

PROGRAMME UPDATE



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

SRI LANKA

06 July 2001

Appeal No. 01.39/2001

Appeal Target CHF 1,016,169

Programme Update No. 1 Period covered: 1 January - 30 June 2001

“At a Glance”

Appeal coverage: 7.1%

Related Appeals: 01.33/2001 South Asia Regional Programmes

Outstanding needs: CHF 944,328

Update: The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) has concentrated considerable effort on revising its constitution with the assistance of the in country delegations of the International Federation and ICRC. Despite limited response to this Appeal, the society continued developing its programmes and partnerships, particularly in the areas of community-based health care and disaster preparedness.

Operational Developments:

Sri Lanka's enormous development potential has been strangled for the last 20 years by the civil war between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Commentators state that the country is losing about four per cent of its economic growth annually due to the war and that growth forecasts of GDP for 2001 have been revised down to four-five per cent. Against this background the first six months witnessed a concerted effort to try and initiate direct peace talks between the government and the LTTE, but a number of hurdles remain which have not facilitated the conducive environment for roundtable talks as earlier expected. The war has continued to divert government resources from important structural, developmental and public issues. A continuing economic downturn, with lack of foreign investor confidence, contraction of the manufacturing sector and government borrowing could lead to more inflation and unemployment, and commentators point out the need for the political and economic outlook to change if the market is to revive.

Sri Lanka's assets include some positive human development factors: having attained the status of a middle income group country with a per capita income of USD 865, its adult literacy rate remains at nearly 90 per cent, life expectancy at 75 years and infant mortality rate at 16 per thousand. Some 57 per cent of the population has access to safe water.

The country continues to experience a lack of adequate rainfall in the key water catchment areas during the first six months of 2001 which have raised the needs of some drought-affected communities in the pre-monsoon season when water levels are at their most scarce and rain fed agriculture systems have failed. Nevertheless the monsoon season may bring its regular cycle of flash floods in the mountains and foothills and river flooding in the plains.

Disaster Response

Community-based Disaster Preparedness and Response Programme

Objective 1: *To improve the disaster preparedness (DP) programme of the national society.*

Objective 2: *To establish early warning systems in disaster prone areas.*

Objective 3: *To renovate and expand the number of existing warehouses.*

Objective 4: *Increased involvement of communities in DP and relief and increased public awareness on DP.*

Objective 5: *To expand the society's ambulance services in the capital city.*

On 26 December 2000 cyclone 04B swept across central Sri Lanka and left some 42,000 families homeless or displaced. The SLRCS headquarters and branch staff worked with the previously trained DP volunteers of the branches in the affected districts who were highly commended for their state of preparedness, and management of the relief logistics. It was as a result of previous DP training at both national and branch levels that the volunteers and staff conducted a rapid assessment of the most vulnerable families. Volunteers worked with local government officials to distribute shelter, cooked food, cooking utensils and sleeping materials.

This response built on the positive positioning which the society received as a result of its response to other natural disasters in late 2000, namely flash flooding, and dengue and malaria fever control in particular. As a result of this positioning and credibility the government's Ministry for Social Services has invited the SLRCS to participate in meetings to respond to relief on the first day of a disaster itself. In June 2001 the ministry again convened a meeting with SLRCS requesting it to assess and support the government's support to drought-affected communities in the south of the country, where rainfall has been unduly low in 2001.

The increased capacity at all levels of the society as a result of DP training enabled the branches and volunteers in the cyclone-affected areas to immediately move into action, distributing from the first day the disaster preparedness stocks they had in their warehouses, and also working with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to distribute non-food relief items in the conflict affected districts. With the CHF 100,000 released from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) and with the support of other participating national societies both through the Federation and in two cases bilaterally, the society's plan of action was well resourced.

