

INDONESIA: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS SPECIAL SITUATION REPORT

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In July 1997 the Indonesian Red Cross Society (Palang Merah Indonesia or PMI) developed a three-year disaster preparedness programme (1997-2000). Following submission to the Federation's Regional Delegation in Kuala Lumpur, a final version was forwarded to donors in August 1997. The goal of the Disaster Preparedness (DP) programme is to "develop and strengthen the disaster management capability" of PMI, with a focus on a community based approach coupled with the provision of an amount of DP related hardware (vehicles, rescue equipment.)

The context

The training element of the Indonesian Red Cross Society (Palang Merah Indonesia or PMI) disaster preparedness programme, targeted at 50 branches and nine provincial chapters in the most disaster-prone areas, was to initially focus on providing the necessary tools to establish a community based approach. This would include the teaching of various participatory techniques (including Participatory Rural Appraisal), the introduction of Vulnerability Capacity Analysis, hazard mapping, building relations with local authorities and other partners and the establishment of community plans and action teams.

The hardware component was to supply a total of 18 Mobile Emergency Unit Vehicles (MEUV) to 18 chapters and rescue equipment to a further 9 chapters and 50 branches. The MEUVs, which are similar to units used by Japanese Red Cross but modified to suit conditions in Indonesia, would be fully equipped with tents, a field kitchen, first aid kits, stretchers, generator, megaphone, kerosene lamps and a water pump.

The initial phase of the programme (supported by Japanese Red Cross) began in the second quarter of 1998. The delay in implementation was caused by demands placed on PMI by the joint ICRC/PMI operation in Irian Jaya and the implementation of the haze and smog programme. Eventual implementation coincided with the arrival of the Federation Representative in Jakarta.

Latest events

Following the political unrest in May 1998, the economic and social situation in Indonesia continues to worsen. Inflation is expected to reach 80%, the economy is forecast to contract by a further 10% (Foreign Report on IMF, Jane's Information Group, London, July 1998) and unemployment is expected to increase to 10.7m (OCHA Report, Geneva, May 1998). Overall an estimated 80 million people (47% of population) are now living below the poverty line (compared with about 22 million as recently as 1996).

PMI, having established joint ICRC operations in Irian Jaya and East Timor during 1997 as well as setting up the haze and smog operation, was pushed to further limits during the political and social crisis. During this time, the disaster management capacity was severely stretched, with PMI putting into operation 14 ambulances as well as teams of First Aiders and other volunteers. Whilst PMI's role in treating the most injured and evacuating others was recognised as a great success, the operation also highlighted the need to strengthen its capacity even further.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Following the recent unrest, PMI hosted a meeting between senior management, ICRC and the Federation. During this meeting it was decided that priority should be given to the DP programme and that funds generated during the recent operation and funds already committed to the DP programme should be now be utilised in an effort to strengthen DP.

The following measures, based on the existing DP proposal, highlight steps agreed by all parties in the meeting:

Training in disaster management

PMI will prepare for an initial workshop in disaster management and develop a full curriculum which will include IHL dissemination. Participants (60 people) will be chapter/branch board members and head of offices. The training takes place from 15 to 21 July 1998 (following a regional workshop in KL) and will be jointly funded by ICRC and Federation.

Training of trainers

PMI training department will prepare for the first workshop in Community Based Disaster Preparedness for trainers from chapter/branches. Curriculum will include participatory methodology, Vulnerability Capacity Analysis and dissemination. Participants will be chapter/branch staff and trained volunteers. This training will take place in August and will be funded by ICRC/Federation.

Procurement of vehicles and equipment

This was started in June by PMI Disaster Preparedness Division and the Federation Representative. Whilst the initial Japanese Red Cross contribution was intended to cover the initial training, two MEUVs with equipment and four sets of equipment for branches (which can only access disaster areas by boat), the favourable exchange rate and joint ICRC support has meant the following can be covered:

- the procurement of 12 Isuzu Elf NKR-66 4.3 ltr diesel trucks lined with aluminium boxes
- the procurement of one Isuzu Panther 2.5 ltr diesel car for monitoring of the programme
- the procurement of 12 sets of emergency equipment for the trucks
- the procurement of 4 sets of standard disaster equipment for branches (where access is only possible by boat)

Procurement of emergency equipment

Further to the emergency operations in May, when PMI mobilised its ambulance fleet and First Aid teams in Jakarta, the following equipment was purchased (funded by Japanese Red Cross) to strengthen its capacity to respond to similar situations:

- Radio equipment for ambulances and branches in Jakarta
- New antenna and radio repeater station for Jakarta
- New stretchers for 16 ambulances based in Jakarta
- Oxygen tanks and masks for 16 ambulances
- New blood centrifuge equipment for Jambi Chapter
- New fax machine for National Headquarters

Outstanding needs

Whilst activities for this year, particularly the training, will require additional funding, the 1999 plan is expected to both reflect the three-year DP plan as well as new needs based on the environmental situation (haze and smog operation) as well as the economic and political crisis. It is likely that PMI will find itself central to providing services to the increasingly high numbers of people who will slip through the net of social support. It will, therefore, be the Federation Representative's role to continue to ensure that PMI is well placed to respond to this fast changing situation. Support for the Federation's role will be required.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

PMI is working closely with the relevant government authorities in this programme; 'BAKORNAS' is the National Disaster Management Co-ordinating Board of Indonesia and its implementing arm is 'SATLAK' at all levels from province down. PMI is the only indigenous humanitarian organisation represented in this government working group.

Media relations during the May unrest were extremely constructive. PMI activities were covered by print and film media (major news agencies) as well as by the Federation's own information systems. The Federation's regional information unit in Kuala Lumpur supported the work of PMI and liaised with ICRC.

Conclusion

Given Indonesia's vulnerability to natural disasters (typhoons, earthquakes, drought, flooding) and the possibility of further civil unrest, population movement and increased poverty, there is a great need for PMI to strengthen its DP capacity.

Though the formal three-year DP programme has faced some delay, a considerable amount has been achieved in recent months. PMI not only demonstrated a capacity to respond during the May crisis but has also begun to set in place its extensive countrywide DP programme.

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