

Programme Update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Zone

Appeal No. MAA80003

17/11/2008

This report covers the period 01/01/2008
to 30/06/2008.



The psycho-social support programme comprising of training courses continued in the first half of 2008 to support those affected by the Bam earthquake. The affected people are exposed to psychological stress caused by the slow recovery process and high unemployment rate.
International Federation

In brief

Programmes purpose: The overall goal of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) zone is to contribute towards the achievement of the Global Agenda (GA) Goals. In order to achieve these ambitious goals in an efficient and effective way, the strategy of the zone is to be more focused on areas where the Red Cross/Red Crescent (RC/RC) Societies can make a difference, on utilizing regional resources and expertise, and engaging the leaders of the National Societies in a strategic dialogue on humanitarian policies and practices. This strategy will capitalise on the lead role of the National Societies in each country of the region and strengthen and broker new regional partnerships so to further technical and operational excellence in service delivery to communities.

Programmes summary: The zone is proud to announce new staff joining the ranks. After working with a very small team due to the uncertainties of the final location of the MENA zone office, the current team, comprising of Marwan Jilani as the head of zone, Eduard Tschan as his deputy, Aysegul Yuksel as the PMER/communications officer and Pedro Simoes as the zone finance manager, has added some key personnel. Dr. Naglaa Rashwan, regional psycho-social support programme (PSP) officer, Mrs. Ingrid Johanessen, transition manager, Mr. Abdel Qader Abu Awad, zone disaster management coordinator and Dr. Kasbar Tashdjian, zone health and care coordinator, were welcomed to the team.

On a zonal level, the preparation for an International Federation/International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) strategic dialogue with all presidents and/or secretary generals of the region continued with a preparation meeting in Geneva setting a date and agenda for the first meeting to be held in Cairo on 25 and 26 November, 2008. This informal platform will allow for a high level policy dialogue and the setting of some collective goals to better ensure the RC/RC contribution as premier civil society actors in MENA.

The zone has developed and is continuing to actively develop an agenda to better define and build a vision around disaster management excellence in the MENA region, building on the strong capacities already existing in the National Societies. The goal is to better position the National Societies as providers of comprehensive disaster management services and to elevate the programme to a flagship programme in and outside the region.

A number of technical network meetings have and will be held in the remaining of the year in areas of disaster management in Morocco, Turkey and Jordan focusing on developing a regional action plan for collective disaster management work and selected technical and operational support to different National Societies. The Ankara meeting aims to bring together three National Societies of the region to develop cross border contingency plans in case of an earthquake.

The Iranian Red Crescent Society (Iranian RC) will host the first regional health and care network meeting in Tehran in October. The agenda has been developed by a steering committee of National Society health directors and it is anticipated that a first MENA action plan for health will result from the conference. In the area of PSP, a MENA plan for action has been developed already by a newly established regional PSP team of National Society practitioners.

In capacity development, the first youth and volunteer meeting will be convened in Amman with youth representatives from 13 National Societies to discuss the critical role of youth in delivering community services. It was decided to further study some outstanding models from the Palestine, Syrian and Lebanese National Societies before finalizing an action plan.

Financial situation: The total 2008 budget was revised from CHF 2,800,990 (USD 2,667,610 or EUR 1,713,144) to CHF 1,514,696 (USD 1,442,568 or EUR 926,420), of which 81 percent covered. The target was revised based on implementation rates and donor response to the Appeal. Overall expenditure was CHF 311,420. Due to the delay in the zone set up, some of the activities have not been able to be implemented as expected. The zone Appeal includes Iran programme components and budget, thus some of the income is earmarked for Iran and will be used only in 2009.

[Click here to go directly to the financial report.](#)

Please go to the International Federation's website for operations relevant to the Middle East region during the reporting period. Specific mid-year reporting (programme updates) on programmes in Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen can be found at the Middle East/North Africa section of the International Federation's website, along with separate reporting on the North Africa region.

No. of people we help: Under Iran programmes, it is estimated that 35,240 beneficiaries benefited from programmes such as community-based disaster preparedness (CBDP), PSP, HIV/AIDS, and capacity development. This figure only includes direct beneficiaries. On the zone level, the support to all National Societies in the region was predominately administered through assistance to the 13 countries covered by country representatives and through convening technical networks to strengthen the collective vision and programme implementation skills of National Society technical directors in disaster management, health and care and capacity building/general management. This support has ensured additional programme scale and scope on a regional, country and community level.

