

SOUTH EAST ASIA: BUILDING CAPACITIES

19 January 2001

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period covered: 1 July - 31 December 2000*

During the second half of the year, the regional delegation, established in Bangkok, was able to undertake ambitious work plans in the areas of institutional development, health, advocacy and communications and relief. Particular emphasis is being placed on the development of inclusive country assistance strategies with each national society in the region and on the contribution of the regional delegation to the action research initiatives. Major relief operations were launched during the period as a result of monsoon flooding in Lao PDR and landslides in Indonesia triggered by heavy rainfall. The regional delegation continues its involvement in the management of these operations and foresees strengthening of Red Cross/Red Crescent networks to ensure improved preparedness and response.

The context

The regional delegation in Bangkok provides advisory and support services to the five country delegations in the region and the eleven National Societies.

Whilst the region is slowly climbing out of the economic crisis triggered by the collapse of confidence in the local currencies in 1997, the recovery is neither smooth nor uniform.

The least developed countries of the region, like Lao People's Democratic Republic are essentially being bypassed and find their economies drifting further and further behind the rest of the region.

Continued violence and political uncertainty in Indonesia are severely limiting development investment in that country. Donors are, however, still keen to focus on disaster preparedness, particularly where it seeks to prepare for both natural and conflictual disasters.

In the Philippines the impeachment trial of President Estrada has led to a deteriorating security situation in the capital and has triggered across the region cautiousness in economic investment. This has shown up in a fall across the region in currency values against the dollar.

Throughout the region this year's monsoon season (July through October) has been one of the heaviest on record bringing substantial and prolonged flooding to Lao PDR, parts of Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. In addition, there has been a higher than average incidence of rainfall-triggered landslides in Indonesia coupled with two major earthquakes. In the Philippines and along the Vietnam coast, typhoons added to the already substantial flood related disasters.

Against this background, the regional delegation has sought to establish itself in its new location in Bangkok, continue to provide service to the region and play a leading role with a limited number of other regional delegations in an "action research" programme aimed at radically changing the way we do business as a Federation. This action research seeks to ensure we improve our ability to coordinate and lead on capacity building in support of the region's national societies, that we become more effective at responding to major disasters in the region and that in order to do this we push more authority and responsibility out of Geneva and down to the regional and country delegations.

Latest events

The new regional delegation in Bangkok is now fully functional with the arrival of an accountant in November and a regional disaster preparedness delegate in December.

The regional delegation has also given additional support over the six month period to both the Lao PDR and Indonesia delegations. Lao has been without a head of delegation since March and in Indonesia the head of delegation left in November and so far has not been replaced.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Coordination and Management

The head of the regional delegation (HoRD) has travelled extensively in the region during the latter half of 2000, visiting all but one of the region's national societies and all of the delegations.

Two key issues have driven these visits and much of the HoRDs work, namely the need to shift to much more inclusive country assistance strategies (CAS) and secondly the direction and implication of the "action research" which the regional delegation is engaged in.

Development of an inclusive country assistance strategy has been taken forward in Lao PDR with the hiring of an experienced consultant for three months to work with the Federation, the Lao Red Cross and all the key participating national societies to devise a methodology for building a more coherent approach to development in Lao and then going on to draft an outline of such a strategy. This work will form the foundation of the Federation's assistance to Lao in 2001.

Throughout the region consultations have taken place with delegations and national societies over the need to evolve the way the Secretariat works in the field to better reflect the Strategy 2010 and the

growing desire of the Federation's membership to see a secretariat more actively engaged in providing leadership and coordination functions rather than direct operational involvement. Along with the regional delegations in Budapest and Harare, the Bangkok delegation has developed a set of programming and management changes which it hopes to implement in early 2001 in order to increase the effectiveness of the work of the Federation in SE Asia. Three objectives have been developed for this action research.

1 To assist each national society in the region to develop an all inclusive country assistance strategy, based firmly upon their own strategic vision and action plan and negotiated openly with their key partners.

2 To build a series or collection of organisational tools in the fields of disaster preparedness and response, health and care, communication and advocacy, and institutional development, which will promote quality assurance, knowledge sharing and shared programme responsibility.

3 To significantly increase the accountability of the Federation in SE Asia to its beneficiaries, its staff and volunteers and its donors.

Progress on this work will be reported on in the next situation report.

