

Report 2006-2007



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Central America and Mexico

Appeal No. MAA443001

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This report covers the period of 01/01/1006 to 31/12/2007 of a two-year planning and appeal process.



Course on Disaster Management and Control, El Salvador. Source: Salvadorean Red Cross

In brief

Programme summary:

During the 2006-2007 period, the goal of the Regional Representation for Central America and Mexico was to support National Societies (NS) in the implementation of efficient, responsive, and focused programmes that contribute to improving the lives of vulnerable people.

The Regional Representation's regional programme areas worked arduously and participated in the Santiago de Chile Inter-American Plan of Action self assessment and supported the Study of the Americas carried out by the Complutense University. Additionally, it supported the organization of the XVIII Inter-American Conference and the drafting of its Plan of Action. Hence, the representation emphasized on facilitating the implementation of the XVII Inter-American Conference Plan of Action as well as the new Guayaquil Inter-American Conference Plan of Action; stressing community interventions, integrated programming, and the fostering of Red Cross networks to define norms and share and disseminate best practices.

Due to the work it carried out during the 2006-2007 period, the Regional Health and Care Programme is seen as the continent's leader in successfully implementing new initiatives and the rolling out of methodologies. It coordinated and cooperated with the Caribbean and South America regions with the objective of achieving continental programme harmonization. The programme followed the Global Health and Care Strategy thus intensifying and scaling up its contribution to the health and socio-economic development of communities through capacity building, social mobilization, partnerships and advocacy. By the end of the 2006-2007 period, the programme began work with NS in the region towards the Global Alliance on HIV and AIDS and launched a continental

blood donation campaign.

During the period at hand, the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Programme shifted its work towards two vital areas: the improvement of NS preparedness capacity and the strengthening of communities' risk reduction and recovery capacities. Work towards the achievement of these objectives was carried out jointly with the two regional Reference Centres, the regional SPHERE focal point and the regional disaster network "REDCAMP Disasters". The programme sought to establish common approaches to risk reduction within each NS and its branches which ultimately resulted in a regional disaster preparedness programme harmonization.

Drawing lessons from successful pilot efforts in Humanitarian Principles and Values, the focus of the programme during 2006-2007 was on providing NS the necessary tools and methodologies to tackle crucial issues such as stigma and discrimination against People Living with HIV (PLWH). Additionally, the programme worked on creating alliances with the private sector that resulted in new opportunities to advocate and raise awareness on issues such as violence and gender equity.

The Organizational Development (OD) programme supported NS in their adherence to the "Well Functioning Nation Societies" criteria through providing necessary technical advice on strategic planning and statute revision and through the implementation of the regional volunteering strategy. Additionally the programme worked on the strengthening of the OD network and on border micro projects.

The Regional Representation Office (RRO) for Central America and Mexico played a key role in supporting the decentralization transition process and the implementation of the new operating model.

Needs: Total 2006-2007 budget CHF 6,545,117 (USD 5,854,309 or EUR 3,966,738) (out of which 73 per cent covered). **Click here to go directly to the attached financial reports:**

[report 2006](#)

[report 2007](#)

[report 2006/2007](#)

No. of people we help: The RRO focused on building the capacities of NS in the region. In consequence, direct beneficiaries of the regional representation's programmes are NS themselves including their staff at headquarters and branch level, governance bodies and volunteers. In effect, the regional representation's indirect beneficiaries belong to the civil society since it is through the strengthening of NS's capacities and the technical support offered, that methodologies, initiatives and activities as a whole can be carried out and implemented accordingly.

Our partners: The Panama Regional Representation has a number of partners who offer technical and/or financial support to the different programme areas while other partners work hand in hand with the representation through alliances and joint collaborations. Partner NS include the American, British, Canadian, Finnish, Italian, Netherlands, Norwegian, Spanish, Swedish and Swiss Red Cross Societies with funding received from the British, Finnish, Swedish Red Cross Societies, DFID, ECHO and ProVention. The Regional Representation continues to build on its relationships with other organizations during the reporting period such as Plan International, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Health Organization/Pan American Health Organization (WHO/PAHO), International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), World Food Programme (WFP), McCann Erickson, and AudioVideo.

Current context

Over the past decade, the end of authoritarianism and armed conflict in the seven countries covered by the Panama Regional Representation contributed to efforts to achieve stability and sustained development. Nonetheless, the region still faces numerous challenges, including widespread poverty, inequality, social unrest, violence and criminality, and frequent natural disasters. In El Salvador,

Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, approximately half the population lives below the poverty line, with indigenous peoples in particular suffering social constraints to their advancement, and suffering in consequence high incidences of malnutrition and infant and maternal mortality.