Our partners: The partners of the MENA zone Appeal (including Iran) have been Australian Red Cross and government, Norwegian Red Cross and government, Finnish Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross, Hong Kong Red Cross, Kuwait Red Crescent, Danish Red Cross, and New Zealand government.

In Iran, the International Federation worked in close cooperation with various partners including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the Ministry of Health (MoH), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), Japanese Embassy, the World Bank (WB) and the ICRC.

Context

The humanitarian conditions of the MENA region continue to be affected by chronic emergencies associated with man-made conflicts, including the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the more recent conflict in Iraq and its devastating impact on the civilian population and the surrounding countries. There has been also an increase in the occurrence of natural disasters associated with climatic changes such as floods, drought, food security, and earthquakes. The International Federation works with its member National Societies to address the impact of such man-made disasters as well as to minimise the effects of natural disasters and public health emergencies. The International Federation supports the National Societies in the MENA region through strengthening the community based health programme components; focusing on disaster preparedness and risk reduction capacities of the vulnerable communities; and on the organizational development of the National Societies through capacity building and institutional development initiatives; as well as on promoting diversity and human dignity through the humanitarian values programmes.

The investment in the institutional development of the National Societies in the MENA region is crucial because of the evolving role of these National Societies as lead civil society actors, and because of the potential role they could play at the national and global levels. National Societies in the MENA region are increasingly assuming a lead role in the humanitarian field at the national level as a recognised auxiliary to their public authorities. They have demonstrated that they are the most likely actor to play a key role in providing assistance and reach out to local communities in situations of emergencies, conflicts and disasters. Furthermore, the diversity of the socio-economic conditions of the region have provided some National Societies of the region with the means to play a prominent role in mobilising resources to contribute to global relief and assistance around the world.

Progress towards outcomes

Disaster Management

Outcomes/Expected results

- Disaster management planning is improved.
- Disaster relief and preparedness capacities within a country level disaster management and risk reduction plan is improved.
- Disaster response capacity is improved.
- Community preparedness and ownership for risk reduction is improved.
- Iranian RC has improved its capacity to mitigate the impact of disasters using local resources and knowledge and is able to cope better with disasters.
- Self-reliance of communities to reduce their vulnerabilities to public health emergencies and disasters has improved.

Achievements

As a result of the Morocco meeting which was organized during 5–12 April 2008, terms of reference have been developed and translated into Arabic and disseminated to all disaster management coordinators. The disaster management plan of action has been finalized with the support of the zone disaster management coordinator and all disaster management directors from the MENA National Societies. The plan will guide the implementation of priorities and the zone's technical support to National Societies.

Volunteers from nine National Societies will receive a training of trainers (ToT) in Amman during 16-21 August 2008 on vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA), contingency planning, and disaster risk reduction (DRR). The training is to be facilitated by MENA zone disaster management coordinator, and representatives from Morocco, Syria, and Qatar. A tentative plan of action will be developed to implement disaster management training at national level, monitoring mechanisms will be approved among participants for the follow up actions, and a database for trainers will be set up.

In addition, in the reporting period, the Palestine Red Crescent Society (Palestine RC) led the review and completion of the MENA disaster management framework.

With the support from the International Federation, the suggestion for rendering rehabilitation services in disaster was developed and the Iranian RC proposed two disaster management training workshops focusing on reviewing the provision of efficient rehabilitation services to the vulnerable and affected communities in emergencies. The rehabilitation department of the National Society scheduled a two three-day workshop for 100 participants, particularly rehabilitation staff and volunteers, to form and train emergency rehabilitation teams in provincial branches. The workshops were conducted in Shiraz and Tabriz during 12-14 May and 9-11 June, respectively. Participants met to discuss and review aspects of rehabilitation service-rendering in disasters as well as to review the formation of the intervention teams for emergencies. The workshops upgraded knowledge of Red Crescent staff, exchanged their experience, and encouraged and involved rehabilitation practitioners for team working environment. Both events were covered by domestic media, especially local TV channels and newspapers.

