

# PROGRAMME 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

## CHERNOBYL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE & REHABILITATION PROGRAMME (CHARP), BELARUS, UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

25 June 2004

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

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### In Brief

Appeal No. 01.81/2004;

Appeal target: CHF 873,000 (USD 700,000 or EUR 577,000).

Programme Update no. 1,

Period covered: January-May 2004;

Appeal coverage: 20.4%. Click below for contributions list.

[http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf\\_appeals.pl?annual04/1-2-3%20-%20ap018104.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual04/1-2-3%20-%20ap018104.pdf)

Outstanding needs: CHF 695,274 (USD 557,000 or EUR 459,000);

Annual Appeal document: [http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf\\_appeals.pl?annual04/018104.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual04/018104.pdf);

News story: "Chernobyl victims: At risk but not forgotten" <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/news/04/04042601/>

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This Programme Update reflects activities to be implemented over a one-year period. This forms part of, and is based on, longer-term, multi-year planning (refer below to access the detailed logframe documents). All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in](#)

*Disaster Response* in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

## **Operational developments**

On 27 April 2004 in New York, in connection with the 18th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, over 600 invited guests from numerous countries attended the first public viewing of the film "Chernobyl Heart" since it won this year's Academy Award for the best documentary. Filmmaker Maryann De Leo personally presented her film in the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations, alongside with its main character, Adi Roche, founder of Ireland's Chernobyl Children's Project.

At the same occasion, Jan Egeland, the UN's Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, handed over responsibility for the Chernobyl portfolio to Mark Malloch Brown, head of the UN Development Programme (UNDP). "To help mitigate the long-term effects of the tragedy", Jan Egeland explained "the United Nations is now emphasizing long-term community redevelopment and empowerment in which the affected populations play a key role". Mark Malloch Brown emphasized that both UN agencies have been co-operating on this issue for several years.

Representatives of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine described the severe health, economic and demographic setback "Chernobyl" still represents to roughly six million people living in affected areas of these countries. Economies in the region have stagnated, with the three countries directly affected spending billions of dollars to cope with the lingering effects of the Chernobyl disaster. Chronic health problems, especially among children, are rampant. "In some areas of Belarus, for example", Jan Egeland added, "national reports indicate that incidents of thyroid cancer in children have increased more than one hundred-fold when compared with the period before the accident."

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2004, the Supreme Council of Ukraine (Verchovna Rada) organized parliamentary hearings with the agenda "The 18<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Chernobyl Catastrophe. A Glance into the Future." According to the parliamentary hearings report it was pointed out that parliament has failed to organize a unique body of executive power, which could implement a "Chernobyl" policy. It was also stressed that the process of accommodation provision for victims (35,000 families of Chernobyl- disabled people and 22,000 families of so called "liquidators", the people involved in the post disaster clean-up operation) shows slow progress. The representative of the Ukrainian Academy of Medical Science drew the attention of the MPs to the growing number of thyroid gland cancer cases among the population affected by the radiation after the Chernobyl accident.

The 2nd International Scientific and Practical Conference "Overcoming the Consequences of the Disaster at Chernobyl: Status and Perspectives" was held on 26-27th April 2004 in Gomel, Belarus. Leading scientists from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine made presentations on medical consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and problems of radiation contaminated areas. Again it was stressed at the Conference that one of most serious consequences of the disaster remains the thyroid gland cancer, the incidence of which is growing.

## **Disaster Management**

**Overall Goal:** The health of the population affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster is improved.

**Programme Objective:** Effective medical, social and psychological assistance is provided to targeted individuals in the six regions affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

### **Expected results:**

- Six mobile diagnostic laboratories will have screened 90,000 people for thyroid gland pathologies in the target group of individuals who were under 18 years old at the time of the accident and living in contaminated areas.

- Prevention of death from thyroid cancer because of timely detection and referral to medical institutions for treatment.
- Stress and anxiety linked to radiation is reduced for 15,000 people annually through psychosocial support.
- Immunity is improved for 15,000 children living in highly contaminated areas through winter supplies of multivitamins containing C, D and B group with iron, folic acid and stable iodine.
- Red Cross national societies have well trained and equipped mobile diagnostic laboratory teams carrying out diagnosis and treatment of ailments of the affected population in remote rural areas of the six highly-affected regions of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia.
- The sustainability of CHARP is increased because of a new management strategy that hands over more programme responsibilities to Red Cross national societies and gradually integrates activities into the health care system.