An important contribution of technical assistance was made by the visit of the Federation's regional DP delegate to support the society in learning from the initial stages of the relief programme and to link it to the longer term disaster preparedness issues in the society. A one-day learning workshop was held with many of the key actors, and the regional DP delegate has since recommended follow up actions that will further strengthen the society's response capacities. Among the eight-point plan of action for strengthening DP activities further are: continuing and enhancing DP training programmes for volunteers in disaster prone districts; developing a disaster response plan; establishing a better prepared tendering process with named authorized companies and authorities; developing stronger linkages with other NGOs which have DP capacities; and sharing the lessons learned with other agencies (governmental and non-governmental). A total of CHF 50,000 from the regional DP budget was allocated to SLRCS to take this plan forward.

As a result of the learning from the cyclone relief operation, the SLRCS also spent considerable planning time with a delegate from the Spanish Red Cross which had offered to assist the society in developing a longer term well-resourced DP programme in eight selected flood-prone districts of the country (six in the conflict-free, and two in the conflict-affected areas) which in total cover 37.8 per cent of the country's population or 7,098,000

people. A proposal was submitted to the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) to enable the SLRCS to increase its work on flood-related preparedness and response. Flooding remains the most common natural disaster in Sri Lanka, with the Ministry of Social Services stating that in 2000 some 229,000 or 1,145,000 were affected by flooding.

A seven-member national DP committee will review the DP programme's progress against clear indicators on ten occasions per year and a national director and coordinator of DP will be appointed to give the programme a strategic management capacity. All training and materials will be conducted in three languages (Sinhala, Tamil and English). In addition, a total of eight district warehouses will also be established or renovated with stocks for 250 families in readiness at any given time.

Humanitarian Values

Objective 1: *To develop a communications strategy and produce a regular flow of materials for the public and the authorities on the national society's mandate and activities.*

Objective 2: *To increase awareness in the Ministry of Social Services and other relevant governmental authorities of the activities of the SLRCS and the Red Cross Movement's fundamental principles.*

Objective 3: *To improve the orientation of staff and volunteers on the fundamental principles and humanitarian values through a more regular internal communications flow.*

Although this programme remains unfunded, the information unit of the SLRCS saw the World Red Cross/Red Crescent Day as another occasion for disseminating the fundamental principles and International Humanitarian Law. A national painting competition, organized by the national secretariat, was promoted with free publicity from Lake House, the state-run media institute. An advertisement appeared in key national daily newspapers for three consecutive days, in three national languages, inviting participants from around the island to submit drawings and posters on the topics defined by the SLRCS, such as the founder of the Movement, its principles and the emblem and its significance. A total of six national winners, out of 200 paintings and posters received from 24 Red Cross branches, will be selected and awarded prizes at a national awards ceremony and exhibition on 14 July.

On commemorating the birth date of Henry Dunant, a full page advertisement was published in three national newspapers in three national languages on 8 May 2001. A media tour for media personnel from ten different media institutions was organized for the purpose of raising awareness among them and the general public about the Red Cross volunteers' activities at branch level. This was followed by six interesting news items, features, and photo captions in both Sinhala and English language media. The visit to the Matale Red Cross branch brought forth wide publicity on the volunteer activities in general.

Further information development activities such as the establishment of an internal and external SLRCS bimonthly newsletter are covered in the information development programme section in the capacity building section of this report.

Health and Care

Community Health Promotion and Training programme

Objective 1: *To strengthen the national society's overall health management capacity.*

Objective 2: *To increase public awareness of communicable diseases and prevention and curative activities in the fields of first aid, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, family planning and primary health care.*

Objective 3: *To expand the existing reproductive and child health care programmes.*

Objective 4: *To develop an active HIV/AIDS awareness programme.*

The SLRCS was actively engaged in planning with the Canadian Red Cross through the Federation for a community based health and care in the community programme, and an agreement was reached to support an initial pilot programme in one district, together with a strengthened health management capacity at national

headquarters level with the appointment of two national posts - a health director and health coordinator. This programme helps the society to deliver its vision of training community based health workers, and supporting effective and unique public health education and disease prevention programmes.

