,770 rations were distributed to 1,480 beneficiaries in Leninsky rayon, enabling them to start cultivating their own land, thus making them increasingly self-sufficient and less dependant on humanitarian assistance. The second distribution will provide a further 2,737 beneficiaries with food for work. The land was provided by the government and the beneficiary selection was co-ordinated between the representatives from local RCST branches, government representatives, agronomists and the representatives from local communities. The selection criteria was based upon the documentation involving land ownership claims, physical ability to work on the land, and sufficient level of skills and knowledge in agriculture.

Food to institutions

The aim of this programme is to provide food for patients in hospitals and psychiatric institutions in Gorno-Badakshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) and psychiatric institutions in Khatlon, Dushanbe and Rayons of Republican Subordination (RRS). Most food commodities were purchased locally. The total number of institutions assisted was 47. Each hospital received 38.50 kg of food for each patient, consisting of 25 kg of wheat flour, 10 kg of rice or beans, 2.5 litres of vegetable oil and 1kg of iodised salt. The total number of distributed food commodities was 82.71 MT. The programme is funded by ECHO through the Finnish Red Cross.

Beneficiary lists were compiled in co-operation with Health Departments from each Oblast. The distribution was carried out in partnership with the RCST. A recent survey in GBAO concluded that some hospitals have surplus quantities of food in their stocks, while there is shortage in others. With a varying numbers of in-patients at various facilities, some food is planned to be reallocated to hospitals and institutions that were not previously included.

Public Canteens

In October 1995, in close co-operation with the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan, the Federation started the first public canteen in a district of Dushanbe. Since then, the programme has expanded and is now entirely managed by the National Society. Today, there are fifteen canteens, supported by the Swedish Red Cross, with six in Dushanbe, three in Khodjent/Chikalovsk, and one in Kofarnihon, Leninsky, Kulyab, Kurgan-Tube, Gissar and Tursunzade. The initial target group was established with the help of the social welfare department of the district authority (Hukumat). From these lists the beneficiaries were chosen from among people with no income or with only a very low state pension.

The project provides a total of 6,000 beneficiaries with one hot meal a day, six days a week, on a weekly rotation basis. On average two times a week, each beneficiary is entitled to a hot meal at the public canteen. The menus were created in close co-operation with qualified nurses, thus meeting the nutritional needs of the elderly. The types of meals served varies daily. Public canteens play an essential part in maintaining social contact among the beneficiaries, as many lonely pensioners find companions and make friends while eating at the canteens.

Heating and Refurbishment in GBAO

As a result of the deteriorating economy of Tajikistan, and a lack of government support to public institutions, many public facilities are becoming unable to carry out their normal services. One of the most serious problems experienced by hospitals and schools is the lack of heating. This was of particular concern in GBAO, where in winter the temperatures often fall to 40 degrees below zero Celsius.

As in previous years, the Federation has provided coal for heating of schools. Up to the end of March 1999, a total of 2,005 MT of coal was distributed to 295 schools in GBAO. Thanks to this support, these facilities remained open during cold winter months. As the coal contained a large percentage of dust, 350 moulds for making of coal briquettes were provided. Training on how to make briquettes was given to the institutions through the local RCST branch.

To complement the provision of heating material, the following refurbishment material was distributed to 305 schools and 32 medical institutions: 500 stoves, 600 sets of stove parts and almost 2,000 square metres of glass for windows. In addition, two thousand bed-linen sets, mattresses, pillows and blankets were locally purchased and distributed to hospitals and internats (boarding schools).

