



CARIBBEAN NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE RED CROSS IN THE CARIBBEAN

No. 3: July 2004

NEW CARAN CHAIRMAN TO TACKLE HIV/AIDS CHALLENGES IN THE CARIBBEAN

The newly elected chairman of the Caribbean Red Cross AIDS Network (CARAN), Mr Terry Charles believes that while significant strides are being made in the region in the fight against HIV/AIDS, there is a major need for a strengthened monitoring and evaluation component, something which he intends to improve on during his chairmanship. "There are many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies tackling the issue of HIV/AIDS, and much funding is available, yet overall the numbers continue to rise. There needs to be a better system of monitoring those infected – young people, children and babies also need to be catered for."

Just over two months ago, Charles, 39, director general of the Grenada Red Cross was elected CARAN chairman. He replaced Mrs Lois Hue of Jamaica, who held that position for two years. The fifth annual CARAN meeting was held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica in April under the theme "Strengthening Volunteer Programmes – Key to Successful HIV/AIDS Interventions." The Caribbean has the second highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the world, second only to Sub Saharan Africa and the worst in the western hemisphere. CARAN was established in 2000 and is the body recognized by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and its organ bodies including the Caribbean Cooperation of Red Cross (CCORC) as the regional HIV/AIDS network of the Caribbean Red Cross. It is a grouping of 16 National Societies and 16 Overseas Branches. CARAN through its secretariat fulfils the role of facilitator of the design, enhancement and implementation of HIV/AIDS programmes in the National Societies and Overseas Branches of which it is composed. Its aim is to strengthen the capacity of National Societies (NS) and Overseas Branches (OSB) of the Caribbean in the prevention, and reduction of HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

Charles is very passionate about the Red Cross and the work it is doing in the Caribbean, so it comes as no surprise that he has welcomed the challenge of the CARAN chairmanship with open arms. He is expecting great things from this Network. "It is poised to take off. I am optimistic, based on the support we have and the good foundation that has been laid by the previous executive." He is supported by an executive committee which includes Ms Glenys Gonzalez, vice-chairman; Ms Marva Edwards, secretary and Ms Michelle Richardson-Thurab, public relations officer.

Charles has been a part of the Red Cross since 1988, when he first became a volunteer of the Grenada Red Cross. "It was an opportunity to reach out and help people," he explained as his reason for joining the world's largest humanitarian organization. Since then he has held many positions in the Red Cross including that of youth volunteer, First Aider, First Aid instructor, group leader, Central Committee member, vice-president and treasurer. He became director general in 1999 and still holds that position. He also serves on the IFRC Youth Commission. Charles, a well rounded individual has also served Grenada's Ministry of Finance



Mr Terry Charles, newly elected CARAN chairman and director general of the Grenada Red Cross

and National Housing Authority (NHA).

Charles noted that while he has lots of plans for CARAN, he said these cannot be realized without the necessary funding. He would like to establish a fully functional CARAN Secretariat by year's end, but like other NGOs in the region, this will not materialise unless there is adequate support. Another challenge for Charles and the CARAN executive is to develop and implement effective, practical and operational HIV/AIDS programmes in National Societies and Overseas Branches. "Funding is the only way to meet the needs of the Network and to adequately support NS and OSB in the areas of prevention, care and support and advocacy." He lamented that while funding may be available, there is a notable imbalance in the way the funds are distributed.

CARAN, he said also has to develop programmes which cater to the needs of each individual country. "What may work in one or two islands may not work in another. Bringing all the different NS and OSB to work together as a cohesive unit is a unique challenge."

Charles is confident that the Red Cross can take real, concrete HIV/AIDS action in the Caribbean, but said it will only happen if we all work together. "CARAN will only work if NS and OSB work with it." He hopes that during his two year tenure as CARAN chairman he will see a greater level of participation from NS and OSB.

