

## ***SRI LANKA: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE***

5 February 2001

*appeal no. 01.23/2000*

*situation report no. 2*

*period covered: 1 July - 31 December 2000*

---

*The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) has continued building its constituency and membership base, focusing on its emerging Youth Wing, developing its Branches, strengthening disaster preparedness, and consolidating its financial development work. It has been particularly successful in increasing its public profile and publicising its community based work, as well as its response to disasters such as flooding, dengue fever, and cyclones. The Society's work has, however, suffered from continuing unstable governance; nevertheless new and strategic partnerships have been emerging with other National Societies as well as with foreign diplomatic and aid missions in country as a result of the impact of its work at community level.*

---

### ***The context***

Sri Lanka's considerable development potential has been strangled for the last 20 years by the civil war involving the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who seek to create a separate nation for the Tamil

minority, although the last six months have seen the possibility of a fresh peace negotiation process emerging. The general elections in October 2000 returned a People's Alliance government formed from a coalition of parties. Armed clashes and bomb attacks in the capital and on other strategic targets have continued to divert resources from important structural, developmental and other issues. Unemployment is high and inflation is gradually rising.

Sri Lanka benefits from a number of human development and economic assets. The Paris Aid Consortium meeting in December 2000 pledged additional bilateral and multilateral aid and encouraged further poverty reduction programmes. It recognised that Sri Lanka has attained the status of a middle income group country with a per capita income of USD 865, an adult literacy rate of almost 90%, life expectancy of 75 years and an infant mortality rate of 16 per thousand. Some 57% of the population has access to safe water. Sri Lankan society is built around a well-developed belief in communal action and concerted effort, and rural areas benefit from the growing power and involvement of women.

In addition to the long monsoon season, the country experiences cyclones, tropical storms and tidal surges, flash floods in the mountains and foothills and river flooding in the plains. In contrast, in the dry northern part of the country, drought and food shortages are frequent when irrigation of agriculture fails. Due to the diversion of economic resources, health services have deteriorated, increasing the vulnerability of the population to infectious diseases. The greatest negative impact on progress and well-being therefore remains the civil war.

## ***Latest events***

The conflict in the north and east continues, with heavy casualties on both sides. The country's capital, Colombo, has also been the target of rebel groups, particularly in the run up to the general elections in October, when on several occasions suicide bombers caused a large number of civilian casualties.

The governing party, the People's Alliance, has continued efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict through constitutional reforms. It has accepted a facilitator in the form of a special envoy offered by the Norwegian government to resume efforts to promote peace talks between the government and the LTTE.

In the meantime, there is continuing encouragement by the donor community as expressed at the Paris meeting in December. It focuses on finding a solution to the conflict, while at the same time supporting the government's key development priorities in the fields of rehabilitation in the north-east, tertiary education with particular reference to information technology; governance development and the Samurdhi programme for addressing unemployment.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

### **Disaster Preparedness and Response •**

#### ***Community-based Disaster Preparedness and Response Programme***

*Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) objectives:*

- Training in disaster preparedness (DP) techniques for staff, volunteers and communities.
- Follow-up to regional DP workshop activities, especially hazard-mapping, DP policy preparation, community-based logistics and warehouse development.
- Pre and post-disaster surveys.

- Increased involvement of communities in DP and relief and increased public awareness of DP.

Headquarters and branch staff of the National Society used their DP volunteers and training to respond to three disasters in the country over the past 6 months: flash flooding, dengue fever and a cyclone. The Society's rapid and effective response to each emergency earned praise from stakeholders in the country including local and central authorities and diplomatic missions.

In the flood relief programme in September and October, the Society was requested by the government to help in the distribution of both food and non-food relief items to 11,000 families affected by torrential rain and flash flooding in four districts in the south. When the government supplies were exhausted, the Society continued to conduct assessment surveys, identify the most vulnerable families and areas, and distribute relief supplies, with the assistance of the ICRC. Non-food relief items mobilised and distributed included blankets, plastic sheeting, kitchen utensils, bed sheets, soap, sleeping mats and clothes, targeting some 5,000 of the most vulnerable families. Health education was another priority: a community based health education campaign was launched advising displaced families on the prevention of water borne diseases

The next disaster was the emergence of waterborne diseases such as dengue fever and malaria in other parts of the country. The Society, together with the Federation, prioritised the six most affected districts and liaised with the government health and administrative authorities. The Society was the only humanitarian organisation to respond with a community based health education programme. Public awareness projects included the distribution of leaflets, mobile public address systems, house-to-house advisory services, water purification and environmental cleaning work.

