

MYANMAR:

Institutional Development and Capacity Building

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Following the holding of the Myanmar Red Cross General Assembly, in March 1999, there has been considerable change in the National Society. This, coupled with ICRC's renewed access to some of Myanmar's prisons, represents a new opportunity for the development of Myanmar Red Cross and its services for the population.

The context

The situation in Myanmar did not change greatly during the period under review. The country remains politically isolated, with limited economic improvement and ongoing unrest on its eastern border.

However, if favourable weather conditions lead to a good 1999 main rice harvest, inflation (51.5% annual average in 1998) is expected to continue to fall in the rest of the year. The steps taken by the junta in late 1998 to optimise land use and increase the output of both cash crops and rice has had some success. In 1999 the total area under cultivation is expected to rise from 5.7 million ha. to 7.3 million ha.

While talks with ASEAN have been delayed, dialogue with the EU and ICRC has taken place, with ICRC gaining access to a number of prisons since early May 1999.

Latest events

The National Society •

The General Assembly of the National Society was held on 19 March. From the perspective of the Red Cross Movement, this is seen as very much a turning point for the Myanmar Red Cross. A new