

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1995 the Netherlands Government invested NLG 1,498,650 for the support of ICRC operations in the South Caucasus, formerly part of the USSR, but now three independent republics: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, all of which are now members of CIS. The emergency started in 1988 and has involved several bitter ethnic conflicts, notably in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Osetia. There have also been civil wars and other armed power struggles throughout the region. The emergency has a complex cultural and historical background. The economies of all three republics are slowly recovering from the effects of war, but recovery is hampered by the economic and political legacy of the communist era. Military conflict has had many direct and indirect effects, notably the destruction of infrastructures and the displacement of more than 1,000,000 people, many of whom are still displaced or refugees.

The investment to ICRC was made through the Netherlands Red Cross, who were responsible for sourcing food parcels and bulk food. Although sourcing in Turkey was investigated, on the basis of cost and availability, purchase were made from Kopcke (family parcels) and GVA (bulk food) in the Netherlands.

The implementing agencies, Netherlands Red Cross and ICRC are described and the guidelines for ICRC relief activities are summarised. An introductory overview of ICRC activities in the South Caucasus provides a context for more the subsequent detailed investigation of their activities.

The two detailed case studies of ICRC activities are based on field investigations by the team; much of the descriptive and evaluative content of the report reflects these field experiences, though inspection of documentary evidence and interviews have also been used to cross check and test the general applicability of the field evidence.

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Abkhazia represents the earlier phase of ICRC's interventions. Programmes here distributed food and non food items to targeted groups in both urban and rural areas. At present, 47,545 people are supported by these distributions (more than 11 per cent of the population). An increasing number of people, projected to rise to 7,700, are provided with hot meals through the canteen programme. The beneficiaries are mainly elderly unsupported people who had retired to the Black Sea coast but are now destitute. Originally the canteens, which are run by a range of other organisations, were supplied with family parcels but bulk food is now provided. Individual canteens are reviewed in some detail. ICRC is now supporting the local sourcing of fresh food for canteens from collective farms.

The emergency in Nagorno-Karabakh is now at a later phase since a peace agreement has held since mid 1994. Displaced people and former refugees are slowly returning to Nagorno-Karabakh. Many of the present population are elderly or vulnerable for other reasons. Since the early stages of their intervention in 1992, ICRC has distributed food and non food items to targeted groups. Distributions of food were also made to the entire population and in late 1995 to the population of Stepanakert. More recently, in the Teamwork programme, 3000 families in Hadrout and Martakert areas where destruction had been particularly severe, are being supported through provision of seeds, water supply rehabilitation and provision of materials for housing rehabilitation.

ICRC activities are reviewed in relation to Netherlands aid conditionalities. Effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impacts, strengths and weaknesses are reviewed in detail. Transparency of ICRC activities is examined. The report concludes with lists of lessons learned and recommendations.

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