The Society hosted a South Asia regional disaster preparedness workshop, the first to be held in Sri Lanka. Representatives from five National Societies participated in the three day workshop to exchange good practices in community based DP and disaster response work, and to plan to share resource personnel and materials between Societies in the future. The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society was asked to loan a senior staff member to be the director for the workshop, given his extensive experience in DP and disaster management.

The Society has also prioritised the integration of DP skills training in the areas of assessment, logistics management and first aid relief in its youth wing development programme. Three youth wing training camps were held for three days to train new members in DP skills. In addition, two exposure visits for six branch and headquarters volunteers and staff were conducted to learn from the DP experiences of the Nepal Red Cross and Bangladesh Red Crescent Society. The Society's DP manual and procedures will be revised in the near future as a result of these learning experiences.

The revision of the Manual had been on hold pending the development of a regional DP policy, a process which was finalised with the ratification of the policy at the regional meeting of Secretaries General in November 2000. The director of development attended a five-day disaster management training course in Europe to further strengthen the Society's overall strategic capacity through the training of trainers.

A proposal to build on headquarters and branch DP infrastructure has been submitted to local aid missions in Sri Lanka. It aims to build community level sustainable capacity, using revolving community funds and strategies focusing on warehousing and buffer stocks which will further increase the Society's competence in disaster response. Relationship building with the government at central level is continuing with a view to agreeing on the specific auxiliary roles that the National Society will be expected to play in times of disaster.

## **Health •**

## ***Community Health Promotion and Training programme***

### *Country Assistance Strategy objectives:*

- To promote primary health care (PHC) services.
- To establish a community health unit at headquarters and train 100 community health workers.
- To educate the community in first aid, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and primary health care in 10 districts.
- To upgrade and maintain the 5 PHC centres as HIV/AIDS, PHC, family planning and first aid information centres.
- To carry out a first aid training programme for trainers, educators and individuals at community level.
- Promotion of HIV/AIDS education.

Given the lack of support for the Society's health programme outlined in Appeal 2000, it has not been possible to initiate community based training of health workers or public health education and disease prevention programmes. However, branches have continued to undertake a variety of health services which have clearly benefited vulnerable communities. First aid training was carried out, free dental services were offered, health education programmes were conducted, pre-school primary health care and centre-based counselling for mothers and families was made available, ambulance services were provided and medical clinics were set up in existing PHC centres.

In addition, the Society took part in polio eradication and vaccination programmes at the request of the government and networked with such organisations as the WHO and Rotary International to spread public education messages on these themes.

Discussions have been held with potential partners on support for the community based health programmes and it is hoped that these will commence in 2001 with the building of a health management infrastructure at headquarters, as well as the training of community based volunteers and the setting up of co-ordination mechanisms in the branches in prioritised areas which urgently require community based health promotion work.

An integrated community based health promotion strategy was initiated and activities took place during the flash flooding and the dengue fever prevention programme. In addition, the new youth wing members underwent a three-day first aid and integrated health awareness training course as part of their disaster preparedness orientation: 300 young people have benefited from this training in the last six months.

First Aid training continued and there are 23 voluntary first aid co-ordinators at branch level. At national level, the Society continued income generation through training courses for external participants from the corporate and business sector; 1,734 company employees and 190 individuals were trained in 2000. In addition, the Society accessed a large corporate donation to develop six videos on first aid, for commercial use and distribution. Overall, the first aid and health programmes of the Society assisted 25,564 beneficiaries during the year.

### **Humanitarian Values •**

The Society successfully recruited and trained 17 branch level dissemination officers. A joint Federation and ICRC three-day training programme was held for these volunteers, together with the Society's information officer, to broaden the target populations for dissemination work on the Fundamental Principles and humanitarian values.

With the close co-operation of the ICRC, the Society has strengthened its public profile and continued to stress the Fundamental Principles of the Movement in all its publications. This gives the SLRCS a strong position with external partners, including the government. There has been a structured briefing for the new Minister and officials in the social services Ministry on the parameters of work in line with the SLRCS mandate.

