

PROGRAMME UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

LAO PDR

7 May 2003

Appeal No. 01.62/2003

Appeal Target: CHF 502,472

Programme Update No. 1; Period covered: January to March, 2003

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organisation and its millions of volunteers are active in over 180 countries. For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

Appeal coverage: 51%; See attached Contributions List for details.

Outstanding needs: CHF245,895

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: N/A

Programme Summary: Organisational development and capacity building remain the focus of the Federation's work in Lao PDR, particularly at Lao Red Cross (LRC) headquarters where the emphasis is on assisting the national society develop a realistic and sustainable human resource development/resource development policy and plan. Development of a viable community-based disaster preparedness programme with LRC volunteers is also in progress. The Cooperation Agreement Strategy (CAS) memorandum of understanding has been signed by LRC and its key partners and is now being implemented. HIV/AIDS continues to be in the spotlight, and new OPEC funding will enable significant enhancement of the programme with LRC. Finding a viable, long-term solution to the future of the LRC blood programme, which was the priority of the LRC/Federation mid-term review in March, continues to be a challenge.

Operational developments

The first quarter of 2003 has been a calm period (except for the security incident referred to below) with no significant political or economic developments and no major natural disasters.

In mid-February, the ambush of a public bus and other vehicles near the popular tourist town of Vang Vieng by armed bandits left 13 dead - among them two Swiss tourists and a Chinese national - and nearly 50 people injured. Subsequently, several other incidents were reported in the northern part of

the country, prompting embassies and international organisations to impose travel restrictions on the northern route, to the ancient capital Luang Prabang. By the end of the quarter, these restrictions were for the most part lifted and road traffic is running normally. During the same month thousands of people flocked to Vat Phou in Champassak, to celebrate the temple's official declaration by UNESCO as a World Heritage site.

In March, the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak in South East Asia began to raise concerns with the Lao government, mindful of the difficulty in instituting effective health controls in the land-locked state. Two of the worst affected areas, southern China and northern Vietnam (now clear of SARS), are neighbours of Lao PDR.

The First Poverty Eradication Congress was held in Vientiane during the quarter to review a two-year plan on the implementation of a poverty reduction programme. The government's main priority is to eradicate poverty nation-wide by the year 2020. Besides reviewing past activities, the meeting also set a target to eradicate poverty by 100,000 people – or some 35,000 families each year - between now and 2005.

Health and Care

Goal: LRC establishes an effective, self-sustaining health and care programme which addresses the critical health needs of the most vulnerable people in Lao PDR.

Objective: The capacity of LRC is strengthened to coordinate, develop and deliver quality health and care services.

Expected Results:

The LRC implements a five-year strategic plan for health and care that complements the Society's overall development plan, also incorporating relevant components of the CAS.

Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

Federation support for the programme was included in the 2003 Appeal on the premise that it would be fully funded by the regional health unit Bangkok. Since then support has been identified for various activities - strategic health planning, community based first aid, and water and sanitation – but directed to the LRC and not through the Lao delegation. Consequently, the Lao delegation has focused on providing ongoing administrative and financial reporting services to the blood programme (funded by the Japanese Red Cross) as well as coordination support to the HIV/AIDS programme funded by OPEC (managed by the Australian Red Cross).

Blood programme

During the quarter, blood donor recruitment participatory meetings were held with the education and military sectors in Vientiane municipality and the provinces of Vientiane and Bolikhamxay, to review the blood donor recruitment activities of 2002 and 2003.

The Japanese Red Cross also reviewed the blood programme, covering technical and management issues; technical assessments were conducted in Vientiane, Champassack, Savannakhet, and Luang Prabang provinces.

In February, staff of the Blood Centre attended the regional Blood Donor Recruitment meeting in Singapore. Among other issues, discussions centred on the use of Federation blood donor recruitment guidelines, celebration of the World Blood Donor Awareness Day in June, selection of a regional poster on blood donor recruitment (from posters to be submitted by national societies), and regional training on blood donor recruitment.

