

INTRODUCTION

The 19 and 20 September 1985 earthquakes in Mexico were a tragic event that deeply moved the world and inspired local and world-wide solidarity with the earthquake victims, from the Red Cross, from other NGOs, from individuals and from governments.

In the following we will present a summary of the Red Cross activities in support of the earthquake victims, first with a brief account of the Red Cross effort in the emergency stage immediately after the earthquake and secondly with a brief review of each of the projects carried out in the Mexican Red Cross and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies programme.

THE EMERGENCY STAGE

When the earthquake occurred, the MRC (Mexican Red Cross) went immediately into action to assist the victims of the disaster in Mexico City, Ciudad Guzmán and surroundings (Jalisco state), the Costa Grande area (Guerrero state) and Lázaro Cárdenas (Michoacán state), with first-aid, ambulance service, food, tents, blankets, and rescuing people who were trapped under the debris of collapsed buildings. More than six thousand people were rescued from collapsed buildings by MRC volunteers under very difficult conditions, and by November 6, 1985, 180,000 people had benefited from the MRC relief operation. The capital was most severely affected and 2,000 MRC volunteers with 150 ambulances came from other parts of Mexico to offer their help in the capital.

Two days after the earthquake, Mr. Jürg Vittani, Head of the League Americas Department, arrived to carry out a joint evaluation of the damage. Subsequently, there were visits by other League and Participating Society officials, and shortly a League Delegation was established in Mexico as a liaison MRC/League - Geneva and for consulting and supervision purposes.

By November 6, 1985, 131 flights with a total of 1,250 metric tons of relief goods had arrived from abroad and were distributed by the MRC. Additionally, considerable local donations were made. The Government assigned earthquake victim shelters to be attended to by the MRC, who distributed 650,000 food rations during the emergency. Tracing services were established by the MRC with League support and coordination, treating approximately 5,500 cases, of which approximately 1,200 were resolved by 31 October 1985.

Fundraising for the Mexico earthquake operation of the League was very successful, raising nearly 25 million USD. It soon became clear that the League involvement would be extended beyond the emergency stage, because of the clear need to help those who lost their homes in the earthquakes to reconstruct (in total more than 20,000 families). In spite of the great effort by MRC volunteers to help the victims of the earthquakes, the need to substantially improve the organization's infrastructure and emergency preparedness was detected. The League Delegation in Mexico has prepared this leaflet to present a review of the MRC/League projects carried out in Mexico, related to the 1985 earthquakes.

PROJECT 1: EMERGENCY CENTRES, MEXICO CITY

When the earthquakes occurred in September 1985, the Mexican Red Cross had emergency facilities only at one location in Mexico City. In this emergency, the need to improve and decentralize the Red Cross infrastructure in the city was felt more clearly than ever. It was decided to construct several smaller emergency centres spread around Mexico City, in order to offer a more efficient service to the community. Funds were obtained to build seven such centres. The centres will offer first aid and ambulance services to the public in general. Patients in need of hospitalization are transferred to public or private hospitals. New ambulances donated by the Canadian Red Cross are assigned to the emergency centres.

Thanks to the new emergency centres and ambulances, the time required to transport casualties is significantly reduced and chances for survival are much increased.

The Mexican Red Cross emergency centres consist of various modules, including services, storage area, emergency and multiple use areas, ambulance area, offices and halls, with a total area of 384 m². The Mexican Red Cross New Projects Department was responsible for the execution of the project. Contractors were in charge of the construction, and a company called ACONSA was hired as a supervisor.

THE 7 DISTRICTS IN MEXICO CITY WHERE MRC EMERGENCY CENTRES HAVE BEEN BUILT

Sponsored by:

Cuajimalpa
Azcapotzalco
Iztacalco
Venustiano Carranza
Gustavo A. Madero
Alvaro Obregón
Tlalpan

Japanese Red Cross
Japanese Red Cross
French Red Cross
French Red Cross
Netherlands Red Cross
Italian Red Cross
Belgian Red Cross

Cost: USD 1,539,027.

The emergency centres will be operated by groups of Mexican Red Cross volunteers and by paid staff in some positions. The construction of the emergency centres was carried out between January 1986 and March 1988.

