

# ***CAMBODIA: MALARIA***

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### ***The Disaster***

Remote areas of northern Cambodia in Preah Vihear and Siem Reap Provinces, formerly under the control of the Khmer Rouge, have recently become accessible to not only the government of Cambodia but also to thousands of internally displaced people. Whilst this largely marginal group of people are moving to this area for economic (access to land) and social reasons, the area's long period of isolation and jungle environment mean that there is both a high level of malaria and little effective health care. Because the majority of the population have had little or no previous malaria exposure, they are susceptible to malaria and have a high risk of developing severe malaria and dying during the next rainy season (June to November 1999). This prediction is also supported by epidemiological data collected by the WHO/MoH and by observations made by organisations working in the area.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) Community Based First Aid (CBFA) programme, implemented by volunteers and Red Cross Youth, has a key role to play in disease prevention. Following visits to the provinces by CRC and the Federation, the CRC will collaborate with the Ministry of Health (MoH), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and NGO's in the procurement, distribution and impregnation of bednets. The operation will specifically seek to protect the under-five age group and pregnant women. Owing to the difficulty of access to the area (limited and poor quality roads), distribution will need to take place during the coming dry season (January to May 1999).

### ***Needs***

Whilst the MoH, supported by WHO, have already distributed more than 100,000 bednets, a further 68,000 bednets and 6,400 litres of insecticide are still urgently required. The Federation has applied to ECHO for the insecticide (deltamethrin SC 1%) and 11,474 bednets, but urgently requires a further CHF 292'000 to procure and distribute the balance of nets (56,526). The nets and insecticide will be procured locally or in Thailand.

The situation in Cambodia offer the CRC and the MoH a unique opportunity to pre-empt a major malaria outbreak. For a limited amount of funding, preventative, and, more importantly, sustainable measures can be put in place. In this context and given the necessary support, the Red Cross is in a position to demonstrate it's role in the prevention of a major disease epidemic that may potentially result in high mortality.

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