Health w

Because of the lack of support to the health system by the Ministry of Health (due to a lack of resources), the need for medical humanitarian assistance still remains. Since 1995, the Federation has provided basic medicines and medical supplies to four different levels of medical institutions in Tajikistan. The health care structure in Tajikistan may be described as follows: the base of the system consists of FAPs (*Feldshersky Akushersky Punkt - health posts*) and SVAs (*Selskaya Vrachebnaya Ambulatoria - rural dispensaries*). The higher levels are SUBs (*Selskaya Utsatskovaya Bolnitsa - rural hospitals*), followed by CRHs (*Central Rayona Bolnitsa - district hospitals*), and specialised hospitals. In the first half of 1999, the programme was funded in part by ECHO and the Netherlands government, through the Netherlands Red Cross.

Medical Distribution to Rural (SUBs) and District (CRHs) Hospitals

In 1999, two distributions of basic medicines and medical supplies were provided to 50 SUBs, 22 CRHs and 7 specialised hospitals in Kurgan-Tube and Kulyab rayons. A total of 1,886 boxes of medicines and medical materials were distributed in February, and 1,424 boxes in May. The approximate number of beneficiaries assisted each month under this programme is 44,000.

Monitoring of the use of drugs, the use of prescriptions, the registration of medicines and their storage was carried out throughout the period. This is done by RCST monitoring teams, consisting of one physician and one other medical person, who received regular support through monitoring workshops.

Five antibiotics workshops for the field officers of the SUB and CRH programme were held in Kulyab region and four in Kurgan-Tube rayon. In total, approximately 300 physicians and nurses attended these workshops. It is hoped that the knowledge gained will contribute towards a more rationalised use of antibiotics, as well as reducing their use.

Medical Distributions to Ambulatory Health Posts (FAPs) and Dispensaries (SVAs)

The second distribution of basic medicines and medical supplies was carried out in May (the first distribution was completed in December 1998). A total of 855 FAPs and SVAs received medical kits in Khatlon Oblast and parts of RRS. The number of beneficiaries assisted each month through the FAPs

and SVAs programme is approximately 233,000. Monitoring of the use of drugs and prescriptions, and the registration of medicines and their storage - was conducted regularly.

Various workshops were held for the monitoring teams, who then disseminated this information to the staff of FAPs and SVAs. Topics included: antibiotics, respiratory infections and hepatitis.

Public Health Education Campaign

One of the most important segment of the Federation Health programme is dissemination of public health information. This is being implemented by the Health Departments of both the Federation and the RCST, in close co-operation with the Ministry of Health, through training of RCST monitoring teams, volunteers and physicians from the hospitals. Health materials, including posters and video clips, are produced and used in schools and kindergartens, health and medical institutions and for public broadcasts on radio and television.

The information provided through the Public Health Campaign included measures for the prevention of typhoid and other water-borne diseases, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and education on drug abuse and general health. During the first half of 1999, meetings, workshops and seminars on the above issues were conducted for street children, children in kindergartens, and at schools and boarding schools, polyclinics and other medical institutions in both Dushanbe and Leninsky.

Further expanding on particular areas related to health, the Community Based First Aid (CBFA) programme focused on First Aid training and typhoid prevention. One of the main segments of the programme is a water and sanitation project in Kurgan-Tube region, where there are eleven volunteer trainers who are conducting seminars on wells, latrines, hygiene education and the role of CBFA volunteers in water and sanitation projects. Three hundred pupil volunteers have been trained in simple hygiene and CBFA techniques. Through lectures in schools, they provide training for other pupils. Additionally, seminars on First Aid and prevention of infectious and water-borne diseases are provided frequently.

Water and Sanitation

The overall aim of the programme is to provide technical assistance to improve the safety of the domestic water supply and provide support for health education in selected rural areas under the existing CBFA programme, as well as to provide assistance towards the improvement of water supply systems in Dushanbe.

The Federation is currently working towards the improvement of the ground water supply in Dushanbe, through the installation of a ground water submersible pump at the Nagborny Water Treatment Plant and the replacement of four motors and 79 shafts at the ground water treatment plants in Yugo-Zapadny and Kofarnihon. Furthermore, a number of pipes and fittings were purchased and installed at the Yugo-Zapadny plant. The implementation of this project is being carried out by the national water authority, Tajik Vodokanal, closely monitored by the Federation and the RCST.

