

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

MYANMAR

5 August 2003

Appeal No. 01.63/2003

Appeal Target: CHF 1,536,834

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: 50%; See attached Contributions List for details.

Outstanding needs: CHF 764,414

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: N/A

Programme Summary: The socio-economic situation continues to weaken, and the political climate has become increasingly unstable, with the result that greater numbers of people in Myanmar are forced to live on or below the poverty line. National health facilities are stretched, and many remote villages cannot access their services. Communities already living at their limit are not able to cope when fire and floods destroy their homes and livelihoods. The Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) is committed to changing its structure, systems and image within the country to better serve the most vulnerable communities. To this end, it is increasing its community-based training, undertaking a major branch survey, and preparing a far-sighted but realistic strategic plan (2004-2008). With a limited number of donors, the financial position of MRCS and its capacity to implement major programmes in health and disaster management is precarious. The national society and Federation delegation have had to drastically scale back on 2003 plans, maintaining only the most vital components of programmes and community-based training. Fundraising for Myanmar has therefore become one aspect of the delegation's work.

Operational developments

During the second quarter of 2003, the economic situation in Myanmar further deteriorated and the percentage of people living on or below the poverty line continued to increase. The exchange rate of the foreign exchange currency (FEC) against the kyat declined significantly with marked fluctuations almost daily. The FEC has also weakened markedly as compared to the dollar to kyat rate. At the same time, food prices, including staples, continued to increase and people are finding it increasingly difficult to buy even basic goods.

A major setback in the national reconciliation process occurred at the end of May when violent clashes broke out between Government and National League for Democracy (NLD) supporters in northern Myanmar, during a tour of senior NLD leaders. A number of deaths occurred and the leader and senior members of the NLD were put under detention. This incident heightened the suspicion and cynicism of the international community towards Myanmar, from governments as well as actual and potential donors. International organisations, as well as governments are still awaiting the Special United Nations Report on Myanmar, which was scheduled for publication and distribution in March, but has not yet been made available.

The Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) continued to give priority to the on-going and comprehensive branch survey, the strategic planning process, establishing a greater delineation and further clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities for governance and management, and the re-organisation of national headquarters so that it can better guide and serve branches.

Health and Care

Goal: There is real and sustainable improvement in the health of the most vulnerable in Myanmar.

Objective: MRCS health and care capacity is enhanced through on-going capacity building within the organisation, and through the increased involvement of communities in preventative and health education programmes.

Expected Results:

1. Increased capacity of MRCS at headquarters and branch levels for effective design, implementation and management of relevant health and care programmes.
2. Improved and expanded first aid training and service delivery programme focusing on community needs and targeting the most vulnerable populations.
3. Improved hygiene and sanitation practices in the communities.
4. Increased awareness of HIV/AIDS and reduced discrimination and stigmatisation of PLWHA

Progress/Achievements

Coordination of health planning by the national society's health division, with the technical support of Federation health delegates, has placed the MRCS in a strong position to implement the strategic health plan 2002-2006. The strategy has been translated into Myanmar to facilitate improved understanding of the role of the health division throughout MRCS, and to inform other NGOs and INGOs of the role of MRCS in health initiatives.

The capacity of MRCS health division continues to be strengthened with participation in the third strategic planning workshop in April. The strategic health plan 2002-2006 facilitates a focused and consistent approach to planning of health programmes, supported by a clear action plan for 2003. Organisational review for restructure identified the critical need for improved capacity in human resource and technical capacity, and ongoing consultation is moving towards an approved organisational structure to support all aspects of MRCS programme planning, including health.

