

SRI LANKA: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

*21 December
2000*

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period covered: 1 January - 30 June 2000*

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) has undertaken significant activities, particularly in the areas of disaster preparedness and health. The Society has also concentrated in the areas of finance and information development. The institutional development process has resulted in a more strategic approach to branch development that will strengthen the internal functioning of the Society and emphasis has been placed on greater clarity between the roles of governance and management. Innovative work has started in the fields of youth and conflict preparedness and initiatives taken in the area of building relations with the media and creating external partnerships.

The context

Sri Lanka's enormous development potential has been strangled for the last 20 years by the civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who seek to create a separate nation for the Tamil minority. Armed clashes and bomb attacks in the capital and on other strategic targets have diverted government attention and resources from important structural, developmental and public issues. Unemployment is high and inflation is gradually rising.

Sri Lanka's assets include certain positive human development factors: an adult literacy rate of nearly 90%, life expectancy of 75 years and an infant mortality rate of 16 per thousand. Some 57% of the population has access to safe water. Sri Lankan society is built around a well-developed belief in

communal action and concerted effort, and in rural areas can count on the growing power and involvement of women.

As an island located in a cyclone prone area and exposed to a long monsoon season, the country is vulnerable to tropical storms and tidal surges, flash floods in the mountains and foothills and river flooding in the plains. In contrast, in the dry northern part, drought and food shortages are frequent when irrigation of agriculture fails. An ancient system of water tanks is breaking down because of lack of maintenance, compounding the water problem, while deteriorating health services have increased the vulnerability of the population to infectious diseases. The greatest negative impact on progress and well-being, however, remains the civil war.

Latest events

The conflict in the north and east continues, with heavy casualties on both sides. The country's capital, Colombo, has also been the target of rebel groups, where on several occasions suicide bombers have caused a large number of civilian casualties.

The governing party, the People's Alliance, and the main opposition party, the United National Party, began a series of discussions in March 2000, centring on bringing about a peaceful solution to the conflict by way of constitutional reforms. The two parties jointly proposed constitutional changes relating to the devolution of power between the Centre and the Regions (called provinces earlier). The President stated that the LTTE too could find a place in the proposed interim council if it gave up arms. Norwegian mediators are said to be hopeful that the extremist Tamil organisation can join the dialogue at some future date, as the initial reaction from the LTTE was not encouraging.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Disaster Preparedness and Response •

Community-based Disaster Preparedness and Response Programme

Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) objectives:

- Training in disaster preparedness (DP) techniques for staff, volunteers and communities.
- Follow-up to regional DP workshop activities, especially hazard-mapping, DP policy preparation, community-based logistics and warehouse development.
- Pre and post-disaster surveys.
- Increased involvement of communities in DP and relief and increased public awareness on DP.

Headquarters, branch staff and volunteers of the National Society have continued to improve their preparedness for both natural and man-made disasters. The main objective is to prepare trained community based action teams from the local area to offer immediate relief and assistance to vulnerable people living in hazard prone areas. The process has included hazard-mapping of vulnerable zones.

151 participants were trained in 5 branches between January and June, in addition to a 4 day residential training course for 35 participants which included community-based vulnerability assessment and mapping techniques (a practical house to house exercise done at field level for one day during the course); analysis of recurrent disasters and trends; use of videos from other South Asian countries, for example, on information gathering in advance of disasters, taking the case of Bangladesh. Other training modules have been developed on pre and post disaster evaluation, making effective use of the media, recruiting and training capable community based volunteers, data collection and reporting techniques.

Resource persons were previously trained Sri Lanka Red Cross Society members from districts with experience in this field. Learning is evaluated continuously and further community based training and recruitment of volunteers and staff is scheduled to build on experience.

