

ANNUAL REPORT



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

14 May 2004

In Brief

Appeal No. 01.63/2003; Appeal target: CHF 1,615,000; Appeal coverage: 57% (CHF 917,857)
[\(click here to go directly to the Financial Report\).](#)

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Overall analysis of the programme

Throughout 2003, the international community continued to regard the overall socioeconomic and political situation in Myanmar with a certain degree of suspicion and cynicism. At the same time, there was also a growing recognition that a number of changes were taking place and that it was necessary to prepare the way and agree appropriate channels for future support and assistance, particularly in the humanitarian field. It is therefore necessary to try to understand the ongoing challenges and the progress made by the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS), as well as the type of support provided by the International Federation within the context of the evolving political and economic situation.

The national reconciliation process continued at a slow pace during the first part of the year, and although the UN Special Rapporteur was unable to carry out all of his planned missions, he stressed that "the policy option should now be engagement, not isolation". The UN Special Envoy for Myanmar also carried out a number of missions to Myanmar. In February, the government accepted a 10-day visit of Amnesty International, and a subsequent visit it was made later in the year. The ICRC continued to strengthen its position within the country, now having access to nearly all regions of the country. They maintain a constructive relationship with the government as well as having access to the leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD).

A major setback occurred in May during a tour of senior NLD leaders in northern Myanmar, with clashes between government and NLD supporters. A number of deaths occurred and the NLD leader and several senior leaders were placed under detention. This incident served to heighten the suspicion towards Myanmar by governments, as well as actual and potential donors, and the international community, led by the European Union, USA, Japan and the ASEAN countries, called for their release. The NLD leader was released from detention in September, but remains under house arrest.

In August there was a major reshuffle of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and the government, and General Khin Nyunt became the Prime Minister of Myanmar. The government presented a seven-step plan for the "Democratisation of Myanmar", with the drafting of a new constitution by the reconvened National Convention as the first priority. Looking for support and cooperation within the region, the Prime Ministers of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand met in November, agreeing a far-reaching plan of action on development projects to be implemented during the next 10 years, and Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt participated in a summit meeting of Japan and ASEAN leaders in Tokyo in December.

The socioeconomic situation continued to weaken from the previous year and with the political climate in a transition period, the result was that greater numbers of people in Myanmar were forced to live on or below the poverty line. The exchange rate of both the foreign exchange currency and the US dollar against the kyat stabilised at around Kyat 840 during the last quarter, but food prices, including staples, continued to increase and people found it increasingly difficult to buy even basic goods. From the end of August, as sanctions by the United States froze the government's and some private companies' assets in US banks, and a number of other countries suspended export and import relations with Myanmar, most of the clothing and fishery industries had to shut down. It is estimated that more than 40,000 workers lost their jobs. In October, the ASEAN leaders were reported as saying "the sanctions are not helpful in promoting the peace and stability essential for democracy to take root".

With a weakened economy, the national health facilities were stretched to their limit, and many remote villages were unable to access their services. Communities already living at their limit were not able to cope when fire and floods destroyed their homes and livelihoods, or when the 'breadwinners' lost their jobs. Fortunately, the year seemed to have been spared major disasters, although annual flooding occurred along the Ayeyarwady River and some major fires were reported and responded to in Mon, eastern Shan states and in Taninthayi and Ayeyarwady divisions. An earthquake measuring 6.7 on the richter scale hit central Myanmar in September, but with limited damage to property and persons.

Against this background, and with a strengthened Federation delegation in place since the end of 2002, the MRCS continued to show its commitment to changing its structure, systems and image within the country to serve better the most vulnerable communities.

At the twice-yearly Central Council meetings, more attention was paid to discussing plans and programmes and roles and responsibilities at different levels within the society, and throughout the year, branch members were invited to participate in national and regional meetings and trainings. At headquarter (HQ) level, a clearer definition of the roles of governance and management evolved, and by the end of the year each of the five divisions had begun preparing divisional plans. Substantial and steady progress was made on the development of a long-term Strategic Plan (2004-2008) for the national society, and the comprehensive branch survey continued to involve governance and management alike as Phase II visits were carried out across the country. More attention was paid to communication with branches, and community-based training in both first aid and disaster preparedness was expanded, and curricula revised. The Keng Tung pilot project for capacity building at the branch level, with first aid as the entry point, developed steadily and has been recognised as the model for future branch development projects.