The **Regional Finance Unit** continues to be located in Kuala Lumpur. There have been no major developments with the Unit in the latter half of 2000. It continues to provide financial and accountancy services to the delegations of SE Asia. Plans are in hand to expand the geographical coverage of the Unit in 2001.

Institutional Development in the Region

During the second half of 2000, the regional ID unit records three major achievements:

- 1 Real progress in the development process of the Lao Red Cross.
- 2 Improving rapprochement and cooperation with the Malaysian Red Crescent.
- 3 First regional RC leaders' course held after almost 18 months of in-house discussions.

Activities related to the development process of the Lao RC following the May Partnership meeting include the conduct of a strategic planning workshop designed by the regional ID delegate in consultation with the NS, from which the LRC first Five Year Plan was developed. Participants to the workshop (and subsequent plan) were all branches of the LRC and all senior officers of the headquarters. A Federation consultant was posted to Vientiane for two months, and produced a comprehensive review or stocktaking report of the LRC, as well as a draft inclusive assistance strategy, the first of the region. The regional ID delegate and LRC ran a participatory ID/governance workshop in November, from which the LRC is to develop an ID plan for the Society.

The regional ID delegate and officer met with the Secretary General and board members of MRCS, joined a youth camp in Johor Bahru (S. Malaysia), provided input to volunteer training about the Federation, and discussed MRCS management issues with the Secretary General during the Yangon leaders' course.

The first regional Red Cross leaders' course to take place outside of Geneva was hosted by Myanmar RC during December. It was rated successful, and suggestions came up to take it to the country level.

Direction for 2001

Concerning Lao RC, the immediate tasks ahead requiring Federation support are:

- 1 Negotiate the draft ICAS with all concerned parties, and oversee implementation.
- 2 Assist LRC develop an overall annual plan from its 5 year plan.
- 3 Assist LRC develop ID and DP plans from its 5 year plan.

Concerning Malaysian Red Crescent, probable activities for future collaboration are:

- 1 Conduct HQ management development needs assessment.
- 2 Conduct ID/management workshop for key headquarters staff and give follow-up support.
- 3 Provide input to weekend volunteer training.
- 4 Observe and report on new DP training (in acqua rescue and toxic response).
- 5 Assist MRCS to organise a BTC in E. Malaysia (Sabah or Sarawak).

Concerning leaders' training:

- 1 Respond to requests for in-country leaders' training.
- 2 Establish regional leaders' training as an annual event.

Concerning other directions for 2001, the regional delegate recruitment programme will continue, and the ID unit will continue to screen and propose candidates for BTCs. The ID Unit will endeavour to develop capacity for supporting NSs in human resource and financial resource development, after assessing needs through the views of NSs and country delegations. The brokering of local resources will be favoured.

The ID Unit will continue to respond to ad hoc requests for assistance from NSs and delegations (e.g management assessment of DPRK Red Cross in early 2001), as well as support related activities (e.g participate in the facilitation of the regional information workshop in Bangkok in February).

Health programming in the region

The health situation in the region remained within the usual pattern. Only Lao experienced a severe diarrhoea (cholera) outbreak with 12,000 cases and 500 deaths in the last 6 months.

Human Capacity Building Programme

Health management course: Detailed preparations for the health management course (February 2001, Thailand) are underway with the finalisation of the course syllabus through a consultation with national societies during the regional workshop on quality in Red Cross/Red Crescent health programmes (23-27 October 2000, Singapore). The regional health unit (RHU) received nominations from 11 NSs and will conduct a regional selection. Organised in collaboration with the ASEAN Institute for Health Development (Mahidol University, Thailand), the course will cover at least 20 health programme managers and key staff through support of AusAID and the Australian Red Cross.

Regional Workshop on Quality in Red Cross/Red Crescent Health Programmes (23-27 October 2000, Singapore): The quality workshop, which was co-organised by the Singapore Red Cross, reconfirmed the relevance of existing regional health programmes and their coherence to Strategy 2010 and NSs' priorities. Participants (health managers from 14 NSs in Southeast and East Asia,) reviewed, updated and finalised implementation mechanisms of regional health initiatives: such as the regional health newsletter, database of regional health expertise, documentation of good practices, standardisation of first aid programmes, and the health management course. It was also a capacity-building workshop involving sessions such as strategic planning, project proposal development and marketing, health education and promotion, total quality management, and human resource development. Resource persons from the National University of Singapore (NUS) delivered the sessions using participatory approaches.