Socio-economic trends have fuelled the spread of HIV and AIDS in the region, with a devastating effect on productivity and human and economic development. The proliferation of arms in recent years fed a growing epidemic of violent crime, involving disaffected and unemployed youth. Finally, the region has remained extremely vulnerable to natural disasters, including hurricanes, floods, landslides, drought, and frequent volcanic and seismic episodes, the impact of which is often worsened by underlying factors such as environmental pollution and the over-exploitation of natural resources.

The seven Red Cross National Societies of the region have a long history of responding to these challenges, with assistance from the Federation, the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (ICRC), and Partner National Societies (PNS). Following the traumatic impact of Hurricanes Dean, Felix, Noel, and Stan on almost all Central American countries during the 2006-2007 period, the Regional Representation was involved in disaster response jointly with PADRU, and subsequently in long-term reconstruction and rehabilitation projects. While disaster response, including First Aid, ambulance, and blood services continues to be an essential component of the work of the National Societies (NS), the Federation in the region increasingly intervened at the community level in the fields of health and disaster preparedness, and developing strategic alliances and project-specific collaboration with governmental and humanitarian agencies.

Progress towards objectives

Health and Care Programme

Programme Objective: National Societies in the region have increasingly adhered to the commitments in health as set out in the Plan of Action of the XVIII Inter-American Conference, particularly with respect to the development of their health departments, and in the areas of HIV and AIDS, health in emergencies, community health, the promotion of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation (VNRBD), Psychosocial Support Programmes (PSP), and water and sanitation.

Achievements:

During the 2006-2007 period, the Regional Health and Care Programme saw the unveiling of several achievements as a result of continuous efforts in all of its key areas. It placed particular emphasis on the development of National Society health departments, on rolling out HIV and AIDS initiatives, on strengthening health components in emergencies and on the promotion of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation (VNRBD) supported over the past five years with funding from Norwegian RC and NORAD.

The programme focused on assisting National Societies in the region in the fulfilment and scaling up of their commitments in the health sector as set out in the Plan of Action of the Santiago de Chile Inter-American Conference and in the launching of strategies and methodologies in accordance to the new Guayaquil Inter-American Conference Plan of Action.

Hence, the Health and Care Plan of Action (PoA) of the Inter-American Conference in Guayaquil, June 4 to June 8, was a trigger for change within the Programme in the Americas Zone. This was not only due to the addition of the two new areas, "Road Safety" and "Harm Reduction" (intra-venous drug use) but rather to the fact that the PoA highlighted the importance of having harmonized methodologies throughout the Zone.

Furthermore, the Central American Health Network (REDCAMP-SALUD), developed with Federation

assistance since 2004, remained the driving force behind the promotion of harmonized health programmes, providing all seven National Societies with a forum to share best practices and disseminate standardized approaches. The Regional Health and Care programme fostered this vital network, and undertook country-specific interventions to create and sustain efficient and viable National Society health departments. Such was the case of the Guatemalan Red Cross, which restructured its Health Department with support from the regional programme and additionally appointed a Head of the Health Department to coordinate national activities. The Costa Rica Red Cross also made advances towards the restructuring of its department; however, the NS is still negotiating with the Federation.

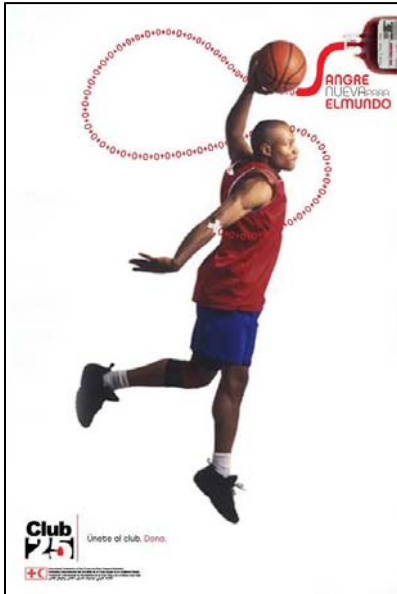
In its commitment to epidemic diseases' transmission prevention, the Regional Health and Care Programme further built on the position it previously enjoyed in the region as a credible partner in confronting the HIV pandemic, working more closely with People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA). For one, the response of NS in the HIV epidemic was refined and scaled-up in the areas of prevention, care and anti-stigma and discrimination advocacy through a number of initiatives in the course of the years.

