

## ***LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC : HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE***

15 January, 2001

### ***Focus on Capacity Building***

***appeal no. 01.59/2000***

***situation report no. 1***

***period covered: January - December 2000***

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*Although early 2000 did not look promising for the development of the Lao Red Cross (LRC) because of a funding deficit and the reduction of the Federation's delegation to a single national liaison officer, the second half of the year was more optimistic with a strategic planning workshop resulting in a five year plan, a successful flood relief operation in the Mekong valley, the production of an inclusive draft assistance strategy, and an ID/governance workshop at the end of the year. As a result, the mood at year end was of enthusiasm and confidence for strong partnerships among all stakeholders for 2001 helping to support the LRC to achieve its goals.*

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### ***The context***

The Lao Red Cross (LRC) has been in transition since 1992. Formerly based within the Ministry of Health, it is now officially independent but remains closely linked to government. Its five year plan, for 1998 to 2003, aims at establishing a branch in all 18 provinces. Its current capacity varies considerably, reflecting the country's shortage of skilled manpower. While some branches are relatively well developed, other branches and the national headquarters have limited management skills, with staff still appointed by the government. Strengthening governance and management remains the area most in need of improvement. Besides capacity building, LRC priority programmes are all related to the promotion of better health.

The Federation has been working in Laos since 1992, assisting in the development of the National Society and in coordinating external support. Its overall objective is to assist the Society in

strengthening its operational capacity, governance and management and to channel appropriate support to its programmes. To do this it has focused on ensuring adherence to the LRC development plan through a development cooperation model that builds on the presence of five donor National Societies and the Regional Delegation in Kuala Lumpur. It was planned that a Federation country representative would provide support for the first three months of 2000 after which technical input would be supplied by the Regional delegation in Kuala Lumpur and a local Federation office.

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

Because no donor funding was attracted to support the LRC core programming in early 2000, the Federation's delegation in Vientiane went into deficit. Its representative was withdrawn at the end of March, and the delegation was reduced to a single national liaison officer reporting to the regional delegation from where Federation support was provided for the rest of the year. The LRC however needed continued support. In May 2000 a Partnership meeting was held in Bangkok involving all the National Societies of South East Asia, all the key Participating National Societies and the Federation's Delegations in the Region. At a special session held on Laos, it was agreed that an approach and process needed to be developed to eventually achieve an inclusive all-partner country assistance strategy for the LRC.

In order to develop the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) in collaboration with the Lao Red Cross, a Federation consultant was posted to Vientiane in late September for two months. The consultant was also tasked to assist the LRC to finalize its five year plan. The conclusions were produced by the end of November and have been circulated to interested parties for input and comments.

With a view to establishing a clear direction and strategy, and in order to establish improved leadership and also hopefully to secure external support (especially from newly interested PNSs) for the following year and beyond, the LRC requested the regional delegation to facilitate their strategic planning workshop in August. Three main priorities were established at this workshop: to make the LRC stronger and able to do effective work, to deliver timely relief to disaster victims, and to help improve the health of vulnerable people. Clear goals and objectives were developed, and the draft LRC five year plan (2001-2005) was produced shortly after the workshop. The five-year plan is intended to help the LRC headquarters lead and support the branches in their annual planning, to guide LRC headquarters in the development of plans for the three major sectors (ID, disaster preparedness and relief, and health), and to provide the lead for all supporting PNSs in Lao in the CAS process.

The Federation sponsored a three day governance/ID workshop in Vientiane in November on request the request of the Society. The LRC ran this workshop as a sequel to a number of events, including the Bangkok partnership meeting in May, the Strategic Planning workshop in August and the resulting draft five-year plan, their health strategic planning workshop in September, and the Netherlands Red Cross programme planning workshop in October followed by the Federation consultant's programme mentioned above. The momentum for these activities has been maintained by the LRC's enthusiasm and their desire to develop a clear framework for the implementation of their 5 Year Plan.

The workshop resulted in:

- clarity about LRC's governance and management situation and agreement about how they can be strengthened;
- agreed action points and strategies for taking forward an institutional development process within the LRC.

A task force was set up to take forward the following five major tasks through various working groups:

- review and propose amendments to decree 36 (this as well as the decree 994 deal with LRC statutes, rules, and regulations);
- draft internal by-laws (statutes);
- draft and develop the ID plan for 2001-2005;

- oversee the writing of the overall annual plan;
- supervise and co-ordinate the implementation of the ID plan.

In addition, the following guidelines were established for branch development:

- The five year plan would serve as the overall guide;
- The LRC must manage and co-ordinate donors more effectively through the CAS;
- All PNSs must follow accepted and agreed upon policies and procedures;
- Luang Phabang is a model of a well functioning branch from which lessons can be drawn;
- Dissemination must be increased, and recruiting both volunteers and members.