INSIDE

- Audio Soap Opera to reduce risks.....2
- Anguilla Red Cross caters to the needs of the elderly.....2
- CDMN participates in PDRU evaluation.....3
- TWC launched in Curacao...3
- Red Cross in Action.....4&5

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Port-of-Spain Sub-Regional Office

5th Floor, Victoria Park Suites, 14-17 Park Street, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.
Telephone: (868) 627-2665/624-1557 Fax: (868) 627-9627 E-mail: ifrcrt01@ifrc.org
Website: www.caribbeanredcross.org or www.ifrc.org

AUDIO SOAP OPERA TO REDUCE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH DISASTERS

Based on the highly successful radio novellas of Central America, an audio soap opera focusing on disasters and risk reduction is being developed for the Caribbean region by the Port-of-Spain Sub Regional Office of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in collaboration with other agencies. The Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), and the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) are among the agencies involved with this project. Through the project, the region's stakeholder agencies in disaster management are strengthening inter-agency co-operation and partnerships.

The content of the audio soap opera will aim at raising awareness and changing behaviour regarding disaster and risk reduction. It is expected that the project will result in the reduced impact of disasters through saving lives, and the protection of human health, resources and assets.

The material will be developed at the average reading level to ensure maximum understanding and listenership. The audio soap opera's main target medium will be radio and other possible uses of the material include schools broadcasting; educational workshops and training activities by disaster management agencies, community and youth groups, religious and other organizations. In the longer term the audio soap opera can be adapted for theatre and expanded to include video.

While the project content will be driven by the mandates of the agencies involved, the underlying theme will be consistent – reduction of risk. The initial offering to the public will focus on what has been agreed as the most common problem of the target audience – flooding and related issues of hurricanes, storms, landslides and food security.

Each storyline will contain a number of key sub topics including such issues as preservation of public health, (community) early warning systems, climate change, building codes, and community empowerment. The script and its characters will encompass the attitudes and personalities that one might expect to encounter in a typical Caribbean scene.



Jill Marie St John of IFRC makes some points during the audio soap opera planning meeting

Each of the proposed 15 episodes of the radio soap opera is expected to be ten minutes. Musical interludes (in some cases developed specifically for this purpose) will be included. The region's musical community will be invited to support the project through their performances.

A number of evaluation and monitoring tools will be utilized to measure the success of the project. This will include surveys of radio stations, schools and other entities broadcasting the audio soap opera, direct feedback through dedicated call-in segments and panel discussions after airing as well as a questionnaire to be inserted in the audio soap opera's CD packaging. The audio soap opera project is scheduled to be ready for broadcast during the final quarter of this year. ●

ANGUILLA RED CROSS LAUNCHES ELDERLY CARE PROGRAMME

The Anguilla Red Cross recently launched a very unique programme on the island to cater to the transportation needs of the 60 elderly persons in their society. The "Elderly Care Programme" was launched as part of their celebrations to commemorate World Red Cross Red Crescent Day which was celebrated on May 8th.

Doreen James, president of the Anguilla Red Cross said while there is much focus on youth in Anguilla, there is no active programme for the elderly. "We assessed the situation and realized that it was quite difficult for the elderly to get around the island especially when they needed to visit the hospital, or get their prescriptions filled and we decided that we needed some sort of transportation for them."

Mike Goodhand from the British Red Cross (BRC) discussed the matter with James and proposed the Elderly Care Programme. A short time after the BRC identified funding for the programme and said they were willing to purchase a minivan to cater to the needs of the elderly.

James said this was a good idea, since the minivan could also be used by the hospital which only has two ambulances – one of which is not in working condition. The minivan was customized with stretcher and wheelchair space. It can accommodate about 15 persons if the stretcher is not used.

When the vehicle arrived on the island, James held discussions with the Ministry of Social Development and decided that they would plan out a structure for the programme. The Ministry has given the commitment to pay fuel and maintenance costs for the vehicle.

Since the vehicle arrived, it has been used to transport the elderly to different functions and doctor visits, but James said they are keen to move ahead with the more structured programme. It is also used for the Red Cross' First Aid services.



