

# ANNUAL REPORT



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

## CUBA

July 2001

*This Annual Report is intended for reporting on the Federation's Annual Appeals only.*

*Appeal No. 01.50/2000*

*Appeal Target: CHF 840,582*

### *The Context*

Cuba remains one of the poorest and most disaster-prone countries in the Caribbean. Since the early 1990s, the country has been experiencing a gradual deterioration of its social development indicators, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and continued embargo by the United States. Shortages of basic products, food and energy continue to affect vulnerable groups, predominantly women, children and the elderly. Like other parts of the Caribbean, Cuba is also suffering from an increased incidence of HIV/AIDS and is regularly affected by hurricanes and tropical storms. Within this context, the Cuban Red Cross has a key role to play, focused on relief, health and social welfare activities.

### *Objectives, Achievements and Constraints*

#### *Disaster Response*

**Objective:** Strengthen the overall disaster preparedness and response capacity of the Cuban Red Cross.

#### **Achievements**

On 11-14 October 1999, hurricane *Irene*, with winds up to 120 kilometres per hour, affected seven provinces and the special municipality of Isla de la Juventud in Cuba. Elsewhere, *Irene* produced intense rainfall and coastal flooding. Of the 14 provinces in Cuba, eight were affected.

On 20 October 1999, the International Federation launched an Emergency Appeal to assist 3,000 families (12,000 people) affected by Hurricane *Irene*. The operation started on 15 November and ended in late January 2000, supplying 3,000 families with hygiene materials and water containers. These materials benefited 70 communities in 14 municipalities of the provinces of Matanzas, Villa Clara, Havana City, Havana, and Sancti Spiritus. In the 70 recipient communities, 720 volunteers of the Cuban Red Cross worked in distribution operations and also disseminated disaster preparedness safety tips to high-risk populations and beneficiaries in shelters.

During 2000 the country suffered a severe eight-month drought, especially in the western provinces of Pinar del Rio, Camagüey, Holguin, Santiago de Cuba and Granma. This drought can be compared with similar conditions experienced in 1986, 1993 and 1998.

### **Constraints**

Due to the delay in response to the Appeal, relief operations related to the 1999 hurricane season extended into the first quarter of 2000.

### ***Disaster Preparedness***

**Objective:** Strengthening the capacity of the national society to prepare and respond to disasters in communities deemed to be the most vulnerable through the introduction of disaster plans at national, provincial and municipal levels.

### **Achievements and Constraints**

#### ***Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP)***

A total of 10 trainers (two per selected province) participated in 11 training of trainer workshops, where 140 new facilitators were trained. These facilitators worked in 17 municipalities, training a further 119 people in 34 prioritized communities. In addition to the training, the communities received promotional and educational materials such as the "Facilitator's Manual" and "Community Based Disaster Guidelines", as well as equipment (TVs, VCRs, disaster preparedness video tapes, projectors, blackboards and markers).

The financial support for this programme was delayed and as a result many of the scheduled activities had to be postponed and modified. Due to the lack of ink and paper in the country, the "Community Based Disaster Guidelines" were not delivered on time to the communities involved in the programme.

#### ***Disaster Response Teams***

A total of 57 disaster response teams were established in the five selected provinces, with a total of 720 people trained. These groups were trained in several disaster response topics such as first aid, logistics, shelter management, census and rescue activities. An important additional component of this year's training was the inclusion of the psychological support and counselling in the curriculum. These disaster response teams elaborated 60 disaster plans and 60 risk maps in the municipalities of the selected provinces. In addition, several community simulation exercises were done in conjunction with the civil defence and other community based organizations. The first national psychological support and counselling workshop was held in Havana, attended by doctors and a psychologist who are part of a disaster response team. They developed the training element for the general disaster response team's training programme.

The arduous nature of the rescue training course limited the participation of all members in the teams. The disaster response teams have limited equipment not only in terms of quality but also in quantity. Due to the lack of funding, the renovation of the equipment was very difficult.

#### ***Water Safety Programme***

A total of 48 new lifeguards were trained. Complementary exercises on cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) were introduced as well as the participation of trainers from the International Sports Institute (INDER). As a result of the public campaigns, comparative statistics showed a decrease in the need for water rescue by Red Cross lifeguards at public beaches, riversides and swimming pools. The official data from 1998 shows that 2,039 water rescues were carried out, in 1999 there were 967 cases, and in 2000 just 953 cases.