During 2000, the established PNS supporters continued their partnership with the LRC in the fields of blood, HIV/AIDS prevention, branch development and water/sanitation, and Primary Health Care (PHC). Efforts were made to focus on a more inclusive and coherent assistance programme based on the national strategy and goals of the LRC, thereby formulating and implementing projects which in the long term would maximize the impact upon the condition of the most vulnerable in Lao and strengthen the capacity of the LRC. The LRC, the PNS and the Federation are now committed to consolidating and implementing together a truly inclusive country assistance strategy which emphasizes the leadership of the LRC, the need for common standards and agreed goals, and the responsibility of the Federation Delegation to add value to this programme.

In September, the Federation supported the LRC in an operation to deliver relief to thousands of flood victims in six central and southern provinces along the Mekong basin. After the initial assessment by the Federation and the LRC, a relief delegate was fielded, as well as regional officers from Hong Kong and Thai Red Cross, to manage the operation and transfer skills to LRC counterparts. This appeal is reported on separately.

### ***Future direction of the programme in 2001***

During the next several years, further strengthening of the LRC will be a top priority by:

- finalizing, explaining, negotiating, and securing the commitment for and the "buy in" to the CAS by all the stakeholders so that it can be implemented by mid 2001.
- reassigning a full time delegate/representative to Vientiane as soon as possible. The Federation's overall role may need to be reviewed in the context of new strategies and implementation mechanisms currently underway through the Regional Delegation's Action Research initiative, as well as the new responsibility of steering and guiding the CAS process.
- The LRC headquarters will finalize and distribute the following to the branches:
  - basic management guidelines for the branches which clearly explain what Prime Ministerial decree 36 and decree 994 from the President of LRC on the regulations for the LRC Branches mean in practical terms;
  - fund raising policy;
  - guidelines on fund raising/income generation for the branches;
  - information dissemination teaching file for the branches ( ICRC);
  - CBFA manual and handbook for the branches.
- The LRC, with the assistance of the Federation, and in close consultation with PNS, will prepare simple DP guidelines on community based disaster preparedness which are linked directly to the CBFA programme. These can then be more easily used by the branches.
- As a direct outcome from the recent ID workshop, the LRC, with the assistance of the Federation and in close consultation with PNS, should prepare a coherent Branch Development Plan which will serve as LRC's model for the.
- The LRC, with the assistance of the Federation, the PNS, and the ICRC, will conduct a comprehensive Training Needs Assessment to determine the future overall requirements in all sectors (programmes, staff development, specific skills) as well as identifying possible overlaps or duplication.
- As part of the ID programme, great emphasis should be placed on assisting LRC to develop a pragmatic income generation plan which recognizes: the need for different approaches and

different types of income generation activity, in Vientiane and the provinces; the need to develop a business oriented approach; the need to involve the local donor community more.

- As part of the ID programme, emphasis will be placed on assisting the LRC to develop a strong Human Resources Development Policy and plan governing: attracting, recruiting and retaining key professional staff; skills, management and technical training; remuneration, rewards, incentives; clearly defined job descriptions, roles and responsibilities for all staff; working environment; personnel and career development.
- Hold a monitoring/reporting workshop with the specific purpose of reviewing existing systems, then considering ways to simplify or standardize these.
- Consider setting up sector or programme specific working groups (along the lines of the existing LRC/PNS Project Management Groups), starting with institutional development which is “cross cutting“. These working groups would comprise all stakeholders and would provide a regular forum for discussing specific sectoral issues, management concerns, improving information exchange, co-ordination on issues such as pooling resources (training, staff, materials), co-financing activities or micro projects (workshops, exchange visits, income generation schemes).

## ***Outstanding needs***

While the 2000 appeal was only 76% covered, the need for support and financial resources has shifted to those programmes which are ongoing in 2001.

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

The LRC, the Federation and the PNSs retain good working relations with government departments in Vientiane, as well as with international organizations and relevant NGOs. The LRC is frequently featured in the local mass media.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

## ***Conclusion***

Valuable momentum has been built up for strengthening the LRC during the second half of 2000. All partners are keen to develop the CAS and support the LRC in its leadership of the national programmes. The Society has made considerable progress since the Federation’s delegation was first opened in 1992, and its potential to become the leading humanitarian agency in Lao could soon be realized now that branches are present in all provinces of the country. The LRC requires consistent and long term support to be able to move towards achieving this goal.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
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<b>Laos</b>						ANNEX 1
<b>APPEAL No. 01.59/2000</b>		<b>PLEDGES RECEIVED</b>			01/12/01	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>CASH</b>						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				<b>336,000</b>		<b>TOTAL COVERAGE 76.2%</b>
<b>Balance carried forward from 1999</b>				(93,429)		
AUSTRALIAN - GOVT		3,500	AUD	3,221	13.12.00	PLANNING PROCESS
JAPANESE - RC		28,630	USD	48,342	19.07.00	
JAPANESE - RC		179,251	USD	282,141	04/12/00	
NETHERLANDS - RC		21,967	NLG	15,923	25.01.2000	LAOS DELEGATION OVERHEAD
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH</b>				256,198	CHF	76.2%
<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>						
PLA000, PLA005, PLA010						