Regional health newsletter: The RHU, in collaboration with NSs, drew up in October the third issue of the regional health newsletter and shared copies of the newsletter with all NSs in the region, key partners of the UN system and other international organisations, universities and NGOs operating in the field of health. Preparations for the release of issue 4 are underway.

Technical support programme

Strategic planning of NSs: During the period, the programme also provided technical and financial support to the Red Cross Societies of Indonesia, Lao and Mongolia in the conduct of strategic planning workshops for their health divisions.

Review of Myanmar RCS Health Programmes: At the request of the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) and Federation country delegation, a multi-disciplinary team led by the regional health delegate conducted a two-week review of MRCS health programmes. With resource persons from the Thai Red Cross and Australian Red Cross, and with the active involvement of MRCS leadership, the review involved field visits and situation analysis of areas such as first aid, water and sanitation, blood and HIV/AIDS, and a day-long workshop which discussed the findings and recommendations of the review team, as well as priority needs in accordance with its capacity.

Cholera Laos: The Lao Red Cross, with technical support from the RHU, conducts ongoing discussion with the Ministry of Health on how LRC can contribute in addressing the very recent severe diarrhoea outbreak which recorded 12,000 cases and claimed 520 lives. The RHU will provide continued support to the LRC in this area.

WEDC conference: The RHU supported health staff of the Vietnam Red Cross to participate in a WEDC Conference (November 2000, Bangladesh),

Dengue: RHU supported the participation of Philippine and Thai Red Cross Societies in the International Conference on DF/DHF (November 2000, Thailand). During the conference, the RHU presented the contributions of NSs in the region in the prevention and control of DF/DHF, as well as emergency response during outbreaks, considering that it has increasingly become a disease burden among countries in the region.

Regional Information System and Disease Surveillance: The regional health unit has continuously gathered relevant information on disease outbreaks, disasters and key humanitarian issues (such as migration/population movements, ageing, etc.) from WHO, UNAIDS, IOM and other organisations through various publications, bulletins and the internet. Gathered information was analysed and shared with concerned NSs to assist them in making better decisions..

HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health

ART: The Thai Red Cross (TRC) has graciously accepted to host the secretariat of the Asian Red Cross/Red Crescent Task Force on HIV/AIDS (ART) for the next three years after the Philippine National Red Cross completes its term this year. TRC and the regional delegation signed a memo of understanding in July 2000, while a process for a smooth transition is being facilitated by the RHU.

Regional Comic Competition: Analysing the questionnaire on the regional poster competition last year (dubbed as 'Anti Discrimination Images'), RHU is finalising procedures for a regional comic competition which addresses similar issues and which culminates in October 2001, during the 6th International Conferences on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (Australia).

Durban: The regional health delegate, together with the ART Secretary and a member from the Indonesian Red Cross, participated in the 13th International AIDS Conference (Durban, Africa) and presented experiences of the ART. As a result of the Conference, the regional health newsletter dedicated a special section on HIV/AIDS which featured reflections of issues discussed in Durban, as well as views on how the Movement can better address the pandemic in the future.

Blood Programme

Regional Workshop on Voluntary Blood Donor Recruitment (17-21 October, Singapore): After mapping the current state of NS blood programmes in the region through survey questionnaires, a regional workshop on voluntary blood donor recruitment (17-21 October, Singapore) was organised to jointly discuss critical issues highlighted by the survey as well as strategies in addressing such issues and the implication of strategy 2010.

Planning workshop on Blood donor recruitment/Cambodia: The regional health delegate also facilitated a planning workshop organised by the Cambodian Red Cross in October 2000 to define its roles and activities in the voluntary blood donor recruitment programme it intends to implement.

International Blood conference in Japan: The regional health delegate presented the regional findings and strategies for blood at the international conference.

First Aid

Status and progress of the regional committee on standardisation were reviewed during the Singapore workshop on quality issues in health.

Humanitarian Advocacy

Support to National Societies

In mid-October, upon the request of the Indonesian Red Cross Society (PMI), the regional information unit held extensive consultations with the PMI's information department, the Secretary-General and the boardmember in charge of fundraising. The result of these meetings was a draft communications strategy and working plan for 2001-2002, designed to fit in with the PMI's five year development plan. This plan has been adopted by the PMI as drafted by the unit.

In November, the regional information unit assisted the DPRK Red Cross to create a first draft of a communications strategy and work plan for 2001. This draft is being reviewed by the unit in consultation with the DPRK Red Cross, the DPRK delegation and the Danish Red Cross. A new draft is expected to be presented to the NS in early 2001.