Other integrated aspects of the promotion of humanitarian values programme are included in the information development programme activities in the capacity building section below:

## **Capacity Building •**

### ***Institutional Development Programme***

#### *Country Assistance Strategy objectives:*

- To strengthen the Society's governance, leadership and management capacity through regional exchanges and training.
- To develop and strengthen the overall human resource management capacity of SLRCS.
- To upgrade the co-ordination capacity of the National Society and to strengthen the human resource development activities.

The Society has continued, with Federation assistance, to consolidate its progress under the overall principles of the Characteristics of a Well Functioning Society. The new Mission Statement recommended by the participative internal Strategic Planning process of June 2000 has been accepted, following two workshops for the Board of Governors, Branch officials, and volunteers and staff of the Society on the institutional change implications.

The Sri Lankan General Election of October facilitated a new relationship with the line Ministry in Government which has led to discussions on a revision of the Society's Constitution. This would allow a formal Recognition Act to be passed in Parliament, thus strengthening the legal base of the Society. The Society has however continued to suffer from unstable governance over the past six months; a Government appointed Interim Board of Management was appointed for a six-month term displacing the elected Board of Governors. This has diverted efforts from the governance issues and resulted in a complex legal confrontation.

Nevertheless, the Society's constituency development plans have proved successful, with the overall membership doubling to 17,000 over the past 12 months. As a result of Youth Wing development activities, youth, who constitute 30% of the overall population, now comprise two thirds of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society's membership, a promising feature for the development of future leadership within the Society.

Branch development work has also progressed with the innovative emergence of the Branch Development Officers (BDOs) whose roles are to co-ordinate between Branches, Government and NGOs; co-ordinate constituency development by holding public meetings; forming Divisional level units to improve the impact of the community based programmes and assistance at emergency times; and strengthen the Branch/NHQ relationships. There has been a marked comparative increase in the achievements of Branches with BDOs in the areas of World Red Cross Day activities, and also in overall recruitment and mobilisation of members and volunteers. The BDOs will be increased in number from 6 to 12 in 2001 to build on this learning experience and explore how the posts can become locally and sustainably funded.

Human Resource Development (HRD) has been prioritised for attention by the senior management team at NHQ, which has recruited an HRD and Training Co-ordinator at national level to develop a HRD plan and improve the Society's overall HRD management practices. The National Co-ordinator has joined a South Asia Regional HRD group of colleagues from all other National Societies, which at a meeting in December 2000 agreed to develop a Regional HRD Manual with common minimum norms and practices, to be further adapted to the cultural environments of each NS. The National Co-ordinator has facilitated two meetings of the Society's senior management team, in order to draw up a HRD action plan of priorities. Anticipated outcomes include the improvement of recruitment, retention, appraisal and development of standards for all volunteers and staff in the Society, as well as a structured training programme to improve key competency levels appropriate in revised job descriptions.

Resource mobilisation work has continued. The Society has successfully raised corporate sector sponsorship to produce six training videos on First Aid for commercial resource mobilisation purposes. Income continues to be raised by providing First Aid training to employees of companies and individuals.

Two structured study and learning tours enabled six representatives from management and volunteer levels to bring back ideas from Nepal and Bangladesh on the topics of Branch Development, Resource Development, Government Co-operation, Disaster Preparedness, Youth Wing development, Human Resource Development and Personnel Management, and health strategy and gender perspectives. The structured learning has been fed back into the Society's policies, as well as into the Committee structures, to enable them to function more effectively by developing further modules, manuals, and training materials in each area.

### ***Finance Development***

#### *Country Assistance Strategy objectives:*

- To assist in developing and adapting the National Society's financial systems and procedures, including automation of part of the procedures.
- To develop an internal audit function.
- To install a computerised accounting function at NHQ and the branches.
- To develop and improve the basic accounting, budgeting and financial management skills of finance staff.
- To train senior management in the tools for financial management.

The finance development work of the Society has continued and systems have been further upgraded. The Fixed Assets Register has been compiled and now needs further updating. The Register records all centrally purchased fixed assets; those purchased by Branches need integration in the months ahead. In addition, automation of some procedures, such as purchase orders and invoice systems, has also been completed.

