

VIETNAM: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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situation report no. 2

period covered: January - December, 2000

With impressive support from donors, the appeal fully funded for 2000, the programme has made major strides in reinforcing the capacity of the Vietnamese Red Cross Society (VNRC). One highly visible result of the success of the programme is the close attention and very positive recognition and support of the Vietnam authorities, indicating that the VNRC is indeed well positioned to ensure its role as a vital national humanitarian actor. The image of the VNRC with the public has been boosted with very positive features in the Vietnam press and media.

The context

With its unique mix of geography, Vietnam is one of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region most vulnerable to natural disasters. Its long and exposed coastline is subjected to an annual beating by typhoons, its mountainous terrain is hit alternately by flash floods and prolonged drought, while its wide river deltas are extremely prone to flooding. Combined with a large and dense population, increasing urbanization, a delayed but significant impact of the region's economic crisis, considerable health and social problems and the lingering effects of war, Vietnam is clearly one of the region's priorities in terms of humanitarian assistance.

There is a strong representation of donors in Vietnam, with nearly all industrialized countries and the EU represented in Hanoi (most providing overseas development aid, or ODA), and the major international funding institutions - notably World Bank and ADB, UNDP, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and, until the end of 2000, WFP as well as 350 foreign NGOs.

Rural poverty, industrialization and other economic development, infrastructure (including disaster prevention and mitigation - e.g., dykes), health and education are among the main areas of focus for

this assistance. The main beneficiaries of ODA are state and provincial-level institutions, mass organisations and a small number of indigenous NGOs.

The Vietnam Red Cross has a countrywide network of local-level branches in each of the 61 provinces and is widely represented down to district level. Considered as one of the top social organizations in Vietnam, the Society's current priorities are described in the government decree which effectively reinvigorated the new VNRC in 1987. These were adopted as the priorities for the Society in 1988 at the Vth National Congress of the VNRC and reaffirmed at the VIth Congress in 1995. The priority programmes are to:

- work in health and first aid at community level
- carry out social work and work in favour of disaster victims
- co-operate with other National Societies abroad.

The focus of the International Federation's Country Assistance Strategy and Annual Appeal for the year 2000 has therefore been to concentrate on the areas of Disaster Preparedness and Relief, Social Work (including a special disability programme including amongst others, people thought to be affected by Agent Orange) and, quite important, the Capacity Building of the National Society. Support to the Vietnam Red Cross in the area of Health has been assured by the Danish Red Cross and Australian Red Cross societies working in country with the Vietnam Red Cross, and through direct support from the Regional Delegation of the Federation in Bangkok. These programmes do not feature as part of the Federations appeal for funding for Vietnam and so are not covered in this report.

Latest events

The year 2000 saw a number of major events in the history of Vietnam:

- Reeling from the effects of the century's worst floods in the central provinces, the focus of humanitarian action turned in that direction. By mid-year however the focus turned sharply south when the Mekong flooded, devastating three provinces, and causing serious disruption to a further four (An Giang, Dong Thap, Long An, Kien Giang, Tien Giang, Can Tho and Vinh Luong). Tropical storms caused flooding in the north central province of Ha Tinh and in the central highland province of Dac Lac, and finally in the south central province of Phu Yen. In total millions of people were affected - the most vulnerable counted in the hundreds of thousands. Of particular worry was the plight of children in these flooded areas who represented the overwhelming majority in the death toll.
- April saw jubilant celebrations for the 25th anniversary for the liberation of Ho Chi Minh City and the end of the so called American War. Despite tensions being raised by a visiting US Senator dominating the international relations arena, the much awaited Trade Agreement between the United States and Vietnam was eventually signed heralding improved prospects for Vietnam exports to the US, and consequently inward investment (particularly from within the region) and thus very positive hopes for the Vietnam economy.
- The historic visit of US President Bill Clinton to Vietnam in November opened a new stage in the relations between the two former enemies. Welcomed by the most senior leaders in Vietnam, Clinton addressed the core issues of relations - the war, dioxin, MIAs, economic prosperity, Vietnam's own choice for how Vietnam should look in the future - a key visit which was much appreciated among all levels of Vietnam society. He even spared time to meet the Vietnam Red Cross, the American Red Cross and the Federation in a private meeting, thus giving special recognition to the work of the Red Cross and in building relations between these two countries.
- Vietnam economic numbers again looked extremely positive with a significant increase in exports (up 24% on 1999 - mainly due to the hike in crude oil prices), food exports are up by 4.2% (although rice exports are decreased possibly due to a combination of flooding in the Mekong and diversification to other crops) maintaining Vietnam's position as the second highest exporter of rice, third highest of coffee, and fourth in the world in rubber. December's Consultative Group Meeting chaired by the World Bank recognised significant improvements in reform and economic development, but also welcomed the openness in discussions between all the partners present.

