

League of Red Cross
and Red Crescent
Societies

Appeal



Appeal No 18/90

Geneva, 25 June 1990

Chernobyl (USSR) - Humanitarian Assistance and Rehabilitation Programme

1. SUMMARY

This Appeal defines short and medium term priorities for assistance to the population of three Soviet Republics - Bielorussia, Bryansk District of the Russian Federation, and Ukraine - affected by the long term consequences of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant catastrophe.

In the short and medium term the Programme will concentrate on assistance in facilitating daily life in the disaster affected zones with a total population of approximately four million people, health education for the population living in marginally contaminated areas, and participation in up-grading the health and social institutions which provide assistance to the affected population.

To ensure effective assistance to vulnerable groups in the first phase and to prepare plans for the long term, the League appeals for

CHF 4,900,000

2. GENERAL SITUATION

It is now four years since the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident, a tragedy that led to the contamination of large areas of three Soviet Republics - Ukraine, Bielorussia and the Russian Federation - and affected a total of four million people. Several other European countries were also affected.

The overall effects of the accident on the population are characterised by a combination of radiological, ecological, socio-economic, psychological, health and other factors which represent an enormous challenge for the Soviet Government and relief agencies involved in alleviating its consequences.

As a result of the reactor accident in Chernobyl, large quantities of different radionuclides were emitted. The worst contamination hit first of all the areas within a 30 kilometer radius (from which approximately one hundred thousand people had to be evacuated), and spread to the regions beyond within weeks after the accident. Beyond the thirty kilometer radius, contamination occurred in irregular patterns depending on the meteorological conditions. According to available information, approximately 10,000 km² are considered contaminated with more than 15 Ci/km² caesium-137, of which:

7,000 km² in Bielorussia
2,000 km² in the Russian Federation
1,000 km² in Ukraine

The total numbers of population living in the contaminated areas are estimated at approximately:

Bielorussia	2,400,000
Russian Federation	700,000
Ukraine	1,000,000
Total	4,100,000

The main concern was, initially, the short-lived radioisotopes of iodine. However, at the present time, four years after the Chernobyl accident, the main problem is contamination of the soil with radiocaesium (half life of the more dominant caesium isotope, caesium-137, is approximately 31 years).

Three zones of contamination are now distinguished:

1. Zone under occasional control:
Regions with a ¹³⁷-Cs contamination between 1 and 15 Ci/km²
2. Zone under permanent control:
Regions with contamination between 15 and 40 Ci/km²
3. Strict control zone:
Regions with a contamination in excess of 40 Ci/km².

The numbers of settlements and population in the areas contaminated with caesium-137 are the following:

	Number of settlements		Number of population
	1-15 Ci/km ²	more than 15 ci/km ²	areas with more than 15 ci/km ²
Bielorussia	3,223	395	102,000
Russian Federation	1,286	154	90,000
Ukraine	1,130	57	25,000
Total	5,639	606	217,000

The following regions continue to be most seriously affected by radioactive contamination: Gomel and Mogilev in Bielorussia; Kiev, Jitomir, Rovno, Chernigov in Ukraine; Bryansk in the Russian Federation.

It is now recognised that the scale of the disaster, even four years later, is such that external resources will be required to ensure more rapid and effective recovery of the areas and people affected.

It has also been stressed that measures taken to alleviate the accident's consequences have proven to be insufficient.

3. RELIEF ACTIONS BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES

Emergency relief actions taken by the Soviet Governmental authorities since the first days following the disaster in April 1986 have been aimed at:

- decontamination of the affected areas. Over 24 million square meters of the Nuclear Power Plant interior facilities and 12 million square meters around it were decontaminated. Some 500,000 cubic meters of radioactive waste have been disposed of in temporary burial grounds.
- evacuation of the population from the worst contaminated areas to new settlements with a wholesale construction programme.

- improvement of the health services to the population affected or living in areas affected by radioactive contamination.

Four years after the disaster, the Soviet authorities and international organisations reassessed its consequences. After an analysis of radiation contamination levels in a number of villages in Ukraine, Bielorussia and the Russian Federation, the Soviet Government is considering further gradual evacuation of 100,000 people over the next three years from areas where lifetime radioactive doses could exceed 35 REM per person.

In spite of enormous efforts on the part of the Soviet Government authorities in alleviating the consequences of the accident, which involved expenditure amounting to tens of billions roubles, it has been recognised that the situation continues to be extremely serious.

The Supreme Soviet stated on 25 April 1990 that this situation has resulted from the wrong assessment of the scale of the catastrophe at all management levels, weak coordination of actions, unreasonable limitations for dissemination of information about radioactive contamination, especially in 1986, the absence of a special governmental agency responsible for coordination of relief actions and actions aiming at alleviating the consequences of the disaster.

In light of the above, the Supreme Soviet adopted the Governmental Programme of Urgent Measures for 1990-1992 for alleviation of the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, which has been established on the basis of the programmes developed in the Republican Governments.