PROJECT 2: HOUSING, CIUDAD GUZMAN, JALISCO

Although media attention focused on the events in Mexico City, the Red Cross soon became aware of the severe damage caused by the earthquakes in the southern part of Jalisco state. After an assessment of the situation, plans were made for a reconstruction project in Ciudad Guzmán. In December 1985 work was started to prepare the site for construction, and the construction was started in April 1986. The project included the construction of a total of 331 housing units, built on a site on the outskirts of Ciudad Guzmán. The construction was completed in January 1987. Each housing unit is 50 m² constructed area and patio.

The contractor in charge of the project was AMEDUR, with four different subcontractors. The cost per housing unit including infrastructure is approximately USD 9,000.

A bank trust managed by a Board of Residents and a Technical Committee has been established for maintenance and social purposes. The contracts of donation between the MRC and the beneficiaries establishes the contributions to be paid by the beneficiaries to the bank trust. The contributions to be paid vary from 5% to 12.5% of the beneficiary's income, depending on the amount of the income. It is stipulated that those contributions will be made for a maximum of 15 years. The amounts of the contributions may be adjusted yearly. Voluntary communal work is organized to clean up streets and to carry out other maintenance.

This Red Cross project may be considered an important part of the reconstruction effort in the 85,000 inhabitant town of Ciudad Guzmán, that was about 20% destroyed by the 1985 earthquakes. Thanks to the projects of the Red Cross and various other Non Governmental Organizations and the Government, it has been possible to fully reconstruct the town. (Sponsored by American and Japanese Red Cross Societies).

Expenses: USD 2,901,766.

PROJECT 4: RECONSTRUCTION, COAST OF GUERRERO

In Guerrero, as in Jalisco, the damage caused by the earthquakes received little media attention compared to that of the capital. However, shortly after the earthquake a group of Guerrero Red Cross volunteers arrived at Zihuatanejo to assess the damage in the area known as the Costa Grande de Guerrero. The damage observed was severe, and a census made by the Mexican Red Cross concluded that approximately 4,300 village houses had been destroyed or damaged by the earthquakes. The MRC immediately started distributing medicine, food and clothes to the affected population. In November 1985 two League Delegates assessed the area, and the MRC/League swiftly decided to carry out a reconstruction project there.

Work started on a pilot project of 315 houses in 6 of the most affected villages beginning December 6, applying self-help construction to maintain low cost and ensure beneficiary participation adapted to a low-income population unable to repay credits. This first stage of the project was completed March 18, 1986 with the result of 126 completely new houses built and 264 repaired. All parties involved agreed the pilot project had been a success, and it was decided to extend the project.

In a total of four stages, 3,200 houses were reconstructed in this project. Half of those were totally new houses and the rest were repairs. Additionally, 9 water systems were constructed. Reconstruction was carried out in a total of 72 villages. Simultaneously, the project offered emergency medical services to the beneficiaries during reconstruction.

As the project over-fulfilled its aim, actually by doubling the number of reconstructed houses as compared to the plan, it can be regarded as highly successful. This was the first Red Cross reconstruction project in Mexico on a large scale, involving beneficiary participation in what we call self-help construction. The application of this concept was decided because of the advantages it offered: substantial cutbacks in expenses could be made by significantly reducing the use of paid labour, increased financial control could be achieved by putting Red Cross volunteers directly in charge of the project instead of contractors and it provided an excellent opportunity for interaction between the Mexican Red Cross and the community that would be of great importance for the institution's image and the strengthening of its organization. In all those aspects the project was a great success, and the experience from it became important for the implementation of similar projects elsewhere.

The Red Cross purchased trucks and had some League jeeps from Costa Rica assigned to the project, contributing to keeping the transport costs down. The cost per housing unit was kept at approximately USD 370. Serious logistical problems were encountered. In some cases, construction materials had to be transported on dirt roads, four hours drive from the main road. Under such circumstances, reconstruction with contractors would hardly have been feasible. The project was completed in March 1987.

The reconstruction project in Guerrero was sponsored by the Japanese, the German, the Italian and the American Red Cross Societies.

Total cost: USD 1,199,049.