The minivan which was provided by BRCS

"We would like to go to each village in Anguilla on a specified date during the week between the hours of 8 am and 12 noon and pick up the elderly from health centres and take them to the hospital or wherever they may need to go. But we are still in the process of planning this." The Anguilla Red Cross is also looking for two volunteer drivers for the vehicle. The vehicle is currently driven by two Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) from the hospital. The vehicle is also housed at the hospital for security reasons.

Additionally, James said they would also like to utilize the minivan during the island's busy tourism season to provide First Aid services to the many visitors that they have for Carnival and boat racing. ●

CDMN PARTICIPATES IN PADRU EVALUATION

The *ad hoc* group of the Caribbean Red Cross Disaster Management Network (CDMN) met for the third time this year on June 24th and participated in the evaluation of the pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU).

Created as a result of the needs identified after a series of major natural disasters in the late 1990s, PADRU was intended as "a resource at the service of the Red Cross in the Americas – National Societies, Federation Regional Delegations and Participating National Societies (PNS)." Its goal was defined as "To improve Red Cross assistance to vulnerable people affected by disasters in the Americas by reinforcing the capacity of National Societies and the Secretariat to provide timely and professional disaster response services during emergencies." The evaluation was led by Harold Lockwood with Jan Gelfand as facilitator. Chaired by the representative from the Dominica Red Cross, Kathleen Pinard-Byrne, the group included representatives from Red Cross Societies in Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis and St Lucia. The Overseas Branches of the British Red Cross Society were represented through Branch Officer, Jill Marie St John from the IFRC Sub Regional Office in Port-of-Spain and Mitsy Harmon from the British Virgin Islands (BVI) Red Cross.

During the first years of operation (2001-2002) PADRU's objectives were defined as:

- To establish and staff the unit, inclusive of a regional logistics cell;
- To co-ordinate and, when necessary, participate in a rapid expert Federation disaster response at the request of a National Society in the Americas facing a situation beyond its capacity;
- To develop and deliver a disaster response training and capacity building function;
- To enhance monitoring, reporting and co-ordination in disaster situations in the Americas, and;



The ad hoc group of the CDMN at a recent meeting in Trinidad.

- To strengthen relations with internal and external partners.

Apart from Standard Federation procedures concerning evaluation, the establishment and growth of PADRU has coincided with the implementation of the Change Process within the Secretariat and its structures in the regions.

This has led to substantial changes in Federation structures in the Americas. Additionally, PADRU is regarded as a pilot programme, which if successful, can be expanded globally. Thus an evaluation at the end of this start up stage, could serve as a "proof of concept" determining if the disaster management structure implemented in the Americas has been successful, and whether it is capable of adaptation to the specific environments and contexts of other regions.

A further rationale for the systematic evaluation of PADRU at this time is the fact that the foreseen evolution of its operations and mandate have occurred since the first two to three years of its existence. ●

TWC LAUNCHED IN CURACAO

The introduction of the Together We Can (TWC) programme in Curacao is being viewed as a step forward for the Red Cross in that country.

The TWC programme was officially launched in the Dutch Caribbean island of Curacao in Papiamento on June 24th.

President of the Curacao Red Cross, Dr Angelo Ramirez speaking at the launch said "This is a special time for the Red Cross....this is a big step forward." He said the introduction of the programme in the native language of Papiamento will be of benefit to many young people in Curacao who shared similar problems with HIV/AIDS as the rest of the Caribbean.

Chief medical officer of the Netherlands Antilles and member of the Red Cross, Dr Bernard Whiteman said HIV/AIDS has led to the emergence of a number of societal, medical and economic concerns. However, he noted that it was "more important to tackle the underlining causes."

Dr Whiteman was of the view that poverty and the growing situation of inequity were some of the key issues which contributed to increasing spread of HIV/AIDS.

He said he was also pleased to see the youth Arm of the Curacao Red Cross getting more involved in issues like



Dr Angelo Ramirez receives copies of the TWC manuals from Michelle Richardson-Thurab, PRO, CARAN.