The Bam operations review revealed the need of the Iranian RC to build up the capacities of its staff and volunteers in order to meet the existing needs. To this purpose, the International Federation continued to support and assist the National Society in building its capacity. The International Federation, in close cooperation with the Iranian Ministry of Education (MoE) and responsible companies in construction process, jointly formed and sent a monitoring team to Bam in April to verify the quality of the work done by the company for the construction of the schools as well as to technically observe all nine schools constructed under the Bam reconstruction programme of the International Federation (Appeal No. 25/03) in Bam city. Whilst acknowledging the high standards and quality of works, they also discovered some technical issues in schools which needed to be corrected by the construction company in line with its contractual obligations. The Sanati Fajr Industrial Company made corrections to the schools in April and May 2008, which were then checked again and approved on the spot by the MoE representatives and school principals. After fulfilment of all obligations by the company under the two signed contracts for the construction of five standard schools and four special schools in Bam, the International Federation paid the final retention fees to the company in late May and issued the final report on the Bam Emergency Appeal in June 2008.

With the financial and technical support from the International Federation, the Iranian RC held a standard logistics training workshop in Tehran on 23-27 February targeting 55 disaster management directors, deputy managing directors for logistics, procurement officers, and warehouse managers from all Red Crescent branches across the country. Four experts from the International Federation's Regional Logistics Unit (RLU) in Dubai facilitated this workshop with particular attention to preparedness and standardisation, procurement, mobilisation and tracking, fleet management, logistics assessment, and warehousing. Altogether, 300 volumes of a logistic manual was translated and distributed among participants and all Red Crescent branches in 30 provinces. The purpose was to give

an impetus to the logistics activities of the Iranian RC specifically to introduce the International Federation's logistics system and to upgrade the knowledge of the National Society staff in logistics division. Trainings contributed to properly involve in the process the provision of humanitarian assistances to other sister National Societies bilaterally or through the pipeline of the International Federation.

The Iranian RC continued to implement the CBDP project to better prepare and enable the disaster-prone communities to be ready for future disasters in Kerman Province and beyond. The project technically supported by the International Federation and financially by the Finnish RC was developed based on the experience gained in previous years. The International Federation's Iran representation and Kerman branch of the National Society assisted the four communities - Khanuk in Zarand city, Dashtkar in Bardsir city, Sirch in Shahdad city and Esfikan in Bam city - to form the CBDP central committees and select their relief and rescue team members. Following the definition of roles and responsibilities for the teams of the communities at the second phase of the project, four induction training workshops were organised in Khanuk, Dashtkar, Esfikan and Sirch communities in February, March, April and June, respectively. About 100 people participated at the workshops in order to be familiar with the contents of the disaster management cycle, CBDP concept, CBDP definition and rational, VCA, SWOT¹, risk assessment, community organizing, public awareness, early warning, evacuation centre management, and small-scale structural mitigations. The Kerman branch also supplied the relief and rescue equipments for the communities' teams to support them. The communities are working and using the CBDP training manual whilst expanding further works on contingency plans, early warning systems, DRR plans, public awareness materials, and risk mapping. Several coordination meetings have been held in Tehran and Kerman to properly run the project in line with the agreed action plan and budget so far. About 34,600 people are benefiting from the project.

In partnership with the UNISDR, the Iranian RC and the International Federation are working with the WB and Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) to get new funding to implement the community-based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR) project in the provinces of Hamedan, Kermanshah and Lorestan. The International Federation representation in Iran held regular talks and meetings with representatives of the WB, Japanese Embassy and JICA to discuss and finalise the proposal. Particular focus of discussions was on sharing information, talking about the ways of cooperation in undertaking the CBDRR activities in Iran as well as drafting and submitting the proposal to the JSDF. The final revised proposal and budget has been sent to the WB in May 2008. The International Federation's representation in Iran, in consultation with the Iranian RC, has submitted another project proposal and budget to the WB office in Tehran in February to seek for further cooperation in undertaking CBDRR activities in four other earthquake-prone provinces in Iran. The Iran representation is waiting to get the WB feedback on the submitted proposal whilst the process is still underway.