PROJECT 5: RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

During the emergency of September 1985, the need to improve the Mexican Red Cross radio communications system was clearly seen. Mexico City and the adjacent counties of Mexico state constitute the largest urban area in the world, with an estimated population above 20 million, and the Mexican Red Cross has taken on the difficult task of offering first-aid and other emergency services to this population. The new radio communications system aims at providing an improved coordination of the overall MRC emergency services in Mexico City and urban areas of Mexico state.

The new MRC radio communications system consists of the following parts:

- 2 operating boosting stations
- 1 boosting station in stock
- 3 base units in the MRC headquarters communications centre
- 1 base unit in the MRC emergency hospital in Polanco, Mexico City
- 7 base units in the MRC emergency centres in Mexico City (Project 1)
- 10 base units in Red Cross branches in Mexico state
- 75 mobile units in ambulances and other vehicles
- 30 portable units.

The system operates with three channels. The first is for the communication between headquarters, the MRC emergency centres and paramedics (in the ambulances), the second between headquarters and ambulances and the third between headquarters and the MRC branches in Mexico state. Channel 1 transmits on frequency 138.750 and receives on frequency 142.325, Channel 2 transmits on frequency 138.775 and receives on frequency 142.350, and Channel 3 transmits on frequency 138.825 and receives on frequency 138.825. All the MRC communications will be placed in a communications centre at the MRC headquarters in Polanco, Mexico City, in order to achieve more efficiency in the coordination of their activities.

RATSA, a consulting company, is in charge of supervision, consulting, control and maintenance of the radio communications system for an 18-month period. Polycom and Antenas Torres y Accesorios installed the equipment between October 1987 and May 1988. The project has contributed considerably to improving the emergency preparedness of the MRC in Mexico City and its surroundings. The project was sponsored by the Swedish Red Cross.

Cost: USD 275,293.

PROJECT 6: PROSTHESIS AND REHABILITATION

It soon became clear that there was a great need for prosthesis, other appliances and various rehabilitation activities for many of those who suffered injuries in the September 1985 earthquakes. In October 1985, a proposal for a project to offer treatment for those earthquake victims was made and approved. The MRC prosthesis and rehabilitation project started operating in November that year, with the aim of providing help for a total of 400 patients and to keep it operating for a year. It was possible to extend the project, and by August 1988 it reported a total of 446 prosthesis and orthopaedic appliances, 109 pairs of crutches, 14 walkers, 108 wheelchairs and 51 hearing aids had been delivered to patients included in the project since its start.

The project operates in cooperation with DIF (Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, Government organization of social assistance) and other Government organizations. Vocational training is provided for some patients integrated at 8 public schools. A large number of activities are carried out by the 7 volunteers participating full-time in the project and the 8 paid staff, made up of a teacher, a psychologist, an orthopaedist, a cardiologist, a social worker, a secretary, a reception clerk and a driver.

A rehabilitation manual, posters and audio-visual material have been produced by the project to promote the understanding of the handicapped's situation among the public in general. There is also cooperation with the University of Puebla in order to develop local production of prosthesis to substitute imports and reduce costs.

The project is now completed as a League project, but it will continue as a bilateral MRC/American Red Cross project. The project is sponsored by the American and the German Red Cross Societies. According to the MRC, the project will be able to operate until September 1989 with the funds now available. The achievements of this project are quite remarkable. The assistance to the earthquake victims is carried out in a very professional manner, and the National Society has acquired considerable know-how in this area. In particular as regards rehabilitation activities and vocational training for the disabled, the MRC is carrying out pioneer work through this project.

Cost until November 25, 1988: USD 491,201.

PROJECT 9: VECINDADES, HOUSING PROJECTS IN MEXICO CITY

The devastation caused by the earthquakes was particularly extensive in the central residential areas of Mexico City, and the MRC and the League agreed it was necessary to extend the Red Cross commitment beyond the emergency stage and engage in projects of reconstruction for earthquake victims. The beneficiaries of the project are certified as earthquake victims by the authorities and selected

according to the criteria of belonging to the lower social strata and of not being owners of any housing. Many of the beneficiaries depend on an income at or below minimum wage level.

Most of the housing units of this project are in vecindades. A vecindad is a kind of housing traditional for Mexico, with rows of dwellings on both sides of a common yard. The Red Cross considered it important to maintain as far as possible this type of architecture in the reconstruction, because the particular physical environment of the vecindades is vital for the way of life of those people. A total of 378 housing units were reconstructed in this project. Each housing unit is 45 m² to 48 m² and consists of a living room, a dining kitchen, two bedrooms, a bathroom and a small private patio. When they please, and can afford it, each beneficiary has the possibility of enlarging his house. The houses were made in full compliance with Government standards as regards size, design and earthquake resistance.