HIV/AIDS and stressed the need to give young people the right tools and support to help them solve problems in their community.

Ingrid Jansen of the Dutch Red Cross' Youth Sports AIDS Drugs (YSAD) project urged leaders in the country to involve persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) to be more active in their communities and also to combat stigma and discrimination. She said it was very important for the Red Cross to develop relationships with other local organizations involved with HIV/AIDS. ●



RED CROSS IN ACTION

CAYMAN ISLANDS

The Cayman Islands Red Cross (CIRC) joined its fellow Red Crosses in May to celebrate World Red Cross Red Crescent Day on May 8th. They held a week of events in order to help raise funds and educate the public about the fundamental principles of the Red Cross. During the week the Red Cross held an "Ideals in Action" training course which was conducted by Richard Aspin from the Montserrat Red Cross. They also visited schools and educated students about the Red Cross and introduced "Masters of Disasters" which is a programme about disaster preparedness to be taught in schools.

The CIRC conducted its second VCA workshop in June where 35 volunteers were trained. They also launched an appeal for clothing items in Haiti and Dominican Republic called "Dollars for DR and Haiti." There was a uniform drive at the end of June where all students were asked to hand in their old/used uniforms for the Red Cross to sell to less fortunate children for the next academic year.

On July 10th, the CIRC held a Hurricane Open House with the support of Cable and Wireless. The objective of the open house was to promote the Red Cross and show the public how the CIRC can assist during the hurricane season. The CIRC also has ongoing training for its volunteers in disaster preparedness.

JAMAICA

The Jamaica Red Cross (JRC) has been very active for the second quarter of this year. For World Red Cross Day they held a press conference at their headquarters and also participated in a morning radio talk show programme. Red Cross youth acted out anti-discriminatory messages in downtown Kingston in front of the historic Ward Theatre. Branches disseminated Red Cross information and offered health care services in various shopping areas island wide.

In addition, the Red Cross launched its Community Disaster Response Teams (CDRT) where 57 persons were certified. There was also a national youth rally where Red Cross youth demonstrated their skills and talents in drill, First Aid, art and Craft and culinary arts competitions.

In June, the JRC held Together We Can HIV/STI Peer Education programmes and had a disaster preparedness article in the print media.

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

The British Virgin Islands Red Cross started off its Red Cross Day celebrations with members attending a church service at the Road Town Methodist Church, followed by a tea party on May 2nd. This annual tea party is one of its fundraising activities which are held every year during Red Cross week. There was also a scheduled radio broadcast promoting all the different areas which the Red Cross is part of including, home care basics, disaster preparedness and Together We Can. A luncheon was held for students of the Selynn Henley Richez Learning Centre which is a school for physically and mentally challenged children. Red Cross week was closed off with a banquet. The BVI Red Cross representatives also met with the National AIDS Programme and other agencies in the community to plan HIV/AIDS interventions for the remainder of the year. On May 22nd, Mrs Virginia Morrell, one of BVI's volunteers died and a short ceremony was held for her on May 28th.

In June, The Red Cross placed much of its attention on preparing for the hurricane season. They also took part in the celebration of Queen's Birthday which usually takes the form of a parade. Youth members were dressed in their uniforms and participated in the march past while some members provided First Aid coverage.

SURINAME

The Suriname Red Cross participated and assisted in their country's 40th Four Days Cultural Walk on April 17th. Twenty-five First Aiders were present during this walk to provide assistance where needed. On May 7th, the welfare volunteers organized a special festive day for children with a physical or mental handicap as part of its World Red Cross Day celebrations. This year, the celebration was held at the S.O. Maretraite School. Through fundraising, the Red Cross was able to renew half of the fence of the school. The children were also visited by Patron of the Red Cross, the President of the Republic of Suriname, Mr Ronald Venetiaan. On the evening of May 8th, the Youth Red Cross held a small workshop called "Stop Discrimination and Stigmatisation." The Healthy Lifestyle Youth Programme which was developed and started a year ago ended on May 29th. This first year was financed by the Micro Project Programme of the European Union (EU). The Minister of Development Aid, Mr ZK Raghoebarsing together with the Red Cross president distributed certificates to the youth of Paramaribo and Nickerie who participated. This programme will be continued by implementing a pilot "Together We Can" project. On June 14th, World Blood Donor Day, 300 blood donors were honored for giving life saving blood. These donors are regular non remunerative blood donors and part of the Red Cross family.

