

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

28 July 2003

Appeal No. 01.62/2003

Appeal Target: CHF 502,473 (USD 371,927 or EUR 325,647)

Programme Update No. 2; Period covered: April to June 2003

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

In Brief

Appeal coverage: 55%; for details please refer to the list of contributions for this appeal on the Federation website.

Outstanding needs: CHF 225,895 (USD 167,206 / EUR 146,400)

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: N/A

Programme Summary: The Lao Red Cross (LRC) gender awareness programme was launched and the first phase successfully concluded by the end of June. There is growing emphasis on developing the new cooperation agreement strategy (CAS) office structure, coordination, and operational modalities, now being put in place to replace the Federation delegation when it closes at the end of 2003. LRC and its partners are fully engaged in this process and committed to making this 'new model' of cooperation work effectively.

Good progress with the development of a viable community-based disaster preparedness programme with LRC volunteers has also been made during the quarter as a result of the training of trainers' workshop. HIV/AIDS continues to be in the spotlight with the new OPEC funding enabling the LRC/Australian Red Cross team to expand the scope and outreach of the programme. Following a roundtable meeting in June between LRC, the Federation, the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation, concrete steps are now being taken to prepare a long-term strategic plan for the blood programme. Finding sustainable solutions for funding will be vital as the Japanese Red Cross Society plans to scale-down its assistance to the programme at the end of 2003, after nine years of support.

Operational developments

Security issues continued to dominate during the quarter, with another ambush on a bus travelling the northern tourist route between Vang Vieng and Luang Prabang in which ten people were killed and 31 injured. Media spotlight also surrounded the arrest, and subsequent release, of two European journalists and a US citizen who had been reporting on an ethnic Hmong rebellion in northern Laos, which triggered an international outcry. Aside from these incidences, the situation in the country remains calm and peaceful.

The combination of the Iraq war and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) has resulted in a downturn of tourist and business activity in the region, which has in turn had a negative impact on an already weakened and aid-dependent Lao economy. The Government took various precautionary measures in line with WHO guidelines to combat SARS. The Ministry of Health, with the support of WHO, UNDP and the international donor community strengthened border health controls, established an isolation ward in Vientiane, and ran a national campaign disseminating basic health and hygiene messages. The Lao Red Cross, with the support of the Federation regional health unit and funding from the Federation's SARS appeal, played an important support role in the fight against SARS. Fortunately there have been no reported cases during the quarter.

The World Bank has confirmed that there is no final decision as yet on whether it will provide financial support to the Nam Theun II hydroelectric dam project. That decision, and the timing of the decision, will be determined by the government of Lao PDR and the private sector developers involved in a number of critical issues. Since income from hydroelectric power is seen as one of the principal sources of the state's future revenue, Nam Theun II is of considerable importance for the government's economic strategy.

On May 30, the Government held a 'mini-roundtable meeting' in Vientiane with its development partners to discuss the draft version of the country's National Poverty Eradication Programme (NPEP). The NPEP is the central pillar of the Government's economic policy for which it is seeking long-term support from the international donor community, who are in turn seeking greater commitment to fundamental structural reforms in the country.

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)

Blood programme

During the reporting period, a blood donor recruitment-planning meeting, with 75 representatives from the army, police and business community, was held to discuss strategies to overcome the shortage of blood donors through the April/May school holidays (school children and students are the main voluntary blood donors in Lao PDR). As part of the 8 May, World Red Cross Red Crescent Day celebrations, over 100 members of the public donate blood to the Blood Centre.

As direct follow up to the recommendations contained in the LRC/Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS)/Federation review of the blood programme held in March, a roundtable meeting was held in Vientiane between LRC, the Federation, the Ministry of Health and WHO to discuss the best approach for elaborating a strategic long term plan for the LRC blood programme 2004-2010. After nine years of support to the LRC blood programme, the JRCS will scale down funding as of the end of 2003. An urgent need exists, therefore, to find sustainable long-term solutions for funding the blood programme.

The roundtable meeting, in which the regional health unit took a lead role, resulted in some concrete steps involving all participants, to elaborate a viable long-term strategy to be submitted to donors by the end of the year.

HIV/AIDS programme

The LRC HIV/AIDS and information/fundraising departments implemented an anti-stigma and discrimination campaign funded by OPEC on World Red Cross Red Crescent Day. Activities were designed as part of the Federation's campaign *The Truth About AIDS...Pass it On*. Over 1,500 posters printed for the campaign were distributed to 17 provinces, and targeted villages where people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) reside, district hospitals, provincial hospitals, high-schools, bus stations, and district authority offices. Campaign materials will continue to be distributed in target villages leading up to the linked World AIDS day campaign in December.