Four National Societies (Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Algeria) were invited to the MENA launch of the International Federation/UNISDR Community Based Organisations in Risk Reduction Platform. Several recommendations have been agreed upon during the meeting focusing on promotion of good practices, building information sharing fora, mapping DRR tools development of risk reduction toolbox, DRR database creation, Arabic DRR terminology, establishing a regional steering group, and link between DRR and climate change.

MENA zone will be the representative for the Global Network for Disaster Reduction to facilitate the "View from the Frontline" – Global Review of the Hyogo Framework for Action through implementing the project at three pilot National Societies. In addition to Iran, proposals or concept notes for DRR in communities were submitted to the WB and the JSDF for Yemen, Syria, Jordan, Algeria and Morocco.

In June, Jordan Red Crescent Society (Jordan RC) organized a planning meeting for branch representatives and disaster management coordinators to develop DRR proposal to be submitted to the WB for the JSDF. Two project proposals have been developed at the two DRR workshops facilitated by MENA zone in Salt and Amman for Jordan RC staff and volunteers.

¹ Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

In the same month, MENA zone supported Jordan RC and Palestine RC in the development of their contingency plans. Jordan RC printed and disseminated its contingency plan to all National Societies in the region, as well as to higher council of Civil Defence in Jordan.

MENA zone is planning to organize an earthquake preparedness training workshop for Palestine RC, Magen David Adom (MDA), and Jordan RC in Ankara, Turkey, during 8-12 August 2008. The training is to be facilitated by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) and supported by the American Red Cross. A tentative technical agreement is aimed to be reached among the participants on building up a joint earthquake contingency plan between Palestine RC and MDA. A joint drill between Jordan RC and MDA branches in Aqaba and Eilat may possibly be agreed upon, along with a plan of action.

Constraints or Challenges

The development of a database for specialized disaster management personal needs more efforts from the disaster management coordinators of the National Societies. Most National Societies have their own contingency plan, which needs to be updated based on the International Federation's contingency planning guidelines which will need an advocacy role of the zone. In addition, cross boarder contingency planning will need more political support from National Societies' leadership.

The disaster management programme in MENA zone lacked personnel to implement the objectives of 2008 which created a gap in the relation between MENA zone and the National Societies in the region in spite of the fact that there were intensive efforts from MENA zone to use the current disaster management plan of action to provide a more focused support framework.

Health and Care

Outcomes/Expected results

- Health and care management planning is improved.
- Capacities of National Societies to meet community health needs as major civil society contributors to achieving country level Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are improved.
- Capacity of National Societies to focus on delivery of priority health needs is improved.
- Vulnerability to HIV and its impact is reduced through preventing further infection and public awareness.
- Iranian RC has enough trained staff to provide psycho-social support to disaster victims.

Achievements

In coordination with the International Federation's health and care department (blood focal point) in Geneva, the Egyptian Red Crescent (Egyptian RC) and World Health Organization-Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (WHO-EMRO), the MENA zone office organized the 11th International Colloquium on the Recruitment of Voluntary, Non-Remunerated Blood Donors (VNRBD). The colloquium was held in Cairo, Egypt, during 12-18 January 2008. One of the short-term goals of the colloquium is to consolidate existing partnerships and establish new working relationships between those who are tasked with the recruitment and motivation of VNRBD. The longer term goal is related to partnerships in a much broader sense, and refers to partnerships for human development. The zone office prepared a database on the involvement of the MENA National Societies at all levels of blood service delivery.

The zone office initiated the second regional PSP network meeting in Benghazi, Libya, during 19-22 April, which was hosted by the Libyan Red Crescent Society (Libyan RC). A preparatory group of this meeting was formed from representatives of five National Societies with the support of the MENA zone office (head of the zone and health consultant). The group prepared the objectives and agenda of the meeting, and facilitated the discussions. The meeting aimed at empowering the PSP of MENA National

Societies. The main outcomes were the development of a MENA regional PSP model, establishment of a MENA regional PSP core team and the development of a MENA zone plan of action for PSP in 2008-2009. Following the network meeting, the first PSP workshop will be held in Benghazi, Libya, during 30-31 July. The workshop is to be organized by the Libyan RC in cooperation with MENA zone office. The first MENA zone PSP core team meeting will take place during 15-19 August in Amman, Jordan, in order to draft a plan of action for forthcoming activities which will include trainings, review of PSP materials and preparation of the next network meeting in December 2008. The regional PSP team also aims to support the Jordan RC in PSP capacity building of its staff working for the displaced Iraqis in Jordan.

