

OPERATIONS UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

ARGENTINA: SOCIAL CRISIS

2 July 2002

Appeal No. 08/2002; Launched on 10 April 2002 for CHF 1,824,000 (USD 1.22m/EUR 1.24m) for 4 months; for 52,000 beneficiaries; Operations Update No. 1: Period covered: 11 April - 7 May 2002.

"At a Glance"

Appeal coverage: 2.7%

Related Appeals: South America: Appeal (01.22/2002)

Outstanding needs: CHF 1,774,806 (USD 1.19m/ EUR 1.21m)

The Disaster/Situation: The precarious situation in Argentina continues to worsen, with growing numbers of vulnerable people requiring assistance. Statistics confirm that 47% of Argentines now live below the poverty line, and that there is an unemployment rate of 24%. The Argentine Red Cross (ARC) has begun implementation of its programme to provide food rations to community soup kitchens in old people's homes and schools, largely thanks to bilateral contributions from the Spanish Red Cross. To date, a total of 3,786 beneficiaries have been reached. Further funding is urgently required in order to successfully complete the programme in support of 52,000 vulnerable beneficiaries for whom both nutritional food and basic health care are increasingly inaccessible.

Operational Developments

Argentina is currently in the throes of the fifth political crisis in five months. Since the start of the economic crisis, the people have seen their pensions disappear, unemployment soar, inflation skyrocket and industries decimated. Statistics confirm that 47% of Argentines now live below the poverty line, and that there is an unemployment rate of 24%. Banks were closed for an entire week and people were unable to access their savings because of the government's concern that a run on current accounts could lead to the collapse of some of the major banks. When the banks reopened, long queues formed around the country as cash-starved Argentines rushed to withdraw a limited amount of money.

Argentines are becoming increasingly used to living in a society of empty cash machines, where barter clubs have begun to replace shops, and where credit cards are no longer accepted. Brand name products have been abandoned in favour of cheaper alternatives. Sales of shoes, clothing and books have plummeted and city centres are full of locked up shops. Sales at supermarkets and malls have fallen drastically and customers are returning to local grocery stores where shopkeepers still sell on credit. There have been several emergency meetings of the government to develop solutions which could potentially result in a total change in direction regarding the country's economic strategy.

Red Cross Red Crescent action •

Utilizing bilateral donations received from the Spanish Red Cross (SRC), the national headquarters of the Argentine Red Cross (ARC), plus the 21 participating branches, are focusing on the distribution of

humanitarian aid to the victims of the socio-economic crisis. This first phase is scheduled to be completed by July 2002. As of early May, distributions of food parcels to 4,000 beneficiaries had begun. This process involves the purchase of relief items and transportation to the different branches. The initial phase of the operation is centred on providing food items to community soup kitchens allowing them to continue with their programmes, taking into account the significant increase in demand that all centres are facing.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Society •

The ARC, with support from the Federation delegation, has made significant changes in order to respond to the social crisis. Modern financial procedures are being developed as well as a purchasing system. Financial procedures which are approved by the executive board are being implemented in branches participating in the operation, with plans to extend the process to all branches. Job descriptions are being written for each of the members of the headquarters and human resource policies will be revised during the course of the operation.

Teams are being built in order to respond to the needs of the operation. A communications and marketing manager has been hired, as well as an administrator and a head of finance. This process, while not a specific goal of the appeal, is part of the overall restructuring process included in the ARC capacity building strategy of which the appeal is one of the key programmes.

A job description and terms of reference for the local volunteer technical coordinator positions have been sent to the local branches; executive summaries of each of the local projects have been developed and shared with the branches. A project office, with the goal of controlling the quality of the projects sent to the international cooperation department, is being established.

Food Assistance •

Objective 1: To provide food assistance to senior citizens, children and families living in extreme poverty.

The provision of food assistance falls into two categories: 1) monthly supplementary food assistance to senior citizens' residences, hospitals, and day drop-in centres either run by or supported by the ARC; and 2) individual food packages to a specified number of senior citizens living on their own with no means of support and who are not using the above centres. At present distributions are underway to residents of senior citizens' centres, day drop-in centres and hospitals.