HIV campaigns and methodologies implemented throughout the region were hugely successful. The *"Nobody has the Truth Written on their Face. Protect Yourself. Use a Condom"* campaign promoting condom use amongst the sexually active population was implemented in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. Additionally, the *"Transporting Respect for People Living with HIV and AIDS"* campaign exceeded expectations since 2005 when it began as a pilot. At the end of the 2006-2007 period, the Guatemalan, Honduran, Nicaraguan, and Salvadorian Red Cross Societies were working with more than 500 drivers who were reaching 10-12 passengers each on a daily basis reflecting the capacity to reach over 90,000 people per month with correct information focusing on HIV prevention and the promotion of tolerance towards PLWAs.

The programme also expanded its flagship in the region in HIV transmission prevention through the youth peer education methodology *"Together We Can"* (TWC). Besides reaching more than 6000 peers in the region through Federation supported workshops, a quantitative and qualitative report was delivered at the end of 2007 which provided insight in what National Societies carried out with regard to TWC activities and a baseline for the mandatory use of the monitoring and evaluation tools by NS in order to measure impact. Additionally, a TWC technical group was created with the participation of all three Americas' regions aiming at standardizing the methodology.

Fortunately, the HIV and AIDS component of the programme saw the unveiling of new opportunities for other NS in the region and new funding and long-term opportunities for the implementation of high impact HIV and AIDS Plans of Action. The Mexican Red Cross accepted the challenge of introducing the HIV and AIDS component of the Health Plan of Action in their Country Health Programme. This NS also agreed to actively participate at the International AIDS Conference to be held in Mexico on August 2008 for which the regional programme is also preparing. In order to aid the Mexican Red Cross in their participation at the Congress, the American, Canadian, Norwegian, Spanish and Swedish Red Cross have offered their support. This was a direct result from resource mobilization actions that the programme undertook during the last months, as previously stated.

In addition, the programme directed efforts towards the Global Alliance on HIV. After the visit to the region by the Special Representative of the Secretary General and the Global Alliance workshop with 13 NS, a total of ten NS have become part of the Alliance, of which three belong to the Central America region. The implementation of the Global Alliance outputs already began in the region taking into account that a toolkit for the prevention, treatment, care and support of PLWAs was translated into Spanish and adapted to the region's context thanks to support received by the Netherlands Red Cross.



In the area of Voluntary Non-Remunerated Blood Donation (VNRBD), the regional Health and Care Programme underwent tremendous progress with finding strategic allies, mobilizing new financial resources and marketing the initiative since 2006. After completing a

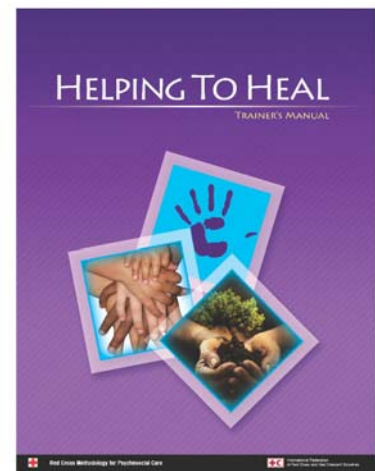
One of the posters produced by advertising agency McCaen Erickson for Club 25

regional mapping and baseline study on NS implementing “Club 25”, 2007 saw the rolling-out and scaling-up of this

methodology. A continental mass media-marketing campaign for Club 25 entitled “New Blood for the World” was launched in the Americas as a result of a strategic alliance and relationship with the international advertising company McCann Erickson. This is a rather imperative achievement for the implementation and the marketing of the programme’s components in the region. At the same time, through an alliance with Peace Corps Panama, two additional tools for Club 25 were completed: “How to Initiate a Club 25” and “The Club 25 Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit.” The regional programme keeps

supporting NS in the implementation of Club 25 with the support of the Finnish Red Cross.

The regional Health and Care Programme, in search of fulfilling its commitments in other areas such as health in emergencies and Mother and Child Health (MCH) carried out several initiatives throughout the 2006-2007 period. The health in emergencies programme area was approached in the form of Psychosocial Support Programmes (PSP) seeing as there was an increased interest in PSP both outside and during disasters. Thus, the regional methodology “Helping to Heal” was developed and its toolkit serves as training material for volunteers and paraprofessionals. Moreover, in response to a dengue alert by the Red Cross Society of Panama after an outbreak of 700 cases during the first three months of 2007 in Panama, the RHCP printed 6000 booklets on Dengue prevention which is part of the MCH programme area.