The Finance Procedures Manual is now in operation and has been discussed at an orientation meeting of over 50 employees at NHQ level. The discussions gave rise to suggestions for further improvements and developments which are currently being considered and integrated. The Finance Director's visit to the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society to exchange finance development information resulted in a commitment to share further documents to help mutual capacity building. An accountant from the Finance Department also visited the Nepal Red Cross Society to learn from their finance procedures and systems. Comprehensive instructions on Branch accounting have been circulated to all Branches and this has led to the planning of training courses in 2001 to strengthen the existing Branch finance reporting systems.

The computerisation process of the accounting systems has been slowed down due to unavoidable delays in obtaining the hardware. In the meantime, Price Waterhouse Accountancy have been invited to comment

on the draft specifications for the accounting software development process, which will then lead to a tender procedure.

The Internal Audit Manual has been completed and the Internal Auditor will begin a programme of Branch visits to offer support and training in further improving systems at Branch level. The Internal Auditor has also been involved in observing the Society's tendering procedures during the recent cyclone relief programme and has worked with the Tendering Board on strengthening its procedures.

Talks have been held with some Finance staff on what computer training they would require once the hardware arrives, and discussions have begun with the Director of Finance and Internal Auditor on training for the senior managers, such as the Directors and National Co-ordinators in the Society, to improve further their budgeting and financial planning and monitoring skills.

### ***Youth Development***

Six young members attended the Asia Pacific Youth gathering conducted by the Federation in Thailand to facilitate shared experiences and plans with other Societies' Youth Wings. These young people have circulated their reports and recommendations internally. The Youth Wing now has its own regular Planning Committee meetings comprised solely of Youth members and drafts plans for national activities at NHQ and Branch levels.

The Youth Wing development programme has developed real impetus. Three Youth Camps have been held in the last 6 months for a total of 100 young people (50% female and 50% male) who followed an orientation programme covering the Principles and history of the Movement, leadership training, First Aid, Disaster Preparedness training, problem solving skills development, and Shramadana ("free labour") activities in the communities where each camp is held. The programme was developed by a Youth Co-ordinating Committee comprised of six young people which organised the training camps.

The youth membership of the Society has grown steadily over this period -- from 904 in May 2000 to 4,858 in November 2000 -- as a result of peer education and motivation programmes in schools and colleges. The Youth Wing development strategy has an integrated approach to the Disaster Preparedness, community health and First Aid programmes of the Society, so that young people are actively employed in clear and productive roles. Some members of the Youth Wing are also the volunteer Information and Dissemination Officers for their Branch.

The elected Board of Governors of the Society is committed to establishing representation for members of the Youth Wing at all levels of District and national decision making bodies, in order to actively involve young members in the governance of the Society. This matter will be addressed when the Society's Constitution is revised and redrafted in early 2001.

### ***Information Development***

The Regional Information delegate has visited Sri Lanka twice in the last six months to assist with the development of a communication strategy for the SLRCS, review the progress of the information officer and provide some basic training in communications.

The Information Officer has carried out Branch visits to gather material on a SLRCS community based programme which could be included in the World Disasters Report, and has undertaken joint training with Federation and ICRC colleagues of the network of information officers within SLRCS branches, including developing clear job and role descriptions to maximise their efforts to improve the profile of the Branches.

This has led to improved co-ordination and co-operation with colleagues in the ICRC concerning the development of the SLRCS information department, and has increased the opportunity to meet informally with members of the Sri Lankan media for purposes of image building and networking.

The Information Unit at the National HQ has significantly increased the public profile of the Society's work in both relief and development. A number of high profile press articles have appeared highlighting the Society's response in the disasters caused by flash flooding, dengue fever, and the cyclone which hit the country's North and East Districts on 26 December. This is the result of a more strategic approach to relationship building with the press and electronic media.

The Information Officer is now co-ordinating the production of a Newsletter intended as a means of motivating members and Branches and HQ staff, as well as an external networking tool with foreign diplomatic and aid missions, international and national NGOs, the media, and other key stakeholders such as the UN agencies.

The Society has also increased the profile of its work in the Federation's FOCUS magazine which presents the work of National Societies in the Asia Pacific Region. This has proved an excellent medium for improving awareness among external stakeholders and is being strategically distributed to a wide range of institutions, including the Government.

## *Outstanding needs*

The primary focus of Federation support is to support the return of a stable and effective governance, and a revised Constitution. In the meantime, the capacity building work at management level must be continued, since its impact could be seen in the Society's three recent disaster response operations when significantly less Federation support was required.

