

II: RESULTS

4. Relevance

While comparing the *project objectives* with the *context* (problem description) in the area of special state concern, the following observations can be noted:

Objective:

..”*Get an improved humanitarian situation for extremely vulnerable persons (EVI) in the areas of special state concern..*”

Context:

- *Slow reconstruction processes, unresolved property issues, poor job opportunities and citizenship rights in the area of return.*

- *Too many persons where unable to cope with the prevailing social / economical situation.*

Humanitarian aid is being distributed and considered necessary for extremely vulnerable particularly in the remote areas. Also in cities like Knin, large quantities of food parcels are being distributed 3 times per week. It is hard to assess how dependent recipients are on food parcels. Calls for “teach me how to fish, rather than give me fish” have been heard during the evaluation mission, though particularly made by distributing agencies on behalf of beneficiaries.

Food parcel distribution is an important complementary input in the nutritional basket, important for those who have little resources due to low or non-income, but it keeps on sustaining a dependency.

The objective of the programme has undoubtedly been achieved through it’s implementation, realising though that the Red Cross, by nature, focuses on needs alleviating among the most vulnerable in the Society. Beneficiaries that require NGO support in income generating activities, and with that become more self-sustainable, are to a lesser extent beneficiaries of the Croatian Red Cross Community Support programme. The Red Cross, in this matter targets mainly, but not exclusively, beneficiaries who are too frail to qualify for income generating projects, as per the criteria agreed upon.

Of relevance to this effect is that the Croatian Red Cross programme complements humanitarian assistance projects carried out by other agencies in the region, which might well focus on having the economic well-being of returnees and remainees in the area empowered.

This complementing factor makes the Croatian Red Cross programme even more relevant. The added value to each of the NGOs’ projects of reconstruction, income generation, distributing humanitarian aid and services, clearly contributes to a better quality of life for those who did return, and for those who remained.

Economic and social revitalization of the war-affected areas is slow and burdened with various difficult problems, which follow post-war period, such as reconstruction of dwellings and infrastructure, community development, reconciliation process and disrupted family structure.

In light of this difficult situation, input of the donors was crucial for successful fulfilment of the objectives, in terms of material assistance and developing capacities (equipment, training, voluntarism, enhancing the role of RC in the local communities).

5. Cost Effectiveness

A financial analysis on means and costs has not been carried out by the evaluators, since a financial

audit of the project is foreseen in the course of year 2002.

Also, imprecise data on exact number of beneficiaries make a cost effectiveness calculation difficult to quantify.

A rough cost analysis of the Netherlands Red Cross funding of the programme can give some indication of whether the Community Service Programme is an expensive programme in relation to its effectiveness as far as donor support is concerned. It needs to be stressed that cost recovery by other donors to the programme, like UNHCR and local municipalities, has been taken into account only when it refers to UNHCRs salary reimbursements to Mobile team staff in the following calculation:

Expenditures1:

- Netherlands Red Cross	:	160.000 euro
- Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs	:	<u>650.000 euro</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE NETHERLANDS DONATION	:	810.000 euro

Expenditures2:

- Salary costs Mobile Teams (UNHCR funded): 1.000 euro per team x 18 teams x 18 months	:	325.000 euro
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TOTAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME	:	<u>1.134.000 euro</u>
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(not exclusive, see notes below).

Beneficiaries:

- Grassroot Volunteer Network: (210 beneficiaries on average per month x 10 Red Cross branches)	=	2.100 beneficiaries per month
- Food parcels (88.000 parcels / 18 months of distribution)	=	4.888 beneficiaries per month
- Welcome parcels: (6.000 / 12 months)	=	<u>500</u> beneficiaries per month
TOTAL NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES:		7.488 persons per month

It can be estimated that about half of the Grassroot volunteer network beneficiaries are also recipients of food/hygiene/welcome parcels, therefore the number of beneficiaries per month can be set at around: **6.400** persons per month

Total expenditure per beneficiary: 1.134.000 euro / 6.400 persons / 18 months = **9.80 euro** p/month, p/beneficiary.

Note: 1) transport costs recovered from a 10% overhead on food parcels value, while the vehicles for the Mobile Teams are donated by UNHCR to the branches. 2) the beneficiaries for hygiene parcels are same as beneficiaries for food parcels ; 3) it should be realised that the food, hygiene and welcome parcels are family parcels, therefore the actual number of reached beneficiaries is higher.

6. Impact

What has been the impact of the programme is indicated by the evaluators as well as by those interviewed, relating the programme's objective to its purpose.