Helping to Heal manual

While strengthening and rolling-out programme components, the regional programme recognized the need for resource mobilization. Hence, the programme held meetings with all current donors including the American, Finnish, Netherlands, Norwegian and Swedish Red Cross and discussed ongoing activities and future programme needs. Through a number of meetings such as the Guayaquil Inter-American Conference and the Global Alliance on HIV, the programme was able to address topics related to resource mobilization, monitoring and projecting. As a result from these meetings, continued support for a possible new three year cycle was agreed upon with the Norwegian Red Cross. In addition, a different and proactive stand was taken by the regional programme, by marketing itself through the distribution of 300 brochures in both English and Spanish to strategic allies and potential as well as current donors.

Challenges and Constraints: Unfortunately, the regional Health and Care programme was unable to roll out initiatives with the Water and Sanitation (WatSan) component. This was mainly due to the lack of a WatSan delegate in the region and the lack of resources by the programme, to contract one. Even though activities were limited, WatSan activities during emergencies were led by the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and several community health projects in the region included WatSan components.

Disaster Risk Reduction:

Programme Objective: Strengthened National Societies are working at the community, national and regional levels to reduce risk, making communities safer and more resilient to disasters.

Achievements:

Over the past two years the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Programme placed efforts on ensuring effective community, national and regional level work by NS aiming at community preparedness and resilience in the face of disasters, and at supporting well-functioning response systems. Most importantly, the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction programme worked towards shifting the focus of disaster risk reduction in the region from projects to programmes, seeking to establish links between individual projects in order to ensure a common approach to risk reduction within each country.

Cooperation and coordination with other organizations and agencies such as PLAN International, ISDR, UNICEF, OAS, Oxfam and others was possible during the 2006-2007 period through joint ventures such as the "Risk Reduction Begins at School" campaign. Having created successful alliances consequently had a larger impact on both regional and community levels. From an internal point of view, the regional programme worked jointly with PNS such as the Italian RC, the Netherlands RC and the Spanish RC for the implementation of the national and regional risk reduction programmes financially supported by ECHO. Through the financial support received from the British and Finnish RC, DFID, ECHO and ProVention, the regional programme was able to attain the necessary funding to support NS in the region in developing risk reduction institutional frameworks which is seen as a vital achievement by the programme.

During the 2006-2007 period, the regional programme also coordinated Climate Change initiatives with the Climate Centre. Such initiatives started to represent a greater priority for some NS in the last years. Therefore, NS are starting to integrate Climate Change into their national risk reduction programmes. Through the promotion of exchanging materials, methodologies and communication's tools by the regional programme, NS are developing their climate change programme as a risk reduction measure in the face of an evolving climate.

In line with the Inter-American Conference and based on the Guayaquil Strategic Plan of Action, the regional Risk Reduction Programme's Plan of Action 2008-2009 was drafted, taking into account new issues discussed at the Conference that affect the region and are an increasing risk to communities. The Plan of Action was developed with the support of the regional disasters network.

Therefore, the programme continued to follow the strategic approach developed since 2003, specifically the development of a dedicated Red Cross Central American regional disaster management network (REDCAMP-DESASTRES) and the delegation of technical support functions to specialized Centres of Reference - hosted by the National Societies in Costa Rica and El Salvador in the fields of community-based disaster management education and institutional disaster preparedness, respectively.

With the support of the regional Disaster Risk Reduction Programme, this technical network (REDCAMP-DESASTRES and both Reference Centres), aided NS in the region in achieving and maintaining Federation standards in disaster preparedness; in developing standard operating procedures, contingency planning skills, National Intervention Team (NIT) training tools, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; as well as positioning themselves as effective partners for national emergency agencies.

Furthermore, the regional programme worked jointly with both Reference Centres for the strengthening of NS's institutional capacities as well as for the common use of community based risk reduction tools and methodologies. Both Reference Centres work through internships carried out by technicians, which reflects the level of cooperation that existed between Reference Centres and NS in the process of

elaboration, creation, revision and implementation of tools and methodologies. The centres also took on the role of capacity builders through the constant training of volunteers, technicians and overall staff and the up-dating of their capacities.

Both Reference Centres acquired such internal and external recognition that they now have a high demand for service and receive many requests from NS in the region as well as those belonging to other regions. What's more, preparedness tools and methodologies have become reference material and are being put to use by other institutions throughout the region (the Town Hall of Tegucigalpa and the National Disaster Systems in Guatemala and Costa Rica) as well as by other organizations (such as Plan and CARE).

