

INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS ASSISTANCE IN INDO-CHINA

Last month we published detailed information on the work of the Indo-China Operational Group (IOG) set up to ensure the pooling of all Red Cross resources and the co-ordination of plans to provide the most effective assistance to the victims of the conflict in Indo-China. On 18 April, IOG sent National Societies a circular giving an account of the situation at that date. Extracts are quoted below.

Democratic Republic of Vietnam

The priority need in the DRVN, as expressed by the National Red Cross Society, is for emergency housing, and M. Stroh, Coordinator of the IRCA, this time accompanied by a group of experts, has recently been paying a second visit to Hanoi to discuss detailed requirements and specifications with the National Red Cross Society and the authorities. A coordinating meeting will be held in Geneva during the week starting Monday 23 April and as soon as possible thereafter details will be sent to all those Societies known to be interested. In this way it is hoped that contributions in both cash and kind will enable this priority requirement to be met in a coordinated, cost-effective and efficient manner and in the way most suited to local needs and conditions. This step-by-step approach may be taking a little longer than unilateral action by sister Societies but will undoubtedly result in a far more efficient deployment of Red Cross and other resources and be more acceptable to—indeed, in accordance with the wishes of—the National Society and authorities of the DRVN.

The other main requirements of the DRVN RC are for ambulances and medicaments and these are in the process of being provided.

Republic of Vietnam

On-going programmes, such as emergency relief distributions, assistance to some 200,000 displaced families, the medico-social programme in orphanages and general support for and assistance to the National Red Cross Society are being continued and intensified as conditions and resources permit.

In addition there are a number of special projects for which the IOG now has detailed plans and costings; particulars of these are being notified separately to National Societies who are known or believed to be interested in participating in cash or in kind for either a part or the whole of individual projects. These include:

- (a) the construction, equipment and running costs of a paraplegic hospital at Vung Tau;
- (b) the construction, equipment and running costs of 18 provincial medical centres;
- (c) the construction of a centre for amputees in Saigon;
- (d) the provision of 10,000 layettes and 20,000 Junior Red Cross friendship parcels;
- (e) the construction, at a later stage, of a small village complete with school near to the paraplegic hospital at Vung Tau, to enable partly self-supporting patients to live nearby with their families.

Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam

The local Red Cross organization has asked the IOG to concentrate on the construction and equipment of a 250-bed University Field Hospital Centre so designed as to be capable of being moved from one area to another.

The project has been divided into a number of self-contained sections and even sub-divided into units within sections so that National Societies wishing to participate in or be identified with it can assume responsibility in cash or in kind for the whole or part of a section or unit.

To ensure compatibility of construction and equipment, the Swedish Red Cross, which has especially detailed and extensive

experience of this type of project and the necessary personnel and space available, has undertaken to coordinate and supervise the receipt, assembly, despatch and erection of the hospital.

An urgent request for five tons of eggpowder was filled by the Australian Red Cross Society.

Khmer Republic

Conditions in the country are still difficult and freedom of movement is limited by lack of a cease-fire. Plans for assistance are thus necessarily less advanced than in other areas of Indochina. It seems clear, however, that the most urgent need is for surgical and medical assistance, possibly with aerial support. The Belgian Red Cross has kindly made available to the IOG a surgeon delegate who has just completed an on-the-spot survey of conditions and requirements. It is possible that the Belgian Red Cross will provide one mobile medical-surgical team and that the leader would be the surgeon who has been carrying out this local survey.

In addition there is an urgent need to provide for the improvement of hygienic installations in camps for displaced persons, and plans are under way to meet this requirement.

At a later stage it is hoped that National Societies will participate in the establishment of a national rehabilitation centre.

Laos ¹

In addition to on-going programmes of support and assistance for the Lao Red Cross and the provision of medicaments, various special projects are under study. These include:

- (a) the construction of an orthopaedic centre at Savannaket capable of providing for 300 prostheses per annum and requiring the services of one physiotherapist and one construction specialist;
- (b) the financial support of the orthopaedic centre of Vientiane with a capacity for 600 prostheses per annum and which could be supervised by the same physiotherapist;
- (c) the establishment of a vaccination campaign for children.

¹ *Plate.*

The Swiss Red Cross has for some time maintained a medical team operating from the hospital at Luang Prabang; the same Society is now sending a further mobile medical team to the country to be deployed as recommended by the IOG Chief Delegate according to prevailing conditions.

It is possible that yet another mobile medical team will be required and the Japanese Red Cross has offered to provide such a team.

Pathet Lao

Regular consignments of medicaments and surgical materials continue to be despatched at the request of the local Red Cross organization.

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TRACING

The Tracing Services established within the National Societies in Saigon, Phnom-Penh and Vientiane with the technical assistance of the Central Tracing Agency of the ICRC are dealing with a steadily mounting number of enquiries.

In *Saigon*, by mid-April, more than 6,000 requests concerning missing persons had been received, 29% of these involved tracing in PRG and DRVN territory and 5% in the Khmer Republic; 33% concerned missing military personnel and 5% were about orphans; the remaining 28% are still being classified.

The establishment of the Tracing Services in *Phnom Penh*, in February, was announced by all daily newspapers, radio and television. Forms have been distributed at the head office of the Khmer Red Cross, in pagodas and in centres surrounding the capital where a great many families have sought refuge.

The military authorities have supplied the Agency with a list of 200 names of soldiers reported missing in combat. Requests for information and enquiries about missing or displaced persons are slowly beginning to reach the Agency. At the present time its

activities are centred mostly on the registration of displaced persons in the area of Phnom Penh.

The Tracing Service in *Vientiane*, backed by a strong publicity campaign in the newspapers and over the radio, has extended its distribution of enquiry forms to six provinces. These standard forms for enquiries and messages have been distributed by IOG delegates, the Laotian Red Cross, the Swiss Red Cross medical team and some religious organizations who, through their activities, come in daily contact with a great number of people from many villages. All necessary documentation has also been forwarded to Pathet Lao. Already, before the end of March, 100 requests for enquiries had been collected by the local branch of the Laotian Red Cross in Luang Prabang, a region in the north of the country, and forwarded to Vientiane.

RED CROSS TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR ASIA

From 6 to 27 February 1973, a training institute was held in Bangkok for representatives of National Societies in South-East Asia. Concentrating on National Society activities in community welfare work, the institute came within the development programme of the League of Red Cross Societies. The League helped the Thai Red Cross to organize the seminar which was attended by twenty-two people from thirteen countries, namely: Australia, Bangladesh, German Democratic Republic, Hongkong, India, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The main theme of the institute was "The Role of Red Cross Today in Community Welfare Work". In fifteen sessions a number of subjects were introduced by experts from specialized institutions and from Thammasat University, League delegates, and members of the Thai Red Cross. Some of the subjects were: Current Social Conditions in South and South-East Asia—Red Cross: Its Development Trend and Implication on Welfare Promotion—Community