Objective:

.. "Get an improved humanitarian situation for extremely vulnerable persons (EVI) in the areas of special state concern.. "

Project Purpose:

1. *Contribute to reconciliation process;*
2. *Improve conditions in Croatia thus contributing lower refugees reluctance for voluntary return;*
3. *Improve capacity of the Croatian Red Cross branches in the region;*
4. *Increase regional Red Cross cooperation;*

6.1. Evaluators views

1. Considerable importance is given to the presence of the Croatian Red Cross volunteers in the field. Besides cherishing reconciliation between remainees and returnees on the spot the role of the volunteers is described by beneficiaries themselves as vital; A point of reference, trust, and comfort.

The regular presence and visits of the Mobile Teams staff and volunteers is time after time been described by the beneficiaries interviewed as very pleasant and necessary. It may be an occasional chat, or a window repair, or a delivery of humanitarian aid. The Red Cross volunteer is one of the few who pay a visit and looks after the well being of the beneficiary.

Beneficiaries who live in remote and deserted hamlets did make their own choice to go back and live there again, often in harsh conditions. They accept the fact that the village is empty, but at least they are back in their own house again, which is all that counts for them. Red Cross volunteers are one of the few who bring some light to their daily solitary existence, and care for their social and health status. This is not a luxury service, but a civil society obligation, and an act of protection.

Volunteers and mobile team members are of different ethnic origin themselves, belonging to different groups (refugees, returnees, domicile persons) which is a significant contribution in itself towards reconciliation. They work together and have the same goal, which brings benefits to the whole community. This is one model of successful building of tolerance, understanding and communication.

The distribution of a Welcome parcel to newly arrived returnees is well received by the beneficiaries, and it is a good tool for the Red Cross volunteers to make the first contact, bridge a gap in communication, and makes further contact much easier.

2. Expected results as to lower the reluctance of refugees to voluntary return to Croatia are less evidently proven. Refugees' reluctance to return is due to some other significant impediments such as extremely poor economic situation or reconstruction pending. Future Red Cross projects might contribute to this effect, in particular when Red Cross regional exchange of information of return will take place.

3. Before 2000, the food component of the Community Support Programme was supplied by ECHO. When ECHO abruptly and unexpectedly faced out its food supply, the Netherlands Red Cross response was well appreciated to cover the existing gaps in food distribution (parcels). The Croatian Red Cross distribution and packaging facilities were in place, but means lacked due to the sudden pull out of ECHO support.

It was understood by ECHO that the Croatian Government had become the responsible body to take over the ECHO role of food distributor to returnees, refugees, IDPs and EVIs, in the areas of return. Although the Government of Croatia understood its role and responsibility, at that time (around June 2000) the resources were lacking.

The Netherlands RC support (Netherlands Government) covered an intermediate moment for the Croatian Government to settle the procurement procedures with the Ministry of Emergencies and

Supplies. The Netherlands Red Cross food support can be regarded as the trigger for the Croatian Government to take over the food distribution part of the Netherlands RC. The Croatian Red Cross remains the distributor, thanks to the existing network.

If the Netherlands Red Cross at that time would not have supplied the food parcel components, the Croatian Red Cross would have been less efficient, not to mention the destitute condition that vulnerable beneficiaries would have found themselves in due to this sudden phasing out of ECHO Food programme.

It also would have forced the Croatian Government to build up a complete own network and logistics system for distribution, which surely would have been less efficient.

From April 2001 onwards, the government distribution of food parcels through the Croatian Red Cross, is some 28'000 parcels per month. It remains to be seen however, whether this form of Croatian government support will continue in the year 2002.

Direct support in terms of material assistance is also important, particularly during the initial period of integration of returnees. Red Cross field workers operate as "extended hand" of the Social Welfare system, filling the gaps of that system. Information and advocacy activities of Croatian Red Cross workers and volunteers, together with other civil society players, contributed to the strong involvement of the Government of Croatia of Croatia during 2001 in solving the most pressing social problems.

The Croatian Red Cross Law, adopted in October 2001, has cast in stone a sustainable role for the Croatian Red Cross in the society. Sustainable income for Red Cross branches for activities in the local community should not be a fantasy anymore, provided branch development on self-sustainability continues. The training seminars for the participating branches in the Community Support programme, and the 4 grass-root Population Movement seminars (jointly facilitated with UNHCR and IOM), have boosted the capacity and confidence among the branch members to take ownership on project development at own initiative.