With regard to first aid and community-based first aid (CBFA), the 2003 action plan developed from the strategic planning process continues to be implemented. Training of trainers (ToT) in CBFA is taking place in states and divisions, in addition to basic first aid, standard first aid and an instructor's course. Multiplier CBFA courses are now planned as a result of the CBFA ToT, which will result in further strengthening of the capacity and activities of MRCS states, divisions and branches. The CBFA project uses a participatory approach to introduce basic health messages and develop skills to improve communities' ability to respond to prevailing health issues and current health problems including severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), malaria, diarrhoea and HIV/AIDS. Financial and technical support from ICRC for the ToT programme well demonstrates the cooperation between MRCS, the Federation and ICRC, in recognising the benefits of a MRCS strengthened training division for all aspects of the Red Cross Movement in Myanmar. Collaboration between MRCS health and disaster preparedness divisions and Federation delegates continues towards planning for an integrated approach of CBFA, providing training elements in first aid, health issues and disaster preparedness to Red Cross volunteers. The CBFA evaluation planned for end 2003 on two pilot projects, one focused on health, and the second on disaster preparedness, will provide the basis for the further planning and development of an integrated training programme to be implemented from the end of this year onwards.

Implementation of the HIV/AIDS project for youth has continued in 20 townships, while the reproductive health project for youth has reached five townships. The outreach programme on HIV/AIDS prevention for bus/truck drivers (Phase II) started in June, expanding beyond Yangon to four more townships. The implementation phase of the community-based HIV/AIDS project in Keng Tung started in May with the visit of a team from Australian Red Cross. Discussions held with the MRCS, project staff at Keng Tung, and beneficiaries, resulted in a draft of activities for the first year. The project will be supported for the next three years, an excellent illustration of a pilot project for further expansion of CBFA/health programmes to other states and divisions.

A plan to improve the safety and efficiency of the existing voluntary, non-remunerated blood donor recruitment programme is currently being implemented, with training of volunteers occurring in MRCS branches. This programme will support the existing National Blood Bank programme.

Impact

With a committed health division and two Federation health delegates, and a clear plan for 2003, there is a growing confidence in the MRCS that the society's health programme can become more effective and more 'in-tune' with the needs of the community. New organisations have indicated interest in working with MRCS as an operating partner; if managed correctly these partnerships can further strengthen MRCS' capacity and visibility.

Constraints

Considerable constraints have been put on the health activities because of the low level of funding for the 2003 Appeal and the cutback in funds. Moreover, MRCS still has limited human resources and technical capacity to deal with existing and potential programmes being considered by interested partners.

Coordination

Cooperation between ICRC and Federation continues to strengthen the Movement's presence in Myanmar. Ongoing consultation with other humanitarian organisations including the World Health Organisation and UNICEF in matters of common interest facilitates an efficient use of resources and more effective programme planning.

Disaster Management

Goal: The risk of disasters is reduced and the resilience of the most vulnerable people in Myanmar is enhanced.

Objective: MRCS's capacity in disaster management is strengthened, based on its network of volunteers and branch structures and in strategic partnerships with the government authorities and other agencies.

Expected Results:

1. MRCS is acknowledged as a leading organisation in disaster management with a recognised role in national coordination systems.
2. MRCS has an adequate response mechanism in place to fulfill its mandate in assisting the most vulnerable people in time of disasters in an efficient and swift manner.
3. MRCS can take full advantage of its nation-wide grassroots structures to promote community resilience to disasters.

Progress / Achievements:

The MRCS disaster management policy was submitted to the bi-annual Central Council meeting in June and approved by the society's governing body. The document will be distributed to branches and other key stakeholders, and underpin the Federation's discussion with relevant government authorities in the coming months to promote better coordination in disaster management.

In April, MRCS organised a pilot ToT workshop for the disaster assessment and response team (DART), with assistance from the regional and country delegations. The 15 participants selected - from MRCS headquarters and provincial levels - had previously attended the DART induction course, in December 2002. The workshop was designed to lay a solid foundation for three training workshops later in the year, by creating a pool of national resource persons and field-testing training materials. Three participants were identified from the workshop as potential key coordinators, and attended an advanced ToT course in June organised by the regional disaster management unit in Vientiane.

By the end of June, and in preparation for the coming rainy season, MRCS headquarters completed the distribution of replenishment items for all but one of 18 warehouses across the country, many of which had been empty and in various states of disrepair for some years. Stock will be dispatched to the remaining site in Hpa-an, Kayin state, once repair of its warehouse is completed. Before the distribution process, each state/division chapter confirmed their readiness to take responsibility for ensuring proper stock management of relief goods, thus reacting positively to the national headquarters' planned disaster management strategy across the country.

