

CARIBBEAN

REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

CHF 2,827,000

Programme no 01.25/99

Introduction

The Regional Delegation (RD) provides support and technical advice to National Societies in 16 countries: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Surinam, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago.

The RD re-located from Kingston, Jamaica, to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic in August, 1998. The move is intended to facilitate closer co-operation with both the Dominican Republic Red Cross and the Haitian Red Cross and to bring the Delegation closer to the majority of English-speaking countries in the East Caribbean, with reduced running costs.

The Caribbean is reluctant host to a wide range of natural disasters. 1998 entered the history books with two of the most destructive hurricanes on record: Hurricane Georges, which left a trail of destruction from the Lesser Antilles islands of Antigua and St. Kitts through the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba, and which was swiftly followed by what has been described as the worst storm of the century, Hurricane Mitch. This followed on record-breaking hurricane seasons in 1995 and 1996. One of the region's longest-running disasters, now in its fourth year, the volcanic eruption on Montserrat, highlights the Caribbean's vulnerability to seismic activity. Large parts of Guyana were affected by drought in 1998 as a result of the El Niño effect.

According to WHO, the Caribbean sub-region has the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the Americas and the second highest world-wide, after Sub-Saharan Africa. The current rate of infection is 246.2 cases per million or an estimated 310,000 people infected. The region is also vulnerable to a rising tide of violence associated with drugs and poverty and a high drop-out from schools.

Over the next three years, within the context of an integrated approach to programme development, the National Societies of the region, with support from the Regional Delegation, will place strong emphasis on the full involvement of Red Cross volunteers in programme implementation and take the necessary steps to ensure standardisation of service delivery and training across several areas, including first aid, disaster preparedness/ response. There will also be an increased emphasis on institutional development with a view to strengthening governance and ensuring sustainable management systems.

The Regional Disaster Preparedness Programme will continue in the anglophone Caribbean where the focus in 1998 was on Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Jamaica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Work will also start in Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The pre-positioning of emergency supplies in the Eastern Caribbean will continue with the support of the Japanese Red Cross in a measure designed to enhance Red Cross response capacity at the height of an emergency.

Following two years of the Resource Development Programme which combined on-site analyses, seminars, national workshops and technical assistance, 1999 will see concentration on regional initiatives with corporate supporters and the establishment of a Caribbean Disaster/Development Fund.

It is anticipated that the RD will shortly reach agreement with the British Red Cross on the formal integration of its six Caribbean branches into the RD's overall work programme and that this will require the services of a second development delegate.

New youth initiatives are planned. A youth delegate will focus on the recommendations from the Belize Youth Leaders Meeting in 1997 and also adapt the Jamaica Red Cross Adolescent Peer Education Programme for introduction into other NS in the region.

Following the passing of a new Red Cross law in the Dominican Republic in February 1998, the way is now clear for the RD to support both programme development and the change process under way with new Statutes, and Rules and Regulations being introduced in advance of the anticipated General Assembly in 1999.

In Haiti, after many years of operational support to the National Society, the Federation has reduced its presence to that of a liaison office. Support from the RD can be quickly mobilised in the event of an emergency, as was seen in the case of Hurricane Georges. Most importantly, the RD aims to implement an agreed strategy with the National Society in support of institutional development, including the consolidation and further development of existing initiatives in the area of Community Based Disaster Preparedness.

Objectives

The Delegation's main objective is to promote the capacity building of the National Societies through an integrated programme approach, emphasising the role of volunteers in providing assistance to the most vulnerable. Specifically, its aims are:

- to continue support to specific relief operations, making maximum use of resources within the region;
- to improve community capacity to cope with disasters and to minimise their effects on the most vulnerable, through the continued systematic implementation of a Community-Based Disaster Preparedness Programme;

- To develop an integrated programme of institutional development which will build on existing regional programmes and activities to achieve the synergy necessary to improve the action, organisation and social impact of the NS;
- To assist NS to make measurable progress in building stronger institutions and achieving financial self-reliance through a resource development programme;
- To counteract the spread of AIDS/HIV among young people in the region;
- To introduce programmes for youth NS members;
- To assist the NS in this region to participate actively in the planning for the Federation's Strategic Plan 2010 and to ensure that the NS can integrate these strategic guidelines into their own planning;
- To promote the work of the Red Cross in the region, together with ICRC, and to disseminate the Movement's Principles.