However, with a limited number of donors, the financial position of the MRCS, and its capacity to implement major programmes in health and disaster management, continued to be precarious. Too often, planned activities, staff appointments and programmes were slow to start and implementation delayed, causing an underspend in some programme areas. The National Society and Federation delegation had to drastically scale back on 2003 plans, maintaining only the most vital components of programmes and community-based training. Reporting to donors requesting extended timeframes for programme implementation, and fundraising for Myanmar, therefore became one important and time-consuming aspect of the delegation's work.

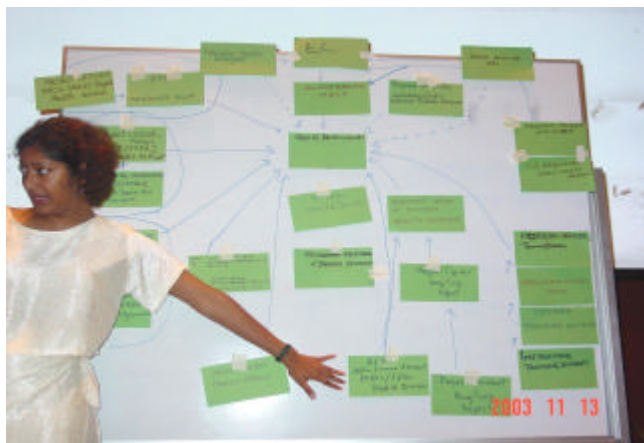
Objectives, Achievements, and Constraints

Health and Care

The MRCS health division was established during 2002. At this time the training department existed within the health division, but a separate division was established for training late in 2003. Both departments are supported technically and organisationally by the Federation delegation. Technical support to the health and training divisions was provided by two health delegates who concentrated their efforts on the training programme review and improvement, and the Keng Tung community-based health project implementation. Overall in the health and training fields, the MRCS was supported in the following key areas: capacity building of health and training divisions; improvement and expansion of first aid and community-based first aid; and the inclusion of HIV/AIDS education and prevention in all health and training programmes.

The objectives have been largely achieved during 2003 with the establishment of the Keng Tung Health Project, and the expansion of community-based first aid training-of-trainers (CBFA ToT) to 8 of 13 states/divisions with resultant CBFA multipliers carried out for the first time. Effective mobilisation of Red Cross volunteers at branch level, involving local communities in ongoing health and training activities, is now occurring.

A health retreat was held in November which brought together for the first time all staff involved in health and training activities for the MRCS. Improved sharing of information and project resources was supported by a new sense of team within the health and training divisions. Recommendations from the retreat included the commencement of monthly meetings to facilitate cross-programme support and information sharing, and a draft health division structure was developed for review and approval.



Regional HR delegate conducts a planning session on the structure of the health division at the health retreat

Both health and training divisions expanded in terms of programmes and personnel, but health division capacity received a significant setback with the resignation of the division head in December. The recruitment process for his replacement was begun immediately to ensure support is given to a full quota of staff. In addition to salary support, the health and training divisions received financial support for equipment procurement and information/education/communication resources.

Federation supported staff training included: the project planning process; blood donor recruitment; a study trip to the Philippines for the CBFA training programme and the sharing of new ideas and experiences; capacity building initiative trainings; and HIV youth programming. Improved staff capacity in the areas of planning, reporting, proposal writing, and financial management has been demonstrated by all senior staff. Health and training division staff have contributed to ongoing MRCS strategic planning and the countrywide branch survey.

The training division has revised and improved the curriculum and delivery of CBFA ToTs using a participatory model of training. A curriculum has also been developed for CBFA multipliers at community level. Topics, in addition to first aid, cover the main health issues prevalent in Myanmar and include HIV, malaria, tuberculosis, and hygiene and sanitation. The significant improvement in the training programme is as a result of a

collaborative effort between the MRCS, the Federation and the ICRC delegations. The CBFA curriculum is also supporting ongoing ICRC activities in Myanmar, in particular, tracing, mine awareness and injury response.

The contents of the standard first aid kits have been revised and are now distributed to all trained participants following CBFA ToT so as to provide further motivation and support for ongoing multiplier courses in the communities. The first aid policy has been approved and distributed to all branches. The recent implementation of new processes to facilitate ongoing support, monitoring and evaluation of training programmes, including CBFA multipliers, has highlighted the underdeveloped potential of the branches in delivering training to the most vulnerable communities.