With the support of the MENA zone office, National Society representatives from Egypt, Yemen, Libya and the regional HIV coordinator participated in the Global Health and Care Forum held in Geneva during 14-16 May. The zone office will be represented in the HIV Global Alliance meeting and the International AIDS Conference that is to be held in Mexico in August 2008.

The zone office coordinated with the Iranian RC to host the upcoming regional health and care meeting in October 2008. A preparatory committee of representatives from six National Societies were formed with the support of the zone office (deputy head of the zone and health consultant). The committee will meet during 15-16 July 2008 and will draft the main objectives, expected outcomes, draft agenda, resources needed and the profile of the participants.

In coordination with the health and care department in Geneva, the zone office prepared a short survey on first aid education in the MENA National Societies. In addition, the zone provided the Arabic information package on the World First Aid Day.

In line with the International Federation's HIV Global Alliance and its five-year National Strategic Plan for preventing HIV and AIDS from 2002 till 2007, the Iranian RC has scaled up its efforts in reducing vulnerability to HIV and its impact especially through promoting public awareness, HIV/AIDS education and assisting patients infected with HIV/AIDS. Following the five training workshops on HIV/AIDS and harm reduction in 2007, the extension of financial support from the Australian RC helped the Iranian RC to conduct two three-day training workshops on HIV and AIDS in Tehran in January and February 2008, respectively. These workshops were attended by a total of 80 participants from the National Society's headquarters and provincial branch in Tehran. The training topics covered different aspects of HIV/AIDS prevention including psycho-social aspects, target group definition, counselling services, vulnerability of drug users, peer education, information, education and communication (IEC) and the effective ways to work with youth. Facilitated by several experts from the MoH and the Iranian RC, the workshops provided the participants with an opportunity to further deepen their knowledge and skills and share their training experience with each other. Iranian RC produced and distributed two educational CDs on HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention among the participants. Additionally, "Payame-Helal", a Farsi-language magazine of the National Society, posted two articles and three stories to raise the public awareness on HIV/AIDS.

The International Federation's country representation in Iran contributed and supported the Iranian RC in writing and submitting an article on HIV/AIDS activities within Iran for the World Disaster Report (WDR) 2008. The article was published in the WDR and it assisted in the awareness-raising activities.

Following the PSP in Bam in 2006 and 2007, the Iranian RC continues a PSP project for 2008 with the funding support from the Finnish RC. The project purposed to meet the specific needs of people in Bam who are exposed to the psychological stress caused by the slow recovery process and the high unemployment rate. The programme comprises of training courses such as computer (for male and female), embroidery, drawing, traditional music, sport, and sewing for those who are affected by the Bam disaster. The programme includes five rounds which commenced in late January and would finish at the end of October 2008. A total of 160 people (80 women and 80 men) are attending the courses. Each course is lasting for two months, and is run by a professional trainer and attended by 20 persons.

Constraints or Challenges

The level of technology within National Societies varies widely including access to internet and use of emails which delays communication. In addition, some of the thematic focal points are not authorized to plan and take decisions which hamper the implementation. The cultural sensitivity to HIV and AIDS continues to be a challenge. There is lack of sufficient funding to support training activities for the Iranian RC staff and volunteers to build up capacities of the National Society to cope with the challenges facing people living with HIV/AIDS across the country. The National Society staff and volunteers need more knowledge and experience on HIV/AIDS.

Capacity Development

Outcomes/Expected results

- A shared vision and direction for the future is set in order to ensure that National Societies become reliable civil society partners.
- Planning, performance, and accountability are improved.
- Effective programmes and services are delivered.
- Resources in support of National Society/RC/RC Movement work are mobilised.
- Iranian RC and other relevant managers from Iranian government have better understanding of how to cooperate with the International Federation and ICRC.
- Iranian RC's capacity to effectively and efficiently train and render services to the vulnerable, especially breadwinners of families, is strengthened.
- Volunteer development is enhanced.
- Branch development is enhanced.
- Strategic planning and legal base is increased.
- Governance and management development is enhanced.