At the end of the year, meetings were being organised for mid-January 2001 with the Vietnam Red Cross, to assist with restructuring of the VNRC information functions and starting work on the development of a communications strategy.

In November, the unit provided technical support to the Mongolian Red Cross (in consultation with the regional office in Beijing) in further developing the MRCS's information programme; further consultations on this project are expected to take place during the second quarter of 2001.

Media relations

The Regional information delegate represented the Federation in Seoul, Korea, in August during the first reunion of families separated since the end of the Korean War in 1953. Interviews on the Red Cross involvement and Red Cross initiatives in reunion issues were given to more than a dozen news organisations around the world and stories and photographs produced for Federation websites and publications.

Extensive media relations were conducted during the massive Mekong floods in Southeast Asia in September and October. Regional information officers travelled to Cambodia and Laos to report on Red Cross/Red Crescent operations and provide communications support to the NSs and country delegations.

In Bangkok, the information unit maintained a strong relationship with major local and international news media during the height of the floods operations, producing a number of news releases, forwarding situation reports and appeals, as well as conducting and facilitating a large number of interviews with media in different parts of the world. A formal briefing on the operations and Federation appeals was organised in Bangkok for media and foreign missions/organisations, resulting in extensive reporting in local, regional and international media.

In early December, the RIU organised and participated in a media briefing on the DPRK operation for Chinese and international media in Beijing, which again resulted in extensive media coverage of the operation. This event followed a series of visits by the DPRK head of delegation to major foreign missions in Beijing and governments and NSs in Europe.

Asia-Pacific FOCUS

Two issues of the AP FOCUS were produced during the reporting period, featuring various RC/RC operations and activities across Asia-Pacific. The main topic of issue 22 (September) was floods and droughts across the region and RC operations and response; issue 23 (December) featured the DPRK operation and had an extra print run of 1,500 copies.

The working relationship with the regional information delegate for South Asia in Delhi has been very productive and marked improvements are seen in the publication, which is gradually being sharpened as a marketing and communications tool for the Federation and the NSs in the Asia-Pacific region. Distribution lists in Bangkok and Beijing were reviewed and updated/expanded. In 2001 the AP FOCUS will systematically carry features on issues relating to the four core areas of Strategy 2010.

Other publications

A publication on the Red Cross in the Pacific region was initiated in July during a visit by the regional information delegate to the regional delegation in Suva. The publication highlights Federation programmes and strategies in the region as well as providing profiles of each of the 12 National Societies. This publication was about to go to print at the end of the year.

Similar regional profiles for the other three sub-regions in Asia-Pacific are planned for 2001 – all of which will have the same approach and will be produced by the South Asia information team in Delhi.

Two 'Bulletins from the Field' were produced for the Mekong Floods operations and distributed in printed and electronic form to local and international media, National Societies and foreign missions and international organisations in Southeast Asia.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Website (<http://redcross-ap.ifrc.org>) project was suspended indefinitely at the end of November. Funding (provided by the Hong Kong Red Cross from the start in 1998) is no longer available. The unit will give much more active input to the Federation's main website and provide support to National Societies in the region that maintain their own websites.

Workshops

A three day communications workshop was organised by the RIU in Pyongyang, DPRK, 6-8 November, in cooperation with the regional ID officer in KL and the DPRK delegation. Danish Red Cross also provided technical support to the workshop. The main objectives were to introduce the NS's information staff to Federation communications strategies and working methods, introduce them to the working and functions of international media and start the development of a communications strategy and a plan of action. The workshop was very well received by the NS; the draft strategy continues to be formulated. A follow-up workshop or seminar is tentatively planned for late 2001.

Preparations continued for a week-long regional communications planning workshop in Bangkok in early 2001. All National Societies in Southeast and East Asia have been invited to attend. Expected outputs of the workshop are a regional communications strategy and plan of action for 2001-2002 and the beginning of a regional information network.

In October the RIU gave presentations on communications work and presentation techniques at a regional health management workshop in Singapore. In December the information delegate took part in a regional RC leadership course in Yangon, Myanmar, and gave a presentation on communications.

Regional Communications Strategy

Much time has been devoted to the development of a regional communications strategy for Asia Pacific. Following the initiatives taken to develop the basic outline of the strategy – the regional information delegate has carried out extensive consultations. At the end of October a meeting was held in Delhi to continue the formulation of the strategy and outline a number of projects. The work will continue in 2001 and the regional communications planning workshop in Bangkok in February is expected to provide extensive input from the NSs' side.