The participatory home and community care and support project in Bokeo has held several meetings with HIV/AIDS and health services in the province, leading to a partnership between local health services, provincial and district hospitals, and Bokeo Red Cross - jointly supported by the Australian Red Cross, OPEC and UNICEF. The plan developed for home and community care in Bokeo included a care and counselling clinic for PLWHA, which opened in June. The clinic will provide training for provincial and district nursing staff in HIV/AIDS care and support, the formation of a positive self-help group, and sub-district village advocacy activities. During the quarter, advocacy workshops continued throughout the country, with 94 sessions reaching nearly 2,500 participants including some 900 women.

To scale up the activities of the youth peer education project, three training of trainers (ToT) sessions were conducted for districts teams from 10 provinces increasing capacity of teams to implement the peer education project at district level.

The LRC care and support project officer, the ARC technical advisor and one positive volunteer attended the Asia Pacific Network of Positive People (APN+) annual general meeting in Bangkok. The meeting provided an opportunity for information sharing between positive networks in the region; it was the first time participants from Lao PDR attended with approval from the Lao authorities.

Strategic Health Planning

The heads of the LRC health and blood programmes attended the strategic health planning meeting/workshop in Vientiane in June to assist LRC with the development of a strategic health plan, one of the primary health objectives in the LRC five-year development plan.

Impact

The roundtable meeting to discuss the elaboration of a long term strategy for the blood programme clearly recognised the crucial support provided by the LRC blood programme over the past nine years in providing safe blood nationally. It also underscores the importance of determining a viable long term solution with funding from other donors (in addition to JRCS) in which the Ministry of Health and National Blood Transfusion Committee play a much more central role.

Constraints

There have been no significant constraints during this period.

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)

A meeting was held with the World Food Programme to discuss practical ways to build a partnership for community level disaster preparedness with the Lao community-based disaster management (CBDM) programme.

In June, ToT and contingency programme (CP) workshops were held by LRC with support of the regional disaster management unit in Vientiane. Field trips were also made to the southern provinces of Savannakhet and Attapeu to gather information for a hazard mapping exercise.

Impact

Valuable information and experience was gained by LRC as a result of the CP meeting and ToT training, which will enable LRC to start developing its disaster preparedness volunteer network and capabilities at the community level. Community-based disaster preparedness/CBDM volunteers training will be held in Khammuane and Savannakhet in August.

Constraints

None have been experienced during the quarter.

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)

Three gender workshops for senior staff from LRC headquarters and branches were completed during the quarter. The LRC is in the process of setting up a gender group to follow up these activities and plan a long term gender mainstreaming programme for the national society.

During the quarter, the Thai Red Cross assisted LRC to prepare a fund raising plan for 2003/2004. The national society statutes have also been revised by LRC and will now be reviewed by the Federation and ICRC. The fundraising policy and decree 36 still require further revision before approval by the Government.

Impact

The gender workshops have led to a basic understanding of the issue with senior management.

Constraints

No specific constraints have been experienced during the period. However it is essential that the LRC information/fundraising division complete its internal restructuring and establish a central-level fundraising committee quickly if it is to implement the fundraising/resource mobilisation plan for 2003.

Due to other work pressures, no progress has been made by LRC on the new youth /road safety project; however this will be a priority for the next quarter.

Constraints

None have been experienced during the quarter.

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 continues to be made with the CAS process. The composition, role, function, staffing, and management/supervisory arrangements and budget for the CAS office have been further discussed and clarified between partners. Draft terms of reference, a work plan and budget for the CAS office, as well as job descriptions for staff have been prepared and circulated to all the partners for comment by the end of July. The aim is to submit a final project document, covering all aspects of the CAS implementation and funding in 2004, to the partners for approval in September.

Impact

No significant impact during the reporting period.

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)

Meetings were held with the Polish and Korean ambassadors, and representatives from the European Union and British trade missions to discuss the work of the Movement in Lao PDR. The Federation also participated in the NPEP mini-roundtable, and a consultation meeting in May between the UN Special Envoy on AIDS in Asia Pacific and donors, international organisations and NGOs.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the German ambassador have indicated support to run a series of Red Cross dissemination and awareness-raising sessions for high-ranking government officials and the international donor and diplomatic community, in the next quarter.

Impact

No significant impact has occurred during the reporting period.

Constraints

None have been experienced during the quarter.

For further information please contact:

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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.

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