Having established Reference Centres, the regional programme was able to approach its objective on enhancing Red Cross contribution to making vulnerable communities more disaster-resilient through several initiatives. Such were carried out by the Costa Rica Centre of Reference for Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CRCBDP) and supported by the regional risk reduction programme.



The CRCBDP's "Better Be Ready" series of 13 modules consequently served to establish early warning systems and draft community plans of action that have been put to use in Guatemala in municipalities affected by Hurricane Stan as well as in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama through micro-projects. Being the cornerstone of community based education in disaster preparedness in the region, the series served an important role in following up Vulnerability Capacity Assessments (VCA) during the last years. Such include technical consultation, production of materials, educational initiatives, community First Aid, early warning systems, risk reduction micro-projects and capacity building workshops through the "Learning by Doing Methodology. VCA and the "Better Be Ready" series are currently used as a common methodology; thus harmonizing projects' processes throughout the region. In fact, the regional programme initiated the development of the series' lessons plans for the module's trainers.

Schoolchildren playing Riskland and learning about Risk Reduction. Source: Red Cross Society of Panama

The Centre of Reference for Disaster Preparedness at Institutional Level, supported by the regional programme, drafted the guides for "National Disaster Response Team," "Centres for Emergency Operations," "Drills and Simulations" and "Emergency Evaluations" which were created through internships and are currently implemented in all NS throughout the region. The use of common methodologies consequently led the region to a good level of institutional harmonization. Hence, the Reference Centre began to take on the role of guiding NS on the use of the materials and supporting them in updating their Plans. The centre also provided integral support in strengthening National Intervention Teams (NIT) through ToT workshops and the updating of trained NITs.

Communications for Risk Reduction:

The regional programme also focused on ensuring that disaster risk reduction information is effectively disseminated throughout the region in order to increase awareness and identify hazards. Therefore, the regional disaster preparedness communications strategy was a vital component of the regional programme. Two awareness raising campaigns were created and implemented. One campaign was developed specially for the hurricane and rainy season and sought a more active role in risk reduction by communities ("Nosotros estamos aquí para Ayudar, tu para Prevenir": We are here to Help, you to

Prevent). A second campaign aimed at communities working jointly with schools in disaster preparedness through the “Better Be Ready” module “Protected School” and was called “Disaster Reduction begins at School.”

In addition, the regional programme prepared other visibility and communications material with help from the Regional Communications Department which were meant for NS to use on a regional framework.

Humanitarian Principles and Values

Programme Objective: Humanitarian principles and values are integrated in each of the core program areas within the National Societies in the region, in accordance with Strategy 2010.

Achievements:

Recognizing that the Movement's Fundamental Principles and the basic Humanitarian Values that underlie them should inform and guide all Red Cross programming, the Regional Representation was working to ensure that they are reflected in all initiatives in the region through the Regional Humanitarian Principles and Values Programme. Therefore, during the 2006-2007 period, the regional programme built upon the ground-breaking work previously carried out by some NS in order to strengthen the impact and expand the scope of communications and dissemination initiatives.

It is imperative to mention that prior to the work carried out during the reporting period, important work had already been done at the national and regional level. Innovative pilot projects mobilizing Red Cross resources to counter discrimination and stigmatization in the context of the HIV and the development, during 2005, of a regional strategy for the prevention of violence, had provided some NS with valuable first-hand experience of the challenges and potential of communications and public relations work in these important fields.

However, 2006 and 2007 saw the expansion of the programme through vital strategic alliances that gave way to new opportunities in the areas of advocacy and awareness raising for all programme components. For one, the HPV programme saw the unveiling of new tools by collaborating with the Spanish Red Cross. Such are “The Regional Volunteering Strategy”, its methodology and a model; “The Regional Guide for Training in Disaster Policy” and the “Regional Strategy for the Prevention of Violence.” The program also coordinated actions with the Violence Coordinator of the ICRC for the region such as the revising of violence related proposals for the NS of the Dominican Republic Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

In coordination with the regional health programme, the regional HPV programme implemented the regional “Transporting respect to people living with HIV” initiative. This initiative, which succeeded expectations, created discussion spaces in communities for individuals to learn about and discuss HIV. Additionally, it had constant television and written coverage and strengthened the Guatemalan Red Cross HIV programme. It further raised awareness on the subject of discrimination against people living with HIV within NS themselves which is reflected through the use of appropriate, sensitive language.

Within the same coordination lines, three NS in the region drafted their plans for the HIV and AIDS Global Alliance and included a strong component on work against discrimination and stigma related to people living with HIV and AIDS. The latter component will serve as a platform for resource mobilization efforts within the programme.