Some of the vecindades were partly financed by other NGOs, and there was some Government participation with loans offered to the beneficiaries at 17% interest rate and on the condition that the beneficiary pay 30% of the official minimum wage monthly to service his debt.

Most of the construction was carried out by the contractor VIDEKO supervised by a MRC architect. The beneficiaries participated in self-help construction as part of their contribution to the reconstruction of their houses. Work was started on the project in December 1985, and the last vecindad of this project was completed in February 1988. When the vecindad of 51 González Ortega Street was completed on March 18 1986, it was the first reconstruction of housing at all to be completed in Mexico City after the September 1985 earthquakes.

The cost per housing unit was maintained at an acceptable USD 5,200. The quality of the houses may be considered as good.

Cost: USD 1,968,771.

PROJECT 13: ROSA DEL TEPEYAC ORPHANAGE

Before the earthquakes in September 1985, construction had started on a new building for the orphanage Rosa del Tepeyac, which had existed for several years in a smaller building on the same site. The construction of the new building had been suspended before September 1985 due to lack of funds, and only the structure had been completed. The earthquakes caused damage to the new building.

After the earthquake, the Red Cross took the responsibility of repairing and of completing the building, including modifications of its structure so as to improve its earthquake resistance. Nuns of the Catholic Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus order operate the orphanage, which can accommodate 100 to 150 children and the

personnel in charge. Many of the children at Rosa del Tepeyac lost their parents in the 1985 earthquakes. The orphanage is situated in Tlalpan in the southern part of Mexico City. The three storey building includes bedrooms for children and personnel, classrooms, kitchen, dining area, offices, a ward and doctor's office and bathrooms. The total constructed area is 1,698 m². The construction was carried out by the contractor DIOSA and supervised by ACONSA. The construction was carried out between October 10, 1986 and April 23, 1987. The Netherlands Red Cross sponsored the project.

The reconstruction of Rosa del Tepeyac orphanage is a project of great social importance, providing assistance to some of the weakest of the victims of the 1985 earthquakes. The quality of the construction is considered as good.

Cost: USD 112,500.

PROJECT 13: REINA SOFIA, HOME FOR THE ELDERLY

Reina Sofia, home for the elderly, was created to care for elderly earthquake victims with handicaps. The institution can accommodate 50, and services for medical and dental treatment, hairdresser's, etc. are included in the facilities. The constructed area totals 2,222 m², and the park areas total 2,250 m². The building includes halls, offices, bathrooms, a chapel, rehabilitation area, TV room, living room, bedrooms, kitchen, and various rooms for service facilities. The construction was carried out by a contractor called EROPORT and supervised by ACONSA. The construction of this home for the elderly was carried out between May 1986 and March 1988, when it was inaugurated by H.M. Queen Sofia of Spain.

Due to technical problems having to do with the soil conditions, the site where construction had first started had to be rejected, and another site was donated to the project in the Xochimilco District of Mexico City. The Reina Sofia project was sponsored by the Spanish Red Cross and is considered a bilateral project. It was monitored by the League.

Cost: USD 474,302.

PROJECT 14: REBUILDING OF RED CROSS CENTRE, CIUDAD GUZMAN, JALISCO

The Red Cross centre in Ciudad Guzmán suffered structural damage in the earthquakes, and it was agreed to rebuild it. An architect from the League inspected the building before work started, and the project was defined to include overhauling of the electrical and sanitary installations, new bathroom furniture, new lamps, partition walls and windows, waterproofing of the roof, painting and signs, carpentry and the repair and reinforcement of the building's structure. The project

also included the purchase of medical equipment such as operating tables, examination tables, lamps, stethoscopes, scales and various minor medical accessories and instruments.

The work was carried out by Rehabilitación de Construcciones S.A. between January and July 1986.

This project has contributed to improving the capacity of the Ciudad Guzmán Red Cross branch to assist the community in emergencies and with medical attention to the needy part of the population. Ciudad Guzmán is situated in an area threatened by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, where emergency preparedness is of great importance. The Netherlands Red Cross sponsored this project.