While many branches continued to conduct first aid training, free dental clinics, health education programmes, pre-school primary health care, counselling for mothers and families, ambulance services, and general medical clinics held in existing primary health care centres, there has been a need to consolidate these diverse activities into a more coherent approach to national and district level health programming.

The Federation's regional health delegate visited the SLRCS in May to: help the society develop criteria for establishing a health management structure; undertake an inventory of the society's existing profile of health programmes; visit some health programme activities to gain a first hand understanding of existing priorities; and to discuss the linkages between the SLRCS health programme and those of the other national societies in the region. One outcome is the agreement that SLRCS will host the first ever regional health forum for national society health managers from all six national societies in south Asia in July 2001.

The regional health delegate also assisted the SLRCS in drawing up the criteria for selection of the district to pilot the community health programme: the criteria includes the need for information on clearly identifiable health needs, an existing and well-functioning primary health care and mother and child health centre (based on one of the five such centres donated by the Norwegian Red Cross in the early 1990s), referral facilities to other health infrastructure in the vicinity, based in a branch which has an established volunteer base and good profile with proven capacity to manage and report on a programme, and with the likelihood of being able to appoint a well qualified local branch health officer.

The inventory of health programmes being carried out by SLRCS shows a core component of its community health programme is focus on HIV/AIDS awareness raising activities. SLRCS participated as an observer in the Asia Regional Task Force (ART) meeting in Bangkok in April 2001 and has signalled an interest in taking an active role in the inaugural meeting of the South Asia Regional Task Force on HIV/AIDS to take place in March 2002. Meanwhile, the regional health delegate will aim to mobilize some limited funds for scaling up the society's current HIV/AIDS work in the context of raising a regional fund to try and support this work. At present this remains an unfunded part of the ongoing SLRCS health activities, but is aimed to be a major programme if the funding situation allows.

The first aid training programme of the SLRCS continues to have high credibility and has trained 506 male and 464 female employees of external agencies such as NGOs, governmental institutions, and private firms between January and June 2001. At the national level the society continued its income generation through training courses for external participants from these corporate and other sector sources, and 296,725 Sri Lankan Rupees (approximately CHF 5,900) were raised by this programme in the last six months. It is hoped to scale up this source of locally mobilized income over the next few months as a mean of sustainable fundraising and share it more widely with other national societies in the region and globally.

Institutional and Resource Development

Institutional Development Programme

Objective 1: *To review and revise the society's constitution and to brief members, governance, and management on the provisions of the new constitution.*

Objective 2: *To develop and implement a comprehensive human resource development (HRD) strategy for staff and volunteers.*

Objective 3: *To increase the recruitment, training and retention of volunteers and members.*

Objective 4: *To develop leadership qualities and skills in management to meet the challenges of strategic management.*

Objective 5: *To diversify existing income generating programmes and create new sustainable programmes.*

The society worked intensively between January and June 2001 to revise its constitution. The Federation and ICRC delegations jointly facilitated a three-day workshop in March for a special Constitution Revision Committee, appointed by the board of governors, and a new draft constitution has been drafted that meets all the minimum standards of the Federation's "Guidance for NS Statutes" guidelines. Subsequent orientation and consultations were held to take the views of a wide range of stakeholders, such as the key office bearers from all 24 branches, board of governors members and all branch delegates eligible to attend the annual general meeting where the draft constitution will be voted on. A separate workshop was held for all staff to apprise them of the key recommended changes in the draft.

Following this consultation with all branches, the SLRCS board will submit a final draft to the joint Federation/ICRC commission for approval. Once the joint commission has given approval, the SLRCS hopes to call an annual general meeting in September 2001 to adopt the new constitution, and a second meeting in December at which elections will take place for posts defined in the new constitution. Should the new constitution be adopted, there will be intensive training of staff, volunteers, and branch personnel in the separation of governance and management, followed by a fresh impetus to membership recruitment and branch development programmes.

