

# **CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA REGIONAL PROGRAMMES**

**CHF 2,830,000**

**Programme No. 01.18/98**

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The Regional Delegation (RD) was established in San José in 1977. It works closely with 12 National Societies (NSs): Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Canada and USA.

The RD comprises six delegates, one of whom — the RD Health Delegate — also advises and provides support to NSs outside the region. In 1998 a Finance Delegate and an Information Delegate will be added to the team.

In the last quarter of 1997, the RD was moved to Guatemala where it will reinforce support to the Guatemalan RC and activities in the wake of the country's peace accords.

Apart from the USA and Canada, the countries covered by the RD face serious development problems; some are among the most vulnerable on the American continent. The level of health and social well-being in most of them is declining, despite generally improved macroeconomic indicators. Unemployment and poverty are growing, giving rise to malnutrition, the spread of diseases that were almost eradicated and a higher incidence of others, including AIDS.

The signing of the peace accords in Guatemala put an end to more than 30 years of war, but armed conflicts and urban violence are gaining ground in Colombia, Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, and elsewhere.

Natural disasters wreaked havoc in the region in 1997: hurricanes and volcanic eruptions in Mexico and Nicaragua, floods in Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua and Ecuador, earthquakes in Venezuela and drought in Nicaragua and Honduras. Each time, the RD helped NSs to cope. In 1998 the meteorological phenomenon, El Niño, already causing damage in most of the countries of the region, will have to be contended with.

The NSs of Central America, some of which are going through dramatic and delicate transitional periods, urgently need support. In assisting them in their work with the most vulnerable, the Regional Delegation has given priority to different strategic programmes: many are well-established; others, newer, have a long-term outlook on the future. They include disaster preparedness and relief, health

and community health, youth, communications and image. The objectives of inter-institutional co-operation and capacity building are integrated into all these programmes.



## *Objectives in 1998*

- w To improve the disaster preparedness and response capacity of NSs and the most vulnerable communities;
- w to strengthen and promote the development of community health activities within the NSs and the prevention and containment of communicable diseases;
- w to assist in the elaboration and implementation of effective, realistic national development plans that help strengthen the NSs;
- w to develop regional networks in the different areas of NS activities;
- w to integrate and strengthen the Youth programme in all the NSs in the region;
- w to strengthen the NS communication strategies and image; and promote the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross Movement;
- w to activate and promote co-operation between the NSs, the Federation, the ICRC and agencies involved in humanitarian development,

## ***Programmes in 1998***

### **Disaster Preparedness and Response**

Two of the main characteristics of countries in the region are frequent natural disasters and vulnerable populations. The following programmes and projects will be launched or continued in order to improve the response capacity of National Societies and communities:

#### ***Community Education in Disaster Preparedness***

This project was begun in 1995. Ten Latin American countries are taking part (five from this region, one from the Caribbean and four from the Southern Cone). Costa Rica and El Salvador will be added in 1998, together with the Cuban and Paraguayan NSs. A mid term evaluation carried out in late 1997 confirmed the effectiveness of this project; a closer impact evaluation will be included, while maintaining its continuous expansion.

#### ***Reactivation of the Interamerican Telecommunications Network***

Training and equipment will be provided to ten NSs, following two technical meetings held in 1997. The use of wireless telecommunications will be encouraged through a pilot project using Packet radio technology, and the Internet system strengthened. This project is co-ordinated with a similar one in the Southern Cone.

#### ***Strengthening the Disaster Response Capacity***

Improving the national supply and warehouse systems and strengthening and organising national relief departments and disaster training systems will be a central feature.

#### ***Consolidation of the Interamerican Delegate Network***

In recent years delegates from NSs in the region have been assigned to relief operations in Latin America, with excellent results. The aim of this project is to consolidate the existing network, to better train the delegates, and to improve the response systems.

### **Health and Community Health**

With poverty on the rise, disease is gaining ground and the capacity to cope is dwindling. The RD is working with NSs on projects that bring them closer to communities, through community education, preventive health, primary health care, first aid and disaster prevention activities. Long-standing assistance projects with a strong social impact will also be pursued. Networking among all the NSs in the Americas, in order to make better use of the capacities in the region, is being reinforced through the Regional Health Delegate.

