

PACIFIC

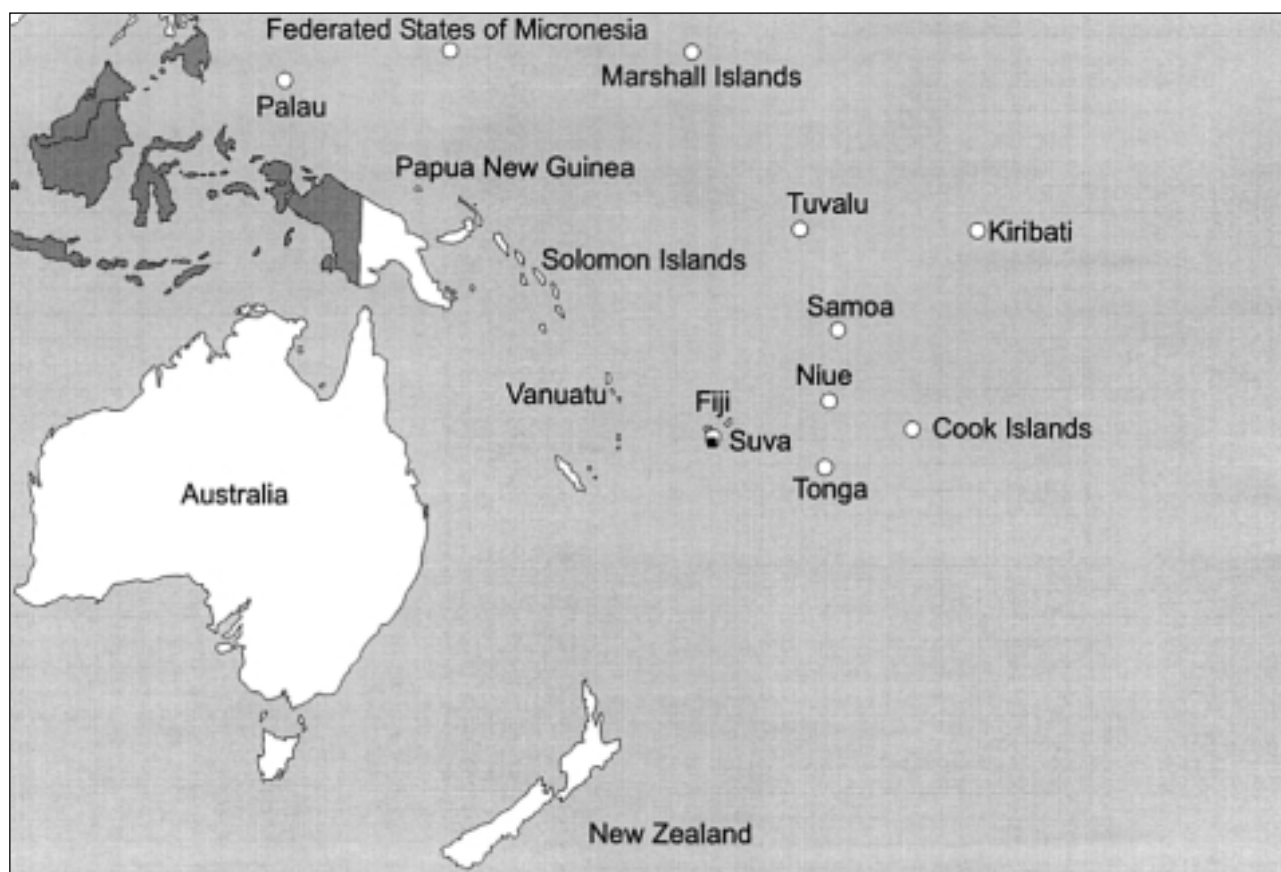
CHF 1,408,000

Programme No. 01.60/2000

Regional Context

Although the Pacific island countries enjoy a relatively high HDI ranking and GDP per capita compared to other developing regions, their remoteness from world markets, their small size and domestic markets, and their dependence on exports of agricultural commodities make them economically very vulnerable. They are currently threatened by economic problems, including the knock on effects of the Asian crisis of 1997, and are engaged in programmes of economic reform and retrenchment. The reductions in health and education programmes through budget and staff cuts will necessarily worsen the conditions of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Natural disasters, including cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, droughts and volcanic eruptions, constitute significant threats in the region: 11 out of 14 countries are in the high risk category for coastal flooding; 8 in the same category for drought; and 8 for tsunamis. Factors that contribute to the countries' vulnerability



are the high impact that disasters have in proportion to the size of the country; the fragility of island environments; the scattered location of communities and their remoteness; and the decline of traditional coping measures. To this list can be added increasing environmental degradation and the high risk of ecological disasters.

Although there are sharp differences in their health status, the health pattern among Pacific island populations is shifting from high exposure to infectious diseases to more chronic and non-communicable diseases. This is partly due to dramatic changes in lifestyle. The growing number of youth suicides appears to be linked to the pressures young people face in the transition from traditional to modern societies, while teenage pregnancies are increasing in many countries. Reported cases of HIV/AIDS are also increasing throughout the region.

