

INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS ASSISTANCE IN INDO-CHINA

In Geneva, those in charge of the Indo-China Operational Group (IOG) are working out various special projects for Indo-China. A prefabricated housing expert has been made responsible for the technical specifications which are to serve as a basis for the construction of dwellings requested by the Government and the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam for some 100,000 homeless people. The document was submitted recently to those National Societies likely to support the project.

Other requests under consideration include the establishment of an orthopaedic centre at Savannakhet, Laos, with a potential annual production of some 300 artificial limbs.

The ICRC is continuing its regular medical relief supplies to the Red Cross Societies of the Republic of Vietnam, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Khmer Republic, Laos and the Pathet Lao. It sent 200,000 Swiss francs' worth of medicaments to the GRP plus 100,000 Swiss francs' worth of surgical kits to the GRP and the Pathet Lao.

On 30 May 1973, the financial position was as follows: the contributions received by the IOG or announced by Governments, National Societies and private individuals amounted to approximately 36.5 million Swiss francs, namely 20 million Swiss francs in cash contributions, 10.5 million Swiss francs donations pledged and 6 million Swiss francs donations in kind. With the increased needs which became evident as the operation progressed, the estimated total cost of the proposed assistance rose from the original 50 million Swiss francs to around 100 million.

Delegates' activities in the field

In the Republic of Vietnam: Twelve persons are engaged in the Red Cross operation. In Saigon the IOG has three delegates, an expert for tracing missing persons and four delegates assigned to the Da Nang, Nha Trang and Binh Duong areas. A local delegate will shortly be appointed for the Can Tho area. In addition, three ICRC delegates and one doctor-delegate are concentrating on tasks related to the Geneva Conventions.

The preliminary stage of the second plan of the Red Cross of the Republic of Vietnam for assistance to 200,000 families has now started. Its budget of 1.5 million Swiss francs covers a maximum period of three months. Besides locally purchased supplies, particularly food, the IOG has received donations including 250 tons of preserved fish, 100,000 blankets and 40,000 mosquito nets. Farm tools have also been distributed to displaced persons who are preparing to go back to their villages. Some 35,000 shovels, spades, hatchets, etc. have been purchased at a cost of 150,000 Swiss francs.

In the Khmer Republic: Here IOG personnel includes fourteen people. Five delegates and one tracing expert are at work in Phnom Penh. A Belgian Red Cross medical team composed of eight persons is starting operations in the Svay Rieng area, where it will have a freight aircraft and a radio transmitter-receiver set for communicating with the central delegation.

Further, the IOG is contributing to a programme for improving medical installations in Phnom Penh camps for displaced persons. A credit of around 65,000 Swiss francs has been allocated for completion of the medical equipment of the Phnom Penh Pediatric Hospital, where a Swiss Red Cross medical team will be operational early in June.

In Laos: In Vientiane, the Red Cross has four delegates and one expert for tracing the missing. Two Swiss Red Cross medical teams are based at Luang Prabang, in the northern part of Laos, one working in a hospital and the other acting as a mobile team.

The Japanese Red Cross, too, has sent out a medical team. It has been assigned to the Paklay area, where it is responsible for the dispensary, examinations in the villages and a vaccination campaign.

Before long, a fourth medical team, set up by the British Red Cross and the French Red Cross, will be carrying out a similar mission in the Seno area, province of Savannakhet.

REAPPRAISAL OF THE ROLE OF THE RED CROSS

In 1970 the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross asked the ICRC and the League to make a study of problems relating to "a reassessment of the role of the International Red Cross in the light of present conditions". The League Board of Governors, meeting in Mexico City in October 1971, adopted a resolution which authorized the appointment of a sub-committee for that purpose, and expressed the hope that the study might in due course be linked to that already started by the ICRC. This was done under an agreement subsequently reached by the two international Red Cross institutions.¹ The memorandum of understanding drawn up on that occasion embodied the following terms:

1. A Joint Committee shall be established with the following membership:
 - 3 representatives appointed by the ICRC
 - 1 representative appointed by the Henry Dunant Institute
 - 4 representatives appointed by the League

The Presidents and the Secretaries General of the ICRC and the League or their respective representatives have the right to attend meetings of the Joint Committee.

¹ See *International Review*, January 1973.