*A woman waits outside the Mobile Diagnostic Laboratory in the village of Laksi, 60 km from the Chernobyl site. Red Cross doctors scan up to 70 people a day for signs of the potentially fatal thyroid cancer, which has been on the increase since the nuclear reactor exploded in 1986.*

### **Progress/Achievements**

To achieve the set objectives the following activities were carried out during the reporting period:

- In the period from January to May 2004, the specialists of six mobile diagnostic laboratories (MDL), working within CHARP, have checked **29,938** people. In accordance with recommendations of the latest Federation evaluation of the CHARP Programme (carried out in 2002) the examinations were concentrated on thyroid cancer screening. It has been scientifically proven that namely this disease is directly linked with the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, especially in young people. Therefore MDL doctors focused their efforts on checking the priority target group, i.e. individuals who were between 0-18 at the time of the accident and living in contaminated areas. Abnormal scans (i.e. pathologies) were detected in **12,305 people**.
- Since primary health care is rather limited in the remote rural areas, the CHARP programme fills the gap in State healthcare services to some extent. Although MDLs no longer provide mass blood and urine testing, in addition to the thyroid screening the laboratory doctors carry out the diagnosis and treatment of other ailments upon complaints of patients or results of clinic tests. At present time this activity is comparatively limited ranging from about 20% to 50% of all work performed by the MDLs.
- CHARP continued to provide psychosocial support (PSS) to the population affected by the Chernobyl disaster. This work was carried out by the MDL specialists, Red Cross workers and volunteers. The PSS support diminished stress in the population through delivering accurate information about the long-term health effects of the accident. All three operating National Societies are scheduled to hold refresher workshops in June-July on methods and tools for providing psychosocial assistance to the victims of Chernobyl.

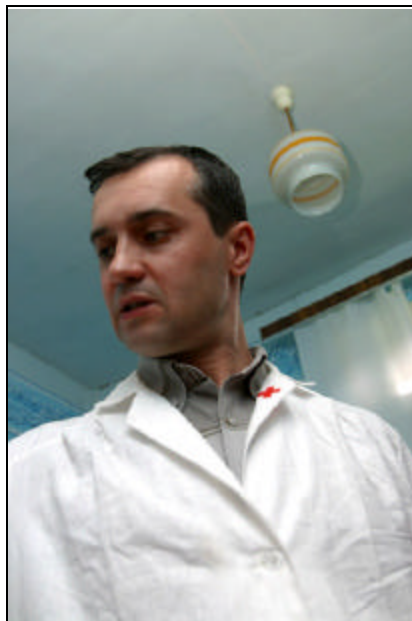
- Following their successful fundraising campaign for support to the programme, the Netherlands Red Cross logistics services arranged procurement and supply of new equipment, reagents for MDLs and multivitamins for children living in highly contaminated areas. In particular 900,000 tabs of multivitamins were supplied for distribution to 10,000 children. The national societies of Belarus, Russian and Ukraine arranged the distribution of the vitamins to children.
- Ukrainian Red Cross, the Kiev representative office of the International Federation and the Federation delegation in Russia coordinated several large scale visits for mass media to the CHARP programme. For further information please see the **PR and mass media coverage** section below.

**Impact:**

During the reporting period the specialists of the Red Cross MDLs referred **3,164 people** to specialized medical institutions with suspected thyroid gland cancer. In **81 patients thyroid cancer** was confirmed by cytological examinations. The specialised clinics shared the results of these tests with the Red Cross. The number of detected thyroid cancer cases is much higher than the result for the same period last year - during January-May 2003, the MDLs detected **48** confirmed cancer cases.

Besides thyroid cancer, two main thyroid pathologies detected by MDLs via screening included **diffuse goitre – 6,903 cases** (56% of all people detected with thyroid pathologies), and **nodular pathology – 4,277 cases** (35%). **Thyroidites** were suspected in **842 cases** (7%).

The above mentioned patients are receiving the necessary treatment and they are under monitoring of Red Cross MDLs and healthcare institutions.



*Dr. Vladimir Sert works with the Mobile Diagnostic Laboratory team in Chernobyl contaminated areas, where thyroid cases among children have more than doubled since the 1990s*

**Constraints:**

Reaching the target plan for examinations i.e. 90,000 people per year by all six laboratories is an ongoing issue for Red Cross MDL staff. Since implementation of the International Federation recommendation to focus on screening only those people aged 0 -18 at the time of the Chernobyl disaster, MDLs have had difficulty in meeting the original targets set. MDL experience shows that it is sometimes not feasible to reach the target number of examinations (70 checks per day) while screening the target group in remote areas, where in some villages only few representatives of this group are residing. For this reason, the target was not reached in 2003 (89,644 people

were examined altogether). However, the new approach of focussing on this particular age group has essentially improved the detection of thyroid cancer.