This programme is considered as a first step of the long-term Governmental Programme. It provides for:

- gradual resettlement of the population from the areas affected by high radiation contamination, where normal working and living conditions are impossible;
- improvement of the health services to the population;
- improvement in supply of non-contaminated food to the population.

The longer term State Programme aimed at protecting the population from the effects of the Chernobyl catastrophe will be worked out and adopted before the end of 1990.

The Supreme Soviet has also requested the Council of Ministers of the USSR to take into account the potential of non-governmental organisations in planning the practical measures for alleviating the consequences of the catastrophe.

4. RELIEF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE ALLIANCE OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES OF THE USSR

Soviet Red Cross staff and volunteers were mobilised within hours of the disaster to assist public health services in prevention, health and hygiene efforts, both in the disaster areas and among the evacuees, with special emphasis on assistance to children, the elderly and the handicapped.

Funds raised by the Alliance were used for:

- provision of financial aid to the victims;
- purchase of mobile diagnostic laboratories;
- purchase of equipment for the All-Union Research Centre of Radiology Medicine in Kiev;
- sponsoring of summer vacations of the children from the disaster affected areas;
- increasing the number of the Red Cross visiting nurses, specifically in the rural areas;
- purchase and distribution of "clean" food for the children.

Income and Expenditure of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR within the Chernobyl Assistance Programme

<u>Income</u>	SUR
(a) Public Donations: 1986-1989	12,570,000
(b) Disaster Relief Fund of the Alliance	3,020,000
(c) Other income	1,017,000
(d) Total income	16,607,000
<u>Expenditure</u>	
(e) Transfer to the Ukrainian RC Society	(7,500,000)
(f) Transfer to the Bielorussian RC Society	(7,050,000)
(g) Transfer to the Russian RC Society	(500,000)
(h) Transfer to other republican RC Societies	(540,000)
(i) Total expenditure	(15,590,000)
Balance of funds at 01.01.90	1,017,000 =====

5. ROLE OF THE RED CROSS / LEAGUE ASSESSMENT MISSION

In November 1989, the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the USSR invited the League to carry out a survey of the situation in the disaster affected areas with a view to establishing international cooperation.

From 9-16 January 1990, a League assessment mission composed of representatives of six National Red Cross Societies (Great Britain, Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, The Netherlands, and Sweden) including experts in the fields of medical radiology, psychological effects of disasters on health, and Red Cross operational management, carried out a survey of the affected areas and drew up a series of recommendations outlining potential areas of cooperation between the Alliance, the League and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

These recommendations, while not presuming to cover all the problems related to the consequences of the accident and follow-up requirements, contain the following major proposals for Red Cross action:

- The provision of accurate information to people directly affected by the accident.
- Counselling to help alleviate the psychological problems that are apparent in much of the population living in the affected areas.
- Provision to Red Cross workers of the equipment required to ensure daily control of contamination levels in the affected areas.
- Encouragement of closer cooperation between scientists and other interested parties both within and outside the Soviet Union.
- Supply of medical equipment, should sufficient support be forthcoming from participating National Societies.

The above recommendations were laid down as a basis for further work of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR in establishing a multi-year operational plan, including international Red Cross assistance elements.

6. OBJECTIVES AND PLAN OF ACTION

Based on its own survey of the situation, information from governmental sources and recommendations of the League assessment mission, the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR took the decision, on 5 April 1990, to considerably enlarge its assistance programme to the population affected by the accident and to appeal to the League for help in mobilising external assistance, to supplement the Alliance's efforts.

The objectives of the Assistance Programme have been set up in compliance with the recommendations of the League Assessment Mission.

They are set up as a complement to the overall governmental assistance programme. They have been established with due consideration to the Red Cross mandate and potential capacity of the Red Cross Movement to contribute to alleviating the suffering of the population affected by this major disaster.

The overall coordination of the Assistance Programme has been entrusted to the Special Coordination Board, established by the Executive Committee of the Alliance under the chairmanship of Dr. I. Ussichenko, Chairman of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society.

The Special Coordination Board will work in close cooperation with the League.

The Plan of Action has been developed initially for 2 years and is based on the assessment made by the Soviet Red Cross of the needs requiring external assistance.

The **Plan of Action** includes the following main projects/programmes, planned to be implemented within the next two years.

1. Provision of accurate information to the people on the effects on health of radioactive contamination.

Establishment with the Republican Red Cross Societies of regular radiation level control services, which will be complementary to the governmental services. The establishment of this service will require:

- provision of simple and effective radiation detectors required for measurements in the contaminated areas with the ratio of one detector for 1,000 people;
- provision of quick food and body monitoring devices to equip 10 Red Cross radiation level control units;
- training of Red Cross staff and volunteers in using the detectors and interpreting received data to the population, specifically in the rural and remote areas;
- provision of supplementary data to the governmental authorities on the levels of contamination.