Programmes

Institutional Development

Detailed plans of action will be pursued in the provision of institutional development support to the four largest National Societies in the region: Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica. Special emphasis will be placed on the role of volunteers. Support will also be extended to the continued development of the CBDP programme throughout the region. Some NS will also be supported in the initiation of a change process and in drawing up development plans.

1998 saw continued improvement in the RD's capacity to provide targeted support to institutional development. There was on-going co-operation with NS in Cuba, Dominican Republic and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. A new law was promulgated in the Dominican Republic establishing the independence of the National Society. Additionally, there were new initiatives involving needs assessments with the NS of Barbados, Jamaica and Haiti. A plan of action has been drawn up for the integration of the six British Red Cross branches into the work of the RD. Targeted assistance is also required for NS experiencing institutional problems.

This programme will seek:

- To promote the development and training of volunteers and volunteer leaders;
- To hold a Basic Training Course for potential delegates from the region;

- To promote implementation of the Study on the Future of the Movement in Latin America and the Caribbean through a review and follow-up of NS implementation of its recommendations;
- To ensure follow-up on institutional weaknesses identified among the NS which participated in the Resource Development Programme;
- To hold workshops in NS experiencing institutional problems, using the methodology successfully tested in 1997 and 1998 with other National Societies;
- To provide support and technical assistance on integrity issues as and when they occur;
- To promote the exchange of human resources and technical assistance within the region and facilitate sharing of information and co-operation activities;
- To promote public support for the NS and enable them to take full advantage of their involvement in all regional programmes;
- To assist in the integration of British RC branches into regional programmes.

Community Based Disaster Preparedness Programme

This programme is the most critical activity in this disaster-prone region, responding as it does to needs identified by all 16 NS and many of the overseas Red Cross branches in the region. The programme is set to undergo

major expansion in the coming year with additional personnel to provide better support to the three large NS in the Latin Caribbean. The RD's Disaster Preparedness Unit focused its efforts in 1998 on the development of DP materials and training for the Anglophone Caribbean and worked very closely with five target NS in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Jamaica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Over 100 trained facilitators were active at community-level in a month-long public awareness campaign in June 1998 in the run-up to a very active hurricane season; this "Better Be Ready" Campaign – run in close conjunction with the Resource Development Programme – is now scheduled to become an annual event.

The Community Based Disaster Preparedness Programme is a key element in the regional strategy to attract new Red Cross volunteers as it is a high-visibility activity with immediate benefits for the communities involved. It is accepted by all NS in the region as an important aid towards institutional development and capacity building. Therefore, linking the Community Based Disaster Preparedness Programme to a National Society's ongoing activities, like first aid and youth/AIDS, is an important part of the regional strategy.

Through links created by the Resource Development Programme, it is also pioneering a Hotel Safety Project in Jamaica where the Red Cross, Royal&Sun Alliance and the Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association have joined forces to develop the Red Cross Hotel Safety Programme, a comprehensive disaster and safety management programme for hotels in the region. If judged sufficiently successful, a region-wide expansion could occur as early as April 1999.

A workshop was held to develop a standard logistics and relief manual, adapting Federation standards to the needs of the Caribbean. Major funding from the Japanese Red Cross has allowed the pre-positioning of relief supplies on islands in the hurricane belt to begin. A sub-regional warehouse has been established on Antigua.

Support from the Information Management Programme for the communications component of the Caribbean Community-Based Disaster Preparedness Programme provided all Caribbean NS with a new computer and, as of May 1998, all 16 NS were connected by internet.

In 1999, the Regional Delegation will continue efforts to assist NS:

- to improve capacities at the community level to prepare for, and cope with, disasters;
- to improve the disaster management capacity of key staff at HQ and branch levels;
- to improve logistical capacity, thereby ensuring rapid mobilisation of essential relief items to meet the emergency needs of the most vulnerable;
- to improve the communications network between NS, branches and the RD;
- to reduce vulnerability at community level by the introduction of appropriate micro-projects.