Cost: USD 68,809.

PROJECT 15: REBUILDING OF THE RED CROSS CENTRE, LAZARO CARDENAS, MICHOACAN

The MRC and the League jointly decided it was necessary to repair the building of the Lázaro Cárdenas MRC branch and improve the working conditions there by rebuilding the facilities. Lázaro Cárdenas is situated in an area frequently exposed to natural disasters and with a considerable risk of industrial accidents.

The work on this centre started in January 1987 and was completed in August of the same year. The rebuilding was carried out by the contractor Construcciones y Acabados San Roma S.A., and it was supervised by architect Víctor M. Lara, representing the MRC. The items included in the rebuilding were overall painting, partition wall between the reception and the pharmacy, iron work, stairs, overhauling of installations and the enlargement of the building by constructing a lightweight structure of a metal frame covered with wallboard.

Included in the project is also the purchase of medical equipment, such as examination and operating tables, scales, lamps, stethoscopes and a number of minor medical accessories and instruments. An ambulance was also purchased. With the completion of this project, the local MRC branch should be able to offer improved service to the community, situated in one of the largest and busiest ports of the Mexican Republic. The Netherlands Red Cross sponsored this project.

Cost: USD 47,168.

**PROJECT 18: SELF-HELP RECONSTRUCTION IN GOMEZ FARIAS,
JALISCO**

Gómez Farías, a village of approximately 13,500 inhabitants in the southern part of Jalisco state, had more than 300 houses destroyed in the September 1985 earthquakes. Many of the houses affected by the earthquake were adobe, of which not all were totally destroyed immediately by the earthquake, but generally damaged beyond repair and exposed to rapid decay. After assessment and feasibility studies had been made by the MRC and the League, a project description was prepared and construction started mid-November 1986. It was completed on schedule in May 1987.

A MRC staff of six volunteers were in charge of the project, managing the project directly, without involving contractors. Paid personnel, mainly bricklayers in numbers varying from 30 to approximately 200, were also hired directly by the project.

Based on the excellent experience in self-help reconstruction in Guerrero (Project 4), the decision was made to implement the same method in the Gómez Farías project. The beneficiaries belong to low income groups (57% have income below the minimum wage), and the excess of labour available made it easier for the beneficiaries to make their fair contribution to the reconstruction of their houses through work rather than through credit. Each beneficiary family participated approximately 100 days in the reconstruction of their houses, organized in groups with leaders chosen by themselves and under the direction of the MRC volunteers. One important aspect of this and similar projects is the continuous process of communication between the project staff and the beneficiaries and the high degree of involvement by the beneficiaries in decisions concerning their situation. The beneficiaries' contribution through labour represents an approximate 15% of the total project cost.

League vehicles were used in order to keep the costs down. As far as possible, construction materials were purchased locally, thus stimulating significantly the local economy. (Bricks, for instance, were bought from a total of 74 local suppliers.) The design of the 50 m² houses was adapted to the local needs and tradition, using tile roofing which allows for good ventilation and with large patios where there is room for domestic animals or horticulture.

A Homeowners' Association has been organized by the beneficiaries to be responsible for the maintenance of the Red Cross housing area. A small fee, the equivalent of 2% of the minimum wage, is paid by the house owners to a fund for maintenance and other common tasks. In December 1988, the houses were registered, free of charge for the beneficiaries, in coordination with local authorities, DIF (Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, para-governmental organization of social assistance) and the Red Cross. DIF also donated the land for this project.

Three hundred houses, including complete infrastructure with water supply, sewerage, power supply, streets, sidewalks, street lamps and park areas, were built in this Red Cross housing area. Additional construction, such as a small Red Cross clinic, a market building, partial reconstruction of 23 houses inside the village and several smaller items, was done without increasing the original budget of USD 1,260,000. The additional construction has an estimated value of at least USD 100,000. The cost per housing unit of USD 4,200 (including infrastructure and additional construction) is much lower than that of any comparable project.

The identification with the Red Cross Movement and the spirit of cooperation between beneficiaries and Red Cross volunteers, so typical for this kind of project, are evaluated as very positive achievements. Additionally, this, and other self-help reconstruction projects, have been very successful in economizing the resources available for the operation and thus enabling the Red Cross to help a larger number of beneficiaries.