Health •

Community Health Promotion and Training programme

Country Assistance Strategy objectives:

- Primary health care promotion and services.
- To establish a community health unit at headquarters and train 100 community health workers.
- To educate the community on first aid, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and primary health care in 10 districts.
- To upgrade and maintain the existing 5 PHCs as HIV/AIDS, PHC, family planning and first aid information centres.
- To carry out a first aid training programme for trainers, educators, and individuals at community level.
- Promotion of HIV/AIDS education.

The Society continues to deliver a diverse set of health services at community level both in the conflict and non-conflict areas. These activities are carried out by community based volunteers who often act as extension workers of the government health service, creating awareness of preventive health care activities and accompanying vulnerable people to their nearest health camp or primary health care centre to receive treatment. Activities include mobile health care for communities displaced or distant from health infrastructure, blood donation campaigns, primary health care centres, free eye, dental and medical clinics in remote areas, assistance to eradicate polio and promotion of public awareness and vaccination programmes to eradicate other preventable diseases.

Other health activities conducted include donation of artificial limbs and crutches to those immobilised by the war. Mother and child health care clinics promote immunisation, family planning and nutrition. Although the Society maintains weekly services at these centres, a lack of financial resources against the appeal 2000 target has hampered implementation of certain programme objectives.

Of particular importance is the Society's first aid project, both in terms of service delivery, internal training as well as training offered to other institutions. In terms of the training curriculum, the Society trained 228 branch members in first aid (112 women and 116 men) between January and March 2000. There are three levels of first aid training: basic, advanced and instructor provided to branch members and volunteers.

In terms of training for external organisations (companies, NGOs) over the same period 613 people were trained (156 women and 457 men) in 26 outside agencies. This activity helps the Society to broaden its resource development vision.

The Society has also provided first aid posts and services at a wide range of national and religious festivals, and is preparing special preparedness services for conflict related first aid services through some of its branches to deal with the threats of suicide bombing, civilian targeting of terrorist activities, and acting as an auxiliary of the government's emergency services in these contexts. Between January and June the total number of beneficiaries at the first aid posts was 1,640 (631 male, 776 women, and 233 children).

The advanced first aid training programme trained 185 members from 5 branches in the first six months of the year.

It has become apparent that a Federation supported review of the totality of the Society's health programmes would be appropriate, particularly as there are also isolated but important activities in the fields of water/sanitation capacity building, public environmental health management, and preventive environmental sanitation which need further strengthening and focus, given the vulnerability and poverty analyses in the external environment.

AIDS awareness programmes (which the Society sees as a growing future programme priority) were not implemented in the first six months of the year due to a shortfall in funding.

Humanitarian Values •

The conflict and the ongoing need to reposition the Society, its mandate and work in the eyes of the public and the government have given rise to significant activities and achievements in this area during the first 6 months of 2000.

The Society recruited 17 branch level dissemination officers. In addition, on 8 May, a number of important opportunities and activities were undertaken by the branches to encourage greater awareness of the Society's and Movement's role and mandate. A brochure was printed (with ICRC guidance) and distributed with a view to preventing misuse of the emblem.

Through co-ordination with the ICRC, the Society produced 40 videos, 30 in 3 languages, 5 in Sinhala, 3 in English and 2 in Tamil. 6 district dissemination programmes were held and 602 participants attended including volunteers, teachers, government officials, school children and the Society's divisional committee members.

Capacity Building •

Institutional Development Programme

Country Assistance Strategy objectives:

- To strengthen the Society's governance, leadership and management capacity through regional exchanges and training.
- To develop and strengthen the overall human resource management capacity of SLRCS.
- To upgrade the co-ordination capacity of the National Society and to strengthen the human resource development activities.

An institutional self-analysis report conducted by an external management consultancy firm was commissioned, completed and analysed through a series of institutional development workshops for governing board members and senior management staff. The outcome was an agreement to hold an institutional development (ID) workshop after each of the 12 monthly board of governors' meeting so that all branches may attend. The workshops would further clarify the role and mandate of governance and management and analyse and propose areas in which institutional issues and challenges can lead to clear capacity building initiatives and improved co-ordination between units at HQ and between the HQ and the branches.