As part of the ongoing community-based disaster preparedness project in Ayeyarwaddy division, first aid courses for community members and Red Cross volunteers were organised in four pilot villages in Hinthada and Thabaung townships. In three villages, self-organised groups of community members that work as counterparts for MRCS field officers secured land, donated by community members, to erect a small building that will serve both as meeting/training venue and as an evacuation center in times of disaster. Frequent contacts were made by MRCS to facilitate activities to better prepare villages for the expected seasonal floods. Preparation for building guardhouses on embankments (to monitor river water levels) has started, with financial assistance from the Federation.

Impact

Although collecting information during disaster situations has been difficult, and continues to be one of the main problems faced by MRCS headquarters when coordinating relief operations, there is an

encouraging trend of gradually increasing information flow from branches. This clearly is a result of the series of meetings and training organised by MRCS, in cooperation with the delegation, over the last few months in preparation for the DART workshops.

Constraints

The current domestic and international environment has not been conducive to the delegation's efforts to raise funds for this programme, and the budget has been substantially reduced from that proposed in the Federation Appeal.

Coordination

There have been growing signs of late that the authorities are interested in the national society's recent initiatives in disaster management, as indicated in a request received by the MRCS headquarters in May to share related materials and procedures with the authorities. It is crucial for the delegation not to miss this opportunity to establish formal contact with the relevant government agencies so that it can help MRCS clarify pending issues and promote better coordination with both the authorities, as well as other agencies and donors.

Humanitarian Values

Goal: There is increased awareness and application of humanitarian values, the fundamental principles and key national and global advocacy themes in Myanmar.

Objective: The awareness of humanitarian values in Myanmar, and the role and responsibility of the MRCS is enhanced.

Expected Results:

The capacity of MRCS to disseminate and publicise the role of the Red Cross Red Crescent has been developed.

Progress/Achievements

Two issues of the Red Cross News have been published by MRCS during the quarter, highlighting the national society's on-going programmes. The publication, in both Myanmar and English, included articles and essays on the Movement's principles and the misuse of the Red Cross Red Crescent emblem as well as stories and information from other societies across the world.

Every opportunity to promote the dissemination of IHL and the national society's work has been used, notably during first aid, blood donor recruitment, and mine awareness workshops in the provinces as well as disaster assessment and response team training at headquarters. MRCS volunteers took part in a 'role-play' competition on World Population Day (27 May), providing information about the prevention of HIV/AIDS to young people. A further opportunity to present the goals and programmes of MRCS was presented during a ceremony in Ayeyarwaddy division, when 250 bottles of blood and 2,000 corneas were donated to the national society.

Events surrounding World Red Cross Red Crescent Day were well reported in the media and high-level officials participated in ceremonies organised by MRCS. The week-long annual Camp for Outstanding Volunteers provided an opportunity for volunteers from across the country to meet with members of the MRCS executive committee, headquarters divisions, the Federation and ICRC. A recording of MRCS songs, together with posters, stickers, T-shirts and key chains bearing anti-stigma messages for the ongoing HIV/AIDS campaign, provided a solid basis on which to ensure good media coverage. Throughout the week, interviews with key leaders of MRCS, ICRC and Federation delegations were also publicised on all local TV channels.

Impact

Increasing interest by the general public in Red Cross activities has been noted, and certain government authorities have also requested further information on Red Cross programmes and plans.

Constraints

Resources available to the communications department are still rather limited, and a recently pared back budget is challenging the output of division staff.

Coordination

The Myanmar delegation, together with ICRC and the Federation's regional delegation, has been supporting the expanding work of the MRCS communications division. Discussions are now on-going with the ICRC for more planned support in the production of information materials and training.

Organisational Development

Goal: The MRCS ability to address the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable in Myanmar is strengthened.