An important achievement in the area of alliances is the strategic alliance with the Honduran radio network AudioVideo. The signing of the MoU for the strategic alliance took place on September 2007. As a result from the MoU between AudioVideo and the Federation, the regional HPV programme has

been able to launch three different campaigns in the areas of risk reduction and HIV as well as one campaign in celebration of the Honduran Red Cross' 70 years. The risk reduction campaign focused on community education, specifically for communities that border the Tegucigalpa River. The HIV campaign orients youth with messages on solidarity and non-discrimination towards people living with HIV, focusing on respect and prevention. Additionally, the alliance has aided in the marketing of the Federation's web page since a link has been created at AudioVideo's web page.

The regional HPV programme was able to define the four-year HPV strategy taking as a baseline the Inter-American Conference. The regional communicators' network began the process of disseminating the HPV Plan of Action which supported NS in the drafting of their strategic plan and provided orientation to NS on the new components that resulted from Guayaquil. This agreement was a direct result from a meeting the regional HPV program held with the network as well as with the ICRC. Furthermore, this commitment on behalf of the network is an important step towards the integration of the program and its new components in all NS Strategic Plans.

Moreover, much of the regional HPV Programme's effort over the past two years focused on mobilizing the immense potential represented by Red Cross youth and volunteers as change agents both within their own NS and with their peers. Hence, the programme successfully advocated non-discrimination values in the region through the dissemination of the "Federation Promise of Non-Discrimination" and the "Non-Discrimination Pledge" via workshops for volunteers. These workshops brought a tangible change of attitude within NS; and the participation in and further willingness to work within these lines widely increased amongst youth volunteers.

More attention was devoted to the development and dissemination of a common set of regional materials in HPV. Hence, the programme developed annual Information Toolkits (the first one was launched in 2006 and the second by the end of 2007) that included two CDs and one DVD, reference documents, capacity building and training manuals and material for HPV-promoting campaigns. These toolkits were handed out to all NS in the region, to be used by technicians in their respective program areas. The latter is essential in guiding and supporting NS in their work towards promoting HPV not only internally but externally as well.

Hiring a Humanitarian Values coordinator in the Honduran Red Cross, the ongoing development of regional communications tools, including a web-page, CDs, videos, and manuals, and the creation of a Movement dissemination and communication network, left the Red Cross well positioned to demonstrate the relevance of its body of principles through effective advocacy and action, in collaboration with the wider humanitarian community and with relevant state agencies.

Organizational Development:

Programme Objective: The National Societies in the region are increasingly adhering to the criteria of a "Well Functioning National Society," and are improving their capacity to work with vulnerable communities.

Achievements:

The Organizational Development (OD) programme played a pivotal role in developing the capacity of NS through the strengthening of the institutional structures of such, focusing particularly on volunteer management, and on promoting peer to peer support to NS through the OD network. Additionally, the regional programme reinforced, during the 2006-2007 period, earlier initiatives that encouraged every NS in the region to adhere as closely as possible to the criteria of a "Well Functioning National Society" and improve its capacity to work with vulnerable communities.

The regional OD programme encouraged and supported the necessary evolution of organizational structures, processes, practices, and tools through a set of initiatives such as the undergoing of electoral processes. This was the case in the Panamanian and Guatemalan Red Cross Societies.

What's more, the programme promoted the revision of NS statutes (legal bases); this took place in the Salvadorean Red Cross Society and the Red Cross Society of Panama which received technical support in the creation of its new electoral regulations.

In addition, the OD programme supported NS strategic planning at national level, including branches. During the 2006-2007 period, five NS revised their strategic plans: the Costa Rican Red Cross, Salvadorean Red Cross, Guatemalan Red Cross, Honduran Red Cross, and the Red Cross Society of Panama.

Within the framework of the Volunteer Strategy, the OD programme was able to accomplish a number of objectives given the need for a strategy and the receptiveness of NS. The fact that six NS approved and disseminated their volunteering policies and management techniques for volunteers shows high ownership of the strategy on behalf of NS. The programme also supported the creation of the first basic volunteer manual with the participation from seven NS volunteer leaders. Additionally, the NS of Costa Rica, Guatemala and Mexico have a volunteer management tool based on the regional manual.

Hence, given the broad framework of the volunteer strategy, all NS strategic plans include concrete indicators of volunteer participation in all programme areas. Based on the positive experience of the "Volunteers in Emergencies Protocol" application during the Hurricane Stan operation in Guatemala, the protocol has been included in Contingency and Response Plans of almost all NS in the region. The protocol was also applied during the Hurricane Felix operation and served as a model during the Peru earthquake operation in 2007.