HIV/AIDS programme

The LRC currently operates HIV/AIDS programmes in 11 provinces in Lao PDR, implementing a village level peer-education project. During January/February the project conducted 62 village level interventions, training 1,240 youth peer educators who in-turn will speak to an estimated 6,200 Lao youth. The project has recently conducted a review of all information education communication/behaviour community change (IEC/BCC) materials and teaching aids to increase the impact of the project on youth - girls and young women in particular. New resources will be finalised by the end of May. In addition, the national project team participated in a one-week workshop to develop new management models, which from July will allow increased activity in existing districts and expansion to a limited number of new districts.

During the quarter, a service agreement was developed and signed between the Australian Red Cross and the LRC HIV/AIDS project manager and communications director, to implement anti-stigma and discrimination campaigns in Lao PDR. Planning meetings and an action plan were produced for the upcoming World Red Cross Red Crescent Day (8 May) campaign *The Truth About AIDS... Pass it On*. Federation campaign materials have been translated into Lao and some 1,500 sets of posters ordered and distribution plans put in place. A needs assessment/survey has also been conducted of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and their families, key service providers and government staff to identify priority issues for the campaign.

The national society has employed an officer to coordinate the expansion of home care activities and to work with local hospitals on developing community health services. Planning meetings were held to agree on a home care model. In one province an agreement for HIV clinical services and training for hospital staff in HIV/AIDS treatment and care has been signed. Similar planning is scheduled for two provinces in southern Lao in May/June.

Advocacy workshops began in January in each village where the project operates. The one-day workshop for parents and village elders aimed at garnering support for project activities and disseminating key project messages. Forty workshops have been completed as of the end of February. During the quarter, four Lao PLWHA, two LRC staff and one government health officer attended the Greater Involvement of Vulnerable People 2 workshop. Four home visits were also facilitated by the LRC. Supporting local health care workers to visit PLWHA in their homes for health checks and emotional support has been ongoing.

Impact

It is too early to assess the impact of activities undertaken in partnership with OPEC. A recent review of the project indicates that it is successful in reaching an estimated 68 per cent of young people in the villages where it operates. Similarly, qualitative reports on the impact of the Bokeo and Savanakheth home care activities indicate significant outcomes in terms of health and quality of life for PLWHA.

Constraints

Compared to 2002, a lower percentage of voluntary blood donors has been observed in some provinces this quarter, possibly as a result of poor campaigns. The blood donation process varied from one province to another; services were inadequate in provinces where there are insufficient LRC blood programme team members.

Funding delays led to the postponement of some scheduled activities, while others have proceeded where possible using existing resources.

Disaster Management

Goal: The impact of disasters on the most vulnerable people in Laos is reduced.

Objective: The capacity of the LRC to help to reduce the loss of life and livelihood of the most vulnerable people resulting from the most frequent disasters is strengthened.

Expected Results:

The programme is based on three key projects that will have the following overall results:

1. The capability of the LRC at the different levels to respond to the most frequent disasters (i.e. village fires, flooding, flash floods and drought) is enhanced by the end of 2004.
2. The disaster preparedness activities undertaken by the LRC are developed with clear linkages to the state system by the end of 2004.
3. The LRC plays an active role within a local, regional and global network in disaster management.

Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

- Community based disaster preparedness (CBDP) and community based disaster management (CBDM) training modules (Lao and English versions) were finalised, printed and sent to the 17 branches. Two branches have been targeted for pilot CBDP training; volunteers from the two initial pilot training branches - Savannakhet and Champasack - will also be trained by using the above modules, in the second quarter.
- Disaster/hazard assessment mapping was carried out and pilot branches - Khammouane and Savannakhet – selected to conduct CBDP/CBDM training.
- Regular coordination meetings have been established between LRC and the National Disaster Management Office. The national society has also established good working relations with the World Food Programme (WFP) and various INGOs, including CONCERN.
- Relief items including cooking pots, eating utensils, blankets, and sleeping mats were restocked in the headquarters warehouse. Following the general warehouse management training sessions in 2002, staff from LRC headquarters and three branches (Khammouane, Oudomxay and Champasack) were trained in the use of computerised stock control systems. Those with inadequate computer skills were first trained in basic computer skills. To assist under-skilled staff in IT matters, a member of LRC staff (from the disaster preparedness division) has been identified and further trained in computer systems. The new software programme for stock control has been introduced at headquarters, and will be installed in the three regional warehouses in the second quarter, once computers have been procured.
- The regional disaster management unit (RDMU) Bangkok, visited and briefed staff from LRC and the Federation delegation on practical problems related to capacity building within the programmes as well as the availability of funds from the RDMU for country programmes.