Objective: MRCS has better foundation, capacity, and performance for running better volunteer based services and programmes more competently, and moves towards being a 'Well-functioning National Society'.

Expected Results:

1. MRCS becomes a more credible and legitimate organisation that can mobilise wider support at international, national and local levels.
2. MRCS becomes a more viable organisation that can continuously develop itself in a sustainable and accountable way.
3. MRCS becomes a more effective organisation that can make a difference in the lives of vulnerable people in the changing environment.

Progress/Achievements

MRCS and the Federation and ICRC delegations held the third strategic planning meeting in April. Assisted by the regional organisational development delegate, participants drafted statements of the society's vision and mission, which were formally approved by the Central Council in June. The meeting also went through a series of analyses, which has provided the logical foundation for the MRCS strategic plan, to be developed in subsequent meetings.

In April, MRCS hired a senior consultant to facilitate analysis of responses to the branch survey questionnaire and to plan the survey's second phase, involving field visits to selected branches. The consultant's unexpected resignation, in May, after initial data collation and several meetings with the branch survey analysis steering committee (comprised of the Federation, ICRC and senior management of MRCS), necessitated an overall review of the project's timeframe and process. Analysis of the collected data then continued, with a stronger role played by the MRCS senior management team together with the Federation delegation. By the end of June, the response rate to the branch survey questionnaire reached an overall 55 per cent of replies from state/division, district and township levels.

Impact

The branch survey has already contributed to MRCS including branch development and volunteer management high on its organisational development agenda; previously, focus was only on the organisational structure at MRCS headquarters. Also encouraging was the move by MRCS leadership to

hold discussions on these issues with youth volunteer leaders and governance members, during the Outstanding Youth Camp and the Central Council meeting in June, respectively.

Constraints

The decision to set up three task forces in the key areas of structures and systems, legal basis, and finance made at the second strategic planning meeting in February, has not been followed up. While it appears that MRCS leadership is not yet prepared to commit themselves fully to serious discussion and action in these key areas, it must also be noted that the increasingly unstable situation in the country may be stalling discussion and decision-making on the part of the national society. However, the fact that these issues are not being addressed also has a detrimental effect on the on-going strategic planning process.

Coordination

Maintaining regular meetings between the MRCS executive committee, senior management staff, and the Federation and ICRC delegates has been difficult because of busy travel schedules. Concern has arisen that communication between MRCS and the delegation is largely one-way, making it harder to further strengthen the partnership. The delegation plans to address this urgent issue in the coming months.

Federation Coordination

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

Objective: Solid coordination and collaborative practices are put in place, enabling all partners to assist MRCS to develop and implement their long-term development strategy.

Expected Results:

MRCS and its key partners (the Federation, ICRC, PNS and other organisations) recognise the vital importance of the CAS for the long term sustainable development of the Society, both as a flexible framework for enhanced coordination and programme management as well as a useful marketing tool.

Progress/Achievements

The growing relationship of the Myanmar delegation with participating national societies (PNS) was further strengthened during this period through personal visits and correspondence. In May, a formal visit was made to the Japanese Red Cross Society; in June, discussions were held with the Finnish Red Cross, as well as other agencies and organisations in Finland. The head of delegation had in-depth discussions with both the regional delegation in Bangkok and the Federation Secretariat in Geneva during May and June. Focus was on the changing situation in Myanmar in general, progress and challenges in working with the MRCS, and the on-going concern of fundraising for the delegation as well as for MRCS in capacity building and programme development. Articles and photographs on donor-funded programmes were sent to the Red Cross societies of Japan, New Zealand, Australia and Finland. In May, a visit to Myanmar by the head of the regional delegation (HoRD) gave further clarity to the relationship between Bangkok and Yangon. It also provided an opportunity for the HoRD to better understand the leadership and work of MRCS and the need for technical and financial support for both MRCS and the Myanmar delegation. The third strategic planning meeting brought MRCS closer to the preparation of a strategic plan. It also provided a clearer understanding of the need for a cooperation agreement strategy (CAS). Both the strategic plan and the CAS process will continue throughout the rest of the year.