The American, Belgian, Danish, Japanese and Norwegian Red Cross Societies sponsored this project.

Cost: USD 1,244,249.

PROJECT 19: REBUILDING OF RED CROSS CENTRES IN GUERRERO AND PURCHASE OF MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

Guerrero is one of the states of the Mexican republic where emergencies are particularly frequent. It is normally affected by the earthquakes that hit Mexico, and flooding, more or less severe, occurs every year in the rainy season. Guerrero is also one of the poorer states in Mexico, with a large percentage of the population without access either to public or to private health services. It was therefore decided as part of the League programme to improve the MRC emergency preparedness and services in the area by rebuilding some of the existing Red Cross centres, constructing one new centre and furnishing better medical equipment and new ambulances. The Red Cross branches included in the project attend to an area with a population of approximately 2.5 million people.

A total of seven MRC centres in Guerrero were included in the project: Taxco, Iguala, Ciudad Altamirano, Zihuatanejo, Chilpancingo, Tlapa and Acapulco. All these centres were equipped with basic surgical equipment, beds, trolleys, operating tables, lamps, cabinets and other minor items. New ambulances (6 in total) were donated to all the branches of the project, except Acapulco which was already well equipped with ambulances.

Overall remodelling was done in the MRC centres of Iguala, Taxco, Ciudad Altamirano, Zihuatanejo and Chilpancingo, considerably improving the facilities of those centres. In Tlapa a totally new 340 m² Red Cross centre was constructed,

including a doctor's office, two wards, emergency room, delivery room, storeroom, multiple use area, paramedics' room, office, a pharmacy and as in Ciudad Altamirano a fully equipped dentist's office. Through another project (Project 30), the Red Cross branch in Acapulco also received the equipment needed to operate a blood bank.

The Guerrero state branch of the MRC directly carried out this project between April 1987 and July 1988. The project has been successful in providing considerable improvement of the Red Cross infrastructure in the state of Guerrero, enabling MRC there to offer better service to the communities. The German Red Cross sponsored the project.

Cost: USD 210,584.

PROJECTS 21, 22, AND 23, CIUDAD GUZMAN, JALISCO

By agreement between the Mexican Red Cross and the American Red Cross, these projects were designed to complement the Red Cross reconstruction project of 331 housing units in Ciudad Guzmán, with the intention of improving the overall environment of the Red Cross housing area. The projects were approved by the League on May 12, 1987.

PROJECT 21: HOME FOR THE ELDERLY IN CIUDAD GUZMAN, JALISCO

The institution has 40 bedroom units for 2 persons each. The bedrooms are 11.2 m². There are 20 bathrooms, each 3.3 m², which means four boarders will share one bathroom. The habitation area totals 957 m². The dining area and three workshops with offices and wards total 780 m². In total, the covered area is 1,762 m².

The institution is meant for elderly earthquake victims from Ciudad Guzmán, unable to care for themselves. "Voluntarias Vicentinas", a Catholic charitable organization, is responsible for the operation of the home for the elderly.

Cost: USD 242,151.

PROJECT 22: COMMUNITY CENTRE

This project provides premises for the Red Cross housing area where both cultural and commercial activities may be carried out. In the multiple use hall, there is room for a primary school for adults and other teaching and training activities and

for community assemblies. The centre includes 14 small shops, offices, a storeroom, a hall, toilets and a machine room. The building has two floors, a ground floor of 532 m² and a first floor of 903 m², totalling 1,435 m².

Cost: USD 146,576.

PROJECT 23: RECREATIONAL AREA AND THE HENRY DUNANT AVENUE

This project provides a recreational area for the population of the Red Cross housing area in Ciudad Guzmán.

It consists of two promenades, five squares, a kiosk, a bicycle track, a football field, a basketball field and two monuments in memory of the 1985 earthquakes, all this in a total area of 12,372 m².

Cost: USD 154,682.

The projects 21, 22 and 23 were carried out by architect Víctor M. Lara as administrator in cooperation with the Department of New Projects of the Mexican Red Cross and supervised by Delegate Leo Horvath, first as a League Delegate, later as an American Red Cross Delegate.