Early 2003 saw the introduction of the AusAID/Australian Red Cross Society (ARCS) funded HIV/AIDS pilot project in Keng Tung. Early project achievements include: increasing the overall capacity of the Keng Tung branch in project management and ownership of the project; the effective mobilisation of Red Cross volunteers in project activities; community participation at all levels of planning and decision making; and access to and involvement of vulnerable groups in both urban and rural areas in terms of minimising risk of HIV and improving health. The Keng Tung model of capacity building at branch level will be replicated in other areas to support the expansion of the MRCS community-based health programmes.



KengTung staff and village leaders discuss the repair of the water supply and building of latrines as part of the community-based health programme

The development of processes to support project management in terms of financial management, reporting, decision making, and communications has occurred through intense technical support from HQ health division and Federation health delegates, resulting in an effective link for the first time, between MRCS HQ and one of its branches. HIV/AIDS support has also included facilitating access for MRCS health staff to training and regional HIV meetings, workshops and strategic planning.

By the end of the year, it could clearly be seen that the training and health programmes were consistently using a participatory model for implementation, and the success of this approach is demonstrated with the commencement of CBFA multipliers and the active participation of community members in the Keng Tung project. MRCS HQ driven programmes are now reaching the community in a sustainable and effective way, and a new and welcome relationship is being built between the MRCS health and training divisions and the branches.

The MRCS health division, while lacking in numbers, includes experienced and skilled staff that support capacity building at all levels of the organisation. The Federation health delegates, working full-time with health and training divisions during 2003, have built strong relationships with the health and training division staff and the relevant executive committee members. However, the lack of sufficient human resources to effectively support

programme activities continues to frustrate all staff. This constraint will be reduced when recruitment procedures are completed. In addition, there continues to be no clear definition of roles and responsibilities for governance and management, and this allows the continuation of cumbersome, complex and ineffective decision making processes, and inadequate information sharing. Too often this results in inefficient programme coordination and delays in programme implementation.

Disaster Management

The MRCS disaster preparedness and response division, established in 2001 at MRCS national HQ, has been supported technically and organisationally by the Federation delegation. The delegation's primary objective was to strengthen the MRCS' capacity in disaster management, based on its network of volunteers and branch structures, and in strategic partnerships with the government authorities and other agencies. Though there remains a substantial need for the follow-up work to nurture and build on the National Society's developing capacity, the programme objective was largely achieved in 2003 through a three-pronged approach.

Among the programme's three focus areas, strengthening of the national society's disaster response mechanism was the area which saw the most tangible impact during the year. A ToT pilot workshop for the Disaster Assessment and Response Team (DART), and the first three DART training workshops were organised. Through these workshops, nine people from the local authorities and military medical service, as well as 110 Red Cross officials and volunteer leaders of provincial and district levels from all parts of the country, were trained in disaster relief. The workshop curriculum placed emphasis on basic Red Cross Red Crescent Movement knowledge and on practical skills in damage and needs assessment and reporting. These workshops have been instrumental in improving the information flow between branches and national HQ in an emergency.



Team work and intense discussion at a DART Training Course

This improved communication, together with the ongoing development of logistic management systems and the replenishment of emergency relief items in 18 MRCS storage centres across the country, has contributed to the heightened readiness of the National Society as a whole to respond to disasters. This was clearly demonstrated in the aftermath of an earthquake of richter scale 6.7 in central Myanmar in September, when the MRCS and the delegation together coordinated an information sharing meeting for local and international NGOs, UN and foreign aid agencies. According to the limited information available to HQ, the National Society organised disaster relief operations and distributed pre-stocked relief items on more than 20 occasions in 2003.

The progress was somewhat slower in other focus areas such as the development of a community-based disaster preparedness pilot project. Initiated in 2002, the project facilitated the participatory risk assessment and the planning process of mitigation activities at four selected villages in Ayeyarwady division. During the year, the MRCS also responded to requests for first aid training from community planning groups, and subsequently organised courses in each village, which were attended by 133 participants, including community members and local Red Cross volunteers. The MRCS also provided these flood-prone villages, which have a total combined

population of some 1,350 people, with equipment for volunteer watchmen and materials for guardhouses on dykes to assist monitoring river levels in the rainy season. Although these communities have lived with disasters for centuries, concepts of disaster preparedness or risk reduction are mostly new to their members, and the pilot project is gradually helping to change their understanding and attitude toward disasters.

