

IRAN

CHF 769,000

Programme No. 01.66/2000

National Context

The Islamic Republic of Iran is situated in a highly disaster prone area where destructive earthquakes are frequent occurrences and heavy rains can produce sudden devastating floods and landslides. After a massive influx of refugees from neighbouring countries during the past two decades, the country is currently host to 2.1 million refugees – the largest refugee population in the world in any one country.

Iran is gradually rebuilding its ties with the rest of the world and progress in this area is expected to improve its prospects for increasing trade and commerce. However the country is struggling to meet its external debt obligations and faces rising domestic prices and an unemployment rate of 30% which continues to rise.

Country Assistance Strategy

The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), as auxiliary to the authorities, has been assigned responsibility for providing relief to victims in the first six weeks after a disaster. In reality, its aid extends well beyond this period. Its prompt and extensive assistance is provided through a network of 270 branches, 3,000 trained relief workers, a large vehicle fleet and 28 provincial warehouses. Because of the frequency of disasters, its responsibilities in this regard and public expectations, the National Society recognises the importance of enhancing its disaster response capacities; at the same time it is anxious to increase its international profile and its participation in the Movement, in part through the sharing of its extensive experience.

The Federation will assist the IRCS in creating a realistic framework for its future development, helping it to build its capacity in the four core areas of activity, with particular emphasis on disaster preparedness and response.

For the moment, the Federation serves as the principal conduit for support to the Society. Apart from the UN system, only a handful of NGOs are represented in Iran, most of them concerned with refugee assistance, and the National Society has had limited opportunities to develop active relationships with the donor community. It needs to build its profile and contacts with other organisations, both nationally and internationally, to facilitate access to more diversified and substantial support sources.

Programme Objectives

Disaster Response

The Federation does not intend to seek funds for any ongoing disaster relief activity but, given the frequency of disasters, ad hoc appeals must be envisaged.

Disaster Preparedness

The overall aim is to help the IRCS maintain its status as the country's main relief organisation, and in parallel, increase its international profile. The Federation will help to modernise and further strengthen and enhance IRCS's Disaster Response management through training and other support. The installation of a Pactor system will upgrade the Society's national and international telecommunications network, facilitating links with the rest of the world and improving its reporting capacity.

In the next two years, a total of 20 training courses in a variety of technical subjects will be organised for some 650 staff at national, provincial and local level. In addition to supplying a Pactor system, the appropriate number of operators will be trained.

Health

The IRCS has a comprehensive First Aid training programme and is exploring the possibility of starting a community based health programme. The Federation will assist the Society in assessing its possible future role.

Humanitarian Values

Although the IRCS disseminates the Movement's Principles in its training courses, population movements, the conflict with neighbouring Iraq and the absence of the ICRC from the country during the last six years have created an urgent need for a dissemination programme. With the return of the ICRC, the launching of such a programme will be explored – a process that will also involve the Federation Representative in Iran.