SLRCS also hosted in June a South Asia Regional Constitution Review workshop for senior governance from all six national societies in the region to share best practice in changing constitutions and achieving clarity of definition of separation in governance and management.

The Federation's president visited in February helping to further consolidate the relationship between SLRCS and the government, and the social services minister reassured the president that, if SLRCS passes its new constitution the government would facilitate a new Red Cross incorporation act in parliament which would finally protect the society from external interference. Without the protection of a strong legal base through an effective constitution and protective legislation the society continued to suffer from unstable governance over the second half of 2000 with the government-appointed interim board of management finally removed by the minister himself in January 2001.

The branch development officers underwent a self-reflection and learning exercise on ways in which their roles could help to further strengthen the overall national headquarters and branch coordination within the society.

There were two structured meetings on human resource development (HRD). The first was for all directors and national coordinators to introduce key HRD concepts and the importance of a competency-based approach to job analysis, recruitment and professional appraisal and development systems. The second was for the key youth wing leaders and representatives in the national society.

Planning began for a national level workshop to be held in the second half of 2001 for representatives from all branches and the national headquarters. The objective will be to revise the society's overall approach to HRD issues for both staff and volunteers. Preparatory discussions and work began to analyze areas that require strengthening in the society's draft administration manual, including all its HRD strategies. Particular attention was focused on the manual's sections on employee capacity building (including training and development cycle); recruitment processes (including competency based approaches, tests and recruitment panel training); and performance analysis. It is expected that the SLRCS will develop a more comprehensive and separate HRD manual for both staff and volunteers.

It is also anticipated that SLRCS will work with other national societies in the region to adopt the Federation's volunteer policy and then consider the introduction of more systematic ways of promoting volunteer recruitment, induction, training and development, and appropriate recognition and reward systems. This work will follow from the more specific constitution review process, which has more clearly defined sections in the new constitution on the "Rights and Duties" of volunteers in future.

SLRCS also hosted a structured learning tour by the Afghan Red Crescent Society to share learning on branch development, membership and resource mobilization programmes, as well as the experiences gained in revising the society's constitution. This is a good example of SLRCS being regarded as a society which can share positive results with other societies in the region as a result of its commitment to institutional growth.

Planning is underway for a three-day local resource mobilization workshop in December to help SLRCS learn from and review existing public and corporate sector fundraising experiences, and to plan more effective strategies to increase diversified sources of local income at both branch and headquarters level. A case study of the successful first aid programme is to be written, as the society raised corporate sector sponsorship to produce twelve 15-minute training videos on first aid for commercial resource mobilization purposes. Income continues to be raised by providing first aid training to 1,734 employees of companies and 190 individuals in recent months.

Finance Development

Objective 1: *To expand the computerized accounting system in the national headquarters and in selected branches.*

Objective 2: *To further improve financial management and administrative procedures and train finance, non-finance and senior management in financial procedures.*

Objective 3: *To further develop the internal audit function.*

The SLRCS finance development programme continued to have impact in the society, with the ability to support the salaries of the internal auditor, accountant, and book keeper. The fixed assets register was updated and verified by external auditors up until the end of 2000. New purchases are also being fully computerized, using a system developed by the accountant paid for by this Federation-supported programme. This exercise was completed with the internal audit department as well and plans are being formulated for the internal audit personnel to travel to branches to extend the physical verification exercise to all branches.

The society has called for external quotations to help it develop the computerized accounting package software required. This has led to planning training courses in 2001 to strengthen the existing branch finance reporting systems. In the meantime, the book keeper computerized the society's accounts under an accounts coding system to improve financial tracking of expenditures.