This issue was discussed at the meeting of CHARP National Managers held in Bryansk (Russia) in March 2004. It was agreed at the meeting that this issue should be studied and submitted to the next CHARP evaluation scheduled for November 2004 in order to find an efficient solution.

### **Coordination and Management**

Starting from 1 January 2004, CHARP has been working on the basis of a new management structure recommended by the Netherlands Red Cross evaluation carried out in April 2003 and the Programme Strategy approved by the International Chernobyl Coordination Committee (ICCC) at its meeting held in September 2003 in Belarus.

In accordance with the new management structure, the National Societies of Belarus, Ukraine and Russian Federation took over responsibilities for the general planning, budgeting, reporting, staff training, logistics support and overall day-to-day running of the Chernobyl Programme. A local manager was nominated in each National Society for this purpose. The Regional Red Cross Committees now report directly to the National Committees. As in all other projects funded by the Federation (or through the Federation) all operational activities in the field will be carried out by the Operating National Societies (ONS). In this context, the implementing role of the Federation is focused on coordination of technical support, as well as support in planning, financial management, monitoring, international representation and advocacy. The Programme Strategy also presupposes further integration of the programme into the respective State health systems in order to enhance its sustainability.

On 14 April 2004, the regular meeting of the International Chernobyl Co-ordination Committee (ICCC) was held in Moscow. The participants of the meeting discussed the first results of implementation of the new concept of the management of CHARP. The conclusion was positive. In principle the new management structure was successfully implemented and became operational in all three ONSs.

The ICCC has also taken a decision to organise the 3rd International Conference of Red Cross on CHARP (the 1<sup>st</sup> Conference was held in 1993, in Kiev, the 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1996, in Gomel, Belarus). The 3rd Conference is planned to be held in September 2005, in Moscow. This important event will be linked with the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CHARP implementation and with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster (April 2006). At the Conference, the National Societies of Belarus, Ukraine, Russia and the Federation will summarise the results of implementation of CHARP and define further ways of development of this unique and important Red Cross Programme.

### **PR and mass media coverage**

The Kiev Representative office of the International Federation and the Operating National Societies play a very active role in promoting the CHARP programme to national and international audiences, as demonstrated below:

- In January 2004 a team of the **Netherlands Red Cross**, including an ambassador, PR worker and correspondent, visited Chernobyl-affected areas in Ukraine and got acquainted with CHARP activities in Zhitomir and Rovno Oblasts. The visit was organised in accordance with the agreement between the Federation, ONSs, and Netherlands Red Cross, the current main donor of CHARP. As a result, CHARP activities were highlighted in TV programmes and newspapers in the Netherlands.
- On 18-21 February the **Austrian Red Cross** General Secretary visited the CHARP programme together with a team of radio, television and print mass-media correspondents. They visited Brest Oblast and familiarised themselves with work of the local Red Cross MDL. As a result, materials on Chernobyl issues and CHARP activities were published in Austria.
- During 21-23 April 2004 in connection with the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe, a large group of television and print journalists (Western and Moscow-based, from UK, Ireland, Canada, Russia, USA, SKY NEWS international) visited Ukraine. The group visited an MDL in Zhitomir region of Ukraine, and interviewed patients examined by MDL doctors and people living in the villages affected by the disaster. Red Cross representatives from Kiev and Moscow also accompanied the group to the Chernobyl plant and areas abandoned following the disaster. As a result of this trip, the journalists highlighted the assistance provided by Red Cross to the most vulnerable people living in contaminated areas, as well as progress in CHARP programme implementation. All news stories and a copy of the SKY news broadcast

are available from the Kiev representative office and the Moscow delegation of the International Federation (contact details at the beginning of this programme update).

- On 21 May 2004, Jan Post, the Secretary General of **Netherlands Red Cross** and Violeta Lombarts, Netherlands Red Cross desk officer, visited CHARP in Ukraine. The trip included visits to the Chernobyl plant, the abandoned town Poleskoye in Kiev Region, mobile diagnostic laboratory in Zhitomir Region, meeting with the mayor of Korosten City. The visitors discussed Chernobyl issues with the MDL doctors and other specialists, especially concerning the consequences of the disaster, and methods of upgrading activities etc. They also spoke with patients who are beneficiaries of CHARP.

The Secretary General was impressed by received information, in particular what he had seen in Chernobyl areas, and by the performance of the MDL. At the meeting with the mayor he promised to do his best to ensure Netherlands Red Cross support of the programme in the future. The visit to Zhitomir area was well covered by mass media (local newspapers, national TV, radio).