Impact

LRC staff trained in the computerised stock control system are now using the system effectively. As a result, the national society has more transparent record keeping of its relief stocks.

Organisational Development

Goal: The capacity of the LRC is strengthened, with particular focus on the fields of human resource and finance systems development, so that it is better able to carry out its humanitarian mandate.

Objective: The foundations of good governance are laid and the LRC's overall management capacity developed in line with its stated aim of becoming a well functioning national society by 2010.

Expected Results

The programme is based on two key projects that will have the following overall results:

1. The LRC's annual planning process is strengthened and institutionalised to ensure implementation of the Society's five-year development plan.
2. The foundations are laid for good governance practices and the related decrees, regulations and procedures are revised and adopted by LRC.

Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

The LRC annual work plan has been completed and the communications strategy is in the process of being finalised. Three gender workshops have been planned in Vientiane, Champassak and Luang Prabang in the second quarter - targeting senior management and women from each division at headquarters, and the head as well as one women officer from each branch. Some PNS staff will be invited. Youth road safety peer group education using LRC volunteers has been organised in Vientiane municipality targeting school children (one of the most at risk groups) and teachers. First aid training has been provided to the police and relevant government officials. Plans to provide CBFA training of trainers in Luang Namtha in May have been finalised. Vientiane municipality and Luang Namtha are the two unsponsored branches in Lao PDR that receive Federation support.

The national society statutes, prime ministerial decree 36, and the fundraising policy continue to be revised and approval is expected soon. In March, senior management of LRC visited Thai Red Cross to discuss the possibility of a 'staff on loan' to assist LRC with its fundraising activities.

During the quarter, the Federation and ARC continued to fund English language courses for LRC staff and senior management, which has seen progress in their ability to and write speak English

Impact

Steady progress has been made overall during the quarter specifically with the annual planning process, gender and youth/road safety activities. As a result of the English language training, LRC staff and senior management are gradually enhancing their skills in speaking, reading and writing.

Constraints

The financial management system consultant will not be able to start work with LRC until May, due to other commitments. Difficulties have also been encountered in recruitment of a local fundraising consultant.

Federation Coordination

Goal: Sustainable long-term development of the LRC is achieved through facilitating strong and effective coordination between LRC partners.

Objective: Solid coordination and collaborative practices are put in place, enabling all partners to assist LRC to implement the current five-year development plan to 2005 and its successor.

Expected Result

A fully inclusive and well-coordinated CAS is implemented which supports the LRC national plan and strategy and is accepted by all partners.

Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

Good progress has been made with the CAS process during the quarter, with a partnership meeting in February followed by a trilateral meeting in March. During both meetings LRC and its key partners (Federation, ICRC, PNS) took firm decisions regarding the practical modalities for effective implementation of the CAS. Decisions covered priorities for the transition period for the remainder of 2003 (during which the Federation delegation will gradually scale down) and establishment of the new CAS office in early 2004.

The composition, role, function, staffing, and management/supervisory arrangements by partners of the CAS office were discussed. Appointment of the LRC coordinator, who will assume management responsibility of the CAS office - with support of a core team and clearly defined inputs from regional delegation technical units and PNS – is crucial to the set up. Draft terms of reference, a work plan and budget for the CAS office, are to be developed by June.

In addition, it was unanimously agreed that the main priority for now is to support the development of a new, transparent internal financial system for LRC, which meets international standards. The Swiss Red Cross has taken a lead role in this respect, supported by the Federation. A local consultant has been engaged to develop the system, a draft of which will be submitted to LRC and CAS partners by the end of the second quarter (for more details about the CAS implementation see above-mentioned meeting reports).

The Federation delegation continues to strengthen coordination between LRC and its key partners at all levels around the CAS process, while at the same time developing good practical working relations with the donor community in Laos.