The recent constitution revision process in SLRCS will require the rewriting of all financial management rules and procedures now that the new constitution has achieved a clear separation of governance and management. When the constitution is adopted at the proposed general meeting in September 2001, the finance director and internal auditor will form part of a team to rewrite the appropriate rules and procedures alluded to in the constitutional provisions. This will also provide the appropriate opportunity to revise the society's finance procedures manual to ensure it is an effective tool for training branch and headquarters staff and volunteers in the new financial management procedures.

The finance director and internal auditor are also considering submitting a plan for intensive training of branch staff and volunteers in improved financial management procedures, particularly in the ten branches where programme activities related to the new disaster preparedness and health programmes will be initiated. This will also be accompanied by the desire to introduce a new loan system in all branches, planned to be initiated in the second half of 2001.

The internal auditor was also involved in observing the society's tendering procedures during the recent cyclone relief programme and will work on strengthening the society's tendering procedures further after the new constitution is passed with clearer emphasis on management staff taking on such responsibilities.

Discussions were held to try and facilitate exposure and training visits of those key accounts staff in SLRCS who did not yet have the opportunity to visit other sister national societies in the region to upgrade their skills. It may be possible to plan such exposure and structured learning visits in the second half of 2001 if funding allows.

Youth Development

Objective 1: *To create a coordination mechanism for the youth wings of the society at all levels.*

Objective 2: *To recruit, orient and integrate youth wing members so that they play effective roles in all programme activities and in governance.*

As a result of several youth camps to train young Red Cross members in disaster preparedness, first aid, leadership skills, and team building among other topics, a National Youth Steering Committee was established. The committee developed a national youth plan which will be implemented with the ID programme funds in the second half of 2001.

In addition, the post of a national youth coordinator was advertised to facilitate a more coordinated approach to youth activities across the society. The responsibilities of this post will be: to plan and implement youth activities specified in the plan at national, district, and divisional levels; to support branches in implementing the society's youth plans effectively; to conduct and develop training programmes to motivate young people to take up further Red Cross activities; and to suggest innovative youth programmes and work with youth task forces at national, district and divisional levels to develop these further.

The society's new constitution integrated a coherent set of integrated statutes for the SLRCS youth wing to enable it to have representation at governance of all branch and central governing board levels of the society to enable the national society to be more responsive to youth needs.

Information Development

Objective 1: To develop a well-functioning and resourced information department.

Objective 2: To develop and implement a strategic communications plan for the society, including long term relationship building with the press and media.

Objective 3: To improve information management between the national headquarters and the branches as an integrated part of the wider branch development programme.

The SLRCS information unit undertook a variety of activities gaining wide media coverage for the activities and events of the Red Cross through press releases, organizing a media tour and informal gathering with media, production of bimonthly newsletter, drafting the Annual Report, and building cooperation and coordination with the regional information officers. This led to an improved public profile of the SLRCS, capturing the interests of a wide audience through the press and electronic media.

During the visit of the Federation president's visit in February, the SLRCS information officer worked together with various media institutes to bring this event to the focal point of the public interest. Nine media institutions reported her visit on 12 different occasions as news items, features, interviews and photo captions in all three languages. The national state-run electronic media announced the arrival of the president over the main English news telecast, while the Independent Television Network and the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation carried an account of the visit and a personal interview with the Federation's president.

The international launch of the *World Disasters Report 2001* was covered through the local media. Five different media institutions in Sinhala and English reported the launch and the significance of the WDR. The national launch organized by the SLRCS will be held on the 13 July.

Joint efforts and mutual interest in forming a network of information officers culminated in the production of bimonthly eight page newsletter, with the aims of motivating the members and volunteers of the Red Cross, and of informing international/national media and NGOs, foreign diplomatic missions and donors on the society's new developments. This provided a tremendous opportunity for the SLRCS to maximize awareness of its work and create transparency among external and internal audiences.