Achievements

The zone organized a youth and volunteer network meeting convening 12 National Society youth volunteers and a first plan of action was developed. It was however determined at the zonal level that the plan of action should be verified by a more in depth study of youth and volunteer programmes in two-three National Societies with a proven track record in community service delivery through youth members.

In Syria, the zone supported a review of the current governance and management structures and developed a list of recommendations. The Yemen Red Crescent (Yemen RC) was one of the three National Societies that received an intensified capacity building (ICB) grant. The grant will ensure a link between the current operational alliance focus on community based health service delivery and a scaled up capacity building effort.

A delegation from Iran consisting of nine members including four Iranian RC senior managers such as secretary general as well as governmental authorities paid study visits to the International Federation secretariat and the ICRC headquarters in Geneva in June 2008. The meetings, presentations and visits they had in Geneva proved useful to them in having a better understanding of the priorities and current issues of the two components of the International RC/RC Movement and in developing closer working relations with them in the field. The International Federation facilitated and coordinated the activities whilst the ICRC financially supported the initiative.

The Iranian RC, with the direct support of the International Federation, continued to implement a project funded by Empress Shoken Fund with the purpose of helping the wives of HIV/AIDS infected men to have a better understanding of the ways and means of prevention and self-protection from HIV/AIDS infection. On 30 June 2008, the Iranian RC finished its work on the project of "training and prevention for the wives of addicted HIV/AIDS infected men in 20 cities throughout Iran". The project had been

scheduled for one year from 1 July 2007 to 1 July 2008 to educate and train a special target group of the community on preventive methods of the disease.

The three-year project for increasing women's role in Red Crescent activities funded by the capacity building fund (CBF) was completed at the end of 2007 and a final narrative and financial report for a period of 2005-2007 was sent to the CBF in February 2008.

Constraints or Challenges

The zone was hampered in delivering on its ambitions by the lack of an organisational development coordinator and therefore contracted with the outgoing regional organisational delegate to assume some key activities. This temporary solution could not compensate for a larger programme impact. It is now anticipated that the zone will have an organisational development coordinator at the end of the year with an 18 months delay.

Especially in the field of capacity building and organizational development it is crucial to have a long term focus and ensure continuity with key stakeholders in the National Societies. In the absence of the zonal coordinator, the country representatives however continued to provide critical support to National Societies in strengthening their delivery capacity.

Humanitarian Values

Outcomes/Expected results

- Communications and advocacy for vulnerable and/or marginalized populations is improved.
- National Societies' information/communications capacities to strengthen the image of Movement and RC/RC brand, including humanitarian principles and values in the region, are increased.
- The role of National Societies in reducing discrimination and increasing respect for diversity including promotion of gender based initiatives is improved.
- Capacity to provide services to beneficiaries due to migration and displacement is improved.
- Capacity to effectively communicate, build brand recognition and mobilize resources is improved.
- Iranian RC staff members and volunteers are trained on humanitarian values and encouraged to disseminate the Fundamental Principles and international humanitarian law (IHL) within provinces.
- Iranian RC and International Federation's profile in Iran is strengthened resulting in further support and more familiarisation.

Achievements

The MENA zone, with support from the Qatar Red Crescent (Qatar RC) is planning a visit to Al-Jazeera headquarters in Doha in July and Al-Arabiyah headquarters in Dubai in September. The visit to Al-Jazeera will be a follow up to the ones conducted in 2005 and 2006 by the Qatar RC and Middle East regional representation of the International Federation. The aim of the two visits is to explore the areas of cooperation in promoting the Fundamental Principles of RC/RC and Humanitarian Values. In line with this aim, the possibility of trainings to be provided by the channels to the International Federation staff will be explored; opportunities for the possibility of future collaboration regarding front line stories will be sought; and the possibility of seconding a counterpart from the channels to support the development of a media strategy for MENA zone will be looked into. The importance of having news related to the activities of the International Federation broadcasted on the channels is high, taking into consideration the significance of them as a stakeholder in MENA in reaching the people of the region and the Arabic speaking audiences.