Once the purchasing process was completed in mid-April, initial distribution of food parcels to branches began immediately and was completed by the end of April. To date, some of the branches have begun the distribution of the parcels to community soup kitchens located in senior citizens' residences, schools, community centres and orphanages which are currently running meal programmes.

The following table shows the communities and the list of beneficiaries in which the first phase of the operation is being implemented:

	Community	Children	Senior Citizens
1	C Uruguay	233	100
3	Concordia	130	20
5	Cordoba		400
6	Don Torcuato	250	
7	La Pampa		50
8	La Plata		49
9	Luján		19
10	Mercedes Corrientes		50
11	Moron		126
12	Quilmes	730	
13	Resistencia	100	105
15	Rosario Frontera		40
16	Rosario	50	
17	S Andrés Giles		40

18	San Andrés	133	
20	San Fernando	150	
21	San Nicolás	160	
22	San Pedro		220
23	Santa Fe	160	5
25	Santos Lugares		90
26	Lomas de Zamora	189	44
28	Villa Mercedes		43
		2285	1401

Health and support services •

All health projects will be initiated during the second phase of the operation.

National Society Capacity Building •

A networking system is being established with the branches involved in the first phase of the operation. The ARC hired three process monitors and a coordinator for the first phase of the operation entitled “crusade for children and grandparents.” Two monitors work from the headquarters and one from the Santa Fe branch. Each process monitor is responsible for overseeing the work of 7 branches and 10 projects. The crusade coordinator is responsible, at the national level, for the food assistance programme being carried out with funds provided by the Spanish Red Cross. In addition, local technical coordinators are being selected in each of the branches involved. The local technical coordinators are the focal points responsible for the overall coordination of activities at the local level. Job descriptions and terms of reference have been prepared for this purpose and have been approved by the president of the ARC.

In order to improve the capacity of the ARC to respond appropriately in cases of social unrest, an Initial Intervention Unit within the ARC is being put into place to address health, first aid and initial analysis during cases of social unrest such as protests and marches. With support from the ICRC, this unit will be set up to react to these events as they occur in the city of Buenos Aires and the greater Buenos Aires area and will be backed by the branches’ relief teams. A coordinator has been hired, member selection is underway and training manuals are being prepared. This unit will eventually form part of the national intervention team (NIT) system which the Federation is implementing throughout the Americas.

Federation Delegation •

A staff member from the Buenos Aires regional delegation has been loaned to the ARC since the beginning of the operation; additional support from other delegates is also provided. The Federation staff member seconded to the National Society has been involved in supporting the ARC throughout the planning process including advising on the creation of relevant systems, structures and procedures.

Coordination

Participating ARC branch representatives, Federation delegates and representatives from the headquarters attended a coordination meeting in Buenos Aires on 8 and 9 February. They were introduced to the action plan, and proposals were presented by the branches.

The ARC participates in ongoing inter-institutional coordination meetings with NGOs including CARITAS, MSF and the Civil Defense.

Outstanding needs

As demonstrated in the initial section of this update, the situation in Argentina continues to deteriorate and the number of people severely affected increases daily, as do their needs. The ARC, with support from the SRC and the Federation delegation is working hard to help meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the country.

Further funding is urgently required in order to address these needs and to complete the programmes outlined in the appeal, since to date, only 2.7 per cent of the funding required has been received. Two of the Federation's main donors are considering support to the operation, but this would be only partial. It is critical that there is recognition of the hardship currently experienced by a large percentage of the Argentine

population facing the largest social, economic and political crisis that Argentina has had to confront over the past thirteen years.

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. This operation seeks to administer to the immediate requirements of the victims of this disaster. Subsequent operations to promote sustainable development or longer-term capacity building will require additional support, and these programmes are outlined on the Federation's website.

For further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>.

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Argentina social crisis						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 08/2002		PLEDGES RECEIVED				02.07.2002
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				1'824'000		TOTAL COVERAGE 2.7%
CHILEAN - RC		500	USD	806	03.05.2002	DIRECT TO DELEGATION
FINNISH - RC		33'000	EUR	48'388	14.05.2002	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				49'194	CHF	2.7%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%