On May 31st, the Suriname Red Cross initiated a committee together with the Roman Catholic Church, an Afro Surinam movement and representatives of the Haitian and Dominican communities in Suriname to render aid to Haiti and the Dominican Republic. An information evening was held on June 18th where several prominent speakers provided information and people were called upon to donate and appeal for the victims of Hispaniola.

ST LUCIA

The St Lucia Red Cross hosted its third annual fundraising Easter Bonnet Parade and Tea Party On Sunday April 11th. On World Red Cross Red Crescent Day they held an "Open Day" which included a viewing of electronic and picture displays of the work of the National Society. The St Lucia Red Cross also assisted nine families whose homes were destroyed by fire earlier this year.

BELIZE

Red Cross branches throughout Belize held various activities under the theme of "Stop Discrimination to mark World Red Cross Red Crescent Day. Volunteers gave free blood pressures checks while promoting the principles of the Movement, conducted a dissemination exercise to share First Aid and Home Nursing tips, HIV/AIDS information and visited persons with special needs. The San Pedro branch used the opportunity to open their new office, which was kindly provided by the San Pedro Town Board. In Belize City, an "Evening of Dance, Music and Song" was held at the Bliss Centre for Performing Arts. Demonstrating the spirit of volunteerism, members and students of the Vista Dance Company, the Belize Choral Society, the Pantempers Steel Band and Ms Gina Scott gave stellar performances. The volunteers also held a party at the Belize Red Cross headquarters for the elderly, homeless and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Other projects which the Belize Red Cross is currently working on include "Together We Can" which is being piloted in Belize in collaboration with UNICEF. Three components are being strengthened in the project – monitoring and evaluation, gender balance and working with out-of-school youth. The Belize Red Cross also recently completed a community blood glucose testing campaign.



RED CROSS IN ACTION

DOMINICA

Training activities are being stepped up to enhance response capacities during the 2004 hurricane season which has been predicted to be above normal activity. The Red Cross also participated in a Supplies Management training (SUMA) which was conducted by PAHO facilitators. As a member of the Mass Casualty Response Team in Dominica, the Red Cross is collaborating with the Office of Disaster Management to draw up a National Mass Casualty Plan.

As part of its Red Cross week activities, the Goodwill Branch of the Red Cross presented food hampers to a number of families infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Director general and UNHCR Honorary Liaison Office, Mrs Kathleen Inard-Byrne attended the International Law Association of Refugee Law Judges First Conference and Refugee Law Training Workshop in Costa Rica on June 9th to 11th.

In July, the Dominica Red Cross secured two first places and one second place in the 2004 UNHCR Poster Contest which was organized through the Dominica Red Cross in observance of World Refugee Day.

As a member of the national Advisory Committee for HIV/AIDS, the Dominica Red Cross is collaborating with the Ministry of Health to establish policies and guidelines that will enhance the lives of persons living with HIV/AIDS.

GUYANA

The Guyana Red Cross has been busy this quarter. They held a number of activities including a Classical Music Concert in aid of the Deaf on Wheels and Community outreach Programmes on May 6th. There was also a press conference in observance of World Red Cross Red Crescent Day and to announce the collaboration between the Guyana Red Cross and the Network of Guyanese people living with HIV/AIDS in the area of care and support.

The Guyana Red Cross also participated in an HIV/AIDS Youth Fair which was sponsored by UNICEF on May 14th. There was also a Blood Drive in Collaboration with the national Blood Transfusion Service for World Blood Donor Day which was celebrated on June 4th.