Impact

In spite of, or perhaps because of the deteriorating economic and political climate, it appears there is a growing interest in the capacity and programmes of MRCS, both within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and from donors and governments alike. The informal information flow between the

delegation and actual and potential PNS has increased the level of understanding and interest in the work of the Red Cross in Myanmar.

Constraints

As already outlined, MRCS is presently working on and committed to developing a comprehensive strategic plan for 2004-2008. Within this process it is also aware of the need for a CAS - seen as an extension of the strategic plan - providing actual and potential donors a clear indication of external partnerships and support sought by MRCS. The national society is, however, aware that without a plan and CAS, it is more difficult to engage partners in the society's overall development and programmes. The strategic plan is slated for the end 2003, the CAS a few months later.

International Representation

Goal: Knowledge and understanding of Red Cross Red Crescent principles and values, nationally and within the international community is increased.

Objective: MRCS and the Federation have leading roles and visibility in national and international fora, respectively.

Expected Results:

MRCS and the Federation are positioned to influence the humanitarian agenda in Myanmar and mobilise resources.

Progress/Achievements

The planned series of meetings with foreign embassies in Myanmar has continued, and general discussions were held with the ambassadors of Germany and New Zealand regarding the role of the Federation, the capacity and programmes of the MRCS, and potential areas of cooperation. At the request of the Federation Secretariat, the delegation prepared a 'Concept analysis of the humanitarian situation paper in Myanmar', to be presented in August to the Inter-Agency Steering Committee in Geneva.

Impact

There is a growing recognition by the Government and by other agencies working in Myanmar, of the Federation as a key player in Myanmar and its particular role in supporting the capacity building and development of health and disaster management programmes throughout the country. There is also increased understanding of the different components of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and their differing roles, and the potential to collectively make a considerable and very positive impact within Myanmar. This was underscored by the high level of participation in events by Government officials, and humanitarian and business organisations working in Myanmar, as well as by the solid media coverage surrounding World Red Cross Red Crescent Day.

Constraints

To date there is limited access to the Ministries of Health and Home Affairs, and although the national society has stated its willingness to organise meetings, the lack of contact between the delegation and the ministries is now a matter for concern. It is planned that initial meetings will emphasise the key goal of the Federation as support to the capacity building and programme development of the MRCS. An issue to be examined at a later date is that of establishing a status agreement or memorandum of understanding between the Government and the Federation.

Coordination

Regular meetings between ICRC and the Federation heads of delegation, and a stated desire on the part of both to cooperate and coordinate activities wherever possible, has ensured a well-established partnership.

Particular focus is given to the shared commitment to assist MRCS become more independent, and better known for its range of programmes and role as the leading humanitarian organisation in the country.

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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. 01.63/2003

PLEDGES RECEIVED

04/08/03

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				1,536,834	TOTAL COVERAGE 50.3%	
CASH CARRIED FORWARD				125,419		
AUSTRALIAN - GOVT		112,650	AUD	95,246	23.04.03	HEALTH
AUSTRALIAN - GOVT				44,385	08.04.03	HEALTH DELEGATE
BRITISH - RC		10,000	GBP	21,475	01.04.03	CAPACITY BUILDING HEALTH
BRITISH - RC		15,000	GBP	32,535	09.05.03	ORGANISATIONAL DEV., BRANCH SURVEY
FINNISH - GOVT/RC		65,845	EUR	97,154	17.03.03	DISASTER PREPAREDNESS, HUMANITARIAN VALUES, ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
JAPANESE - RC		83,181	USD	107,096	18.06.03	HIVAIDS & FIRST AID
JAPANESE - RC		99,817	USD	128,514	18.06.03	DISASTER MANAGEMENT
NEW ZEALAND - RC		50,000	NZD	37,475	16.06.03	DP TRAINING, DART TRAINING, HEALTH & CARE
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				689,299	CHF	44.9%

KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
FINLAND	DELEGATE(S)			59,959		
JAPAN	DELEGATE(S)			23,162		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				83,121	CHF	5.4%

ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET

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