

TAJIKISTAN

RELIEF, HEALTH AND CAPACITY BUILDING

CHF 11,436,000

1,750,000 beneficiaries

Programme no 01.46/99

The Context

The political situation in Tajikistan is approaching a critical point, when it will become apparent whether the peace process, agreed on in the mid-1997 Peace Accord, has sufficient impetus and support to generate stability and pave the way for an economic upturn. Meanwhile, as the national infrastructure crumbles, the plight of the most vulnerable continues to deteriorate. Even assuming the most optimistic scenario, their prospects are bleak indeed.

The civil war, which started in 1992, has taken an appalling toll, not only in terms of casualties but in the destruction of medical structures, education facilities and other essential services. Closed schools are creating a generation of children lacking the most basic tools to enable them to earn a living in adulthood. The collapse of the medical infrastructure is demonstrated by the reappearance of certain diseases such as TB and hepatitis. Preventable diseases are also on the increase, including diarrhoea, respiratory tract infections, sexually transmitted disease and malaria.

According to the UN, 80% of Tajikistan's population live below the poverty line and almost 50% are unemployed.

Tajikistan has a high birth rate (26.7 per 1,000) but also a high child mortality rate (30.9 per 1,000). Its high average rate of population growth, 3%, its low average age (22 years) and large labour force (48%) are a rich theoretical potential, but in reality its GDP growth has been negative for four years, ending in 1996 with -4.4%. Efforts to develop the agricultural and industrial sector have been thwarted by catastrophically low cotton and aluminium prices, in most cases lower than the cost of production.

The country is very mountainous, so that 90% of its six million population occupies less than 8% of the total land area and 70% lives in rural areas. The past winter, with a snowfall ten times more than usual, and the warm spring unleashed an unprecedented series of floods, landslides and mud-slides, demonstrating the decline and collapse of the monitoring and preventive mechanisms operative in the past.

Objectives of the Operation

- Relief: Through programme support, to assist the National Society to provide food assistance to the most vulnerable, patients in institutions, the isolated elderly, multi-children families and pregnant women.
- Health: To assist the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST) to continue preventive health programmes and distribution of medical kits and hygienic supplies to health structures at middle and primary level.
- Social Welfare: To mobilise and strengthen people's networks by continuing support to small scale projects at grassroots level.
- Disaster Preparedness: To enhance the capacity of the RCST to respond to disasters.
- Capacity building: To strengthen the capacity of the RCST in terms of modern management of human, material and financial resources and assist them in diversifying their fund-raising base.

Plan of Action

- Relief

Food to the Elderly and Other Vulnerable Groups

The RCST and the Federation propose to continue the food deliveries to vulnerable elderly beneficiaries dependent on a state pension and without family support. The programme targets vulnerable elderly people in Dushanbe and other urban areas, plus some mountainous areas in West Tajikistan. A few areas excluded until recently because of the security situation will be included in the 1999 programmes. The number of beneficiaries increased from 25,000 in 1997 to 30,000 beneficiaries in 1998; the 1999 target is 68,300,

a beneficiary group expanded to include multi-children families.

Food to Institutions

Leprosy and mental hospitals are acutely short of food for patients. Following emergency distributions in 1996, 1997 and 1998, the RCST and Federation propose to continue regular food deliveries to these institutions in addition to the regular distributions to hospitals and internats. The distribution in 1999 will be divided into two rounds, the first covering hospitals and psychiatric institutions, the second hospitals, psychiatric institutions and internats. Altogether, the project will serve approximately 2,000 beneficiaries.

Public Canteens

The Public Canteens Programme, a relief programme with a social impact, started in mid 1995. It is managed by the National Society with assistance from the Federation. In 1997 the

number of canteens rose from 5 to 15 and in 1998 from 15 to 25 – a figure that will be maintained in 1999. The programme aims to provide one hot meal per day, six days a week, on a rotation basis, to vulnerable elderly people and some street children in urban areas of West Tajikistan. On average, each beneficiary receives meals for six months of the year. The 1999 target is 6,000 beneficiaries.

Heating and Refurbishment in GBAO

For four years the Federation has provided coal to hospitals and schools in Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast in the Pamir mountains. This programme will continue in 1999 but will refurbish these institutions so that they need less coal for heating. The programme produced a cut-back in coal from 3,000 MT in 1997/1998 to 2,500 MT for 1998/1999 and a projected 1,165 MT for 1999, brought about by replacing coal burning heaters by electric boilers in some institutions, better assessment of institutions' needs and the local manufacture of coal briquettes from coal dust for smaller stoves.