Some immediate successful outcomes of this process included the branch development and policy committee workshop on branch development strategy; the ratification of a new financial procedures manual for the Society; the appointment of an information officer to improve the information capacity of the Society, the consolidation of the monthly activity reporting formats, the development of a draft five year development plan for the Society and new lateral linkages within the Society so that, for example, the branch development committee attended the AGM of the Society for the first time.

The appointment of two Directors to co-ordinate policy and programme level interface with the Federation and the ICRC has improved programme and institutional planning and reporting.

An ID workshop held in June resulted in a number of outputs including a self-assessment by the board of governors on the need for further clarity of their roles versus those of management. A 3 year strategic plan for the Society was drafted which articulates a clear vision and mission, outlines prioritised strategic issues and programme goals, objectives, activity plans and budgets in a logical framework analysis format. The presence of verifiable indicators and means of verification for all future activities provide for a clear monitoring and evaluation component in the Society's work and will further strengthen reporting internally and externally. This will enable management to monitor areas of progress and performance in programmes and to conduct a training needs analysis for staff in areas where the programme requires further changes to achieve more impact.

The Society has also drawn up improved human resource management guidelines and has revised job descriptions for all senior staff. The same process of clarifying job descriptions for junior staff and for volunteers will continue in the second half of 2000.

Finance Development

Country Assistance Strategy objectives:

- To assist in developing and adapting the National Society's financial systems and procedures, including automation of part of the procedures.
- To develop an internal audit function.
- To install a computerised accounting function at NHQ and the branches.
- To develop and improve the basic accounting, budgeting and financial management skills of finance staff.
- To train senior management in the tools for financial management.

The Society has continued to undertake focused and effective action in building its internal financial management and control systems. All accounts in areas have been cleared, a fixed assets register is close to completion, and a new "Financial Procedures Manual" for the Society has been approved and adopted by the board of governors.

The Society took the step of appointing an internal auditor whose roles include finalising the appropriate control mechanisms in all manuals under development across the Society, developing quality assurance mechanisms for systems in place, overviewing financial management systems, auditing personnel systems and procedures, ensuring clear procurement and requisition procedures, and drafting an internal audit manual for the Society.

The regional finance delegate undertook two missions to Sri Lanka between January and June 2000 to further progress of financial development work in the Society. The Society has continued to address the introduction of computerised accounting systems and the draft specification for computerised software has been completed and has been put out to tender. The development and installation of the software will take place in the second half of the year, accompanied by training for NHQ accountants, and senior managers, followed by training in branches which will pilot the system.

Training for senior management in financial management did not take place during the first half of the year. It is planned to undertake this training together with familiarisation with the new computer software which will aim to provide a complete management information system within the Society.

Youth Development

An important recommendation from the institutional self-analysis report conducted by the external management consultancy firm focused on youth members. As a key part of human resource mobilisation and of the membership development strategy, this is in the early stages of development. During the second half of the year, activities will be formalised through the formation of divisional

youth units with volunteer youth co-ordinators, training of youth leaders, and holding of youth orientation camps on the principles of the Movement. By 30 June, 7 young people had been selected through a comprehensive interview and were able to attend the Asia Pacific International Youth gathering. A youth camp has also taken place in Badulla District and learning from these initiatives will be consolidated and built upon in the next 6 months.

Information Development

As a result of additional funding mobilised by the regional information delegate during the first 6 months of 2000, a higher profile was identified as a critical need for the Society to counter serious misunderstandings about its role and work in the external environment.

An information unit was established at the national headquarters with the recruitment of an information officer to the Society in March 2000. The information officer's role is to raise publicity for effective work at branch level, produce annual reports, monthly activity reports on district level activities, brochures and occasional leaflets, and write press releases and articles for the media.

