

# HAITI

## HEALTH, DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE, CAPACITY BUILDING

CHF 856,000  
50,000 beneficiaries

Programme no 01.27/99

### The Context

The paralysis which has gripped the country at all levels of government continued through most of 1998, affecting the availability of funding. The Republic of Haiti's fragile democracy has not been able to respond to the country's main problems and it remains the poorest nation in the western hemisphere. The GNP per capita is about \$ 260 and the distribution of wealth is very unequal. Access to health and education is severely limited for most of the population.

The Haitian Red Cross (HNRCS) mounted a relief operation after Hurricane Georges hit the country in September 1998. In addition to the relief phase, the NS is now working on rehabilitation, concentrating on housing needs for the victims.

The Society has been going through a process of institutional change. In February 1997, a General Assembly approved new Statutes for the NS. These Statutes represent a significant step forward. The NS has been able to establish 13 Regional Committees, and although not all of them are operational yet, serious efforts are being made to continue this new thrust. A two-and-a-half year programme, sponsored by the Netherlands Red Cross/ Netherlands Government, to develop three of the country's most vulnerable regions got underway in March 1997. In August 1998, the Regional Delegation embarked on a new process of engagement in the institutional development process that included workshops with these branches.

The NS has established the main priorities for a project-based approach to the many needs in the country. The State has delegated some major responsibilities to the NS, such as the National Blood Service (1986) and disaster response functions.

The Port-au-Prince Delegation was formally closed in August 1998 and the Regional Delegation now supports a liaison office in Port-au-Prince which can be made operational at very short notice.

The overall aim of the HNRCS is to meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups in the country and to strengthen its own institutional capacity accordingly.

## The Operation

### Objectives of the Operation

- To make further progress in institutional development and ensure the necessary technical support;
- To ensure the overall disaster preparedness and response capacity of the Haitian Red Cross;
- To develop further the capacity of the Blood Service through blood donor promotion;
- To structure and define the Training Policy of the NS, following the recently created Training Centre;
- To meet the needs of specific vulnerable groups through appropriate social welfare and other support.

### Plan of Action

- Disaster Preparedness Project

This project seeks to support ongoing activities in the NS Community-Based Disaster Preparedness Project funded through the Canadian Red Cross by CIDA. It will concentrate on equipping volunteers and providing them with training to increase their capacity to respond to disasters. There is also a well-identified need to raise awareness at volunteer and community level of the hazards that environmental degradation represents.

- Blood Donor Promotion

Through this project, the Haitian Red Cross intends to carry out a public campaign in support of blood donation, married with HIV/AIDS prevention education in schools and other institutions in towns throughout the country. The shortage of voluntary blood donors is a major obstacle to the establishment of a well-functioning Blood Service.

- “Kay Nou”

This social welfare project - “Our House” in Creole - got underway in the latter half of 1997 and targets single women who have left their homes in the countryside and live homeless on the streets of Port-au-Prince. The project provides them with temporary accommodation, simple skills and literacy training. Finally, they will be given help in returning to their communities.

- Institutional Development Programme

The emphasis in Federation support has gradually shifted from relief to development of the NS. The Federation will commit resources to assisting the NS in capacity building. This commenced in early 1997 when the NS was included among the first eight NS in the region to participate in the Regional Resource Development Programme. Technical support to the NS in

finance and administration is provided on a regular basis. The Port-au-Prince liaison office also maintains a basic capacity to provide logistical and other support to the NS in the event of a major emergency.

Administrative and other support will continue to be supplied to the Netherlands Red Cross/Netherlands Government-funded Branch Development Project, which covers the Haitian Red Cross Regional Committees of Les Cayes, Jacmel and Jeremie. Capacity building, micro-projects and income-generating activities are the main areas of action of this project that has, at the same time, increased considerably the HNRCS's regional co-ordinating mechanism. It is fully funded for 1998 and the first half of 1999.

### Capacity

- The Operating National Society

There are 168 staff employed at headquarters, including employees of the blood centre, who are paid directly by the Ministry of Health. Most of the staff are relatively new. The Society concentrates on key areas such as its blood programme, ambulance service, first aid and community health training. The regional development section was created in 1996, with no external support, and was able to establish 13 regional committees.

- The Federation

Shortages of funds, an opportunity for new methods of co-operation on institutional development issues and the re-location of the Regional Delegation to the Dominican Republic were all factors in the decision to close the Haiti Delegation in August 1998. However, a liaison office continues to function in Port-au-Prince with one full-time staff member and a Netherlands Red Cross delegate working on the regional development project. More frequent support from specialist delegates is now possible given the relative ease of travel between Santo Domingo and Port-au-Prince.

### Co-operation

The HNRCS co-operates closely with the Ministry of Health, particularly in relation to the blood programme. It has also implemented a school and environmental health project supported by ECHO. The information and dissemination section is sponsored by ICRC.