Disaster Preparedness and response

The delegation has been active in supporting relief programming in Lao, in Indonesia and across the Mekong basin. The monsoon flooding of 2000 has been some of the worst on record. Whilst disaster response programming has largely been managed by country delegations, the regional delegation has played a critical role in helping coordinated information and response across the region, particularly in the Mekong river basin.

We have helped establish a system for the regular sharing of river-level information between the affected countries thus improving preparedness and the timeliness of interventions. The delegation has also published two "Bulletins from the field" giving an overview of the regional floods situation. These have been instrumental in attracting new donor funding into the region.

In Lao, a country which does not traditionally suffer from disaster level flooding, the delegation provided staff to assist with the initial assessment of damage and needs in September as the Mekong river rose to record heights. In the absence of an in-country head of delegation, the regional delegation continued to provide management support, both from Bangkok and from the regional finance unit in Kuala Lumpur, resulting in the launching of a relief appeal on 21 September for CHF 871,317 to assist some 42,000 flood victims.

In Indonesia, also without a head of delegation for the later part of 2000, the regional delegation worked with local staff and a staff on loan from the Japanese Red Cross to launch an appeal on 30 November for CHF 252,984 to assist some 4,000 families affected by the intense landslides triggered by rains.

The regional Delegation continues to provide management support to both these programmes.

At the end of November, the regional disaster preparedness post, which has been vacant for over a year, was finally filled. During 2001 the DP programme will focus on the building of regional Red Cross/Red Crescent networks for disaster preparedness and response.

Outstanding needs

At the end of the year, coverage of the appeal stood at 108.5 per cent.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

One key achievement during this period has been the successful negotiation of an in-country agreement with the government of Thailand to cover the delegation's activities. This agreement, similar to that held by other international organisations in Thailand, was concluded on 13 July.

Initial contact and introduction meetings have been held with: the ICRC, the regional offices of UNHCR, UNDP, WFP, UNICEF, the World Bank, Oxfam.

Initial contacts have also been made with the Embassies and Missions of most of the key donor countries and those of the countries in SE Asia covered by the regional delegation.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The first half of 2000 was dominated by the move from Kuala Lumpur to Bangkok. The second half by the consolidation of the new office, the building of a new team and the design and development of the action research proposals.

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

South East Asia						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 01.58/2000						PLEDGES RECEIVED
						01/19/01
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				2,530,000		TOTAL COVERAGE 108.5%
Balance carried forward from 1999				522,541		
FEDERATION BUDGET				617,727	01/01/00	
AUSTRALIA GOVT		124,731	AUD	122,062	20.06.00	HEALTH MGT COURSE
AUSTRALIAN GOVT/RC		12,200	AUD	11,804	04.07.00	PROGRAMME ASSISTANT SUPPORT TO ART
AUSTRALIAN GOVT/RC		1,482	AUD	1,434	30.04.00	AIR TICKET FOR REPR. OF CHINA RC
BRITISH - RC		40,000	GBP	100,000	09/12/99	SOUTH EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES
BRITISH - GOVT/DFID		98,039	GBP	248,039	28.11.00	DISASTER PREPAREDNESS
HONG KONG - RC		16,083	USD	25,572	19.01.00	WEBSITE OPERATING COSTS 99
JAPANESE - RC				324,625	29.08.00	HEALTH, INFORMATION PROGRAM
NORWAY - RC		500,000	NOK	96,599	03/27/00	ART AIDS
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		250,000	SEK	47,400	30.05.00	INFORMATION
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		1,400,000	SEK	265,440	30.05.00	HEALTH
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		400,000	SEK	75,840	30.05.00	INSTITUTIONAL DEPARTMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				2,459,083	CHF	97.2%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		350,000	SEK	66,360	30.05.00	HOD (3 MONTHS)
Austria	Delegate(s)			60,123		
Iceland	Delegate(s)			60,123		
Great Britain	Delegate(s)			100,205		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				286,811	CHF	11.3%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
Singapore RC				25,000		Staff on loan
Philippines RC				60,000		Staff on loan
Mongolia RC				5,000		Staff on loan
Korea Republic RC				60,000		Staff on loan
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				150,000	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						
P51900, P51901, P51902, P51905, P51160						