Due to the lack of means of transportation, planned visits to some main beaches and swimming pools were not possible. Also, due to the lack of funding the complementary lifeguard equipment component could not be completed.

### ***Health and Care***

**Objectives:** A training programme for Red Cross youth leaders at provincial and municipal levels will be introduced, covering the management and evaluation of services. The three main beneficiary groups targeted by this programme through separate but complementary projects are the elderly living alone, disabled children and orphans and youth at risk from HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

#### **Achievements**

The national youth programme was working on the recruitment of new volunteers at the school and university levels. Youth and volunteer policies were also evaluated in order to update the manual. For the updating of its material, the Cuban Red Cross is using the volunteer and youth policies of the Colombian Red Cross as a base for the development of its new structure. Programmes assisting elderly people living alone, disabled children and orphans continued to be priorities for the national society.

#### **Constraints**

Due to the lack of funding for this programme, some of the activities were not fully developed. However, bilaterally funded programmes continued to provide support in carrying out youth activities.

### ***Humanitarian Values***

**Objective:** Support for the dissemination of the fundamental principles and humanitarian values of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement will continue in recognition of their role in enhancing the institutional image of the national society.

#### **Achievements**

During the year, this programme was specially involved in supporting the Cuban Red Cross in the development of its image and communication programmes, involving both staff and volunteers as well as local journalists. There were three main workshops developed within the national society and with other partners which mainly focused on establishing the national communication network, developing a communication strategy and plan of action for 2000-2001, and finally, on increasing awareness among media of the Cuban Red Cross and its social role.

As a result of these workshops, a national communication strategy and plan of action is in place. All branches are working under this perspective and this plan will be adopted into the national development plan. The next step is the national and branch level implementation of the communication strategy. The intention is to develop a pool of volunteers who could join the communication emergency team in case of disaster. Local journalists actively participated in all seminars and contests developed by the national society and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). A total of 35 local journalists attended the Cuban Red Cross' national journalism awards ceremony and three participated in the regional journalism awards. This year, a Cuban journalist, from Camagüey, won the ICRC's Henry Dunant Award.

Finally, the national society launched its national poster contest which aims to promote the national society's role in the community. This contest called on national art schools and universities, local artists and the public to send artistic works related to the seven principles in order to create the 2001/2002 Red Cross poster.

### **Constraints**

Due to the delay in the transfer of funds, the programme activities ended in the first quarter of 2001. Some of the information officers do not have office facilities (including computers or Internet connections) to report on time to the headquarters.

### ***Institutional and Resource Development***

**Objectives:** To rehabilitate and repair run down branch offices/facilities; provision of equipment and supplies, dissemination and teaching materials, vehicles, equipment and first aid manuals for training at the local level.

### **Achievements**

Five selected provinces have computers, printers and Internet connections with e-mail addresses. These technical facilities increased the branches' image and allowed for better reporting to headquarters. The national society received a four-wheel drive vehicle which is being used by the disaster response teams.

The national society continued working on the amendments of its statutes and internal regulations. Seven provinces developed internal elections as well as their local plans of action while ten provinces submitted their proposals for amendments of the national society's internal regulations.

### **Constraints**

Due to the delay in the transfer of funding, the planned activities were carried over into the first quarter of 2001. Some of the southern provinces still remain very weak. However, it is hoped to reinforce the development of these branches during 2001.

### ***Financial Details***

The financial statement for the Cuba Appeal for 2000 will be provided separately, upon completion of pending final reconciliations.

### ***Conclusions***

In the spite of the difficult economic situation of the island, the national society in Cuba increased its range of action thanks to the sister national societies that supported its programmes. The national society is currently involved in several multilateral community programmes which dramatically increased its public image. Cuban citizens recognized the importance and role of the Red Cross and also demonstrated their interest through the involvement of new volunteers in different programmes. However, there is still a need for more funds in order to cope with the demands of the community in terms of more extensive programmes, as well as more equipment and facilities. This is a challenge to the Cuban Red Cross because its programmes depend on external financial sources, but it also demonstrates that the lack of funding is not always an obstacle to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable.

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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.*

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

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