

INFORMATION BULLETIN



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

CAMBODIA:

22 August 2001

Special Report - Branch & Community Development in the Northeast Provinces

This Information Bulletin is an update on the branch and community development in Cambodia's Northeast provinces as part of the overall programming under Appeal No. 01.41/2001. The budget for this specific project is CHF 298,853 in 2001. A total of CHF 140,000 is still being sought for the remainder of 2001.

Operational Developments

The four north eastern provinces - Mondulkiri, Ratanakiri, Stung Treng and Kratie - are some of the most remote and underdeveloped provinces in Cambodia. This area has received the least attention from humanitarian agencies since international aid started to flow into Cambodia in the 1980s. Moreover, until 1999, the Cambodia Red Cross (CRC) was only present in Kratie.

These remote provinces face many development challenges including the distances to be traveled and the lack of infrastructure and basic government services. The provincial populations are made up of diverse communities with different cultures and languages. For example, in one province 12 different ethnic groups speak a total of 11 languages.

Province	Area (km ²)	Population	Density (persons/km ²)
Mondulkiri	14'288	32'392	2
Ratanakiri	10'782	94'188	9
Stung Treng	11'092	80'978	7
Kratie	11'094	262'945	24

Source: General Population Census of Cambodia 1998

The repatriation from Thailand in 1999, as well as the significant movement of IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) in the subsequent years has highlighted the considerable humanitarian needs in the Northeast provinces. On the basis of this situation, a community based capacity building programme, supported by the Federation and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was developed as a pilot project in Mondulkiri province. The programme was expanded to the three other Northeast provinces in 2000.

Each of the four provinces now has an active Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) branch office and a Red Cross Volunteer (RCV) network. The volunteers have been trained to identify and map the characteristics of vulnerability in families and communities. The outcome of this mapping is to focus on the delivery of programmes which assist the most vulnerable to break out of the cycle of vulnerability.

A vivid example of the effectiveness of the RCV network is in the comparison of an outbreak of cholera in 1999 to an outbreak of dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF) earlier this year. In 1999, cholera claimed the lives of 136 people in Ratanakiri. Assistance was requested from the CRC but at the time the branch did not have any staff or volunteers. Two years later, DHF claimed the lives of 3 children with another 205 cases reported. Again the CRC was asked to help. This time, with a small number of dedicated branch staff plus newly recruited volunteers, the branch responded by providing health education to the community and mobilising the RCVs to undertake a community clean up of potential mosquito breeding sites. It also took the lead in planning this response in consultation with the provincial health department. This was a remarkable turn around in capacity of the Cambodian Red Cross and for the Ratanakiri branch after only one year of operation and a major benefit to the most vulnerable in the community.

The branch capacity building process is primarily directed towards establishing a viable and sustainable Red Cross presence in these remote provinces so that the Red Cross is able to respond to the emergency and development needs of the most vulnerable in the communities. The programme is built on six foundation blocks:

1. A trained human resource capacity

The Federation has facilitated the recruitment and training of 3 CRC staff in each Branch. In turn, the trained staff have recruited and trained a network of volunteers. To date, 450 volunteers have been recruited and 400 have received training in Red Cross dissemination, disaster preparedness, community health issues, first aid and vulnerability assessment.

To ensure adequate access across these provinces, particularly in the most remote areas, the branches have planned to recruit and train a further 350 volunteers in 2001 and 325 volunteers in 2002 as well as provide refresher training to the 450 existing volunteers in 2001 and 800 in 2002. Staff are also undertaking individual skills development. In addition, each of the branches are to conduct their first branch assembly to elect a governance committee. One branch has already successfully conducted an assembly and the other branches are currently recruiting members, and implementing the process to enable the assemblies to be held in early 2002. Following this, branch directors will be recruited to complete the branch management team.

2. The provision of resources

The Federation has equipped each branch office with a computer, photocopier, telephone line and basic office furniture/equipment. Volunteers have received first aid kits and there are emergency stocks for the most vulnerable.

Further assistance is required to provide a motorbike for each of the branches in order that Development Officers can travel to outlying communities.

3. Branch office buildings

Some of the branches are located in government buildings on a temporary basis. Alternative arrangements for a permanent office building with training facilities in each province are currently being pursued using funds provided by the Social Fund of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

4. Communication Networks

All four branches are mapping other agency operations by geographical and sectoral coverage within each province to maximise cooperation and coordination. Branches also attend provincial network

meetings, where these are held. Together with other agencies, the branches have already developed proposals for water supply improvements, planned technical training for RCVs in water and sanitation, planned and implemented an emergency response to an outbreak of Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever and conducted HIV awareness campaigns.

Membership and fund raising plans are now being developed by each branch to increase local support for the work of the branch and raise awareness of the Red Cross and International Humanitarian Law.

5. Vulnerability assistance projects

The cornerstone of this programme has been the development in the capacity of volunteers to engage the community in a participatory process to identify the most vulnerable and their needs. Each volunteer receives training in vulnerability assessment, following which the volunteers return to their villages to undertake the participatory assessment process. This process collects data with which the branch can identify and develop projects based on actual needs of the most vulnerable. It also enables the volunteers to meet and get to know their own community while at the same time promotes the principles of the Red Cross movement. In addition, it provides staff with the experience in developing project proposals from the grassroots level up. The branches are in the process of collating and analysing this data as it is received from the RCVs. The information will be used to plan the future health and welfare assistance projects to assist the most vulnerable.

During the assessment process, which continues as new volunteers are recruited and trained, the Federation has assisted the branches to plan and implement key health projects such as malaria prevention, HIV/AIDS awareness and clean up campaigns.

Support is required for the continuation of vulnerability assessments, emergency assistance projects, malaria prevention campaigns, HIV/AIDS awareness activities and health intervention projects identified through the vulnerability assessment process.

6. Volunteer Mobilisation projects

Volunteers are provided with opportunities to understand that their contribution is recognised beyond their own village and they are connected to an international Red Cross Volunteer network. To date these have been focused on World Red Cross Red Crescent Day as well as group projects such as clean up campaigns and emergency response.

As well as establishing a viable and sustainable Red Cross presence in these remote provinces, this project also plays a role in developing knowledge and expertise at the national level. The Cambodian Red Cross, with Federation support, is currently engaged in a planning process which includes assessing the approach to branch development based on the valuable experiences gained in these four provinces as well as at the Phnom Penh Municipal branch. The assessment includes establishing criteria for selection of branches to be targeted for development and minimum standards that must be attained for a branch to be recognised as 'well functioning'.

Outstanding needs

The Cambodian Red Cross Northeast programme is partially funded by the Social Fund of the Kingdom of Cambodia (to end 2001) and an AusAID grant through the Australian Red Cross (to end 2002). The Federation has undertaken to provide matching funds to the AusAID grant. Unfortunately, an anticipated donor contribution did not materialise earlier this year and as a result a total of CHF 140,000 is still sought for the remainder of 2001 and a further CHF 220,000 is required for 2002.

For further details please contact: Ewa Eriksson, Phone : 41 22 730 42 52; Fax: 41 22 733 03 95; email: eriksson@ifrc.org or Antony Spalton, Phone: 66 2 661 69 33; Fax: 66 2 661 69 37; email : spalton@ifrc.org; Seija Tyrninoksa, Phone : 855 23 210 162; Fax : 855 23 210 163; email : ifrckh01@ifrc.org.

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Head a.i.
Relationship Management Department

Hiroshi Higashiura
Head
Asia & Pacific Department