4. The present Federation Regional Population Movement programme should be viewed as a logical sequence to the already extensive national society and Federation involvement in the Former Yugoslavia. Following the Federation assessment mission in May 2000, the regional Population Movement Conference for Croatia, FRY and BiH was held in June 2001. It set the frame for future activities and laid the ground for more adequate and sustainable national society-led programming. Technical support given by the Regional PM delegate enhanced the know how and resource base of the branches, enabling them to respond better to displacement in their own right.

6.2. Perceptions by others

Also NGOs, while asked, valued the Croatian Red Cross volunteers' presence high, as being the ones who know the situation on the spot as no other. The volunteers are regarded as "knowledge centres" when it comes to outstanding humanitarian needs outstanding reconstruction issues in villages.

CARE Canada's 2 million USD reconstruction project in Donji Lapac was based on the reports and assessments of the Croatian Red Cross volunteers who had "mapped" the area for outstanding needs in advance at own initiative.

The perception of the Croatian Red Cross by those interviewed (beneficiaries, NGOs, and government) is very positive.

Strengths mentioned have been:

- The volunteer network in the field, their expertise and presence;
- The logistics capacities, notably packaging, warehousing and distribution throughout the entire country;
- The experiences in Social Welfare and Health project implementation;
- The auxiliary role to the Government;

When asked on what the role of the Croatian Red Cross in the society could be, a common answer by those interviewed was: ..”be an advocate, keep up the network with volunteers, strengthen the auxiliary role with the government, act as a voice of the people, continue do needs analyses on economic needs and on opportunities for and with beneficiaries, be project planners in the field..”

Overall comments additionally made where that the Croatian Red Cross ..“might be heading for hard times: different tasks ahead, more important ones. Social Welfare is a niche. The social service system of the Government is changing, therefore a bigger role for the Croatian Red Cross can be targeted for, as auxiliary..”. Other roles mentioned: “Give youth activities a meaning, give jobless youth who do not follow school a useful occupation or social activity. Training. Reactivate civil society...”

Government officials interviewed see the present and future CRC role as being the biggest humanitarian network in the country, with high experience in social welfare and logistics.

6.3. Perceptions by beneficiaries

During the evaluation mission, field trips were made in the areas of special state concern. Mostly elderly and handicapped beneficiaries were visited and interviewed by the team. The beneficiaries declared their dependency on the Red Cross Mobile Teams and gave their appreciation. Besides the delivery of a parcel, the simple fact of being there for a chat, do a small repair in the house, or do shopping, is very much appreciated. Since most of the beneficiaries live in remote areas, a contact with others than the Red Cross volunteers is rare. Family support is received from time to time.

The beneficiaries visited appeared to have a day-to-day approach to life, and could not, therefore clearly indicate their opinion on the possibility that the Netherlands Red Cross food parcels might not be continued to be distributed again in the future.

Quite frankly, for the beneficiaries, it does not really matter whether the Netherlands Red Cross, or the Croatian Government finances the food parcel, or hygiene parcel, as long as it is being distributed on a regularly basis.

Also visited was a family which returned recently from Vojvodina, back to their home in the Dalmatian hinterland. On their return they temporarily stayed at a reception centre in Sisak while waiting for the repair of their house. This family has got good support from UNHCR, IRC and the local Red Cross towards rebuilding their house. The wish to return back home, no matter what, was clearly an overriding factor. The fact that their stay is lonely and remote (the children have to walk to school several kilometers), the hamlet is damaged and the local economy in shatters are still less important than the fact of being displaced somewhere else, even if conditions sometimes may be better.

Annex 3 provides brief overview of family situations typical for beneficiaries of this assistance, and beneficiary feedback.

7. Beneficiary criteria analyses

The beneficiary criteria as stipulated in the July 2001 project proposal does not inform on the definition of “returnee”. Key question in this is, how long a person is considered to be returnee?

The Government of Croatia gives a returnee status for a 6-months period. De facto, however, many remain to be regarded as returnee, or become “EVI” if they are vulnerable after this 6-months period.

Although the project proposal is not exclusive in reaching certain target groups more than others - the main criteria is vulnerability, not favouring any category more than others, an average percentage of categories reached with the programme can be concluded on, in the former sectors North and South:

Between 70-80% of the beneficiaries are returnees, IDPs or refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the remaining 20-30% are among “EVIs”.

Most of the beneficiaries are of rural background and some 70 % of the beneficiary population are over 60 years old. In comparison to the last couple of years, it is obvious that younger people are returning, families with children, which implies that they have different needs and require different approach when providing assistance. House rehabilitation and, first of all, job opportunities remain crucial preconditions for sustainable return and dignified life of the whole population in the target areas.