The construction of Projects 21, 22 and 23 was started in May 1987, and they were inaugurated on December 8 1987. These projects were sponsored by the American Red Cross.

PROJECT 24: VIDA NUEVA SCHOOL FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED

The aim of this project is to provide adequate premises for the accommodation and teaching of mentally retarded children, with the appropriate installations required to offer them specialised assistance.

The Vida Nueva facilities consist of two buildings. Building A includes offices, rehabilitation area and service areas. The rehabilitation area includes a therapy room, stimulation area, special education area, language therapy area, emotional therapy area, observation area, cognitive therapy area, hydrotherapy area, physical therapy area and occupational therapy area. The service areas include bathrooms, kitchen, dining room, storeroom, laundry and porter's house.

Building B includes the boarding facilities, which are bedrooms, bathrooms, dining rooms, TV rooms, playrooms, kitchen and corridors. The total constructed area is 1,608 m².

The construction of this boarding school was started in February 1987 and was completed in June 1988. A foundation by the name of Vida Nueva is in charge of the operation of the institution which has room for some 40 children. This institution represents an important step forward in the treatment of mentally retarded children in Mexico. The quality of the construction is considered good.

Cost: USD 242,402.

**PROJECT 26/31: HOUSING IN MEXICO CITY
PARTIAL DONATIONS TO BENEFICIARIES OF
GOVERNMENT RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMMES**

In July 1986, the MRC and the American Red Cross signed a contract for this project with the objective of providing partial assistance to earthquake victims, beneficiaries of Government reconstruction programmes. Those beneficiaries have Government mortgage credits on their housing, and the Red Cross assistance is used for down payments (normally 10% of the cost of the house), to purchase lots or to assist families in making partial monthly mortgage payments. The project contract established a maximum donation of USD 3,000 per beneficiary family. The project is divided into phases, according to the type of assistance given.

Delegate Leo Horvath from the American Red Cross has been assigned to supervise this project and is also an observer in the Technical Committee of the Bank Trust established for the operation of the funds of this project in Mexico. It was decided to make this project bilateral from September 1988 (Project 31).

Phase I: Monetary donations to assist families in acquiring a house

By December 1988, the MRC reported that 621 families had been given assistance in this phase. Additionally, a Phase II.B was implemented, reporting 2,200 beneficiary families.

Phase II: Purchase of land on which families could build their homes

The MRC reports that a total of 7,037 families had been helped to purchase their lots, by December 1988.

Phase III: Donations to assist families in paying mortgages

6,707 families had received donations of this kind by December 1988, according to the reports from the MRC.

PHOTO CAPTIONS

- 1 Demolition of vecindad Aztecas 57, Mexico City.
2. Patio at Reina Sofía Home for the Elderly.
3. Fifty well-equipped ambulances were donated by the Canadian Red Cross to the Mexican Red Cross. Total cost: approximately 1.7 million Canadian dollars.
4. The Gustavo A. Madero Emergency Centre, one of seven such centres built with League funds in Mexico City. The ambulances are a donation from the Canadian Red Cross.
- 5 Reconstructed houses in Costa Grande, Guerrero.
6. Handing-over ceremony at Aztecas 57, in the busy Tepito district of Mexico City
7. Graduation ceremony and handing over of tools to participants in vocational training, prosthesis and rehabilitation project
8. Water tank that was built as part of Project 4 in Barra de Potosí, a village that had been devastated by a tidal wave caused by the September 1985 earthquake.
9. Reconstructed houses in Costa Grande, Guerrero.
10. Reconstruction in process in San Andrés, Jalisco
11. Reconstructed house in La Cofradía, Jalisco.
12. Reconstructed vecindad.
13. The Mexican Red Cross centre in Ciudad Guzmán, Jalisco State.
14. Project 22: Community Centre, Ciudad Guzmán, Jalisco
15. The MRC centre in Tlapa, Guerrero, built with funds from the League. Medical equipment was also donated to the centre.
16. The larger part of the self-help construction was done by women.
17. Project 21: View from the home for the elderly, Ciudad Guzmán.
- 18 Beneficiaries and Red Cross Officials in the Red Cross housing area, Gómez Farías.
19. Reconstructed houses in San Andrés, Jalisco.
20. View of the Mexican Red Cross housing area in Ciudad Guzmán, Jalisco