Additional to the later achievements, the regional programme created a Volunteer Database and posted it on the website for its use by all NS in the region. The NS of El Salvador, Guatemala and Panama created their own database taking the region's model as a reference. Consequently, the Regional Representation developed a guide on the use of the database.

A final vital achievement within the area of volunteers was the fact that all seven NS in the region, coordinated by the Panamanian Red Cross' volunteer training centre, created the "Integrated Training Curricula for Volunteers" and subsequently disseminated it.

Furthermore, the OD programme actively supported the strengthening of the regional youth network as well as its annual meetings and its participation in the first Inter-American Red Cross youth meeting in the framework of the Inter American Conference in Guayaquil.

At the same time, the programme worked towards finding alternate mechanisms for the forwarding of initiatives within the area of youth. For one, a coordination channel was opened with the Finnish Red Cross through a proposal in support of the regional youth network, to be implemented in 2008. With the collaboration of the International Commission of the Red Cross (ICRC), the OD programme was able to aid the Guatemala Red Cross in the reorganization of its youth volunteers. The programme was also able to provide three youth volunteers with distance learning courses from the Latin-American Faculty for Social Sciences (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales) in the form of scholarships, with Spanish Red Cross support and in coordination with the Regional Representation for South America in Lima.

The regional programme continued to foster the Central American organizational development network; strengthening it through the following initiatives:

- The OD network provided technical support in the Santiago de Chile Plan of Action implementation's self-assessment.
- The OD network provided support in the thematic organization of the President's Meeting and other technical seminars.
- The OD network was imperative for the WPNS study and the implementation of the regional volunteering strategy.

- Three members of the OD network participated in internships at the Panama Regional Representation Office, collaborating with the regional OD programme through knowledge exchange. The interns gained knowledge on the Federation's programme areas at secretariat level and in turn carried out workshops on planning modules to Panamanian Red Cross and Regional Representation staff.

As in other regions of the Americas, the regional OD programme assisted the NS that were building their capacities in community integrated programming (CIP), including the refinement of methodologies for branch development and social volunteering. Such was the case of the Costa Rican and Panamanian Red Cross Societies that both carried out cross-border integrated community programmes. The latter provided support to previously identified vulnerable indigenous (Ngobe Bugle) communities in terms of high flood prevalence, poor hygiene and high incidence in exploitation of minors.

Finally, a consistent effort was made to build OD support into all Red Cross interventions in the region, while increasing the number of strategic allies and partners promoting such programming. Similarly, the programme actively participated and supported the coordination of the First Continental Resource Mobilization Forum with the Regional Representation for South America. As a result from this initiative, six NS representatives received professional training on resource mobilization and the regional Resource Mobilization strategy was created in 2006.

Challenges and Constraints: Following up on the Nicaraguan Red Cross crisis, the Federation, the ICRC and the High Commission have insisted the Nicaraguan Red Cross Society's National Council, the need of proposing new leaders that would be part of the governing board. The current council members were also advised to decline their aspirations as candidates for a new governing board. The proposal seems to be the only alternative in order for the National Society to overcome the integrity, management and governance crisis that's its currently undergoing. In addition the NS was advised of the risk of facing an intervention if unable to come to an agreement. Nonetheless, there is no known response from either of the parts involved in the crisis and hence, the crisis continues.

Working in partnership

During the 2006-2007 period, the Regional Representation scaled up its actions in Disaster Risk Reduction, Humanitarian Principles and Values (HPV), Health and Care and NS Organizational Development (OD) through partnerships, alliances and joint ventures as parallel initiatives to resource mobilization actions. It actively worked to strengthen and improve cooperation, coordination and support mechanisms as well, in order to facilitate collaboration with external and internal (Movement) partners. Day to day cooperation amongst NS in the region progressed, in part due to the increased contact that regional networks provide and due to new and updated internet-based communication tools.

For one, the regional disaster risk reduction programme strengthened and expanded bonds with its usual partners in the risk reduction communications strategy. PLAN, UNICEF and CEPREDENAC collaborated in the implementation of several initiatives such as a children's painting contest that was part of the "Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School" campaign. Partnerships with DIPECHO, ProVention and DFID were vital for the achievement of the programme's objectives throughout the reporting period for these supported the strengthening of risk reduction and disaster preparedness capacities at both institutional and community level. While Movement partners' support such as that received from the Finnish and British Red Cross also resulted in greater institutional and community capacity through work with the Regional Reference Centres.