A first orientation/training session on information needs and strategies was conducted by the Federation's regional information delegate in March and June. The World Red Cross Day on 8th May provided an important opportunity to capitalise on the new unit and its relationship with a growing network of branch level information volunteers. Articles on the history of the Movement and the Society appeared in all national languages and in English in both State-owned and non-State owned daily and weekend papers. The electronic media also covered the Red Cross Day activities.

A more strategic communications strategy is being developed with linkages between media and press work, branch development, volunteer mobilisation and retention and local resource mobilisation and fund raising. Activities already underway cover organisation of media tours for journalists to branches (2 conducted already), launching the Federation's World Disasters Report to the national media, publishing the consolidated monthly report, recruiting more branch information officers and publishing more brochures and leaflets.

Outstanding needs

The primary focus of Federation support is towards consolidation of the internal institutional analysis and internalisation of the strategic planning process that is currently underway. The need for existing programmes to be consolidated under the four core priority areas of Strategy 2010 and for quality standards under each programme area to facilitate monitoring and accountability is crucial.

Equally important is the need for clearer distinction between governance and management and for the Federation to support a more strategic human resource development strategy so that all staff and volunteers have more clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Development of capacities at the level of headquarters and within the branches is a key area. Ongoing support for the institutional development workshops at governance level will continue to build a more effective partnership.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Sri Lankan government's Board of Inquiry into the Society is aimed at resolving pending matters and ensuring fruitful collaboration in the future. The Federation has a critical role to play in this process. Nevertheless, at Branch level positive relations have been built with Education and Health Ministries (and with the Ministry of Defence in the conflict areas).

A major priority for both the Federation and the National Society will be improvement of the awareness of the Movement's mandate at global level, and the work of the constituent parts of the Movement in Sri Lanka. Discussions are taking place with the ICRC regarding a strategic approach to dissemination work.

The Society's newly appointed information officer supported by the Federation's regional information delegate has ensured a more regular stream of positive, factual articles in the media documenting the work of branches in particular. A media briefing on the Society's new approach to building partnerships with the media was well attended and a number of key journalists subsequently requested visits to see programme work and better understand the work of the Society.

The current strategic planning exercise has also highlighted the need for more long-term, focused networking and co-ordination with other humanitarian organisations in Sri Lanka. The Society intends to take proactive initiatives at local and national levels to join existing humanitarian fora to co-ordinate with other actors and create better understanding of programmes and priorities.

Contributions

Low coverage of the appeal has hampered programme implementation.
See Annex 1 for details.

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This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

| Sri Lanka | | | | | | ANNEX 1 |
|--|----------|-------------------------|------|-----------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| APPEAL No. 01.23/2000 | | PLEDGES RECEIVED | | | | 12/21/00 |
| DONOR | CATEGORY | QUANTITY | UNIT | VALUE CHF | DATE | COMMENT |
| CASH | | | | | | |
| REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF -----> | | | | 427,000 | | TOTAL COVERAGE 27.4% |
| Balance carried forward from 1999 | | | | (68,658) | | |
| BRITISH - GOVT | | | | 50,000 | 19.01.2000 | DFID 1.4.2, 1.4.3 |
| ICELAND - RC | | 500,000 | ISK | 10,948 | 03/30/00 | NS CAPACITY BUILDING |
| JAPANESE - RC | | 8,000,000 | JPY | 124,576 | 26.06.00 | |
| SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH | | | | 116,866 | CHF | 27.4% |
| KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL) | | | | | | |
| DONOR | CATEGORY | QUANTITY | UNIT | VALUE CHF | DATE | COMMENT |
| SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES | | | | 0 | CHF | 0.0% |
| ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET | | | | | | |
| DONOR | CATEGORY | QUANTITY | UNIT | VALUE CHF | DATE | COMMENT |
| SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED | | | | 0 | CHF | |
| THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL: | | | | | | |
| PLK001, PLK005, PLK160 | | | | | | |