

\$472M Spent on Foreign Aid in 2010

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The president in St. Petersburg visiting the disabled Friday. Health care spending is up domestically and abroad. **Dmitry Astakhov**

Russia spent more than \$80 million in 2010 to improve health care in developing countries, according to a report the Finance Ministry released Friday.

The report highlights how the country is meeting its G8 commitments ahead of the upcoming summit in Deauville, France.

"Health has become for Russia quite a traditional area for contributing to international development," said Andrei Bokarev, head of the Finance Ministry's international financial relations department.

Russia's contributions to G8 initiatives have helped pay for vaccine research and subsidies, as well as upgrades to 10 anti-epidemic response teams that could be used in humanitarian emergencies.

The G8 funnels its vaccine assistance through the Advance Market Commitment initiative, which claims "to stimulate industry investment in global health product development." Russia pledged to pay \$80 million into the initiative by 2018 and has already disbursed \$16 million.

The first Russia-subsidized vaccines were delivered to Nicaragua, Kenya, Yemen, Congo and Guyana at the beginning of 2011, Bokarev said.

The report also lists food security as a main priority. According to the report, Russia spent \$98.2 million last year to train farm specialists and supply technology and resistant seed cultures to Africa. This year's spending on food security is expected to stay the same, Bokarev said.

G20 countries plan to approve a food security strategy in Cannes this November.

Russia's contribution to international assistance programs is growing faster than that of its G8 partners, said Ambassador-at-Large Vadim Lukov. The country funded roughly \$432 million per year between 2007 and 2010, compared with the \$101 million it had paid annually in the three years prior, Lukov said.

"It is the highest growth rate among the G8 countries," Lukov said. "Whereas for the other donors — our Western partners — the main task right now is to maintain the levels they've already reached."

But Bokarev did not overplay Russia's role in the G8 initiatives. The country is still the smallest donor despite the higher growth rate, he said.

"We are still far, as are many of our partners in the G8, from the achievements of the levels made in the 1960s and 1970s when annual assistance amounted to 0.7 percent of gross national product," Bokarev said.

Russia spent a total of \$472.32 million on international development assistance in 2010, nearly meeting its annual target rate of \$500 million. This is down from the \$785 million given in 2009 due to greater domestic needs during the global financial crisis, Bokarev said.

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