Regional Assistance Strategy

There are 14 National Societies in the Pacific Region. They comprise two Participating National Societies (PNS) – Australia and New Zealand; nine Operating National Societies (ONS) – Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Palau, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu; and three National Societies in formation – Cook Islands, the Marshall Islands and Federal State of Micronesia. With the exception of the two PNSs and Fiji and PNG, the other ten National Societies have fewer than five employees each.

The majority of the National Societies run DP and relief services, and blood donor, Youth and first aid activities. Others have started programmes in community health, HIV/AIDS education and work with the disabled. The Hanoi regional meeting and the sub regional Nadi meeting in 1999 established a background against which they have determined their own medium term objectives.

The three priorities set by the National Societies reflect their state of development and the country and regional contexts. Their first priority is to address their internal weaknesses and develop their organizational capacity. This will include the development of improved systems and structures but also the skills and capacity to tap into new sources of funding.

The second priority is to develop more effective Disaster Preparedness and Response capacity, because of the region's vulnerability to natural disasters and the importance of establishing the Red Cross as a key player in this area.

The third priority is for National Societies to provide more effective health services to communities and to the most vulnerable. The development of new community-based health programmes with a focus on health education is seen as a way forward to this goal.

The Federation will build its assistance strategy around these three main priority needs. Since all require external funding, the Regional Delegation, besides providing technical advice and assistance, will concentrate on developing long term partnerships and obtaining funding for the benefit of National Societies in the region through advocacy and networking with other organizations. In the long-term, this should lead to a closer regional identity amongst National Societies and create an environment in which Societies are able to cover their core costs from local or regional sources.

Programme Objectives

Disaster Response

The Regional Delegation supports National Societies and Delegations in the emergency assessment of disasters. It also monitors cyclone conditions, especially during the period from November to March each year, forwarding information to the National Societies in the path of named cyclones.

Presently there are two ongoing long-term relief operations in the region:

1) Solomon Islands: Displaced people from Bougainville

This small health programme is run and managed by the Solomon Island Red Cross and receives only financial support through the Regional Delegation.

2) *Papua New Guinea*: Aitape and Bougainville operations. These are the subject of a separate appeal.

Disaster Preparedness

Since all National Societies in the Region have Disaster Preparedness as part of their core programmes, the Federation will provide resources and assistance towards meeting the following objectives.

By the end of 2000, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuata Red Cross will have updated their DP plans and by the end of 2001 Tuvalu, Toga, PNG, Federal State of Micronesia and Marshall Island Red Cross will have established DP plans. It will ensure that all the Pacific Red Cross Societies have a well functioning DP container programme, with well managed and stocked containers. It will improve the human capacity in National Societies for DP/R programme planning and implementation at the national level and it will promote the development of a National Society network in the region to share resources and so strengthen preparedness and response capacity.

Health

In the period 2000 - 2001, the regional health programme will focus on empowering National Society Health Programme staff to manage and implement core health programmes in their respective countries. The programme areas were identified at a meeting in 1999 attended by 12 National Societies of the region. The Federation will provide appropriate resources and technical assistance. It will encourage improved human capacity in National Societies for health programme planning and implementation and foster the development of a National Society network within the region to share resources and so strengthen health programme capacity.

It will ensure that Pacific National Societies have the necessary material and knowledge to plan and implement "first aid in the community", and to develop comprehensive programmes by the end of 2001. By this date, Fiji, Cook Islands, Samoa, Tuvalu, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Federal State of Micronesia Red Cross Societies should have a functioning Commercial First Aid programmes. It will help all National Societies in the Pacific develop functioning blood donor recruitment programmes, able to meet their country's blood needs, and encourage the inclusion of HIV/AIDS and psychological support programmes in the "First Aid in the community programme" or other relevant programme.

Humanitarian Values

The Federation will assist in promoting humanitarian values in the region by organising an information workshop for participants from all National Societies (in 2000) and establishing a Sub-regional Information network (2000-2001). In collaboration with the ICRC, it will assist Societies with International Humanitarian Law activities (2000-2001) and continue assisting them with the Movement's Millennium campaign (2000). Finally, it will continue working on establishing a global communications network for all Societies in the region (through E-mail, Internet, etc.) 1999-2001.

Capacity Building

The primary responsibility for building capacity lies with each Society's governance and management. Although the emergence of competent, well functioning National Societies through capacity building is vital to the Federation's work, it requires a long term perspective. The assistance outlined below is designed to create such a long-term framework for action.

The Federation will encourage Pacific National Societies to take an integrated approach to institutional development, and human resource, financial resource and programme development. It will provide technical assistance to ensure that institutional and resource development assessments are undertaken in all Societies by the end of 2000. It will set priorities for Institutional and Resource Development support for each Society (2000-2001), and will explore the opportunities that exist in the international Red Cross/Red Crescent network to develop skills and retain the commitment of both staff and volunteers.