Over the past few months, the Guyana Red Cross has been working in the region of the Rupununi, in the mitigation aspect of the SAID/AMCROSS funded Community Based Disaster Preparedness (BDP), Education and Mitigation project. They assisted the community in making and preparing burnt bricks to shore up wells, to make aprons around wells and to cover the existing wells. Buckets, ropes and pulleys were also provided by the Red Cross. The Guyana Red Cross hopes to continue this process in other villages, once they receive funding.

BAHAMAS

The Bahamas Red Cross celebrated World Red Cross Red Crescent Day with a message to the Bahamian community. They also held a joint enrollment under the theme "Protecting Human Dignity", for the Junior Red Cross members on May 27th. There were 250 new members. The enrollment ceremony was attended by teachers, parents, youth leaders and officers of the Society.

On Tuesday June 15th, the Society held its Central Council Meeting. The meeting was attended by members from around the entire Commonwealth of the Bahamas. At the meeting, members received the 2003 report, the annual budget and the audited accounts. Officers of the Society are also currently reviewing its disaster plans for the 2004 hurricane season.

ANGUILLA

The Anguilla Red Cross held a week of activities in commemoration of World Red Cross Red Crescent Day. Their focus this year was on the elderly. The Anguilla Red Cross took the opportunity to launch their "Elderly Care" project and commissioned a new 15 seater minivan which was custom made with stretcher and wheelchair space. The bus was donated by the British Red Cross.

In June, the Anguilla Red Cross attended their National Disaster Committee meeting and was asked to sit on the committee. They also provided First Aid services at two major functions – Anguilla Day on June 1st and the Queen's Birthday Parade on June 14th.

Meetings were also held with newly installed Governor, Mr Alan Huckle and representatives of the Ministries of Health and Social Development, and Home Affairs, Tourism, Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment to discuss how they can work together for the benefit of Anguilla.

GRENADA

The Grenada Red Cross held a number of activities to celebrate World Red Cross Red Crescent Day. Some of these activities included a radio talk show and, a church service together with a rally and parade.

The Red Cross also continued providing First Aid services to a number of events and business. In April, they also held a seminar on Safety and HIV/AIDS at one of the communities in Bonair.

In May, representatives of the Grenada Red Cross participated in the Blood Day Planning meeting as well as the National Emergency Advisory Council (NEAC) meeting and the NERO Planning Committee meeting. They also had an open house in collaboration with the Blood Bank at Grenlec and Cable and Wireless.

In June, the Grenada Red Cross held its Red Cross Planning Committee Meeting and celebrated its 50th anniversary. On World Blood Donor Day they broadcasted a Red Cross television programme and held an appreciation evening for blood donors.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The annual Chain gathering of primary school junior link members took place on May 4th. The theme of this year's gathering was "Education and Change – Towards a Better Life." Some 700 children took part with 200 adults. In commemoration of World Red Cross Red Crescent Day a 20 minute television interview took place with Ms Delia Chatour of the ICRC, Ms Kathleen Fergusson Stewart of IFRC and Mrs Judy Boopsingh of the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross (TTRCS) on the topics of "Anti-Stigma and Discrimination." The TTRCS' community outreach programme offered blood sugar testing and blood pressure reading for 200 persons and a church service was held in southern Trinidad. The Junior Welfare Committee held their annual sports event for the elderly and children in May. The third fundraising golf tournament netted a tidy sum of TT \$25,000. The tournament saw the participation of members of the diplomatic corps and several key corporate sponsors.

SABA

The Saba Red Cross held a fundraising BBQ and awareness drive in May. On May 28th, they also had a Simulation Day with the local Fire Department, Police, doctors and nurses. On May 31st, they monitored a Rosary Walk and provided First Aid services.

They are also currently involved in a number of projects including the re-certification of old members, recruiting new members and recruiting two new trainers, they are also attempting to increase their volunteer base.