

RUSSIAN FEDERATION: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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The programme continues to make valuable contributions in the planned areas, but with funding of some important activities coming to an end more donor support is needed. The Russian Red Cross (RRC), with Federation support, has also created a pilot project for the First Aid programme with a focus on a marketing element, and is undergoing a reform and transition for which further support is needed.

The context

The decline in Russia's socio-economic situation continued throughout the 1990s, accompanied by political turmoil, natural disasters, occurrences of new bio-industrial hazards and economic hardship. Diseases which had once been under control (such as tuberculosis) are now thriving, and the growth of HIV/AIDS causes grave concern. A surge in diseases such as tick borne encephalitis, anaemia in nursing mothers and babies, anthrax and others have strained a health service which is severely under-resourced and responding slowly to much needed reforms.

Regular shipments of essential supplies (food, medicine, fuel) which once allowed inhabitants of the permafrost regions of Siberia and the Far Northeast to survive the bitter winters have failed, leaving millions exposed to power cuts, food shortages, unpaid bills, soaring disease rates and ineffective or non-existent health services. Most of the non-indigenous inhabitants have opted to leave for the bigger cities of European Russia while indigenous races are finding their traditional way of life the only viable coping mechanism. Even these methods are under threat due to increased livestock diseases, reduced or contaminated fish stocks, and other elements.

The conflict in Chechnya remains unresolved, resulting in more than 200,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in neighbouring North Caucasian republics and other parts of Russia. Recent floods in Eastern Siberia have led to fears of outbreaks of diseases such as typhoid. In addition to conflict and floods, Russia is prone to earthquakes, droughts, volcanic eruptions, fires and severe storms. And as a

result of technological disasters, vast regions of the country have been polluted. Radioactive fallout from nuclear accidents led to contamination in several parts of the country, with areas bordering Belarus and Ukraine severely affected by the Chernobyl accident.

To respond to the situation, the Federation and Russian Red Cross (RRC) formulated a Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) intended to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable Russians. With up to one third of Russia's population living on less than one dollar a day, the need for increasingly well-targeted, effectively monitored emergency humanitarian aid is critical.

The CAS intends to support the RRC's readiness to respond to difficult socio-economic conditions, and to cope with disasters caused by climatic change or other environmental situations. The Federation and RRC recognise the need to ensure that assistance is targeted to the most vulnerable groups, and the emergency relief programme launched in the winter of 1999/2000, and into 2001 targets elderly living alone, children (particularly those in orphanages and other institutions) imperilled indigenous communities, and disabled persons.

Considerable emphasis is being placed on health education, particularly in the RRC's fight to reverse the alarming increase in communicable diseases. The Federation and RRC have also already started to work on improved quality of assistance, by undertaking new monitoring and evaluation missions to impoverished areas.

The Russian Red Cross participated in the «Almaty Conference» (Almaty, December 1996) and is a signatory to the «Almaty Declaration» establishing the Federation's focus on support to four key areas of activity: Institutional and Resource Development (IDRD) reform, Disaster Preparedness and Prevention (DPP), Population Movement (PM), and the Visiting Nurse Services while continuing emergency response action. Part of the support towards the reform process concentrates on legal advice.

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 CIS.

Latest Events

In April, the government decided to set aside RR 7.5 billion (nearly 270 million dollars) by the end of 2000 to rebuild war-torn Chechnya. The government also plans to spend RR 3.5 billion (USD 125 million) on gifts, donations and improved services for World War Two veterans, according to Deputy Prime Minister.

Russian bank officials sent a proposal on restructuring the banking system to President Putin, consisting of 12 stages. The government expects GDP to grow up to 4.5 percent next year and inflation to be around 10 percent, said the Economy Minister.

According to the deputy prime minister in charge of social affairs, Russia is now struggling to cope with the task of helping some 620,000 orphans and abandoned children. The number of orphans and "social orphans" - children either abandoned by their parents or taken from them by authorities - had been growing by some 120,000 per year. Only 25% of these children are cared for in public institutions. The state owes some RR 29 billion (USD 1 billion) in overdue welfare payments to needy families with children.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Health •

Visiting Nurses Service (VNS)

The TB/VNS programme funded by the Swedish Red Cross is finished. The RRC submitted the final report to the Delegation's health co-ordinator. On 28 March-11 April, a seminar on home care for 13 visiting nurses and 8 instructors from Ryazan and Tatarstan Red Cross committees was held. A training centre was established and equipped in Ryazan. During the implementation, 46 visiting nurses were trained and 16 instructors prepared on the programme of home care. Some 55 visiting nurse kits were delivered to five targeted RRC regional committees - Belgorod, Kaluga, Ryazan, Nizhny Novgorod and Rostov. Salaries were transferred to visiting nurses in seven regions participating in the TB programme - Arkhangelsk, Murmansk, Pskov, Astrakhan, Buryatia, Kemerovo and Tomsk.