The experience in this pilot project has also been vital in preparation for the MRCS' plan to integrate its community-based first aid and health awareness training with the promotion of community resilience to disasters through local participation.

Most of the constraints within the disaster management programme can be related to the disaster preparedness and response division's insufficient capacity to guide and coordinate branch activities, and the ambiguity in the MRCS' roles and responsibilities in disaster management. It is these issues which the programme tries to address in its third focus area. The delegation has provided necessary salary support for the division's staff, and helped them to receive various training in coordination with the regional delegation in Bangkok. The delegation has also cooperated with the ICRC in offering guidance for the division's activity planning, monitoring and evaluation, and to support the integration of ICRC supported tracing activity into the division's structure. While a solid team is starting to evolve at the division as a result of this assistance, the capacity building in this field cannot go much further without clearer understanding within the National Society and among the authorities and other partners about the role of the MRCS in the country's disaster management. The adoption of the society's first disaster management policy, as well as recent efforts to disseminate knowledge of the MRCS' activities and the Movement's principles in disaster management, through public events and the publication of information materials, have prepared the ground for more active engagement in a dialogue with the authorities and partner organisations. Unfortunately, this has been delayed due to the sensitive nature of the matter and will require specific time and energy from the delegation in the coming months and years.

Humanitarian Values

The MRCS' communication division, established in 2002, continued to be provided with technical and organisational assistance by the Federation delegation. MRCS' goal in communications for 2003 was to increase the awareness and application of humanitarian values, the Fundamental Principles, and key national and global advocacy themes in Myanmar.

The already well-established Red Cross newsletter continued to be produced, with six issues published in Myanmar and one in English. The newsletter highlighted the work of the MRCS and included a series of articles on Red Cross principles, community-based first aid, disaster management, blood donation, protection of the emblem, mine awareness, as well as passing on information from other Red Cross and Red Crescent societies around the world. Extending the information a little wider, MRCS sent a number of stories to the Federation's website about society activities on HIV/AIDS peer education with truck drivers, community-based first aid training, and the branch survey, as well as providing Myanmar disaster information to DMIS. Unfortunately, the division did not manage to prepare the Annual Report 2002 in English as was anticipated in the yearly plan as a key public relations tool for the society.

The communications team continued to work with other divisions within training programmes and workshops using these not only to share information and techniques but also as an entry point for the dissemination of Red Cross principles and knowledge about the Movement. In addition, communication division staff regularly gave lectures on Red Cross principles, international humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions, and MRCS' role and responsibilities at the Central Civil Service Institute in Yangon and Mandalay, and for Defense Ministry officers at their combat & organisation training courses.

During 2003, and although still a small team, the communications division began to take a stronger overall advocacy role and was at the forefront of a number of key public events of the national society. For Red Cross Week, the team was instrumental in organising the exhibition at the annual "Outstanding Red Cross Volunteers" camp in Yangon from 3 to 9 May, as well as disseminating Red Cross messages and materials and other public relations activities. They contacted the news agencies and Myanmar television for coverage of World Red Cross Day events, and organised interviews with officials of the MRCS, and the ICRC and Federation delegations. They took the initiative to reproduce old Red Cross songs with new music and sold key chains at a subsidised rate. For the first World First Aid Day in September and for the Disaster Forum in October, the communications

team worked closely with the health and disaster management divisions to ensure that the activities were well organised and the messages were widely communicated.

For the same reasons, the head of the communications division played a key role in the organisation of the strategic planning meetings, and was largely responsible for the reports. Likewise, the head was heavily involved in the branch survey, particularly in the analysis of data and the preparation of the preliminary report, but also in the Phase II branch visits.

However, looking back at the year's achievements, and recognising the inadequate resources available, the still limited capacity of the communications division, and the many and various tasks in which the team are expected to be involved, the specific objectives set by the communications team for 2003 were not fully met. Further support and closer attention to a more concerted plan and organisation of communication tasks still requires a better strategy for more consolidated results. At this particular time in the MRCS history, with the country in a transitional phase, and with humanitarian needs expanding, the communication and dissemination of Red Cross messages, and the visibility of Red Cross programmes, must be amplified and the image of the national society strengthened. The Myanmar delegation, together with ICRC and the Federation's regional delegation, need to provide further support for the expanding work of the MRCS' communications division. Discussions are now ongoing with the ICRC for more support in the production of information materials and training.