Vietnam Red Cross •

The much awaited National Congress of the Vietnam Red Cross has been once again postponed until May 2001. With increased attention from different sources in Vietnam due to the increase in performance in disaster relief and social activities in recent years, an overdue government audit was commissioned. With attention focussed on relief operations, the senior leadership felt it best to postpone this to give the time needed to assure the effective development of the next five year strategy and the all important line-up in the governance and management of the Society.

While waiting this event significant changes have taken place within the organisation of the Vietnam Red Cross, both at national and provincial levels, with new staff and managers and a more dynamic team in the particularly disaster prone provinces.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Disaster Relief •

Appeal 2000 pledged to continue to support the Vietnam Red Cross in disaster relief. During 2000, the bulk of the flood operation for the 1999 Central Provinces appeal (approximately USD 5 million) was completed by June, and an operation for the Mekong and storm disasters valued at close to USD 7 million was started. Donor support was raised largely through in country contacts and through PNS initiatives in their capitals. Increasing revenues are forthcoming from the international companies based in Vietnam and from private individuals.

Through the implementation of the relief operations in 1999, increasing responsibility has been handed over for the management of the operations to the Vietnam Red Cross.

The effective implementation of the operations has also generated approximately USD 4.8 million in cash and kind for disaster preparedness initiatives from different donors.

Disaster Preparedness •

Appeal 2000 set two objectives for DP support to the VNRC:

- To assist the VNRC in the strengthening and improvement of the National Society's disaster-preparedness capacity, both at the Headquarters DP Department and in high-risk areas, through human resource development and capacity building.
- To assist the VNRC with the development of ongoing, sustainable, risk-reduction activities

To strengthen the capacity, support has been provided to train and coach the team of staff within the DP section of the VNRC's Social Work Department. Trainers from 21 provinces have been trained in Training of Trainers (ToT) based on a DP manual developed together with the Vietnam Red Cross.

A key development in 2000 has been the total redesign of a DP training material targeted at the local community, and specifically school children and through them to their families. Thousands of teachers have been trained across seven Central Vietnam provinces in the first phase of this programme which will see 20000 children trained using this material by March 2001. The trainers trained in DP have implemented this programme together with the Ministry of Education and Training in each province, and the local chapters.

Swimming and lifesaving training has been provided to 26 trainers from ten provinces all over Vietnam.

26 emergency response posts (community based disaster response buildings equipped with rescue gear) were constructed in the seven central provinces. Training will be provided in early 2001 to the shock brigades (teams of volunteers) who man these posts to improve their effectiveness and delivery.

In addition, hardware in the form of computers with modems, fax machines, sirens, loudhailers, motorcycles, boats, life vests, first aid material and Red Cross identification has been provided to the staff and volunteers of the Disaster Preparedness

Plans to establish a GIS system link to the UNDP sponsored Disaster Management Unit of the Government have been postponed until an eagerly awaited grant is approved.

The main risk reduction efforts supported under the appeal have been the Mangrove plantation programme which has continued to support six northern provinces with funds and technical support to manage the existing 4,000 ha of coastal mangroves, and to plant 983 ha of new mangroves during the year. This programme is key in the coastal protection programme of the VNRC - and withstood the test of Tropical Storm Wukong which hit Ha Tinh province in September.

An evaluation of the programme during 2000 highlighted some difficulties in the management of the programme in two provinces. This has been rectified during the year. A further evaluation of this and the Danish Red Cross supported mangrove programme highlighted the need for a streamlining of the two programmes during 2001.

A second mitigation initiative is the housing programme which, although part of the reconstruction operations of the VNRC, has become a focus of attention of local communities, local authorities, central government and major donors. An assessment commissioned by the Federation and carried out by ADPC concluded that the programme was well focussed as a relief/rehabilitation programme, and gave some guidance for its integration to other development programmes. The VNRC and the Federation sponsored a national competition for the development of storm resistant housing in September, attracting a large number of entrants. The six finalists were judged by an independent jury comprising representatives of government departments, NGOs and the Red Cross, and awarded prizes for designs in four categories - mass relief/rehabilitation housing, development programme housing, individual housing and novel designs.

Social Work •

Appeal 2000 planned support to VNRC in terms of training to provincial chapter staff, support to national headquarters and chapter staff in developing social work skills and adopting social work methods in their daily work. It planned support the VNRC in providing ToT to disseminate this approach. Objectives were also set to assist in the development of the Vietnam Red Cross own Social Work manual, and in particular in the identification, planning and implementation of specific local level activities, aimed at meeting needs within the community. And most importantly, the Federation committed itself to implementing these objectives using the "social work approach".