2. Strengthening of the Health Education Programme for the population living in marginally contaminated areas

Establishment of Red Cross printing facilities in Kiev, Ukraine, in order to facilitate printing and distribution of accurate information to the population on the effects of contamination and advise on the most appropriate behaviour in such an environment. These printing services will cover the most acute information needs for all affected areas, i.e. in Bielorussia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Assistance to the Public Health Authorities in counselling the population to help alleviate psychological problems.

3. Exchange of experience and information on how to cope with the consequences of nuclear and other technological disasters, within the Red Cross Movement.

It is planned that in the middle of 1991, the Alliance and the League Secretariat will organise a seminar for all participating and other interested National Societies in order to examine the results of the first year of cooperation in alleviating the consequences of the nuclear power plant disaster, to study the experience of the Soviet Red Cross as well as Soviet governmental agencies, and to set objectives for further cooperation.

It is also envisaged that in the course of the first year of operational cooperation, National Societies will be invited to provide experts in various fields in order to ensure mutual benefit and share available information.

4. Upgrading the health and social institutions directly involved in treating and rehabilitating the population affected by radioactive contamination, with the priority target groups:

- children and the disabled
- orphans
- servicemen and volunteers who participated in decontamination operations immediately after the disaster.

The following health institutions have been preliminarily identified as most urgently requiring medical equipment and medicines which are not available and at present could not be provided within the Soviet Union.

a) Belorussia

A group of scientists of the Department of Medicine of the Mogilev Teachers Training College set up an independent Centre of Ecological Medicine under the auspices of the Mogilev District Committee of the Belorussian Red Cross.

The primary aims of the Centre include health examination of the people living in the radioactivity contaminated areas, especially that of mother and child and their treatment in possible cooperation with foreign experts.

The Centre is planned to be operational from 1 November 1990. Its total personnel will consist of 170 staff members. It will carry out primarily health diagnostics of children and women, specifically pregnant women. These groups of the population, chosen to be the main target, are made up of an estimated 100,000 people, including 5,000 pregnant women and 50,000 children of up to 15 years of age.

b) Russian Federation Bryansk District

8 Regions of the Bryansk District (Oblast) with a total population of 318,000 people have been contaminated by the radioactive fall-out. About 90,000 people, including 23,000 children are living in the areas with a contamination level of over 15 Ci/km².

Bearing this in mind, it has been proposed to set up an interregional diagnostic centre in the town of Novozibkov, which is geographically situated in the middle of the District's contaminated zone.

The District Health services are also lacking medical equipment for the maternity homes.

c) Ukraine

About 25,000 people are living in the areas with a contamination level of over 15 Ci/km². According to the available estimates, 150,000 people, including 60,000 children, received thyroid doses exceeding allowed levels.

The League has been requested to assist in upgrading the Ukrainian Special Dispensary of Irradiation Protection, responsible mainly for diagnosing and treating of the children from the affected areas.

The lists of required medical equipment and medicaments are available from the League on request. The budget related to item 4 of the Plan of Action represents an estimate.

The above medical requirements are not exhaustive. There is a great need in equipping the rural health institutions with blood testing equipment which could not be obtained locally. The League, in cooperation with the Alliance, will be prepared to develop other proposals if required by the National Societies.

5. **Coordination of the Alliance/League assistance programme will be done by the Alliance Headquarters. The implementation of the practical projects will be under the responsibility of the Bielorussian Red Cross Society, the Bryansk District Red Cross Committee in the Russian Federation and the Ukrainian Red Cross.**

In order to assist and advise the Alliance in implementing the programme, as well as in coordinating the international assistance, the League is setting up its delegation in Kiev. The capital of Ukraine has been chosen as the League operational base due to its proximity to all affected areas and sufficient communication means available there.

It is also to be noted that Kiev has several international flight connections with many European countries.

A League Representative will be based in Kiev in June. It is envisaged that with the development of the programme he might need to be supported by experts, whose terms and period of assignment will be defined according to the requirements.

The role of the League Representative will include assistance to the Soviet Red Cross staff in developing detailed operational plans and reporting procedures according to the required international standards, monitoring the progress of the League/Soviet Red Cross assistance programme, identifying and assessing priority needs, advising the Soviet Red Cross on matters related to strengthening the operational infrastructure and capacity of the Alliance in the affected areas.

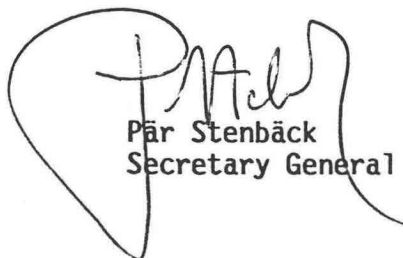
7. BUDGET (1990-1991)

	CHF
(a) Provision of 4,000 units of radiation detectors and 10 devices for mobile radiation level control units	2,500,000
(b) Establishment of the Red Cross document production department	100,000
(c) League delegation	150,000
(d) International seminar in Kiev	30,000
(e) Medical equipment	2,000,000 (*)
(f) Programme support	120,000
Total	4,900,000

(*) Required in kind



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