- Health

Medicines for Rural and District Hospitals

This project covers the 81 rural and district hospitals in the Khatlon and Kurgan Tube regions and a total of 14,400 beneficiary patients.

Medicines to Ambulatory Health Posts and Dispensaries

Approximately 600 ambulatory health posts and 300 dispensaries in Khatlon Oblast and the Rayons of Republican Subordination received a medical kit and medical and hygiene supplies in October 1997 and

May 1998. The next distribution of these kits will take place in May 1999. The medicines will reach at least

1.5 million vulnerable patients.

Public Health Education Campaign

The deterioration in the health service has produced a sharp rise in the incidence of disease and accidents, most of them preventable by simple procedures within everyone's reach. This programme seeks to educate people in these procedures through a series of media campaigns.

Water and Sanitation

Potable water, available to more than 40% of the population of Tajikistan prior to 1991, is now much scarcer. This programme seeks to provide affordable and sustainable methods of supplying clean water to rural populations.

- Social Welfare

Street Children

Street children are a growing social problem in a country torn by political conflict and economic crisis.

A centre for such children has been established, providing a safe haven for youth at risk and services for their protection and development. The staff of the centre consists of a psychiatrist, a doctor, a lawyer versed in human rights, cooks, teachers of extracurricular subjects, and tutors for children experiencing difficulties in school. The centre, principally a daytime facility, offers over-night shelter on an emergency basis.

Leper House (self-sufficiency project)

This programme will enable 49 patients who have been marginalised by their families and society to become self-sufficient. This is a one-time grant.

Shoe Making (GBAO)

This programme, begun in 1997, teaches students to make their own shoes and is designed to reduce the need for outside aid. Tools will be donated to schools as a basis for shoemaking lessons in the future. This six-month project will benefit a total of 11,000 people, by providing 6,000 pairs of new shoes, 3,000 pairs of repaired shoes and 2,000 pairs of local factory-made shoes.

Seeds, Tools, Animal Husbandry (self-sufficiency project)

The programme will be implemented in the two rayons of Varzob and Tursun Zade by the Tajikistan Red Crescent branch. Vulnerable families receive, on a credit basis, wheat seed, mineral fertiliser and cows with winter fodder. The credit will be recovered in the form of grain and animals which will be used to assist other vulnerable groups in the community.

- Disaster Preparedness and Response

1998 was a year of many local floods, mud-slides and landslides in Tajikistan, following an exceptionally hard winter. This programme, a development from the successful regional programme, seeks to develop further the National Society's capacity and provide a buffer stock to replace and enhance stocks used in 1998.

- Capacity Building

Institutional Development

The presence of a Development Delegate in the Tajikistan Delegation will continue. After prioritising development at headquarters level in 1997 and part of 1998, the programme in 1999 will concentrate on strengthening the branches through training in volunteer management and fund-raising. A small grants fund will be set up. Image-building materials will be produced locally. A local consultant will give hands-on training in effective communication and administration.

Income generation, through animal husbandry and agricultural programmes, started in 1997 in West Tajikistan. This programme will continue, along with other innovative income generation ideas. It will

be complemented by fund-raising and cost recovery programmes, within a comprehensive Resource Development Programme which will also seek to strengthen the capacity of the Tajikistan Red Crescent Society in overall resource management.

Capacity

- The Operating National Society

The Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan, founded in 1927 as part of the Soviet Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, was admitted to the Federation in 1997 and maintains a structure consisting of

one central, two oblast, two regional, 16 city and 47 rayon committees.

The RCST, under new leadership, is moving to improve its performance and resources, despite the current severe financial constraints.

The Society is the only humanitarian organisation working throughout this war-torn country. Since 1996 it has been operating under a new and more open management structure and focusing on self-sufficiency programmes enabling the most vulnerable to help themselves. It is the implementing partner of the Federation in all relief and distribution programmes.

- The Federation

The main goal of the Tajikistan delegation is to support the RCST during major relief operations and to assist the Society in the implementation of its health, social welfare, disaster preparedness and training programmes.

The Federation Delegation, previously a sub-delegation of the Almaty Regional Delegation, became a fully-fledged country delegation on 1 May 1997. It consists of 10 delegates who work with well trained local staff and are supported by the Regional Delegation in Almaty.

Co-operation

The National Society and the Federation delegation enjoy good relations with the UN system, particularly UNHCR, for whom the National Society is a leading implementing agency. Good relationships and co-operation are maintained with the representative of ECHO, a major donor to this operation, and with German Agro-action, The Aga Khan Foundation, Mercy Corps International, Counterpart International and many other NGOs operating in the country. There is close co-operation with ICRC on security matters and co-ordination of programmes.