In addition, cooperation with partners within the Movement led to the rolling out and scaling up of

initiatives within the Health and Care programme. The Global Alliance was vital for the rolling out of HIV strategies and methodologies taking into account that all NS are part of a unified, regional project and that it will be a trigger for new and current donors to insert resources in the region which will allow for Humanitarian Principles and Values components to be carried out such as anti-stigma and anti-discrimination work.

During the 2006-2007 period, the regional OD programme also established partnerships with Movement actors such as the Finnish, Norwegian, Spanish and Swedish Red Cross. Joint efforts between the programme and the different Partner NS resulted in cross-border community projects, volunteer management training, strengthening of the youth volunteer network and an overall strengthening of the regional OD programme. The programme worked in partnership with the ICRC in an effort to end the Nicaraguan Red Cross' institutional crisis.

Moreover, an increase in the number of alliances with the private sector can also be reported since the regional Health and Care, HPV and OD programmes actively worked in finding strategic partners that could help develop and implement initiatives that are rather unconventional within the Movement.

The regional Health and Care programme has been building a relationship with McCann Erickson, a multinational advertising company, through the development of the "Faces" campaign in 2005 to promote condom use amongst the sexually active population and later, through the creation of the "Club 25" campaign (2007) for the promotion of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation. Additionally, the Health and Care programme and the HPV programme worked jointly on developing a partnership with the International AIDS Society in order to prepare for the XVII International AIDS Conference to be held in Mexico during August 2008.

At the same time, the regional HPV programme was able to carry out advocacy and awareness raising initiatives in the form of anti-discrimination and risk reduction messages, through the strategic alliance with AudioVideo, a Honduran radio station chain. This alliance is a forerunner in the area of establishing alliances with big media corporations.

The alliance between the regional OD programme and FLACSO was another important partnership with the private sectors as it contributed to capacity building of youth volunteers. The programme also placed efforts in initiating an alliance with Duke University in coordination with the Zone, in search of internship options, mutual support and knowledge sharing initiatives.

Contributing to longer-term impact

Throughout the reporting period, the Regional Representation worked on improving the region's capacity to prepare for disasters through the implementation of the communication strategy and the scaling up of information dissemination. It also significantly promoted respect for human dignity through tolerance, anti stigma and non-discrimination messages in terms of HIV and AIDS advocacy. It collaborated with regional National Societies and strengthened their institutional capacities through the development, monitoring and evaluation of their Strategic Plans. Hence, the Regional Representation contributed and continues to contribute to the International Federation's Global Agenda.

Furthermore, the region is starting to see a significant scale up in the work against HIV and AIDS with the implementation of the Global Alliance Plans of Action which will consequently contribute to the Millennium Development Goals.

Additionally, the systematization of the "Well Prepared National Societies" will improve the quality of programmes at country level which goes hand in hand with the Federation's Global Agenda.

The increased commitment to promote the harmonization of plans at the national, regional and

continental level will contribute to working towards common goals aligned with the Federation's Global Agenda. The new Inter-American Plan defines the strategic areas of work for the next four years as approved by the 35 National Societies of the Americas at the Guayaquil Conference and its adequate use by NS. The guide for National Societies to monitor the progress made, in line with the Federation-wide Performance and Accountability Framework, will help monitor advances made and measure the contribution towards longer term impact in the coming years.

Looking ahead

The 2006-2007 period was key for the Central America region, in terms of representing the final year of implementing the commitments made at the XVII Inter-American Conference held in Santiago de Chile and implementing the new commitments made at the XVIII Inter-American Conference in Guayaquil. The community focus the Conference and the Inter American Plan had, is strengthening the strategic and operational planning of NS in their work with communities.

The regional Health and Care programme has great expectations since the "Club 25" initiative will start to be implemented jointly with the dissemination of the campaign. Additionally, the Global Alliance on HIV and AIDS promises to scale up action against HIV and AIDS as well as roll out methodologies such as Together We Can, which is being revised and will have a new monitoring and evaluation guide in 2008.

In 2007, the Regional Representation developed the regional plan for the next two-years (2008-2009). This plan, in alignment with those prepared by the two other regions in the Americas – South America and the Caribbean -, places its programme work within the framework of the Global Agenda and responds to the strategic priorities laid out in the new Inter-American Plan.

Finally, the regional office in Panama will continue within the new Americas Zone structure and will further assist and support the consolidation of the Zone Office.

How we work

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 \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering quality and accountable assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

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