

EL SALVADOR

CHF 1,139,000

Programme No. 01.17/2000

National Context

El Salvador is slowly emerging from the shadows cast by a long internal armed conflict which slowed economic and social development in the 1980s and part of the 1990s. Although the country is making progress economically, it still faces serious problems: 71% of the population lives in extreme poverty, 42% are illiterate and in such conditions of hardship, violence is increasing. In addition El Salvador is vulnerable to hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and, increasingly, the effects of a 98% destruction of its forests.

Country Assistance Strategy

During the war years, the activities of the Salvadorean Red Cross (SRC) were related to the armed conflict. Once the war was over, outside assistance to the Society came to an end and it had to grapple on its own with the transition to peace-time services, an issue that has still not been satisfactorily solved. Ten years after the end of the war it has still not drawn up a national development plan and, although it maintains ambulance and first aid services, a blood bank and water safety activities at central level, the work of its branches is very weak. However, its wartime services have left the Society with a strong public image, and it is regarded by the government and the population as one of the leading aid organisations in case of disaster. Hurricane Mitch confirmed this image and the National Society now has to face new challenges.

The current SRC leadership recognises the need to rapidly strengthen its capacity at all levels and develop a nation-wide coverage for its services, particularly in an environment where numerous organisations are competing for limited resources. In response, the Federation will assist the National Society in drawing up and implementing a National Development Plan and will support the development of a community based disaster response capacity and the reinforcement of its primary health care services. In parallel, it will help increase the numbers and quality of its volunteer resources.

Programme Objectives

Disaster Response

The SRC is involved in the “post-Mitch” rehabilitation efforts. Its objective is to strengthen its response capacity, primarily technical, organisational and financial aspects, at national level and particularly in its branches.

Disaster Preparedness

The Federation will support the extension of the Regional Programme of Community Education on Disaster Awareness into El Salvador. The Federation will help the SRC to be better prepared, giving support in drawing up and implementing a national disaster response plan, and will provide technical training and support for the

acquisition of disaster equipment and material. It is expected that the good standing of the SRC among the urban and rural communities will facilitate the introduction of disaster education and the organisation of community programmes. The SRC will be part of the three-country “Golfo de Fonseca” project.

Health

The SRC has only recently embarked on primary health care and community welfare projects and it is still evaluating efforts so far and its future role in non-traditional areas of need. The Federation will support the National Society’s efforts, while seeking to increase the participation of the branches and their volunteers and explore local funding sources. The Federation will co-operate closely with ICRC in these tasks.

Humanitarian Values

The increasing violence in the country, attributed to the civil war and its aftermath, is particularly widespread among young people who have dropped out of school, are unemployed and have few opportunities to realise their potential. The Federation will support a SRC national dissemination programme focusing on the philosophy and principles of the Red Cross in peacetime. One of its purposes will be to attract young people as volunteers in community services.

Capacity Building

To help the National Society define its future direction, a National Development Plan, built on consultation with all organisational levels in the Society, will be introduced. Increased capacity at branch level, and in particular local self-sustainability, will be emphasised. A national campaign will focus on the recruitment of young adult volunteers.