A constant check by the Croatian Red Cross staff and volunteers with the beneficiaries to see whether there is a need for further continued distributions and, to see whether the criteria for distribution are adhered to is carried out.

Beneficiaries are asked to inform whether there are any forms of alternative support given, like family support, so that the Croatian Red Cross can continue the relief action to serve the most vulnerable only.

A setback is the fact that a computerized database is not operational yet in the Croatian Red Cross on their beneficiaries. Thanks to the Netherlands Red Cross donation, and additional International Federation support, a start has been made to use 10 computers (delivered to relevant branches) to prepare a database on the current project beneficiaries.

Up to now, the volunteers have a record for each beneficiary being visited and supported by the volunteer, but the sheet is filled in on paper. This needs to be entered in the branch computer. The programme department has hired trainers who will train the branches on how to use the software. Support is promised by UNHCR to share relevant software, UNHCR plans to hand over its own database (computerized) to the Croatian Red Cross during 2002, which will further facilitate the Croatian Red Cross to systemise its database. No duplication is foreseen in this, the UNHCR database will compliment the Red Cross database.

The total number of beneficiaries of the programme, on any given period in the programme implementation is around 6.400 beneficiaries, as mentioned in par. 5.

8. Post- 2001 Vulnerability

The most vulnerable, as per Croatian Red Cross terms, related to the Community Support Programme, similar to as it was described in the project proposal of the programme, could be better broken down as follows:

- Vulnerable persons not on the ODPR lists (if returnee status has expired which is the case after 6 months of stay), or remainees;
- Vulnerable persons, but who are not on the list of Ministry of Social Welfare. This can easily be

the case if one for instance owns a piece of land, even if the piece of land is far out of any city, village or even hamlet;

- Vulnerable persons without income, pension (applies to farmers for instance), or any form of income less than 55 euro per month;

- Vulnerable persons without family support available;

The Croatian Red Cross will advocate to the Government of Croatia to give a high priority to continue humanitarian aid and services distribution to vulnerable persons in the above four categories who the Croatian Red Cross considers as beneficiaries, on top of any other beneficiaries identified by the Croatian Red Cross, ODPR, Ministry of Social Welfare, like new returnees or refugees.

The Croatian Red Cross estimates that at least 3'000 persons can be considered for the above categories, which are in the areas of special state concern, after 2001.

If no government food parcels for these 3'000 persons can be made available by the Government of Croatia, the Croatian Red Cross will have to find other ways for support and appeal for that accordingly.

9. Setbacks in programme implementation / lessons learned

There were few setbacks to report on, while implementing the Community Service Programme. One was that the workshops for the Grassroot Volunteer component were held rather late, another setback is the fact as mentioned in par. 7 on the lack of a computerized Croatian Red Cross database on beneficiary figures. The latter point has been overcome by the hiring of trainers / instructors. Also, support is promised by UNHCR and support was given by the International Federation with extra computers and printers, for branch development purposes, which complements the Community support programme.

III: CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

10. Conclusions

1. Looking at statistics on returnees, it can be concluded that there is a trend of a slow down in returns of refugees to Croatia. For the next two years of 2002 and 2003, an estimated number of 20.000 persons are expected to return to Croatia's area of special state concern. Further returns should possibly be seen more as "shuttling ones" pending a slow local integration process (and limited support for that) in FRY.

Also, the only new cases that could occur would be if the property issues become suddenly resolved, at least significant number of pending cases

Many of those who did return, unfortunately, find little of what should have been an economically recovered area of return. To break this impediment factor for return, self sufficiency promotion in all services delivered by humanitarian agencies is being brought forward as a priority.

2. Evaluating the achievement of the programme **objective**, which was set in the project proposal in mid 2000, it can be concluded that the objective has been met, realising the difficulty in quantifying this:

- From service delivery point of view, beside countless positive responses from beneficiaries, a second indicator is the responses from partner organisations in the field. Main factor of success is the coordination among all relevant organisations, as well as the complementing components of each of the agencies programmes.

An excellent cooperation between the agencies present in the area, complementary to each own operations, has been established. Where most NGOs focus on starting income generating projects, it is the Red Cross who cares for the extremely vulnerable, many of who are too frail to be eligible for implementing income generating projects by themselves sufficiently.

The programme is complementary also to the UNHCR-funded program of assistance which includes warehousing-distribution services, individual/family support and shelter activities. Besides Netherlands Red Cross, Government of Croatia and UNHCR, other donors are taking part in funding certain components of the Croatian Red Cross humanitarian program, or with in-kind donations: Catholic Relief Service, German Red Cross, IOM, Canadian and Norwegian Embassies, as well as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The Croatian Red Cross, strengthened with a recently adopted Red Cross Law, remains undoubtedly as one of the few agencies in the area, since most of the NGOs, particularly the international ones, are planning their phase out during year 2002.