Resource Development

The overall objective is to help NS fortify their institutional structures so they are better equipped to provide both disaster related assistance and on-going social services. The focus of this programme is on improving image and the ability to recruit and to motivate volunteers, and to boost fundraising. Drawing on the Federation's available material and human resources and applying lessons learned in resource development in other regions, this programme combines on-site analyses, seminars, national workshops, technical assistance and local resources to help Caribbean NS and branches address their unique capacity building needs.

The Caribbean Disaster/Development Fund was launched by NS with an initial goal to raise USD five million over five years through marketing the NS as a group and seeking local and regional support from individuals and corporations. Long-term mutually beneficial corporate partnerships have been established with a number of premier regional brands providing funding in-kind, and technical support to NS.

The Regional Delegation and the Dominica Red Cross co-operated in the development of the Red Cross Tip of the Day programme as a year-round educational and public awareness regional campaign, broadcasting practical Red Cross disaster and safety Tips daily on national radio. The Caribbean Red Cross Societies website was officially launched on World Red Cross Day, 8 May 1998. All National Societies in the Caribbean have been provided with a comprehensive but easy to use membership and fund raising tracking software package.

The Carnegie Corporation from the United States is providing funding to support revenue generating projects in the five smallest countries in the region (in population and economy size) - Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

All 16 NS and six branches of the British Red Cross have benefited from this two-year-old programme which has sought to build image and boost fundraising at NS level. Specific income generating activities at NS level will continue to be supported. However, the concentration in 1999 will be regional and includes the following:

- Firmly establishing the Caribbean/Disaster Development Fund and securing regional corporate partnerships;
- Establishing a regional Corporate Advisory Group of the Caribbean's top corporations;
- Developing additional regional initiatives to raise funds and awareness of the Red Cross;
- Developing marketing tools and training to strengthen the Red Cross in the region, particularly by attracting more volunteers;
- Supporting regional campaigns such as the "Better Be Ready" DP campaign in June; Red Cross Month; HIV/AIDS Awareness; and Red Cross Millennium-related activity;
- Supporting the development of strong NS resource development committees involving skilled local business leaders as Red Cross volunteers.

Youth

The importance of sustainable, community-driven programmes to address the increasing vulnerabilities of young people was emphasized by Caribbean Red Cross leadership at the region's bi-annual conference in July 1997.

- Addressing this issue, the Regional Delegation will assist NSs in revitalizing and strengthening their Red Cross Youth departments, to be managed and supported by young people. Skills and tools will be provided to empower youth members to identify community vulnerability and design and manage programmes to protect youth and support their development.
- As a priority, the successful Jamaica Red Cross HIV/AIDS youth peer education will be expanded to other highly vulnerable countries in the region. A youth delegate from the region will co-ordinate the two year programme, targeting Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, and Trinidad & Tobago during the first year.
- A Caribbean Red Cross AIDS Network will be formed to further promote AIDS prevention through the regular sharing of experiences and resources.

Information and Dissemination

The RD's work in this area is closely bound up with all other programme areas, particularly that of resource development, with its focus on image, promotion and fundraising. The Caribbean News continues to be an important vehicle for both Red Cross and non-Red Cross audiences and now has a circulation of 5,000. Press releases continued to be issued regularly directly from the RD which also supplies NS with support to meet their own media needs. Publicity has been organised to support World Red Cross Day and the launch of the World Disasters Report. The Delegation will continue to maintain both the internet and user-restricted intranet sites as a key resource for Red Cross staff and volunteers, and members of the public.

- Publication of Caribbean News will continue on a quarterly basis;
- Promotion of World Red Cross Day;
- Participation in the global launch of the World Disasters Report 1999;
- RD will continue to foster good relations with the media and issue regular press releases and provide technical support to NS in this area;
- A regional Red Cross data base will be established in combination with the Resource Development Programme and the results will be published in the form of a Caribbean Red Cross Directory.

Regional Delegation

The RD provides readily available technical support and advice to 16 NS and six overseas branches of the British Red Cross. It facilitates co-operation between these member NS and partner Operating NS. Management and financial control of the regional programmes is also a key function of the RD. In the last four years, the RD has become operational in response to a variety of disasters in ten territories. The RD presently comprises five delegates based in Santo Domingo; the addition of a second development delegate is envisaged in 1999.