A joint meeting with the participation of representatives from the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent (UAE RC), ICRC and the International Federation will be organized around the same time of the visit to Al-Arabiyah to explore the ways to work better as Movement partners in communications and media issues, with special focus on the UAE Humanitarian Channel and the 2009 Campaign. The channel is

expected to be operational next year and will be a global TV broadcasting in English and then will be translated to the five internationally recognized languages. The launch may coincide with the 150th anniversary of Solferino and can promote humanitarian programmes of the Movement and external partners. The gap of knowledge related to humanitarian issues and IHL is expected to be tackled at the community level through the channel and visibility will be increased.

The International Federation, Iranian RC and ICRC jointly conducted several training workshops on IHL in Bandar-Abbas city and Imam Sadegh University, Hormozgan and Tehran provinces from January to May 2008. Trainings aimed to refresh and enhance the knowledge of the Red Crescent staff and volunteers through discussion touched upon promoting the Fundamental Principles and IHL. The Iranian RC was encouraged to organize more training workshops on disseminating the Fundamental Principles and IHL in the cities of Tabriz and Tehran in the second half of the year.

The International Federation held a workshop for 25 students of the Iranian RCS's Helal Applied Sciences Higher Educational Institute and presented the National Society's and International Federation's history and activities on 8 May. The International Federation representative had an interview with the Iranian RCS's Payame-Helal Magazine regarding the International Federation's activities in Iran. The National Society organized various events to celebrate the World RC/RC Day which included, amongst the others, drawing competitions, bell ringing, blood donation, simulation exercises, exhibitions, voluntary services, and media coverage.

Constraints or Challenges

The zone has not had the necessary staffing support to ensure a more ambitious agenda. It is planned to put a larger regional effort into better defining the strategy for Principles and Values. The zone will organize a region wide Principles and Values conference in the next 12 months to address the specific focus and strategy for a better foundation of work in the MENA context.

Working in partnership

The MENA zone has been active in supporting the Operational Alliances in Yemen and Palestine where innovative approaches to better working together under a framework of joint planning and pooled resources has led to increased quality plans and more effective implementation.

The concept of planning, monitoring and evaluating the Operational Alliances framework as the prevailing "business model" according to the International Federation's internal framework of the seven ones is being actively piloted with the Palestine RC. The seven ones include one set of needs analysis through a common assessment of vulnerabilities and capacities; one set of objectives and strategies; one global thematic strategic plan and one country programme support plan with expectation of long term commitment to ensure sustainability; one shared understanding of the division of labour among entities of the RC/RC Movement; one results-based funding framework in which multi and bilateral financing channels can co-exist; one performance tracking system; and one accountability and reporting mechanism.

In the area of DRR, the zone has co-launched a new regional initiative with the UNISDR, aiming at scaling up risk reduction activities of community based organizations in the region. Similarly, the MENA zone has brokered new funding partnership with the WB Global Facility for DRR and the JSDF aiming at establishing a long term relationship with two leading organizations in the area of community based risk management. A new partnership with the Global Road Safety Programme (GRSP) funded by the Shell Oil Company has also been initiated in this reporting period.

Traditional partnerships with UN organizations, the European Union, governmental donor organizations, the Norwegian, Swedish, American, German, Danish and French Red Cross Societies are fortunately continuing to grow.

The International Federation is in close contact with the Iranian MoFA to follow up on the issues regarding the ratification of the Status Agreement between the International Federation and the Iranian government. Regular meetings have been organised with senior managers of the MoFA to facilitate the ratification processing. A revised Status Agreement text has been obtained in meetings and shared with the secretariat. The agreement was revised by Geneva and the revised text was translated into Farsi and together with the other supporting documents shared with the MoFA in June for feedback.

The Iranian RC procured 63,000 family tents for earthquake operations in China in June through signing an agreement with the International Federation. The representation in Iran facilitated and supported the process on procuring and despatching all family tents from Tehran to Chengdu in Sichuan for the International Federation's earthquake operation in China. The two logistics delegates who came from RLU to coordinate tents' transportations left Tehran after the end of their mission in late June.