Organisational Development

The MRCS embarked on a cautious undertaking to address its complex organisational development needs with the re-examination of the national HQ structure in 2001, and the appointment of managers to head the newly established divisions of disaster preparedness and response, health, and communications in 2002. The Federation delegation has been providing extensive assistance and guidance for the National Society throughout the process, with the objective that the MRCS will have a better foundation, capacity, and performance for running volunteer-based services and programmes more competently. In view of the country's very delicate situation, the delegation has chosen to take a measured, persevering approach to foster a consensus within the National Society and ensure its ownership of the process. The delegation managed, in close coordination with the ICRC, to support the MRCS to take significant steps in 2003 in the direction toward the programme objective.

The delegation supported the MRCS in organising five meetings during the year to keep the development of the National Society's strategic plan on track, in which governance and management could voice their different views and analyse the society's external and internal conditions together with the Movement partners. The society has adopted new vision and mission statements, and is planning to finalise a long-term strategic plan in early 2004. While the development of the MRCS' strategic plan itself has been slow, these meetings have provided unique fora for consensus-building and served as a mainstay of the overall organisational development process by keeping sensitive, strategic issues in the forefront of discussions.

The MRCS' first-ever branch survey, which started with the assistance of the Federation and the ICRC in 2002, has also taken longer to be completed than initially planned. The survey has been conducted in parallel with the strategic planning in order to complement the latter's largely national HQ-centred orientation, and to counteract the current leadership's general inclination, as well as existing organisational and managerial gaps between national HQ and branches. A branch survey preliminary report, prepared after the analysis of questionnaire responses from 55 per cent of the total branches in the survey's first phase, identified a range of issues that need to be addressed in subsequent branch development activities and which must be an integral part of the society's long-term strategic plan. The survey has gradually helped the leadership and HQ staff to realise more the strategic importance of the issues of branch development and volunteer management. The MRCS is planning to complete the second phase by organising semi-structured discussions in focus group meetings at all 17 provincial chapters and 34 sample township branches in the first quarter of 2004.

The biggest constraint and challenge in organisational development remains the unclear demarcation of roles and responsibilities between governance and management, which is continuing to cause frequent delays in decision making and obscure the process of accountability and authority. The restructuring of the national HQ and the training of management staff, though often delayed by indecision, are steadily progressing to address this issue. The training division was established during the year as a separate unit from health division, and the finance and administration division is scheduled to be established in January 2004, the new head being recruited during

December. The participation of four MRCS staff in the Project Planning Process regional trainings during the year was beneficial to the capacity building of the management. The trained staff will be used as facilitators for a PPP workshop in Myanmar planned for 2004 to improve the staff's programme management skills.

Combined with these initiatives and the establishment of proper administrative and operational procedures in the coming months, both the strategic plan and branch development activities are also expected to contribute to improving the situation by articulating the long-term direction of the National Society and by starting to disperse the focus away from HQ. In addition, the delegation will need to further tighten coordination with the ICRC and intensify joint efforts to win the understanding of the government authorities, whose support is essential to consolidate the MRCS' organisational change process.

Federation Coordination

The Federation delegation continued to work constructively and openly with MRCS, building a strong working relationship and trust, but recognising the real challenges and constraints such a partnership entails. The delegation considers it must play the roles of both promoter and defender of the MRCS to the outside world, as well as being a constant support and constructive critic of the National Society as appropriate and in the right manner.

Equally important, the delegation recognised its responsibility to sister national societies providing support to the MRCS through the Federation, providing them with information and reports as well as organising visits and special programmes as required. The key donors to the MRCS, namely the Australian, British, Finnish, Japanese and New Zealand Red Cross Societies, continued to seek advice from the delegation regarding priority issues and programmes, and others, namely the Danish, German and Swedish Red Cross Societies, requested initial information or made first visits to discuss future partnerships. All have indicated their desire to work under the umbrella of the Federation delegation, although different relationships and requirements may emerge, and all have given positive signs that if the MRCS continues to consolidate their recent progress, they will consider longer-term funding within the coming years.

At the Federation's Partnership Meeting for Southeast Asia in October, the Federation delegation prepared a joint presentation which was delivered by the President of the MRCS, the ICRC cooperation delegate and the Federation Head of Delegation (HoD), and which reinforced the importance of movement cooperation in Myanmar.

