

PERU

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE, CAPACITY BUILDING

CHF 277,000
137,300 beneficiaries

Programme no 01.24/99

The Context

Of Peru's 24 million inhabitants, 37% are less than 15 years old and 59% are aged between 16 and 64 years old. Young people, therefore, are not only the biggest group but also those most affected by unemployment, violence and lack of opportunities.

Peru's current economic stability was achieved through a tough economic programme which has had the harshest effects on the most vulnerable, accentuated by cuts in public spending on social services, health, education and utilities. Recent UN figures indicate that 14 million Peruvians – or 60% of the population – are poor, and almost 22.5% are below the extreme poverty line.

The Operation

The Peruvian Red Cross (PRC) has decided to concentrate its efforts in 1999 on disaster preparedness, health promotion and youth programmes. All projects aim at development and promotion and last on average one or two years. Branches will carry out most of the work, thus favouring co-ordination and promoting unity within the National Society.

Objectives of the Operation

The objectives are:

- to develop the PRC's operational relief capacity, enabling it to respond effectively to emergencies and disasters
- to improve people's health, with special emphasis on promoting voluntary blood donation
- to encourage children and adolescents in schools to participate in Red Cross development activities
- to strengthen the NS by fostering branches' participation in planning and management.

Plan of Action

- Disaster Preparedness

The NS has initiated a plan to improve its disaster preparedness capacity and strengthen the infrastructure needed for effective disaster management.

The plan includes establishing an operational centre to monitor relief management and action during national disasters. The NS is also preparing a “Manual of Relief Operations” setting out guidelines for PRC action.

Specialised Rescue and Relief Groups will be set up, thus increasing operational capacity in case of emergencies or disasters.

In rural locations, general Relief Groups will be established, together with Sea Rescue Groups, working in coastal areas. This service will be provided jointly with the Rescue Team from Peru's National Police Forces. Additionally, High-Range and Mid-Range Mountain Groups will provide specialised first aid services to tourists and the local population in case of accidents or disasters in mountainous areas. All will be on call during disasters.

- Voluntary Blood Donation

In Peru, non-remunerated blood donations are almost non-existent, because of widely held beliefs and misinformation. Blood banks have serious difficulties in meeting demand in normal times and the problem is even more acute in cases of large-scale accidents or natural catastrophes.

Government efforts have gone as far as introducing training and the necessary technical measures in official blood banks to ensure safe transfusion, but there is no budget for further action. The Red Cross has been asked for help in promoting blood donation.

- Youth

Most Peruvian Red Cross volunteers are under 18 years old, mirroring the country's demographic pattern. The development of their skills is therefore a key priority for the NS.

In a seminar in June 1997 attended by most branches, the Youth Red Cross identified its priorities. One of these is to carry out a Red Cross programme in schools, aimed at integrating children and youngsters in all Red Cross development activities.

The 1998 appeal made it possible to finance Phase I of the Red Cross youth units consolidation programme in educational centres. Phase II will improve and reprint training materials and assess the programme's achievements so far.

- Capacity building

The priorities are to improve financial and administration management, to support the development of financial and human resources, to consolidate the Society's public image and to strengthen communication between the branches.

The basic communication and administration infrastructure will thus be reviewed and training in Red Cross/Red Crescent principles, and in strategic planning, administration, project management and steering will be carried out.

Capacity

- The Operating National Society

The National Society introduced a National Development Plan in 1996. It has 45 branches and a staff of 20 in its headquarters. Volunteers are divided into four groups: youth, community health, first aid and relief.

- The Federation

The Federation has supported the restructuring of the National Society through its Regional Delegation.

A development delegate has been working with the PRC since 1996. A disaster prevention and preparedness delegate and a consultant on youth issues in the Regional Delegation provide technical assistance in these areas. The Federation helped in the planning and organisation of an International Co-operation Forum where the Peruvian Red Cross was able to present its programmes of activities.

Co-operation

Good working relationships have been established between the National Society, the ICRC and the Federation. Co-ordination has been especially important in the course of the relief operations triggered by the El Niño 1998 phenomenon.