Salaries were also transferred to visiting nurses in the Sverdlovsk region under the German Red Cross funded project. In June, nine visiting nurse kits were delivered to the region. On 14-23 June, six visiting nurses and four Red Cross chairpersons participated in a training seminar on home care.

HIV/AIDS - Youth/VNS

The HIV/AIDS prevention programme continues in RRC youth centres in Moscow, Kaliningrad, Krasnodar, Sochi, Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. In June, the regional health delegate together with the RRC youth co-ordinator and RRC HIV/AIDS co-ordinator visited Kaliningrad to monitor the ongoing youth activities on the programme. Two field trips to Murmansk and Arkhangelsk were also conducted for the same purpose. Meetings were held with regional authorities and local departments of the Health and Education Ministries. An annual plan of action was established for these regions. Seminars with regional chairpeople, accountants and HIV/AIDS co-ordinators were held to discuss reporting, medical and informational aspects of programme implementation.

The HIV/AIDS manual for youth was prepared and presented to the RRC national HIV/AIDS co-ordinator and consultants for revision.

The National HIV/AIDS co-ordinator and the Federation's health co-ordinator participated in two press conferences organised by UNAIDS in April-May. In June, the RRC/Federation's health team participated in a donor meeting and presented an overview of RRC activities under the HIV/AIDS programme. An informational letter was sent to all regions in the Russian Federation regarding the HIV/AIDS situation in the country and RRC activities in this area.

Regular contacts are established with the Red Cross European AIDS network. The RRC health department is now preparing for their conference to be held in September in Bratislava.

During 8 May (World Red Cross/ Red Crescent Day) and 14 May (Russian Red Cross Day) some 2,000 books on AIDS were given out. RRC HIV/AIDS co-ordinator wrote an article on AIDS to the Russian Red Cross magazine.

A presentation on RRC HIV/AIDS activities was made for the TB seminar at the end of June.

Blood Donor Recruitment Programme

The programme was implemented in October - May and funded by the Finnish Red Cross.

A workshop for blood donor recruiters with the participation of Federation's Blood Department senior officer from Geneva took place in Moscow on 1-2 June. RRC and other NS experience and new methodologies in this area were discussed.

Information materials (a poster, a leaflet for blood donors, a bookmark on safe blood donorship, pens, badges and stickers) were produced and sent to the participating regions of Moscow, Moscow region, Tver, Nizhny Novgorod and Belgorod in April.

The programme is almost completed. The final report is being prepared to be presented to the Europe Department. After a final revision of expenses, savings will be used for reprinting information materials for blood donors.

Disaster Preparedness and Response •

Assistance to flood victims in Kurgan and Orenburg regions was provided during the reporting period in the form of hygiene parcels, bed linen and blankets as follows:

Settlements	Bed linen sets	Blankets	Hygiene kits
ORENBURG region			
Orenburg	235	235	453
Orsk	235	235	453
Jasnensky	30	30	37
Adamovsky	30	30	37
Kvarkensky	30	30	37
Pervomaisky	30	30	37
Novoorsky	30	30	37
Belaevsky	30	30	37
Orenburg region	60	60	77
TOTAL:	710	710	1 205
KURGAN region			
Kataysk	77	77	142
Dalmatovo	77	77	143
Shadrinsk	84	84	166
Kargapolie	47	47	75
Shatrovo	47	47	76
Zverinigolovsky	95	95	151
Pritobolny	47	47	75
Ketovsky	47	47	76
Mishkino	65	65	105
Belozherka	59	59	90
Shatrovo	65	65	106
TOTAL:	710	710	1 205

With the Federation's support the RRC formed a 'rescue on water' team, which started working on 1 June at four Moscow beaches, saving 10 people from drowning as of the date of reporting.

Population Movement Programme •

Regional Reception Points for forced migrants and other vulnerable people continue working in Kirov, Orenburg, Omsk, Oryol, Rostov-on-Don, Tambov, Voronezh and Sochi. Some 7,881 individuals were assisted during the reporting period, including 5,468 migrants. The total of 1,502 food coupons, 1,131 family food parcels, 1,559 medical kits and 2,798 hygienic parcels were distributed. Some 1,217 medical prescriptions were paid (14 USD each); and 544 psychological and 396 legal consultations were held.

The RRC Central Committee Reception Point assisted 1,181 people, including 855 migrants during the reporting period. Some 606 food coupons, 120 family food parcels, 380 vitamin kits, 446 medical kits, 1,004 hygienic parcels and 136 second hand clothes sets were distributed. A hundred and ten beneficiaries received legal consultations.

A socio-psychological rehabilitation centre assisted 185 migrants. A medical and social assistance centre in Pskov assisted 667 people, including 361 migrants. Two RRC centres of medical and social assistance have not received funding since June, but continue working by using local resources. Some 2,144 appeals were satisfied, including 1,061 coming from migrants.

The Telephone Hot Line project is ongoing. Some 307 consultations were given to migrants during April-May.