The whole delegation participated in a three-day off-site team building and planning session facilitated by the regional human resources delegate. With a larger team in place since the first quarter, and increased responsibility towards both the MRCS and partner societies, it was felt important that the staff better understand their roles and responsibilities, and to discuss how to improve individual and team performance. New regulations for national staff were agreed and a security plan for the delegation concluded by year end.

In spite of, or perhaps because of the deteriorating economic/political climate in the country, it appears that there is a growing interest in the capacity and programmes of the 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 partner national societies has increased the level of understanding and interest in the work of the Red Cross in Myanmar.

As already outlined, the MRCS is presently working on and committed to developing a comprehensive strategic plan for 2004-2008. Within this process they are also aware of the need for a cooperation agreement strategy (CAS) - seen as an extension of the strategic plan - providing actual and potential donors a clear indication of external partnerships and support sought by the MRCS. They are aware, however, that without a plan and CAS, it is more difficult to engage partners in their society's overall development and programmes. The strategic plan is slated for early 2004, and the CAS process to begin at the 2004 Myanmar Partnership Meeting.

International Representation

The Federation is not well known in Myanmar, and even within the international community there is a high degree of misunderstanding about its role and activities. Efforts were made during 2003 to clarify its position, activities, working methodology and responsibilities within Myanmar, particularly with regard to the MRCS. 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 was 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.

The delegation and the MRCS took the initiative early in the year to organise a meeting with interested international NGOs to discuss the issue of coordination of information and response in times of disaster. The group agreed that the delegation and the MRCS were appropriately placed to continue leading discussions and eventually present some proposals to the appropriate government ministries and authorities. Unfortunately, and as already noted in the disaster management section of this report, the delegation and the MRCS have yet to follow up on this initiative.

The HoD began a series of meetings with foreign embassies in Myanmar, and in Bangkok, and general discussions were held with the ambassadors of Great Britain, Japan, Germany, Australia and New Zealand regarding the role of the Federation, the capacity and programmes of the MRCS, and potential areas of cooperation. During this period talks were also held between the Federation HoD and representatives of DFID and AusAID with regard to actual or potential funding and relationships through the respective national societies or through the Federation in the case of DFID. Discussions were also held between the HoD and the New Zealand Red Cross Society and NZAID during a 7-city speaking tour which the HoD undertook at the invitation of the New Zealand Red Cross Society, one of the key partners of the MRCS and the Federation's delegation.

In August, a very constructive meeting was organised by the MRCS with the Minister of Health, together with the directors of all the departments of the Ministry of Health. The Federation was represented by the HoD and the health delegate, and present from the MRCS were the President, the senior advisor on communications and humanitarian affairs and the honorary secretary. Discussions focussed on the roles of the MRCS and the Federation delegation with regard to health and disaster preparedness / response programmes, and it was agreed that further talks be held in the next months. A subsequent meeting was organised with the Deputy Minister of Health during a visit from the Head of the Secretariat's Asia Pacific department. At this meeting the question of a status agreement between the government of Myanmar and the International Federation was discussed, and suggestions were given as to what steps could be pursued to move this forward. To date there has been limited access to the Ministries of Social Welfare and Home Affairs, although the MRCS stated its willingness to organise meetings and to ensure formal introductions were made.

The Federation delegation participated in all UN and international NGO meetings, including those with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the UN Special Envoy for Myanmar, and was able to present its position and observations on these occasions. More informal meetings were held between the delegation, the MRCS and individual organisations and agencies, such as WHO and UNDP, with regard to more specific issues. At the request of the Federation Secretariat, the delegation prepared a "Concept Analysis of the Humanitarian Situation in Myanmar" which was presented to the Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC) in Geneva in August.

There is a growing recognition of the Federation as a key player in Myanmar and its particular role in supporting the capacity building and the development of health and disaster management programmes throughout the country. There is also increased understanding of the different components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and how and why they have differing roles, and how collectively they have the potential to make a considerable and very positive impact within Myanmar.

The challenge remains to improve the capacity of the MRCS so as to strengthen its programmes to assist the most vulnerable, and to be the most effective and visible humanitarian organisation working in Myanmar. The International Federation, as a membership organisation, must ensure that all support to the MRCS, and through it to its many and differing communities, must be appropriate, consistent and sustainable.