

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES AND SOCIALY VULNERABLE

CHF 11,845,000
250,000 beneficiaries

Programme No. 01.37/98

Although fighting in former Yugoslavia ended in 1995, the agony of the 566,000 refugees and 79,000 displaced persons hosted by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) continues. Repatriation of large numbers of refugees to their homes in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina appears ever more unlikely, yet their integration into their host country is made extremely difficult — primarily due to a deepening socio-economic crisis.

Meanwhile, the willingness of the donor community to fund humanitarian relief operations in FRY has steadily declined. Several major international organisations are expected to depart in 1998, leaving the International Federation with the Yugoslav Red Cross Society (YRCS) as one of the few providers of international assistance for refugees.

The Operation

The Federation has been active in FRY since 1992, supporting the YRCS in dealing with the refugee crisis created by the 1991-1995 Yugoslav conflict. Since then, it has channelled over CHF 100 million-worth of relief goods to the country, targeting refugees and displaced as well as a further 31,000 of the most socially vulnerable through a Soup Kitchen Programme. In addition, it has supported the development of an extensive Social Welfare Programme run by the YRCS. It has also helped the National Society to re-establish its traditional youth, home care and blood-related activities, as well as reinvigorating first-aid training. An in-depth institutional analysis is currently underway with a view to identifying key areas for growth and development.

Objectives in 1998

- | To support the institutional strengthening of the National Society and increase its capacity to cope with the needs of vulnerable people;

- | to provide essential hygiene sets to meet the needs of 250,000 of the most vulnerable refugees;
- | to continue the set-up of income-generating projects allowing selected refugees to become self-reliant and thus to contribute to their integration;
- | to continue to support social welfare services such as psychological counselling, visits to homes and collective accommodations, and the provision of other forms of psycho-social support;
- | to help YRCS to further develop its traditional activities in the fields of home care, health education and prevention, blood donation and youth;
- | to help YRCS to implement an internal information network and to train staff and/or volunteers to use such a system.

Plan of Action

Relief distributions

In 1998, 750,000 pre-packed Essential Hygiene Sets will be distributed through the YRCS network to 250,000 beneficiaries meeting one or more of the following criteria: below 18 years of age, above 65 years of age, lactating women, the chronically ill and the handicapped in the 18-65 age group. Each set will cover the basic hygiene requirements of one person for a four-month period, containing toilet paper, soap, shampoo, sanitary pads, toothpaste and washing powder. The Federation will also continue to distribute in-kind donations of used and new shoes.

Kosovo, where tensions between the Albanian majority and the Serb minority continue, remains an area of concern. The Federation is committed to building bridges between both ethnic communities and will work with the ICRC in reconciling Red Cross activists within the province. Its operations in 1998 will include a continuation of the successful water and sanitation projects, the bimonthly provision of 2,500 basic health and hygiene kits to needy families and health education programmes. With the termination of the soup kitchen programme in Kosovo and a handing over of managerial responsibility for feeding programmes to the Yugoslav Red Cross, the Federation aims to support the National Society in a monthly distribution of food parcels to approximately 7,000 beneficiaries.

Refugee Support

Social Welfare

The Federation will continue its support of the YRCS's Social Welfare Programme, which each year makes over 150,000 contacts with individual refugees in need of a wide range of services including psychological counselling, occupational, recreational and cultural activities, home visits, and limited secondary health care support. In addition, Federation support in 1998 will cover a series of psychological workshops for refugee children to help them to understand their situation and assist them in adapting better to their new environment.

Self-Help Groups for the Elderly will also be set up around the country, to offer the elderly — both refugees and indigenous people alike — a chance to become independent. The main conduit for this activity will be the pensioners' clubs already existing throughout the nation.

Support to Self-Reliance

To lay the foundations for true integration of refugees into their new home communities, income-generating projects will be set up to allow many refugees to become self-reliant — not

only in the economic sense, but psychologically as well. The majority of the projects will be in agriculture, crafts, occupational activities and the service sector.

In order to strengthen the capacity of YRCS branches in areas with a high concentration of refugees, the Federation also plans to support the set-up of income-generating projects directly benefiting those branches. Detailed proposals have already been received, and the best will be supported as funds dictate.

Repatriation

Despite the failure of the international repatriation programme so far, the Federation will be ready to assist returnees if and when the need arises. The Federation's repatriation programme includes the distribution of publications related to the issue (such as the *Going Home* booklet), support for refugee organisations and their confidence-building information programmes and improvement of the information flow of regional Red Cross repatriation-related activities to refugees, in co-operation with other Federation Delegations in the area.

Assistance to National Society/Training/Programme Development

health Programmes

The Federation will support two YRCS programmes: voluntary blood donation and health education and prevention.

The blood programme seeks to reinvigorate the YRCS's traditional activities in this field through educational activities (seminars, lectures etc.) and the development of promotional campaigns aimed at the general public.

The health education and prevention programme seeks to educate YRCS professionals and volunteers through a series of four seminars. Promotional campaigns aimed at the general public (e.g. on AIDS awareness) will also be developed.

Youth Programme

As part of its long-term strategy to rebuild its youth programme, the YRCS proposes for 1998 and beyond a unique programme called "Red Cross Schools within Regular Schools", which would involve 9,720 children in primary schools throughout the Federal Republic. The programme, firmly supported by the Federation, calls for providing basic information and knowledge of the International Red Cross Movement, as well as building awareness of the Movement's importance and of humanitarian values in general.

The Federation also plans to support a Fine Arts Workshop run by the Red Cross branch in the northern town of Kikinda, where hundreds of children learn about Red Cross principles and humanitarian values through various forms of creative work.

Furthermore, the Federation will support participation of YRCS youth leaders in international Red Cross meetings, which are of great importance for the overall institutional development of the National Society.

Finally, four youth camps involving 50 participants each will be run during 1998, with the aims of engaging young YRCS activists in the National Society's activities, recruiting new volunteers and disseminating the principles of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.

INFORMATION

A free flow of information within the YRCS is essential to streamline and focus its operations. The Federation proposes to establish a nation-wide CC-mail network that will link the YRCS's headquarters and all of its 210 local branches, as well as the training of YRCS staff and/or volunteers to use the system in a meaningful way. To strengthen the YRCS's external relations capacities, the Federation plans to fund a half-time professional assistant to the National Society's Information Officer.

Capacity

Despite severe cuts in funding, the 210 branches of the YRCS remain the largest and most effective humanitarian network in the country. They form the basis of a sophisticated distribution system which has become the channel for the bulk of external humanitarian aid to refugees and social cases in FRY (from UNHCR, ECHO, WFP and others). As this National Society network and expertise increased, the Federation Delegation in 1997 decreased to eight delegates (based in Belgrade with branch offices in Kosovo and Montenegro). The handover of programme management responsibilities to the YRCS will continue in 1998 and as a result, the size of the delegation will be further scaled down.