In line with the Federation's commitment to support a dynamic CAS implementation process, the following is a summary of the activities of key partners:

PNS	Activities (January – March 2003)
Australian	Australian Red Cross (ARC) continues to support a comprehensive HIV/AIDS programme in the country. OPEC funds have enabled LRC/ARC/Federation to expand the scope of the programme in 2003 – with additional capacity building available for the LRC headquarters information and fundraising division.
Danish	Danish Red Cross (DRC) supports an integrated programme of primary health care in three northern provinces (Xiengkouang, Pongsali, Huaphan). DRC also provides significant support for LRC capacity building at the national level as well as to the Lao delegation.
French	French Red Cross supports community based first aid (CBFA), water and sanitation, and branch development activities in two of the hitherto unsponsored LRC branches (Vientiane province and Sayaboury).
Japanese	Japanese Red Cross (JRCS) will continue support of the blood programme, through the Federation, up to end 2003. JRCS has also made a significant contribution to disaster preparedness activities in the country.
Netherlands	Netherlands Red Cross continues to support branch development at both LRC headquarters and branch level until end 2003, with specific support going to branches in Bolikamsay, Khammouane and Savannaket.
Swiss	Swiss Red Cross continues to provide financial support for Luang Prabang and the northern branches of Udomsai and Bokeo. It is also supporting the development of a new internal financial management system for LRC.

Impact

Progress achieved during the quarter clearly demonstrates that the CAS process is well on track with the full support and commitment of LRC and key partners, including the ICRC. The practical modalities for implementing the CAS have been worked out and a clear plan of action has been agreed regarding priorities for the transition period. The Federation's key role in supporting the LRC to drive the CAS process forward and in strengthening coordination at all levels is appreciated by the PNS and perceived as 'adding value'. The Lao CAS approach may well provide a useful model for other national societies in the region. Regular visits by regional delegation technical units demonstrate the Federation's overall commitment and responsibility to support LRC in implementing the CAS in the long term (after the Federation delegation is phased out to be replaced by the CAS office).

International Representation

Goal: Decision makers and influencers in Lao PDR are aware of and sympathetic to the work of the Red Cross Red Crescent on behalf of the vulnerable.

Objective: The LRC and its CAS partners are positioned to influence the humanitarian agenda in Lao PDR and to mobilise resources.

Expected Results

The policies, strategies and programmes of LRC and its CAS partners are advocated to and understood by the country's government and civil society.

Progress/Achievements (activities implemented within this objective)

Routine quarterly meetings and contacts were held with the ministries of foreign affairs, social welfare and health to raise awareness about the work of the Federation and the LRC.

Meetings were held with the German and Swedish ambassadors in which HIV/AIDS, road safety and raising awareness about the work of the Movement in Lao PDR. Discussions on strengthening cooperation in disaster preparedness were held with representatives of UNDP, WFP, and the World Bank.

There were no specific dissemination activities during the period. However, discussions have started with ICRC regarding the possibility of organising joint dissemination/communications sessions for the international community in Vientiane with LRC. If successful, this method might be tried to expand dissemination to representatives of civil society, possibly to enlist support from private sector for fund raising.

Impact

Through regular contacts and exchange of information with government officials, the international donor community and civil society, there is a steady increase in awareness of what the Movement represents in general, and more specifically the work of the LRC in Lao PDR. Dissemination and communications activities at the provincial and branch level are gradually having some impact by raising awareness among government officials, local civil society and LRC staff and volunteers.

Constraints

The Red Cross is still not well known at all levels of society in Lao PDR. This is a major challenge for LRC, the Federation and ICRC in particular, and must be a priority of future work. More basic dissemination must be undertaken as a routine part of normal programme activities.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

APPEAL No. 01.62/2003

PLEDGES RECEIVED

05.06.2003

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

				TOTAL COVERAGE		
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				502'473		51.1%
CASH CARRIED FORWARD				143'231		
BRITISH - GOVT/DFID(04)				80'000	24.02.03	ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				223'231	CHF	44.4%

KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
DENMARK	DELEGATE(S)			33'347		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				33'347	CHF	6.6%

ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	