

SOUTH ASIA

REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

CHF 1,688,000

Programme No. 01.28/98

The South Asia Regional Delegation (SARD) will be formally established in New Delhi, India, in the first quarter of 1998. The establishment of a South Asia Region, separate from south-east Asia, recognises that the countries of South Asia — Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka — not only face many similar threats and vulnerabilities in the form of natural and man-made disasters, rapid population growth and inadequate levels of resource mobilisation, but also share common strengths, capacities and cultural, political, socio-economic, religious, ethnic and historic similarities.

Objectives

While some areas have been identified as priorities for the region (institutional and resource development, health, communications, disaster preparedness), programme development and concise project plans will be established for this Delegation only after assessment missions and data analysis are complete. This assessment process, facilitated by the SARD, will include the National Societies in the sub-region, and will take into account capacities, skills and regional resources, as well as potential donor support.

Its priorities will address the general regional objectives agreed in the Beijing Declaration, with particular focus on (a) regional and national resource sharing, (b) sustainable organisational and information systems, (c) increases in disaster preparedness levels, (d) increases in disaster response capacities, (e) community-based approaches in First Aid and Disaster Preparedness, and (f) HIV/AIDS. It is also foreseen that a specific strategic direction and regional approach will emerge from the 5th Asia and Pacific Regional Conference in Kuala Lumpur in May 1998.

The following three-year priorities have been identified by Societies in the region:

- | Institutional and Resource Development, to be integrated into all programmes, projects, and approaches. This includes financial management, reporting, financial sustainability strategies, human resource skill building, enhanced utilisation of existing resources, management training and regional linkages, among others. Technical expertise will be provided or facilitated through the Regional Delegation and the Secretariat.

- | Disaster Preparedness, with increased operational capacity and sustainability in disaster preparedness as the main objective.
- | Health Programmes, focusing on analysis efficacy of current programmes, modernising services and technical capacity, and sustainability. Technical expertise of the Regional Health Delegate and National Society resources will be utilised. The health assessment in Bangladesh is being completed.
- | Human Resource Development. The SARD should provide a forum for enhancing the skills of National Societies and Country Delegation staff through staff-on-loan, junior delegate, and staff exchange opportunities. Other avenues include training workshops and basic training courses.
- | Linking National Societies and Delegations in the sub-region at various levels through strategy meetings, educational opportunities and exchange programmes. Several workshops and fora are planned bringing together top management, middle management, relief and logistics, and finance staff of National Societies in the region.
- | Information and Dissemination strategies will be developed to establish information and dissemination services and technical support for National Societies and Country Delegations. Information and dissemination will become integrated into all programmes and activities.

This approach acknowledges that a Regional Delegation, as an extension of the Secretariat, is an institution to support National Societies in the region and should be shaped by them.

A viable Regional Delegation requires secure funding for a substantial period of time. Its long-term objective is to have the National Societies in the region gradually “buying into” the services they receive from the Regional Delegation. To optimise the work of the South Asia Regional Delegation funding must be stable for at least 3 years. This appeal, therefore, seeks ideally a three to five year donors’ commitment.

SRI LANKA

When the relief operation for displaced persons was concluded in early 1996 Federation coverage shifted to the Regional Representative, but an office remained open and staffed throughout this transitional period. With technical support from the Regional Representative and Secretariat, the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society has identified its need to focus on the institutional and resource development of its headquarters and branches. To assist them in these efforts, a Federation Representative position will be established in Colombo. The Federation will work closely with ICRC to provide a consistent approach throughout the country in branch development. Training resources will be consolidated when possible.

BHUTAN

An inquiry into the eventual establishment of a National Society in Bhutan will be facilitated by the South Asia Regional Delegation in co-ordination with ICRC. With the possible return of some of the Bhutanese refugees currently in camps in Nepal, a NS could play a role in assisting in the re-integration process.

MALDIVES

The Maldives, a nation of many small atolls subject to tropical storms and global warming, are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters. The Maldives Government has expressed interest in pursuing the establishment of a National Society.