The Federation has provided funding for 16 MT of liquid chlorine to Tajik Vodokanal, representing 50% of total needs for a period of 5 months. To reduce the wastage of water in Dushanbe by 15,000 m³ per day, five teams contracted by the Federation/RCST, are currently replacing taps, fittings and pipes in kindergartens, schools, medical institutions and some households. To complement the technical segment of this project, as part of the Public Health Campaign, the messages 'Close Taps' will be printed on the sides of public buses. Leaflets containing the same message and other information on reducing the wastage of water, will be produced and distributed to the population. In addition, a fifteen-minute video will be produced, to be broadcast on public TV over the coming months. The Federation plans to phase out the technical assistance to Dushanbe with an anticipated arrival of the World Bank funding in the near future.

The major part of the programme concentrated on installing some 40 shallow driven boreholes in seven villages in Kurgan-Tube region, assisting approximately 3,000 beneficiaries. This ECHO-funded

programme plans to assist a further 7,000 people. Ongoing training of volunteers in hygiene education is conducted by the CBFA team, in close co-operation with the Water/Sanitation programme.

The Federation provided 12.25MT of Calcium Hypochloride (powder chlorine) to Tajik Vodokanal in eight rayons - Kurgan-Tube town, Sovetski, Muminabad, Kolkhozobod, Shaartuz, Gissar, Kumsangir and Pyanj, covering their needs for water purification for a period of six months. The lists of beneficiary rayons was prepared by Tajik Vodokanal. Random monitoring of the residual chlorine levels was regularly carried out by the CBFA monitoring teams from the RCST. The results showed satisfactory levels of chlorine.

Social Welfare w

Street Children

The Street Children programme continues to be implemented smoothly. From the beginning of 1999, a new Programme Co-ordinator has been recruited by the National Society. A number of regular events were organised, such as music and dancing, as well as small workshops on making toys, flowers for house decoration and gardening. Besides the regular activities of the Street Children Centre in Dushanbe, different events were organised: the celebration of International Women's Day (8 March), a function to celebrate the arrival of spring (the Tajik Navruz holiday, 21 March) and lessons in basic First Aid. In April, a new television set was purchased for the centre, which will be used for educational and recreational activities. All children in the centre were provided with one pair of shoes.

Shoe-Making Project

This programme originally began in 1997, with the idea of teaching students to make their own shoes, thus reducing their need for humanitarian assistance. The programme in Kulyab and Aini is funded by the Spanish Red Cross. The start of the project in GBAO has been delayed, due to problems experienced by the local branch in identifying a suitable location for the workshop. The chemicals, tools and other necessary materials and equipment were procured in Dushanbe and transported to Khorog (GBAO) in May.

Disaster Preparedness and Response w

The overall goal of the programme is to assist the RCST in strengthening its disaster preparedness ability, hardware, and human resources, enabling it to play a more central role in responding to future disasters.

So far, five regional training seminars (in Dushanbe, Kulyab, Kurgan-Tube, Leninabad and Khorog) and five rayon-level seminars (in Faizabad, Varzob, Leninski, Kulyab and Khorog) have been conducted. Issues covered by the seminars include: community public awareness of disaster preparedness and disaster response, organising disaster response in a state of emergency, organising distribution to the most vulnerable, training of volunteers in logistics, warehousing and management of stocks and basic First Aid. Both regional and rayon Committees of the RCST were responsible for the seminars. Beside the RCST staff and volunteers, seminars were attended by the representatives of local State Emergency Committees, and the representatives of local government and Jamoats (village administrative authorities).

The refurbishment work on DP warehouses was completed in Dushanbe, Kulyab and Aini. The branches in Garm and Kurgan-Tube received two containers each (20 MT capacity), which will be used to stock DP commodities. In Khorog, the National Society has not yet secured warehouse space. The total commodities distributed to all seven locations were: 200 cooking sets, 5,400 hygiene sets, 42 tents, 2,000 blankets, 20 rolls of plastic sheeting, 290 picks, 290 shovels and 557 bales of clothing.