#### ***Gulf of Fonseca Project***

This regional community health, first-aid-in-the-community and disaster preparedness project stresses the training of health agents and the population in order to help reduce vulnerability in communities in the depressed area around the Gulf of Fonseca, covering Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. The branches of the three NS, the local authorities and the communities themselves are involved.

#### ***Creation of an Interamerican Network of Red Cross Blood Banks***

After a seminar on blood programmes in America in early 1997, several meetings were held in order to create an updated network meeting the new technological standards and providing the quality service outlined in the Federation's Quality Manual.

#### ***AIDS /STD Prevention for Adolescents***

This project is already under way in Nicaragua and El Salvador. It is planned to extend it to other countries in the region, starting with Honduras and Panama.

## **Capacity Building**

The Nicaraguan and Ecuadorian RC Societies were helped to prepare their National Development Plans in 1997 and other NSs in the region were given support with planning, regulations, and statutory matters. Nevertheless the planning weaknesses pinpointed in the *Study on the Future of the Red Cross in Latin America and the Caribbean* persist. The Regional Delegation will continue promoting the institutional and operational capacity of the National Societies through the following three approaches.

### ***Assistance in Strategic Planning***

Technical support will be given in the preparation and implementation of national development plans and related operational tools, including the updating of statutes and regulations. Priority will go to the elaboration of a National Development Plan for the NSs of El Salvador and Venezuela and Plan implementation in the NSs of Nicaragua and Ecuador. A regional seminar on "Project Management" will take place in early 1988 in Antigua, Guatemala, thus starting networking among NSs on the identification, formulation, management and evaluation of projects.

### ***Administrative and Financial Management***

The RD will provide assistance in the design and improvement of national financial management and administrative systems, particularly through specific workshops, but also by promoting study visits of technicians from one NS to another.

### ***Resource Development***

The revenue generation strategies and self reliance of all the National Societies will be strengthened according to the criteria and methods outlined in the *Resource Development Handbook* to ensure that NSs have the necessary financial base to carry out their mission. Two workshops were organised in 1997 for the branches of the Colombian Red Cross as part of a more extensive project. A subregional programme covering the NSs of El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras as well as national projects in Costa Rica and Guatemala will be developed in 1998.

## **Youth**

Red Cross Youth plays a major role in NS development in the region, although usually with an assistance focus. In order to strengthen the Youth programmes of the NSs and to help integrate young people into development activities, the RD is working on the following programmes:

### ***School Programmes***

Some NSs in the region have a traditional involvement in school programmes. In order to strengthen this approach and extend it to all NSs, the RD will give significant support to this initiative which emphasises prevention and promotion programmes and developing the capacities of children and youth.

### ***Training, Promotion and Development of Red Cross Youth***

Poor knowledge of programme planning and management by young volunteers is limiting the development of Youth programmes. A manager training project will therefore be introduced. Parallel to this, the RD will support young people in the preparation of programmes and the publication of teaching materials adapted to the region. The project is being carried out in all the National Societies in the region.

## **Communications**

The image of a National Society is a fundamental factor in maintaining its public credibility. It implies visibility of the services it provides, financial transparency and capability to transmit the values and ideals of the Red Cross. NSs need to know how they are perceived by the population in order to establish their strategies. Lack of a modern media strategy is the principal cause of the weak presence of some National Societies and hampers efforts to regain the population's confidence. A Regional Information Delegate will be posted in 1998 in the Regional Delegation and will work closely with the Information Delegate in Buenos Aires. The following projects will be undertaken.

***National and Regional Information***

The publication, "Noticias de América Latina", will continue to be published regularly and multicultural audio-visual materials will be produced on Red Cross values and services in the region. The project will be pursued in co-ordination with the Buenos Aires Regional Delegation and increased efforts will be made to obtain more information from NSs and their branches on issues and activities.

***Strengthening National Societies' Ability to Communicate***

Societies will be given technical support to develop their communications strategies and programmes as well as their HQ functional units. A project to train staff from these departments will start immediately, in co-ordination with the Buenos Aires Regional Delegation.

***Dissemination***

The dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement and of international humanitarian law will be carried out in co-operation with the ICRC and all the NSs.