The SLRCS information officer participated in a 14-day training attended by information officers from the other national societies in South Asia. The course focused mainly on developing a comprehensive understanding of the mandates of the movement and of International Humanitarian Law (facilitated by ICRC), and on the development of skills in the areas of writing news releases and feature articles, newsletters and organizing press events. As a result, the information officer achieved excellent coverage of feature articles in key Sri Lankan newspapers in three languages on World Refugee Day and World Red Cross/Red Crescent Day.

Coordination and Management

With the planning that has taken place with sister societies in the past six months, the new strategic partnerships emerging in the areas of disaster preparedness and health will help the society to reposition itself with other key actors in the country as a provider of key, and in some cases, unique services.

Both the new health and disaster preparedness programmes contain important objectives to increase the national society's positioning and long term sustainable relationship with the government through key ministries. In the case of the health programme, a key objective in the sustainability area is the signing of a set of agreements with the Ministry of Health to recognize a specific set of mandates for services which the society can offer as an independent auxiliary. Similarly in the DP programme, considerable emphasis is given to increasing effective networking with local and national governmental and non-governmental actors with capacities to improve the disaster preparedness capacities of vulnerable and affected communities.

The Minister for Social Services reiterated support to the Federation's president for passing a Red Cross incorporation act in parliament once the society's new constitution is adopted as the beginning of a strong legal and protective base. He also expressed an active willingness to facilitate a more strategic relationship between the society and the government, and a new approach to an overall memorandum of understanding between the society, government and Federation was proposed and agreed upon.

The SLRCS continued to build strategic relationships with influential media, as noted in the information development programme section of this report earlier. The Federation's delegation has kept the UN and other external humanitarian institutions, as well as foreign diplomatic and aid missions, updated on the society's programmes, and has distributed the Asia Pacific *FOCUS* magazine to this audience to emphasize the profile that the society has been getting for work in which it has achieved clear impact. SLRCS has had one article in the *FOCUS* magazine in each of the three last issues to increase understanding of its activities.

Increased networking is now taking place with UN agency heads of mission and the European Union's office which is re-establishing confidence in the society: Meanwhile, the Federation's delegation will be increasing its role in facilitating direct briefings between SLRCS and such missions in the second half of 2001 to build more long-term partnerships between these institutions and the national society.

Outstanding needs

The primary focus of the Federation's assistance is to support the adoption of the new constitution that can lead to the offer by the government of passing a long-awaited recognition act in parliament which should protect the society more effectively from the unstable governance it faced over the past few years. Following the passing of the new constitution intensive training will have to be conducted for members, volunteers and staff across the country on the provisions of the new constitution and the implications for their work with the clear separation of governance from management.

In the meantime, the focus of the Federation's work with the Secretariat's Capacity Building Fund resources in the second half of 2001 will be to undertake three specific areas of strategic work, namely: the holding of a national level workshop to further improve the national society's approach to human resource development issues for both staff and volunteers; to hold a national workshop to improve the local resource mobilization work of the SLRCS to make it more sustainable and less reliant on highly uncertain external funding; and the employment of six new branch development officers to strengthen those branches in which significant new programmes will be developing.

Management-level capacity enhancement will be enabled at the senior level with the appointment of two new directors and national coordinators to manage the two new health and disaster preparedness programmes. This will bring the management structure of the national society more into line with the Federation's *Strategy 2010* programme framework.

The Federation's delegation will also continue to work in a highly coordinated way with ICRC through joint appeal planning and will formalize the trilateral arrangements between the three components of the Movement in Sri Lanka late in 2001.

SLRCS is in critical need of institutional and organizational development and capacity building support. The work undertaken on improvement to systems and the constitution has shown important impact and the overall strengthening of capacity enabled the society to dialogue more confidently with other potential partners. This is a positive outcome and the Federation will continue to try and interest new partners in longer term strategic support for the society, which incorporates the fundamental principles and humanitarian values in its work in this complex environment.

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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>.

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