

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Disaster Preparedness and Response department within the DPRK-Red Cross National Society was formed in 1998 and has received support from the IFRC since 1999. In late 2000 the British Red Cross Society participated in a review of the existing DP/DR programme and assisted in developing a two year work plan, which sought to address key areas in capacity building and training amongst others. Following this review a proposal was developed and funding was secured from the UK government's Department for International Development of £200,000 to support DP/DR activities over a two-year period from 2001 to 2002. In early 2002 further financing was provided by DFID, bringing the total funding for the programme to just under £327,300 (or approximately Chf 802,767) over two years.

The overall goal of the BRCS-supported DP/DR programme is to minimise the impact of natural disasters on vulnerable populations of the country. This goal is to be achieved through four specific objectives: improving systems and structures underpinning the National Society capacity to respond to natural disasters, human resource development, community level interventions to reduce vulnerability, and development of a regional system of pre-positioning of key relief items. The BRCS support is now nearing the end of the intended two-year period. Therefore, an independent consultant was contracted to carry out an assessment of the progress and impact of the programme and to make recommendations for future scope and direction of activities. He visited the DPRK from 10 to 17 of September, together with a regional IFRC Delegate based in Beijing.

Summary Conclusions

In overall terms the review team considers that in the last two years the DP/DR programme has made a significant contribution to the capacity of the DPRK-Red Cross National Society to respond to disaster events. The programme has been successful in defining a clear role for the Red Cross in preparedness and response, which is both acknowledged and appreciated by the government and the main international humanitarian actors in the country. The RC is now considered to be the leading agency in this field, concentrating on clearly defined competencies, including search and rescue, first aid and non-food aid assistance, all of which complement the role of government authorities during a disaster response.

The review team considers that the objectives and activities of the DP/DR programme are generally appropriate and well designed in terms of achieving the stated programme goal, with the exception of one or two sub-activities. However, the team does have some concerns about the direct application of community-based approaches in the context of the DPRK, without a better understanding of how they may need to be modified to allow for country-specific conditions. In broad terms, the team concludes that there has been an effective use of resources and that activities have been carried out in a reasonably efficient manner, given the operational constraints.

In quantitative terms, not all of the stated targets have been met in the work plans covering the two-year period and in some areas there has been very slow or no progress at all. This situation is reflected by the fact that there is a still significant under-spend in the overall budget. **Some of this lack of progress is linked to the**

special working environment in the country and the constraints imposed on internationally supported programmes. Given these constraints the team considers that the targets set in the first two years have been overly ambitious and that the pace of implementation has not been realistic or sustainable. In spite of these shortcomings in meeting output targets, the team still considers that much hard work has been done and that the open and generally productive working relationship between the IFRC and the National Society has been vital to the progress made to date.

Future Direction for the Programme

There is no doubt that the DP/DR programme is on the right track and that the main objectives will remain relevant and appropriate for the near future, with only some further refinement of certain activities. Progress has been made on a number of important issues; however, there is now the need to consolidate these achievements and to make sure that the momentum generated by capacity building and training activities is not lost. A number of important challenges and constraints remain, such as staffing, the need to learn from what has been already achieved (particularly for community level interventions) and to improve the sharing of information between the National Society and the IFRC. The detailed recommendations included in the body of this report seek to address these issues and concerns.

Lastly, the review team considers that it would now be an opportune moment to capture much of what has been achieved and learnt and to bring this together in the form of an over-arching disaster preparedness and response strategy. This topic was flagged during the BRCS mission in late 2000, but little progress has been made since then. In part this may have been because the department itself has been growing and learning at such a fast pace. It would seem that many pieces of the puzzle are now in place and that staff at all levels have had a good deal of direct, practical experience in DP/DR issues in the last two years.

Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations presented below are intended to address the most important issues and constraints facing the DP/DR programme in the coming year; more detailed recommendations, including reference to specific activities, are included in the main body of the report.

- Continue with all four main objectives during the next year of programming, but with a much greater emphasis on improving systems and capacity at provincial and branch levels, in order to complement the work already carried out at national level.
- Revise and reduce the targets for activities within each of the main objectives to more realistic and achievable levels, taking into account the workload and staffing constraints of both the IFRC delegation and the National Society.
- Concentrate on a process of consolidation and refinement of the main initiatives developed over the first two years of the programme. To achieve this a systematic follow-up and monitoring plan needs to be put into place, including practical and measurable indicators, to assess the impact of the various

programme components at provincial, county/city and *ri* levels. However, care must be taken to avoid making this system overly complex or burdensome.

- For next year carry out a concentrated programme of support to the key province of South Pyongan to ensure proper follow-up, monitoring and lesson-learning across all main objectives. Additional, but less intensive, follow-up should be given to North Pyongan, Jagang and Kaesong provinces. The warehousing and stockpiling activities should continue at national level for all accessible counties and provinces. The BRSC-supported programme should not expand any further during 2003/2004 in geographical terms.
- Improve the communication and transparency in relations between the National Society and IFRC on the issue of information sharing and reporting on *all* training and capacity-building activities, irrespective of funding source. Where problems in information sharing are due to systemic weaknesses in the National Society, these should be addressed in a comprehensive manner through the IFRC Organisational Development programme.
- Continue to engage with the government's Flood and Disaster Relief Committee both at national and provincial levels, but at the same time, strive to maintain the operational independence currently enjoyed by the National Society.
- In reviewing and refining training materials, particular attention should be paid to providing simple, clear and focused messages that can be readily put into practice by both RC staff and community members.
- Greater efforts should be made with regard to community-level interventions (such as the CBDP pilot project) to learn more about indigenous structures and mechanisms. Lessons learnt should be used in finalising the design of such interventions and modifying "off the shelf" approaches in order to make them more applicable to the DPRK context.
- The National Society should be encouraged to address the issue of staffing, which has constrained progress in some areas, by ensuring that there are at least three full time desk officers at all times in the DP/DR department to manage both IFRC-supported and regular National Society programme activities.
- Continuing efforts should be made to integrate DP/DR components and activities with other, on-going, IFRC initiatives, particularly the Community-based First Aid and Water and Sanitation programmes.