- From food distribution point of view, important is that when agencies decide to cease food parcel distribution that this is done with sufficient notice. When ECHO stopped its distribution during mid 2000, practically overnight, numerous recipients were not able to find alternative sources in such short moment and could have come into a destitute condition. Thanks to the Netherlands Red Cross support, the Croatian Red Cross could quickly continue with needed delivery of food parcels.

A condition set for this was that the Government of Croatia would in due course take its responsibility and take over the food distribution component, what indeed has happened a year after.

3. Evaluating the **purpose of the programme**, or better, why do beneficiaries need the programme, some two points can be looked at:

- Reconciliation is not an activity but a (desired) side effect from being present while implementing. The continuous presence of the Mobile Teams and of the volunteers of the Grassroot Information network in the areas of return serve as a form of protection to the returnees and remainees, and brings people together at the same time.

- Expected results as to lower the reluctance of refugees to voluntary return to Croatia is less evidently proven. Refugees' reluctance to return is due to some other significant and complex impediments such as extremely poor economic situation or reconstruction pending. Future Red Cross projects might contribute to this effect, in particular when Red Cross regional exchange of information of return will take place.

- The training seminars for the branches and the grass-root Population Movement seminars have boosted the capacity and confidence among the branch members to take more ownership on project development at own initiative.

- The present Federation Regional Population Movement programme should be viewed as a logical sequence to the already extensive national society and Federation involvement in the Former Yugoslavia. It set the frame for future activities and laid the ground for more adequate and sustainable national society-led programming. Technical support given by the Regional PM delegate enhanced the know how and resource base of the staff involved at headquarter and branch level, enabling them to respond better to displacement in their own right

4. With regard to the post-2001 vulnerability in the area of special state concern, the Croatian Red Cross will advocate to the Government of Croatia to give a high priority to continue humanitarian aid and services distribution to vulnerable persons in the area of special state concern. The Croatian Red Cross estimates that at least 3'000 persons can still be regarded as vulnerable in line with criteria, additionally to the existing state criteria which are "status" based (refugee, returnee or IDP), rather than based upon vulnerability.

11. Recommendations

1. As for the design of income generating projects for beneficiaries, it can be recommendable for the Community Support Programme to assess the feasibility for the inclusion of small income generating activities in the Programme. For some of the current programme beneficiaries, activities can be thought of like seeds distribution, poultry etc.

Also, it can be an opportunity for some of the participating branches, to further develop a certain “community rooms” concept. A facility at the Red Cross premises where beneficiaries, or youth (displaced, returnees and local population) can meet, do social activities, or get training sessions like language training, computer skills training, vocational trainings etc.

2. UNHCR dependency:

Since the Community Support Programme is rather dependent (financially) on UNHCRs input, it is of utmost importance for the Croatian Red Cross to find sustainability in its activities with own resources or with Government and local municipalities funding acquired. This goes in line with branch development exercises (recommendation 5).

3. Advocacy:

One of the most pressing issues in any post-war community is reconciliation, living together again after traumatic experiences of displacement. Promotion of voluntarism, organizing small community based projects involving different groups of population, developing of proactive approach in addressing the problems of the most vulnerable community members, contribute significantly to the improvement of general situation, as well as to the trust building. This is something to be developed further, the “advocacy role” of the CRC worker or volunteer.

4. Emergency fund:

An emergency fund, to be kept at branches might be considered for serving most vulnerable with a tailor made package, like medicines or food support. Preferably, this emergency fund is to be a revolving fund, supported by the relevant municipality. Funds to be released in coordination with the Croatian Red Cross programme coordinators in Knin and Zagreb.

5. Branch development:

New needs for training seminars occur for training the Croatian Red Cross branches (and local municipality) in Project Cycle Management, Participatory planning, local fundraising techniques, self awareness of strengths and opportunities in Civil Society (particularly now the Croatian Red Cross Law has been adopted which gives numerous opportunities to Red Cross branches to gain its own income from for instance municipalities or local companies), and public.

6. Regional exchange:

The Community Support Programme of the Croatian Red Cross has many aspects to share with refugee/IDP related projects implemented by the Yugoslav Red Cross and the Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Naturally, it can only be encouraged to continue to share experiences, complement each strength, and assess possibilities for joint (cross-border) projects in the framework of the Regional Population Movement Programme.