

Appeal 2005



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

ASIA PACIFIC: 2005 APPEAL INTRODUCTION

Appeal no. 05AA045- 063

The International Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity. The Federation is the world's largest humanitarian organisation, and its millions of volunteers are active in over 180 countries. All international assistance to support vulnerable communities seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, according to the SPHERE Project.

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Region Details	2005 in CHF
East Asia	19,980,572
Pacific	3,295,096
South Asia	25,930,093
Southeast Asia	10,431,041
Asia Pacific Service Centre	320,856
Total sought	59,957,658

Asia Pacific is the most disaster-prone region on earth, with some 60 percent of all natural disasters occurring in this area. The region also contains almost two-thirds of the world's population, many of whom live on flood plains and in coastal areas exposed to cyclones. Relatively high vulnerabilities among the dense populations along the main river systems in China, in the downstream and delta areas of major rivers such as the Ganges and the Mekong and in the cyclone exposed Bay of Bengal and China Sea coastal areas result in several hundred million disaster victims each year. In 2004, this pattern was exemplified with major flooding in South Asia (Bangladesh, India and Nepal) and large swathes of China.

The region also contains one of the world's most active earthquake and volcanic fault lines. Moreover, as populations grow, more people become disaster victims. The Pacific Islands, for instance, by virtue of their small size and relative isolation, present special risks to their populations during the cyclone season and face the threat of rising seas levels, brought on by global warming. Driven by the Netherlands Red Cross, a climate change pilot programme got underway in the Pacific during 2004, complementing a similar initiative in Vietnam started during the previous year, focusing on community adaptation/mitigation micro-projects and public awareness.

Poverty is the most widespread elemental problem in Asia Pacific, with around three-quarters of the world's poor living in the region, where roughly 25 percent of the population exist in 'absolute poverty', well in excess, for instance, of the figure in sub-Saharan Africa. For much of the 20th century, poverty in Asia Pacific was primarily a rural phenomenon, but with the rapid shift from country to city in later decades, the number of urban poor has grown inexorably, giving rise to new challenges mainly centred on overpopulation and disease control.

Nevertheless, strenuous efforts by governments across the region to alleviate poverty are starting to bear fruit. Indicators on the progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving the number of people living on less than one US dollar per day by 2015 points to encouraging trends in the Pacific, East and South Asia, with especially good results so far in China and India, the world's two most populous countries. Overall, the present position on meeting MDG targets throughout Asia Pacific is more mixed. Progress on goals relating to food security, primary education, child/maternal mortality, maternal health and combating disease is described as ranging from modest to poor by monitoring agencies. Interestingly however, the region is scoring better at present on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The size and diversity of the region – which stretches from Afghanistan to the Pacific Islands and a socio-economic scale including Japan, Australasia and Singapore through to Pakistan, DPR Korea and Timor-Leste – combined with its vast and vulnerable population, susceptibility to disaster and disease and the ever-present spectre of conflict and terrorist outrage present huge challenges and opportunities for the humanitarian sector, especially the 35 Asia Pacific Red Cross and Red Crescent societies (including those seeking recognition and admission) and their partners.

Against this background, it is no surprise that CHF 59.9 million of funds sought for activities in Asia Pacific to assist the needy in 2005, far exceed the aspirations of any other region in the Federation, apart from Africa. Three countries from Asia Pacific – DPR Korea, Afghanistan and India – are in the top four on the global list of appeal targets for the coming year and comprise nearly half the figure requested for the region:

Afghanistan: Strategic development of the Afghan Red Crescent is a primary focus for 2005, with objectives including: developing a constitution; increasing branches' organisational capacity; establishing cost-effective systems; expanding fundraising capacity, with sustainability being the long-term goal; and encouraging youth to learn about and disseminate humanitarian values.

DPR Korea: The distribution of essential medicines in four provinces and implementation of community-based first aid and education programmes will reach an estimated 8.9 million people in 2005, coupled with water and sanitation activities for the construction and rehabilitation of water supply and waste water systems in vulnerable communities; training 1,000 community health volunteers in hygiene promotion; and reaching 117,000 more beneficiaries in 40 target communities.

India: Federation Secretariat support in 2005 will concentrate on the Indian Red Cross strategic priorities with focus on eight targeted disaster-prone states and assisting the national society in its cooperation with the partner base.

Together with the Federation Secretariat, a number of bilateral Red Cross and Red Crescent partners and the ICRC also form the basis for assistance to Asia Pacific national societies. In 2002, the last year for which full figures are available, international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement support to Asia Pacific national societies exceeded CHF 250 million – well ahead of any of the major UN agencies – with the ICRC contributing 66 percent of the total, the Federation Secretariat 20 percent and bilateral Red Cross and Red Crescent partners 14 percent. Whereas the ICRC contribution relates specifically to its mandate in conflict situations, the Federation Secretariat and bilateral components target vulnerability reduction and tangibly impact progress towards achieving the MDGs. The

data also relates solely to international assistance in Asia Pacific, excluding domestic fundraising by the region's national societies themselves, which can be conservatively approximated at several hundred million CHF.

The Federation Secretariat's regional structure to support the Asia Pacific membership in their work to improve the situation of the most vulnerable is centred on a tried-and-trusted sub-regional composition, with regional delegations in Bangkok, Beijing, Delhi and Suva, managing a further 16 delegations/offices. A regional service centre, based in Kuala Lumpur, provides the network with technical advice and guidance on finance, reporting and organisational development, with a number of other functions, including telecommunications and logistics, in the pipeline.

Working coherently as a Federation of course demands the creation and fostering of cross-border initiatives, which truly harness the power of humanity. The Asian AIDS Network celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2004 as an effective mechanism for regional cooperation, helping individual societies to produce strategic plans for combating the virus – and the consequent stigma and discrimination – encouraging them to integrate monitoring and evaluation into their project design, and to focus on outcomes and impact measurement.

HIV/AIDS was late coming to Asia and the Pacific, but the situation is rapidly changing and the virus is now spreading much faster than the response. Over seven million people are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in the region; India, China and Indonesia, with their very large populations, are at especially high risk. In Asia Pacific, as globally, the aims of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic are threefold: to reduce stigma and discrimination; to prevent further infection; and to provide care, treatment and support. A five-year plan for addressing these imperatives through the period 2005-09 was drawn up at the end of 2004, including regional and country level projects and targeted at diversifying the funding base and securing long term mobilisation of resources to enable Asia Pacific Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to scale up their HIV/AIDS response.

Anchoring much of the Federation's work and activities throughout Asia Pacific is the Manila Action Plan (MAP) – signed by the region's national societies at the VIth regional conference in the Philippine capital at the end of 2002 – now entering its third year of implementation, centred on three pivotal programme areas: health, population movement and disaster management. A detailed questionnaire completed by the membership in 2004 on progress with MAP objectives and tasks drew some encouraging results, also shedding light on various challenges which are being addressed ahead of the VIIth conference, scheduled for the final quarter of 2006.

In summary, entering 2005, as ever, many uncertainties lie ahead for Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies in Asia Pacific and the millions of disadvantaged they seek to assist. The Federation response is premised on: achieving a marked expansion in the volume of service delivery to the needy; finding new funding sources, particularly in the development sphere, to drive this growth; enhancing national society capacity; and integrating still further Movement intervention across Asia Pacific.