

AN APPEAL BY THE ICRC AND THE LEAGUE

On 17 June 1974, the President of the Executive Council of the ICRC, Mr. R. Gallopin, and Mr. H. Beer, Secretary General of the League of Red Cross Societies, sent the following circular letter to Governments and National Societies:

Despite the Paris Agreement of January 1973 fighting still continues in some parts of Indochina, entailing heavy demands on the Red Cross for surgical and medical aid. Even in those areas where relative peace has been restored, the aftermath of 25 years of war has left hundreds of thousands of persons homeless, destitute, sick or vulnerable, through malnutrition, to disease. Aid of almost every kind is desperately needed. On the one hand the Red Cross must continue to give its full support to the victims where the fighting continues; and on the other it must help destitute people in those regions where the actual fighting has ceased. Thanks to financial and material contributions received from Governments and Red Cross Societies throughout the world, it has so far been able to provide aid in the form of shelter and prefabricated housing, food, medicaments, medical services, hospital equipment, clothing, trucks and ambulances, and a wide variety of other relief supplies to a value of over 50 million Swiss francs. But the resources are now almost exhausted.

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies have, therefore, carried out a major review of the situation, and of those emergency needs which are unlikely to be met by any other organisation. As a result a new reduced programme has been drawn up to cover the next nine months. This represents the minimum required to meet the most pressing of the emergency needs in the various areas of Indochina. It involves a total cost of some 19.5 million Swiss francs.

It is fully appreciated that the humanitarian problems and needs of Indochina have disappeared from the headlines. Other

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more recent disasters have taken their place. Yet this does not mean that those needs have diminished or disappeared; they are as real and as urgent as ever.

The ICRC and the League, in December 1972, established the Indochina Operational Group to mobilise and coordinate the most effective use of world-wide Red Cross and other resources for the benefit of the victims of the war in Indochina. The two Institutions have recently decided to retain this Group, for so long as may be necessary, to coordinate their respective activities in Indochina. We now make this joint appeal to Governments and National Red Cross Societies to provide the necessary resources. Already the shortage of funds has enforced a reduction of activities to cover only the most desperate needs; and unless more money becomes available in the very near future even the most vital elements in the Red Cross programmes, such as medical services, especially in Cambodia, will have to be curtailed or even withdrawn.

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In its broad aspects, the new programme includes continued material aid to displaced persons or to those now being resettled, as well as the maintenance of a dozen medical teams in the Republic of Vietnam, the Khmer Republic and the Kingdom of Laos. A sum is also to be set aside for the needs of war victims in areas controlled by the Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia.

In the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Red Cross must, on the one hand, complete its programme of prefabricated housing for some 30,000 persons, and, on the other, meet new requests for relief. As the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam is being supplied with equipment for a 250-bed hospital, additional material and surgical supplies will be needed.