In accordance with the Part B, Article 8 of its constitution, the Iranian RC held the elections of the district branch assemblies of the National Society in May. The elections of provincial assemblies of the National Society will be held in July and the election of the General Assembly and supreme council in Tehran in August 2008.

The International Federation and the UN OCHA are working together to improve coordination during emergencies. The International Federation's representation also had a meeting with the Syria-based ICRC's regional cooperation delegate in February in Tehran to discuss various issues related to cooperation with the Iranian RC. The International Federation has its coordination meetings on various programmes and issues with the ICRC delegation to review and discuss mutual cooperation and interests, particularly implementation of disaster management workshops.

Head of MENA zone office visited Iran in April to discuss with the Iranian RC various issues related to closer cooperation between the International Federation and the National Society. He met with the senior managers including the National Society's president and secretary general as well as with the director of international social cooperation of the MoFA focusing on the issues related to ratification of the Status Agreement between the Iranian government and the International Federation. Following the discussion and agreement between two parties in Tehran, the International Federation drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be signed between the International Federation and Iranian RC touching upon the activities for further cooperation and relations in the future. The MoU was translated into Farsi and submitted to the Iranian RC to get any feedback on it but Iranian RC suggested signing a final draft in October 2008.

The Iranian RC bilaterally made in-kind donations of non food items such as family tents, blankets, medicines, medical equipments, detergents, plastic sheeting and food items such as canned food, rice, tuna fish, sugar, dates and edible oil to the National Societies of China, Tajikistan, Palestine, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Myanmar to assist those in need from January to June 2008. In close cooperation with the Iraqi Red Crescent (Iraqi RC), the Iranian RC also ran a five-day training course on first aid for 25 participants from the Iraqi RC in Orumiyeh city in June 2008. The workshop aimed at strengthening the capacity of Iraqi RC, training more resource persons and expanding relations between the two National Societies.

Contributing to longer term impact

A core zonal issue to ensuring higher impact is initiating focus on and raising of adequate resources for a longer term excellence programming which allows continuous support of the technical cadres in the National Societies while building a larger base of highly skilled professionals, brokering strategic partnerships around programme initiatives and introducing creative incentives on all levels to guarantee increased programme impact. The zone and its partners are challenged here to ensure more reliable resources but also a joint initiative for better career planning and incentives for all actors to embrace technical excellence as a long term ambition.

Too often initiatives are looked at in sectoral silos, short term funding cycles with unrealistic ambitions and with no real understanding of the realities these potential champions of technical and operational excellence in a National Society face. Technical directors of programmes in health and care, in disaster management or even in general management are asked to implement often competing sectoral portfolio, driven by competing donor interests or they simply do not have the technical and funding support to implement the excellence they are able to demonstrate in a more enabling environment.

The zone's largest contribution to programme impact will be by facilitating a clear path for excellence which is based on a strong authoritative support by the regional National Society leaders and collectively defined in the annual policy dialogue meetings. Donors must come together and support this critical zonal initiative more strategically and the zone has to invest in the champions of excellence, National Society technical directors, branch directors and volunteer leaders in new and creative ways, ensuring long term excitement and incentives to implement the plans of action where it counts most: local communities. This will require an additional push to measure the success of these networks through the implementation of the plans of actions at a National Society level with some key indicators. Developing these indicators and establishing national level measuring systems will also be part of the 2009 – 2010 planning horizon.

Looking ahead

The zone remains understaffed and still without a permanent residence. Despite enormous efforts by zonal leadership, there remains a sense of indifference at headquarters in Geneva to actively support a final resolution. This has made it extremely challenging to the zonal team to function on its highest level and to its stated ambitions. At this point and until the end of the year, the zone hopes to have more critical staff in place and know where its final location will be with an at least 18 month delay.

Despite this unfortunate start into a new structure for the MENA region, the zone was able to make significant inroads with the National Societies' leadership and with the technical directors and has been able to establish the necessary relationships to further a larger collective vision of technical and operational excellence. The resources in the region and in National Societies are there to greatly increase programme quality and scale. The zone management is confident that it will now see significant changes in working towards a collective vision and towards increased programme quality and additional resources within the next 12 months.

How we work	
<p>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".</p>	<p>Global Agenda Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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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