

Russian Federation: Severe Poverty in the Northern Territories

31 October, 2000

appeal no. 24/00

situation report no. 01

period covered: 20 September - 25 October, 2000

The Severe Poverty in the Northern Territories programme was launched on 19 September to assist 209,000 beneficiaries, mainly children in institutions, with food and clothes. The programme also includes a development component to involve the vulnerable northern people in small-scaled economic projects. There is a critical need to start the process of procuring relief items but very few donations have been received. Donor support is particularly needed to purchase seeds before the end of January for distribution in time for the planting season in the beginning of March.

The context

Russia continues to suffer through a period of chronic economic dislocation and social unrest. One third of the population lives on less than a dollar a day; old and new virulent diseases are contributing to a dramatic decline in the country's population which fell by almost half a million in the first half of 2000.

For the last three years, the Russian Red Cross (RRC), supported by the Federation, has implemented several large-scale humanitarian programmes across Russia, providing humanitarian assistance to five million of Russia's most vulnerable citizens. These programmes include: appeal 30/98 to assist 1,631,500 beneficiaries during the winter in Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and the Russian Federation; appeal 05/99 covering critically isolated communities in Russia (Chukotka, Kamchatka, and Magadan) primarily intended to alleviate the impact of cold, malnutrition, disease, stress, and lack of medical care to 82,000 indigenous people; appeal 29/99 to render assistance to 770,000 beneficiaries in 22 remote polar and northern regions; and appeal 8/99 responding to TB/HIV/AIDS/STDs in Belarus, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine. The previous winter appeals were designed as broad-spectrum, emergency aid programmes intended to deliver assistance to the most vulnerable through the long, cold winter months.

The challenge has been immense, but by mounting this response the Federation and RRC have gained valuable experience and lessons about the type of aid needed, and the timing of such aid.

This Appeal is different. Concentrating almost exclusively on Russia's most vulnerable and critically isolated Northern Territories and Far Northeast - Nenetsk AO, Taimyr AO, Yakutia Republic (Arctic regions only), Magadan, Kamchatka (including Koriak), Chukotka, and the Tuva Republic (included because it is the worst affected republic) where the children and impoverished communities have absolutely minimal coping mechanisms, the RRC and Federation aim to alleviate the suffering and restore a measure of dignity to 209,000 beneficiaries while assisting the RRC to develop to its full potential. This appeal also reflects two core areas of Strategy 2010 (Health and Care in the Community and Disaster Response) by concentrating on support to health centres and directly to families through the establishment of community canteens, which will provide a platform for micro economic projects, thereby drawing communities closer together.

The objectives of the appeal are to

- Improve the level of food security and nutrition of children in remote areas, urban centres and institutions.
- Enable the most vulnerable children to remain warm, active, more healthy and able to attend school.
- Encourage beneficiaries to become more self sufficient.
- Improve the health and welfare of infants and families, and equip rural medical stations.
- Establish community development focal points and explore openings for Russian Red Cross income generation.

Latest Events

The health situation continues to worsen in Russia with overall life expectancy falling by one year in 1999 to 65.5 years. The Russian Academy of Medical Sciences reports that general level of illness rose 15% while the number of people considered as invalids increased three times over the last 10 years.

The RIA news agency quoted a haematologist as saying that one of the main reasons for the worsening figures were smoking and vodka, which resulted in more cancer cases, heart problems and death due to accidents. Many Russians became much poorer after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with wages not keeping pace with rising prices for food and healthcare.

Russia's population declined by 507,400 people during the first eight months of the year totalling 145.1 million people as of 1 September, according to the State Statistics Committee. From January to August, the number of deaths exceeded the number of births by 593,600. The Statistics Committee foresees that the Russian population will drop by 11 million people over the next 15 years.

On a positive note, there was an increase of 15.2% in the production of threshed grain (to 45.5 million tonnes), 30.8% more potatoes were harvested (10.1 million tonnes), and 3.6 million tonnes of vegetables were gathered.

Red Cross/ Red Crescent Actions

While the Japanese and Monaco Red Cross have pledged CHF 156,610 and CHF 9,316 respectively, few procurement or development activities have been started due to the lack of funds. The Icelandic Red Cross Society has also expressed an interest in supporting the programme. A training workshop for chairpersons and accountants of the involved regional Red Cross committees will be conducted in the beginning of December. Lessons learnt from implementing previous northern programmes will be discussed as well as reporting and financial procedures improvement. Ideas for developing community canteens, specific for each region, will be collected. The Delegation is currently looking for a consultant

and two advisors for the programme to assist in defining indicators to measure possible effects of the new appeal.

Outstanding Needs

Funding is urgently needed to start seed procurement before the end of January to finish distributions in time for the planting season.

External Relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

On 20 September a press conference was held in the RRC Headquarters in connection with the appeal launch. Several local and international media representatives participated. The information delegate, relief co-ordinator and RRC First Deputy were interviewed by Radio France (Moscow).

Marketing kits, including the new appeal and two Delegation films, were sent out to Embassies and major NGOs in Moscow as well as to Geneva for further distribution among PNS. Planning for media visits to the field was held. The information delegate and reporting officer conducted a field trip to the Taimyr Autonomous Okrug together with a Moscow Times correspondent and photographer. Visits were made to the regional authorities and private enterprises which assist the local Red Cross committee in transportation of humanitarian goods. In the beginning of October a meeting with the Department for International Development (DFID) representatives in Moscow was held to discuss the current appeal and possible support to the programme. On 25 October the relief co-ordinator visited the ECHO (Moscow) office to discuss possible funding of the new appeal. Initial indications are that ECHO is not planning to disburse money for Russian programmes outside of the Caucasus region at least until spring of 2001.

Contributions

See annex for details.

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Russian Federation: relief assistance						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 24/2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED				11/01/00
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				17,617,400		TOTAL COVERAGE 0.9%
JAPANESE - RC		10,000,000	JPY	156,610	25.09.00	
MONACO - RC		40,000	FRF	9,316	19.09.00	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				165,926	CHF	0.9%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						