

PACIFIC

REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

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The Pacific region is an area of great diversity both in culture and socio-economic development. Most of the countries in this region have been classified by the World Bank as being in the lower or lower-middle income grouping. Tourism, logging, mining and remittances by relatives living overseas are the main props to the economies. Long term barriers to development include: small land masses, growing populations, small domestic markets, geographical isolation from major trading partners, geographical dispersion, ecological fragility and vulnerability to natural events such as cyclones, earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions.

Aid to the Pacific is extremely high by world standards but has declined in the last decade for a variety of reasons, including 'donor fatigue'. Although a bleak outlook for many Pacific Island countries has been forecast, governments in the region have made long term commitments to providing aid for their developing neighbours in a spirit of partnership and in the understanding that, without aid, most countries in the Pacific cannot provide modern living standards and opportunities for their people.

But there are gaps in the official response, particularly in the areas of health, welfare and disaster mitigation. The creation of National Red Cross Societies has been one local response to meeting these needs and, in most countries, there is a strong local commitment to the Red Cross Movement. National Societies have developed and grown and their numbers and activities have increased over the last five years. The twelve National Societies currently in the Pacific reflect the diversity and the economic variety in the region. They range from long-established, well-structured organisations to small one or two person groups, often less than a decade old. As they develop and mature they are included increasingly into government social activities and plans, as planners and implementers.

The future of Red Cross in the region is very positive, but it is vital that the interest in, and support for these National Societies is maintained so that they can have the confidence to continue to develop. Although there has been a noticeable improvement in the quality and extent of Red Cross activities in many countries, and in the efforts made to publicise and fund them, some National Societies are still struggling to find the resources to sustain their activities from the small economic pool available to them and, like their governments, they rely on assistance from outside. At the very least, support to the core staff necessary for basic activities must be maintained.

Objectives in 1998

The objectives of the Regional Delegation (RD) are to assist the National Societies in the region:

- | To develop the structure, resources and communications, nationally and regionally, which will best meet their needs in the communities they serve;
- | to broker and co-ordinate support and activities throughout the region;
- | to promote an understanding of Red Cross and its capacity to assist the most vulnerable in times of need.

To reach these objectives the RD will develop protocols and resources to enable the National Societies to maintain their programmes and momentum with minimal assistance and will promote the concepts of a “Well-functioning National Society” and “Working as a Federation”.

The Regional Delegation continues to plan its activities in accordance with the priorities set by the National Societies, based on the Plan of Action for the Asia and Pacific region. The National Societies have been involved closely in the process. Consultation, through workshops and meetings, has provided the starting point and the RD has converted the outcomes into specific plans and programmes or proposals. Although a rather slow process, it has had the advantage of grounding the activities in the wishes of the National Societies and of providing a good guide on how the RD itself should develop.

In 1997 the RD worked closely with the National Societies in Health, DP and Development. Among the highlights:

- | Standards and curricula in First Aid were developed and instructor training completed in five countries.
- | A Regional Cyclone Response Plan and some Red Cross National Disaster Response Plans were developed.
- | A pilot scheme, integrating aspects of disaster preparedness (DP) and health into a new concept of ‘Community Based Self Reliance’ got underway and new Pacific-oriented manuals for DP and First Aid are nearing completion.
- | Staff on loan were used wherever possible to ensure that efforts, resources and expertise are retained in the region, so that confidence in Red Cross and within the Societies will grow through experience and ownership.
- | One new Society was formed and three others are in the process. Two National Societies were assisted in applying for recognition and admission.
- | Assistance was given in responding to disasters in eight countries and, until February, the RD managed the relief operation on Bougainville.

Programmes in 1998

Development

The overall aim is to develop strong organisational structures, adequate capacities and effective policies of National Societies based on improved methodologies, systems and practices.

- | A regional training programme will be developed and a staff-on-loan programme, for the RD and National Societies' staff and volunteers, will continue by facilitating the movement of staff throughout the region and by providing, if necessary, 'caretakers' for the staff positions.
- | The development of sustainable, self-financing National Societies will continue to be facilitated through on-going follow-up to earlier Resource Development activities, assistance to meet outstanding needs in material and/or seed resources, brokering of relationships with participating National Societies and agencies, and assistance with applications, monitoring and reporting.
- | The eighth in a series of regional biennial programme meetings will be held in conjunction with the Asia and Pacific Regional meeting in Kuala Lumpur.
- | Existing "Societies in Formation" and new National Societies will be developed further by assisting steering committees to draft statutes and by providing seed financial and material resources for the first year.
- | Information to National Societies and increased public awareness of Red Cross activities in the Pacific region will be expanded, simple local databases will be developed and effective and timely information sharing will be facilitated through an information-sharing network at national and international levels

Disaster Preparedness (DP)

Improving the capacities of vulnerable communities and individuals is the key to effective disaster preparedness since community involvement in planning and implementation leads to communities which are better prepared to mitigate and respond to the effects of disasters. The programme will build on the progress made in 1997 when training material was developed, village training and vulnerability and capacity assessment carried out in Samoa, pilot workshops run in remote communities in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu and a regional workshop held in Fiji.