A total of 2,000 DP posters were printed and distributed to Oblast and Rayon committees, who distributed them further to Kishlaks (villages), Jamoats and Hukumats (district administrative authorities), as well as State Emergency Committees. Two different designs were developed into poster/calendars (1,000 of each design); they were chosen from 17 different designs submitted by the general public in a competition organised by the RCST.

Two HF-base radios were purchased and donated to the RCST. They were installed in Dushanbe and Aini by the radio technician from the Federation Regional Delegation in Almaty. Efforts by the RCST to obtain an independent frequency from the Ministry of Communications have not been successful so far. A 4WD Lada Niva was procured in Almaty and handed over to the RCST for the use in the DP programme.

Capacity Building w Institutional Development

The first two in a series of oblast-level 'Management and Strategic Planning' workshops took place in Leninabad in April and in GBAO in June. Chairpersons from all branches were represented during the four-day workshops, demonstrating a high level of participation. Three other workshops are planned during the year, in Kurgan-Tube, Kulyab and the RCST Headquarters in Dushanbe.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the NS and the Federation is currently under revision. The National Society Development Plan drafted in 1998 is being revised, in order to incorporate a period of three years. Programme Agreements will be established for all ongoing Federation supported activities, as part of the Development Plan 1999/2002. A second phase of the ongoing Finance Development plan is currently being implemented. An organisational chart of the RCST headquarters was finalised, together with a new salary policy. Computer and language skills are considered as important qualifications for NS staff, and the RCST has introduced English (funded by the British Red Cross) and computer training for HQ staff.

In early May, the RCST Development Department representative and the Federation Development Delegate attended an ID workshop in Minsk, organised for the National Societies from the region. On 13 May a meeting of all delegates was held to encourage the inclusion of capacity-building elements in all programmes. A second such meeting is scheduled to take place in July.

The Local Capacity for Peace Project (LCPP) was initiated with the RCST by the Federation LCPP Delegate and a consultant. A two-day workshop was held at the RCST Headquarters in Dushanbe (17-18 May). It was attended by branch chairpersons from most rayon and oblast levels. Follow-up meetings took place later in the same week. The next stage of the project will be implemented in late August.

Outstanding needs

Funding is urgently required for the Heating and Refurbishment Programme in Gorno-Barakshan, as the purchase of coal for schools and medical institutions for the coming winter should start as soon as possible.

The Institutional Development Programme is still awaiting for funding for 1999. This is now becoming increasingly urgent, as the mission of the current Development Delegate will end at the end of September.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Delegation regularly attends various inter-agency meetings, security meetings and UN briefings. The relationship with the ICRC Delegation in Tajikistan is good, particularly concerning the exchange of security related information. Meetings with various NGOs concerning programme co-ordination are attended regularly. During the first half of 1999, these have included discussions with German Agro Action and Mission Ost on relief assistance, and with WHO, MERLIN and the Aga Khan Foundation on health issues. Extensive discussions took place with ECHO regarding the global programme for the coming year.

A good relationship is maintained with government departments at all levels, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Health. Local Television, radio and newspapers regularly provided media coverage of ECHO funded programmes and the Federation's work in general.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details. Please note that Annex 1 reflects the response to this years 1999 Appeal; however, there was a significant carry-over from ECHO contracts signed in late 1998 but actually made available for programmes in 1999.

Conclusion

The humanitarian situation in Tajikistan remains difficult. The assistance provided by different international humanitarian organisations remains the only source of support for a large part of country's population, and for medical and educational structures. Given the current political uncertainties, the start of a large-scale economic recovery is likely to be still further delayed. Continuing support to Tajikistan from the Federation donors will be needed for some time to come.

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