

# CROATIA

## ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES, DISPLACED PERSONS AND RETURNEES

CHF 4,946,000

Programme No. 01.36/98

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Following intense conflict in Croatia during 1991 and up until the arrival of the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) in 1992, 535,000 people were displaced from their homes. A further 400,000 refugees arrived in 1992 as a result of the war in neighbouring Bosnia-Herzegovina. Over five years later, 287,000 displaced persons and refugees remain in Croatia, including many elderly people who have little or no support from their families and friends. Although the Croatian economy is slowly recovering from the effects of the war, it is struggling with the difficult transition to a market orientation and is not able to provide adequate health, social and welfare support needed by the most vulnerable elderly refugees and displaced.

### *The Operation*

The International Federation established a Delegation in Croatia in August 1992 with the aim of assisting the Croatian Red Cross Society (CRCS) in carrying out its humanitarian relief assistance programmes to the most vulnerable. In 1997, the Federation's operations included: relief, psycho-social and medical support to vulnerable elderly remainees in the Former UN Sectors North and South; support for camp management programmes in the Gasinci camp and the Swedish-supported settlements; home care, water and sanitation and institutional development assistance in Eastern Slavonia; the creation of additional capacities for institutional elderly care; and assistance to returnees.

### *Objectives in 1998*

- | To complete the transfer of all programme management to CRCS;
- | to assist CRCS in re-establishing traditional activities disrupted by the war (blood donations, first aid) and establish and expand new activities (such as the provision of home care across all areas of the country);
- | to continue monitoring the needs of the most vulnerable refugees, displaced persons and returnees;

| to complete projects aimed at establishing institutional elderly care facilities.

## ***Plan of Action***

### **Health/Social Welfare**

#### **Home Support Service**

The CRCS's home care programme for vulnerable elderly people was successfully revitalised in 1995 with the support of the International Federation. Since then, the programme has been incorporated into the state welfare system, with the Red Cross receiving reimbursement for beneficiaries meeting strict criteria. In 1998, the programme will be expanded to the Former UN Sectors North, South and West through 15 Red Cross branches. Assistance is also required to support the home care programme of branches in Eastern Slavonia for the first six months of 1998, after which it will be fully integrated into CRCS's national home support service.

This programme will incorporate many aspects of the *Operation Save Lives*, which was implemented by the International Federation and CRCS in the Former Sectors North and South from the autumn of 1995 until the end of 1997. The modified programme will benefit 8,800 extremely vulnerable elderly people in all of the former UN Sectors — North & South, 6,000 beneficiaries; East, 2,000 beneficiaries; and West, 800 beneficiaries — with relief, psycho-social, technical and medical assistance. Multipurpose teams working directly with 29 CRCS branches will target individuals who fulfil several criteria of vulnerability (such as: over 65 years of age, living alone, handicapped, bedridden, no income, and/or no relatives).

In addition, CRCS requires financial assistance to support some 1,500 potential home care beneficiaries in different parts of the country who are in need but fall just short of the government's criteria as they lack citizenship documents, have minor income or own property.

### **Camps**

#### ***Gasinci***

The Croatian Government's May 1997 decision to resettle residents of the Gasinci camp had a major effect on the work of the Red Cross. While some 210 elderly refugees still await transfer to suitable accommodation throughout Croatia, the Red Cross home care team within the camp will continue to provide them with assistance. In addition to 23 refugee volunteers, four driver/volunteers will be needed to drive the elderly to hospital from the isolated camp. Hygiene, medical and supplemental food supplies (milk and fresh fruit) will also be purchased by CRCS for these vulnerable beneficiaries.

#### ***Swedish Settlement***

In 1998 the Federation will continue to monitor and support CRCS's management of basic maintenance, social work and camp supervision in the three Swedish-supported settlements (Pisarovina, Sasna Greda and Dumace) built in 1994. A Red Cross presence is still needed in the settlements as they are primarily used as transit centres, where vulnerable groups are left behind.

### **Institutional Elderly Care**

#### ***Elderly Care Villages - Ilok (Eastern Slavonia) and Pisarovina***

The provision of appropriate facilities for geriatric care remains an important need in Croatia, as some 4,000 affected people have no family support and are unable to return to their homes. The

Federation supports the establishment of such facilities — which would be managed by CRCS and provide long-term solutions for the most vulnerable of this target group.

The concept of elderly care villages was developed to provide a central facility for immobile beneficiaries around which prefabricated structures would be assembled for persons with some degree of mobility. The Federation began construction of a central facility in Ilok (Eastern Slavonia) in 1997, supported by the Norwegian Red Cross and NORAD. Additional funds are needed for the dismantling, transport and reassembling of 40 prefab houses from the Danish Red Cross-managed camp in Kutina, which will provide the village in Ilok with 260 beds, and for the completion of the village's infrastructure.

In 1998 the Federation would like to launch a virtually identical project in Pisarovina, close to Zagreb, utilising one of the three Swedish settlements.

### **Assistance to Returnees**

As repatriation to all of the former sectors in Croatia is expected to intensify during 1998, the local branches of CRCS plan to distribute seeds and tools to 38,500 returnees of all ethnic origins. By providing returnees who fulfil the criteria of vulnerability with various seeds traditional to their areas, dependency on decreasing humanitarian assistance will be alleviated.

### **Assistance to National Society/Training/Programme Development**

#### ***Family Health Education in Home Care***

CRCS will offer training courses in home care for families of disabled and/or bedridden persons, as well as self-help instruction for the beneficiaries themselves. These courses are aimed at increasing families' abilities to cope with ailing relatives. External support is needed to educate groups of trainers for this activity.

#### ***First Aid***

CRCS organises first aid competitions to raise its own visibility and to attract new first aiders, as the activity is an important fund-raising source. Financial support is needed for the development of long-term planning and the organisation of first aid competitions at local level.

#### ***Blood Donor Recruitment Seminars***

Blood donor recruitment campaigns are also important for funding, as their organisational costs are covered by the Ministry of Health. No funding is provided, however, for the training of professionals who participate in the campaigns, nor for promotional materials (badges, posters) which would serve to strengthen this activity of CRCS and improve the chances of its future success.

#### ***Human Rights and IHL Dissemination***

As more displaced persons and refugees return to the war-affected areas in Croatia, CRCS plans to hold ten seminars for the promotion of human rights and International Humanitarian Law during 1998. Specific target groups of the seminars include those who work with children, military and police officers, CRCS youth leaders and other staff. Federation support to the National Society will be closely co-ordinated with ICRC.

#### ***Water Rescue***

As Croatia has some 6,000 km of coastline and a high potential for tourism, the need for water rescue activities has been identified by CRCS as an important potential service and source of future revenue generation. CRCS has been recognised as a member of the International Life Saving Federation - Europe, and in 1997 trained 20 professional lifeguard instructors. CRCS plans to establish 25 Water Rescue Centres (six team members in each) within 25 branches, co-ordinated by the headquarters in Zagreb. Funding is required for six seminars to train 150 life guards, as well as for basic lifesaving equipment.

### *Eastern Slavonia*

The Federation will work closely with CRCS and the local Red Cross branches in Eastern Slavonia to help facilitate their smooth integration into a single structure.

### *Co-operation*

Co-ordination with ICRC and UNHCR will be maintained (especially in regard to the seeds programmes) to ensure no duplication of efforts. Also, referrals are regularly provided by the ICRC for potential beneficiaries of the Home Support Service programme.