- | National Societies will be assisted with the preparation and/or revision of DP plans.
- | A Pacific regional DP database and a regional DP plan, including a register of trained personnel, will be developed.
- | Personnel from each National Society will be trained in disaster management and in organising and implementing Community Based DP (CBDP) training workshops. This programme has begun and a Cyclone Response Plan and Model National Society plan have been developed.
- | Effective, rapid and independent communications during disasters will be facilitated by two portable satellite telephone/fax units, to be placed on stand-by at strategic points in the region.

Health

This programme is composed of four components and is included partly in the Community Based Self Reliance programme.

Community Based First Aid

Red Cross Societies are the main source of First Aid training in many countries and most intend to extend their traditional training to cover primary health care and daily emergencies, in order to promote the concept of “A First Aider in Every Home”. Training material with a Pacific focus is nearing completion and training of instructors has been undertaken in four countries.

An urgent need to upgrade First Aid Instructor certificates throughout the region will be met by developing standards for Instructors, conducting Update and “Train the Trainer” courses and maintaining up-to-date record systems in order to co-ordinate on-going revalidation of Instructors’ certificates. Workplace First Aid Courses will be developed and qualified Workplace Instructors trained at national levels in two or three countries.

HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control

Maintenance of dignity and reduction of the discomfort of people suffering from AIDS at home will be supported by developing training programmes to support the family and/or carer. The programmes will be incorporated as a module in Community Based Self Reliance. HIV/AIDS/STD awareness and prevention was included in all First Aid and health education courses last year and educational material has been translated into local languages in at least five countries.

Blood Services

An improved supply of screened blood and blood products and the co-ordination of voluntary non-remunerated blood programmes will continue to be facilitated through the exchange of information and standards concerning safe practice in collection, storage and supply. Activities in National Societies range from a full transfusion service in two countries through collective services to donor recruitment in most countries.

Combined Health projects

The strengths and weaknesses of the combined health programmes in the region will be reviewed and National Societies’ needs will be identified.

A co-ordinated plan for all Combined Health activities, together with a simple regional database containing up-to-date details of human resources and equipment, will be developed. Needs for basic first aid, primary health care and culturally acceptable educational aids and materials will be identified and items provided where appropriate.

Community Based Self Reliance

The overall aim is to ensure disaster-prone communities in the region have the awareness and capacity to protect and improve the health and general well-being of the members of the community and are able to prepare for, and minimise, the effects of disasters.

The concept of “Community Based Self Reliance” (CBSR) has been formulated to take account of the association between health and DP.

The CBSR programme is designed to incorporate elements of DP, first aid and health care into an integrated community based training programme. The continuing evolution of the programme, and its endorsement by the Pacific National Societies, has seen some of the DP and Health projects in the 1997 Plan included under the CBSR programme which involves development of training material, guidelines and authorisation levels for instructors, and pilot projects to refine the material and procedures. At this stage of development, some parts of the programme are combined while others remain in their component parts.

| A CBSR Manual will be developed and printed and each National Society will be encouraged to produce the manual in the local language/s. A ‘Train the Trainers’ Manual, a companion to the

CBSR Manual, will be produced and circulated to assist with the formation of a pool of competent instructors with skills relevant to Red Cross activities.

- | A CBSR training programme, which takes into account the priorities, customs and beliefs of specific communities, will be introduced as a pilot scheme in two countries. National Society staff will be trained and will take part in the programme as instructors and facilitators.
- | A regional health workshop will be held to examine progress in health programmes, review manuals, determine future priorities and update knowledge and practical skills. Some 40 Community Based Health Care Instructors will be trained in the four essential components of primary health care. The courses will be tailored to meet the needs of each National Society.
- | The Western Samoa Red Cross's CBDP Village training programme will continue to be supported. A further 1500 villagers will be involved in addition to some 50 villages which have already received training. Development, dissemination and use of Pacific guidelines for Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (VCA) will be continued for the VCA project in Western Samoa.
- | The CBDP Instructors' Manual developed during 1996/1997 will be reviewed and 100 copies will be reprinted.

Delegation Management

The RD is staffed by three delegates, plus two full-time and one part-time support staff. Travel and communications in the region are time-consuming and expensive.

The issue of the most judicious siting of the RD, in order to provide the region's National Societies with high quality services which are also the most cost effective, was reviewed in 1997. The decision has been taken to relocate the Delegation from Sydney to Suva, Fiji, in the heart of the region. The move is scheduled to take place early in 1998.