During 2000, the Vietnam Red Cross has succeeded in organising basic social work training in six further provinces. Given staff shortages in early 2000 (the situation has since improved significantly), and the strain on the department with the major relief operations, the 15 envisaged has not been possible. The process of the development of the Social Work Manual has been long and involved within the Vietnam Red Cross, but has achieved significant result, with a working draft produced by the VNRC own team. This draft has been offered to branch staff and outside experts for comment and has already been revised somewhat and will be further revised in the coming months.

Most significantly has been the work in two provinces to develop a model approach for assessing needs and identifying local community level projects. This approach will be formalised in early 2001 and is seen as a key tool for local Red Cross branches in their planning of practical actions in community level social work. The theme of the social work programme has been to move from "charity" to "community development". Training has helped to change mindsets. It is hoped that these practical tools will help to change practical actions.

Several local level projects have been supported during the year, ranging from support to individual families with income generation activities, to ongoing, long term programmes such as the Gia Lam Deaf and Mute School. Increasing funds are being generated within Vietnam, whether from embassy small grants schemes or through community groups such as local business, international companies, the international women's club or international schools. A key objective for 2001 will be to support the VNRC to generate more funds locally for such projects.

Disability Programme •

A clear derivative of the VNRC's social work programme has been the Agent Orange Fund, which has led to the "Disability programme" supported by the International Federation and other donors through the 2000 appeal.

This programme aimed to support five provinces with pilot programmes targeting disabled children and their families - improving living conditions, helping with community based rehabilitation, medical/surgical interventions, vocational training/education and income generation.

A lengthy programme development phase was needed, with detailed support provided to the headquarters departments involved and to the provincial chapters. Some chapters were well able to handle the assessments and planning, and indeed the activities (most notably those from among the E5 supported provinces), but newer provinces involved required support from a very basic level. Six provinces have now begun work in the pilot programmes and extensive needs assessments and initial activities have already taken place.

Institutional Development •

This is covered in a separate situation report.

Outstanding needs

The appeal for 2000 is fully covered. The small surplus will greatly assist the ongoing programmes in 2001.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Extensive efforts have been made to ensure that the Vietnam Red Cross is supported in its position with the Vietnam authorities, domestic and international media, the general public and international donors.

The close attention and very positive recognition and support of the Vietnam authorities during 2000 - ranging from the Prime Minister to provincial leaders, shows that the VNRC is indeed well positioned to ensure its role as a national humanitarian actor. The support from international donors has also been impressive in this year, solidifying the position it has held in previous years. But it is in the eyes of the general public of Vietnam that the image of the VNRC has been most impressive. Hardly a day goes by that Red Cross is not featured - positively - in the Vietnam press and media.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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Vietnam						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 01.27/2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED				01/10/01
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				2,727,000		TOTAL COVERAGE 103.9%
Balance carried forward from 1999				40,926		
UNITED STATES - FREEMAN FOUNDATION		419,798	USD	718,904	08.09.00	Communication equipment, education program and materials for 100'000 school children
AUSTRALIAN - GOVT		7,000	USD	12,415	04.04.00	SUPPORT TO DEAF & MUTE SCHOOL
AUSTRALIAN - GOVT		6,299	USD	11,171	12.10.00	INSTALLATION WATER SYSTEM IN KONTUM
AUSTRALIAN - RC		26,985	USD	47,858	12.10.00	WATER PROGRAMMES
AUSTRALIAN - RC		12,085	USD	21,433	12.10.00	CBFA
BRITISH - RC		40,000	GBP	100,000	09.12.99	1999/2000 DPP
BRITISH - RC				88,802	26.07.00	BRANCH DEVELOPMENT FUND
BRITISH - RC		74,000	USD	131,239	05.10.00	E5 BRANCHE DEVELOPMENT
DIPECHO		400,000	EUR	622,480	06.07.00	HR DEV. ID AND RISK REDUCTION
GERMAN - RC				6,155	18.04.00	BRANCH DEVELOPMENT
JAPAN - RC		340,304	USD	535,638	03.04.00	MANGROVE PROJECT
NEW ZEALAND - RC		870	NZD	673	22.06.00	
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		190,000	SEK	36,024	30.05.00	NATIONAL COORDINATION
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		810,000	SEK	153,576	30.05.00	ID
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		800,000	SEK	151,681	30.05.00	SOCIAL WELFARE
VIETNAM PRIVATE		1,200	USD	2,124	28.11.00	HELP 10 CHILDREN ONE YEAR
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				2,681,099	CHF	98.3%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
Finland	Delegate(s)			45,010		
Netherlands	Delegate(s)			5,092		
Switzerland	Delegate(s)			42,392		
Great Britain	Delegate(s)			60,123		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				152,617	CHF	5.6%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						
PVN000, PVN003, PVN005, PVN007, PVN015, PVN161						