Another area for management support is to facilitate a clearer and more strategic internal Human Resource Development strategy with the newly appointed National Training and HRD Co-ordinator. This will ensure that there is a comprehensive approach to building staff and volunteer capacity to deliver the Federation's Core Programme objectives in Strategy 2010. Progress has already been made in the two management workshops on HRD strategy planning with the senior management team, but more work is required to support the resourcing of the follow-up processes.

Further consolidation of the Finance and Information Development programmes into a wider strategic framework of Branch and HQ development and capacity building remains a priority. Building on the gains made in these areas, the development of Branch capacities at volunteer level to complement the vision that exists at NHQ is an important challenge. Building the capacity of the new Information and Dissemination Co-ordinators, who are volunteers, and of the salaried Branch Development Officers in selected key strategic Branches requires an integrated plan and clearer lines of accountability to ensure effective planning at Branch level. The integration of the new Youth Wing members into the programme structures of the Society will also need support in the form of strategic management training for the programme co-ordinators to help them identify means of strengthening the human resource base available to the Society.

The Federation Delegation will also prioritise support, in co-ordination with ICRC, to achieve a revised Constitution, and thereafter governance development work to ensure a recognition of the mandates of governance and management at all levels in the Society.

Although the Society only found one strategic partnership in the last year, the effectiveness of the Institutional Development and Capacity Building work has nevertheless had an important impact, and the overall strengthening of capacity has enabled the Society to dialogue more confidently with other potential partners. The Federation will continue to try to interest new partners in longer term strategic support for the Society, which has a very important positioning as an institution working according to the Fundamental Principles in a complex, war-affected external environment.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

In August the Ministry of Social Services appointed an Interim Board of Management (IBM) to manage the Society's affairs for a period of six months and to rectify some areas of administration which the Government's Board of Inquiry had identified as needing attention. The IBM's legitimacy was contested in a legal action by the displaced elected Board of Governors, who sought reinstatement. After the October general election, the new Minister for Social Services took the decision to dissolve the IBM and reinstate the elected Board of Management. The IBM contested this in court and was returned to governance in December. This unstable governance debate has hampered the Society's overall ability to achieve its objectives, but management interface with the Federation has been maintained, enabling some regular programme activities to continue.

The new Minister for Social Services has expressed support for a more strategic relationship between the Society and the Government, and a new approach to an overall Memorandum of Understanding between the Society, the Government and the Federation has been proposed and agreed on. This approach will include a Government commitment to a Recognition Act in Parliament once the Society has revised its Constitution. The Social Services Ministry has also expressed support for more joint programming work with the Society on behalf of the most vulnerable people in the country. A regular meeting schedule has now been agreed on, for drawing up action plans and review and monitoring purposes.

The Society has continued to build strategic relationships with influential media: it recently involved senior journalists in its training programme for the Branch Information Officers. This, together with briefing evenings for journalists, has helped the Society to achieve regular and balanced reporting of its activities in the past six months.

Due to the issues of unstable governance, the Society has been unable to follow up on its plans to increase networking with UN and other humanitarian institutions, but the Federation Delegation has kept all foreign diplomatic and aid missions updated on the Society's programmes, and has distributed the Asia Pacific FOCUS magazine to this audience. This has led to increased possibilities of developing partner relationships with local aid missions in country to support some of the Society's programmes.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Head a.i.  
Relationship Management Department

Hiroshi Higashiura  
Head  
Asia and Pacific Department

**This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>**

<b>Sri Lanka</b>						ANNEX 1
<b>APPEAL No. 01.23/2000</b>		<b>PLEDGES RECEIVED</b>			02/06/01	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>CASH</b>						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				<b>427,000</b>		<b>TOTAL COVERAGE 27.4%</b>
<b>Balance carried forward from 1999</b>				<b>(68,658)</b>		
BRITISH - GOVT				50,000	19.01.2000	DFID 1.4.2, 1.4.3
ICELAND - RC		500,000	ISK	10,948	03/30/00	NS CAPACITY BUILDING
JAPANESE - RC		8,000,000	JPY	124,576	26.06.00	
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH</b>				116,866	CHF	27.4%
<b>KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES</b>				0	CHF	0.0%
<b>ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED</b>				0	CHF	
<b>THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:</b>						
PLK001, PLK005, PLK160						