

MYANMAR

CHF 817,000

Programme No. 01.26/2000

National Context

Although rich in natural resources, Myanmar is the poorest country in South East Asia. The political isolation of the country since 1988, and the economic sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union have affected the country's economic development and the 1997-1998 Asian economic downturn compounded the problem. An estimated 40% of the population do not have access to health services and roughly the same number lack adequate water and sanitation. The emergence of tuberculosis in rural areas and the spread of HIV/AIDS are significant health problems.

Myanmar is vulnerable to cyclones, floods and fires. In recent years it has been conducting a returnee programme for Rohingya people who have moved back from neighbouring Bangladesh to their home state, Rakhine.

Country Assistance Strategy

The Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) has begun a change process which includes revising and modernising its statutes and developing management capacity at national headquarters and branch level. Currently, the Society's governing structures have a predominance of government appointees and there is little separation of governance and management. Its traditional programmes are health related, with first aid the most extensive. The Society has opted to continue to prioritise its activities in the health sector. Specifically it will aim at better integrating its Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) Programme and its Community Based First Aid (CBFA) Programme which covers, in addition to first aid training of volunteers and youth, water and sanitation, the ambulance programme and HIV/AIDS activities.

The priorities for the Federation are, therefore, based on these development choices as well as on the poor health and development indicators in Myanmar, the Federation Strategy 2010 and the Hanoi Declaration (1998). It will focus on developing governance, strengthening management, and improving health conditions and disaster preparedness, by supporting a number of key programmes through its country delegation and through the Regional Delegation in Kuala Lumpur. Specifically it will assist at least seven of the 14 State and Division Red Cross Branches to enhance their capacity to implement programmes and sustain them after the initial period of assistance.

Programme Objectives

Disaster Response

The Federation will support MRCS in disaster relief operations, helping to strengthen its response and seeking international assistance when required. It will continue to provide technical expertise in support of MRCS

community development activities in the integrated assistance programme (UNHCR funded) for the extremely vulnerable individuals (EVIs) among the returnee communities and local vulnerable people in Rakhine State.

Disaster Preparedness

Assistance will focus on strengthening the national DP programme at all levels, from headquarters management to branch level preparedness. After a review of external assistance in January 2000 an integrated approach to health, disaster preparedness and community based first aid may be introduced.

Health

The Federation will seek to strengthen the ability at community level to address health problems, manage injuries and illnesses and prevent communicable diseases. It will do this by further developing a MRCS-integrated training programme that builds on an existing CBFA training programme and will aim at training a minimum of 10,000 volunteers a year in the least accessible States/Divisions. The ultimate goal, after four years, is 40,000 trained volunteers, countrywide.

Humanitarian Values

The promotion of humanitarian values will be an integral part of all MRCS programmes. To support these efforts the Federation will co-operate in ICRC dissemination programmes and will help develop information materials to increase public awareness of the MRCS and the Movement.

Capacity Building

The success and sustainability of MRCS programmes and services delivery depends on the National Society having the institutional capacity needed to formulate, implement and manage such activities. To achieve this the Federation will support a human resource development programme to strengthen the Society's organisation and management. A review of MRCS organisational and management structures at National Headquarters and branch level is scheduled for January 2000 and will give future guidelines, but a human resource development programme, covering staff skills development and performance evaluation is already envisaged. In parallel, a communications programme to increase public awareness of the Society's role in the community and its humanitarian motivation will be launched.