Institutional / Resource Development and Capacity Building •

In April, the RRC President took part in a Murmansk meeting for all RRC north regional committees' chairpeople, and then conducted a field trip to Astrakhan to see the progress in institutional development in the region.

Several experts from the RRC Central Committee held a meeting to discuss changes and additions to the RRC Statute.

An inter-regional institutional development seminar was held in Moscow for the Central region on 3-5 May. The RRC Institutional development department representatives conducted three field trips during the reporting period to monitor the progress with institutional development in the Northern Caucasus, Arkhangelsk and Murmansk.

On 27-28 June, a PNS meeting was held in the Central Committee of the RRC with the participation of the American, Canadian, Danish, Icelandic, Netherlands, Norwegian, Swedish, British, and Russian Red Cross, as well as the ICRC and the Federation, to discuss the strategic partnership opportunities (also known as the "adopt a zone" programme) and RRC's reform process. Contributions were made to a tripartite MoU that will establish a uniform approach in the content and methodology for future partnership.

The Nordic Co-ordinating group conducted a meeting immediately after the PNS meeting to discuss their planning for support to the RRCS, and agreed upon providing assistance to the Northwest zone.

The American Red Cross ID assessment mission for identifying the best way to provide support to Eastern-Siberia will be conducted in the middle of August. This has given ample time for questionnaires to be submitted to all districts included in the zone. It is planned that at least 100 questionnaires will be completed in each district, or 1,200 in total, prior to the arrival of the assessment mission. Teams are now being formed and are expected to include members of the RRC Central Committee, RRC East Siberia zone, the American Red Cross, British Red Cross and Canadian Red Cross. Pending results of the zonal assessment, a plan of action will be created to include probable assistance in areas of youth and VNS among other.

A medical company donated gifts in kind to the Russian Red Cross worth some USD 1,200 during the reporting period. The medical items will be distributed through the RRC Central Committee to several hospitals in the Moscow region.

A textile company donated children's clothes worth USD 50,000 to the RRC. Negotiations with the IKEA store are going on about furniture donation to the RRC Ivanovo orphanage.

An interesting RRC initiative is a joint agreement with the Russian Football Union. A text of the agreement is prepared and will be officially signed soon. This year several months of co-operation between the Moscow football club "Katusha-Spartak" and the RRC Moscow City Committee triggered negotiations in the Russian Football Union, conducted by the RRC Resource Development Department and Moscow City Committee. The text of the agreement has been finalized and will be officially signed by RRC DG in July. According to the agreement the Red Cross will receive a certain percentage from the football match ticket prices for humanitarian work, the football players will become members of the Red Cross, they will use the RRC logo on their uniform thus raising the visibility of the organization, the Red Cross in its turn will support the needy players and invalids - members of the club.

The resource development representative participated in the Business and NGOs conference, organised by the Moscow Resource Centre.

RRC Membership Card Project

Some 300,000 RRC membership cards were produced and delivered to 42 regional committees; some RR 610,000 have already been raised.

Information/Media

In May and June, the information delegate produced five stories for "Direct from the field" and gave an interview to Radio Russia on the issues of the emblem. He also conducted a field trip to Tuva together with the Relief delegate and Kemerovo with the Delegation's health department representative and International Film School crew to produce a TB film.

In April, the information delegate together with the relief delegate and logistics officer conducted a field trip to Timyr to monitor the ongoing operation. A story for "Direct from the field" was produced and pictures of beneficiaries taken.

The information officer prepared two stories and a photo-essay for the "Direct from the field" about RRC activities in one of the villages in Kamchatka.

The Russian language translation of Strategy 2010 was received from the publishing house and mailed to the regional delegations in the former CIS countries. World Disaster Report (Russian summary) was translated and printed. A press release on WDR was sent out to Russian media.

Reprints with certain modifications of posters and leaflets for the TB and HIV/AIDS programmes were completed. Posters on the Winter programme and the American bulk food programme are being prepared.

A tender among filmmakers was conducted for producing a video-film on TB and a contract signed with the Moscow International Film School. Field trips were conducted to Pskov and Kemerovo to interview the local RC committee and health institutions' representatives as well as TB patients. The film is now completed. Another video about the RRC/Federation activities in the Far East and Arctic territories was prepared.

An investigation on RRC activities was conducted in Archangelsk to prepare for a BBC TV crew making a programme about the elderly in Russia.

The Federation took part in preparing and conducting the RRC Day on 14 May and participated in the RRC press conference on 18 May on the results of the Red Cross Year in Russia.

On 25 April the information officer took part in the final conference of the ECHO/RRC resource development project that involved representatives from three Russian regions.

Outstanding needs

Funding of some important programmes is coming to an end, and more cash is needed to continue them. The RRC created a pilot project for the First Aid programme with a focus on marketing element. Donor support is needed to launch the project. The RRC transition period will be extended and further support is needed to the reform process.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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