

Programme Update

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

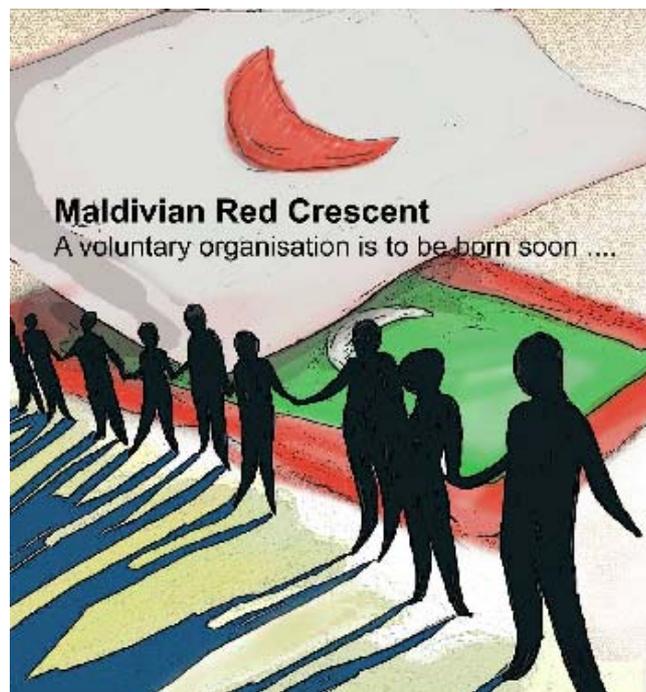
Maldives

Appeal No. MAAMV001

10 November 2008

This report focuses on the Maldivian Red Crescent formation process.

In a world of global challenges, continued poverty, inequity, and increasing vulnerability to disasters and disease, the International Federation – with its global network – works to accomplish its Global Agenda, partnering with local community and civil society to prevent and alleviate human suffering from disasters, diseases and public health emergencies.



In brief

Programme summary: The Maldives is one of the few countries in the world without a national Red Cross or Red Crescent society. Prior to the December 2004 tsunami many of the locals had never heard of the Red Cross. The process of forming a local national society was initiated in September 2005. In January 2008, the International Federation launched [Appeal 2008-2009](#) for the Maldives, outlining programmes that are focused essentially on creating the environment for a national society to be established and begin its work. There are hopeful indications that this process could be completed soon, following the submission of a Red Crescent Bill to parliament.

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Context

Following the 26 December 2004 tsunami disaster, the International Federation and partner national societies of America, Australia, Britain, Canada, France and Germany were quick to respond in the Maldives [in country] by addressing immediate relief and recovery needs. Unlike in other tsunami-affected countries, however — where national Red Cross or Red Crescent societies were at the forefront in providing immediate response to the disaster — the Maldives lacked a national society with which Red Cross Red Crescent counterparts could partner. Without a local counterpart to support

implementation, the immense relief and recovery operation that followed faced special challenges, not the least ready access to the affected communities.

Within a few months of the start of the relief operation, the profile of the Red Cross Red Crescent was high in the Maldives and the potential value of having a national society in the country became evident to a number of senior government officials and members of the community. At the time, though, national non-governmental organizations were not strong and civil society was underdeveloped, partly on account of the challenging environment for organizational development. Furthermore, the administrative structure of the country encouraged a centralized administration and limited opportunities for island-level decision making.

However, the government had already embarked on a political reform agenda before the tsunami struck. A road map was agreed for democratization and political parties — which had been previously banned — could be registered after the end of June 2005. These changes encouraged some to support the formation of a Maldivian Red Crescent, while others were more cautious as to timing; they saw the risk of politicization of the process in an immature democracy.

The International Federation realized that the opportunity presented at that time might not readily come again in the future (an attempt to form a national society in 2000 had not succeeded). With the support of several government ministers and senior officials, a public meeting was convened in Malé on 28 September 2005. It was attended by approximately 150 senior government officials, representatives of the UN and other organizations, and members of the public.

A working group is formed

Following dissemination activities and publicizing of the reasons for advancing a proposal to form a Maldivian Red Crescent, approximately 70 people volunteered to join a working group that was proposed to plan and organize the formation process with the Red Cross Red Crescent. The working group officially started when it held an inaugural meeting in Malé the next day, 29 September 2005.

From then, the working group volunteers participated in weekly meetings and made some significant achievements within a one-year period, including the following:

- Producing a draft national society statutes document;
- Researching and assessing priority activities for the society's strategic plan;
- Introducing the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in 20 of the country's atolls through a series of public meeting. This entailed disseminating the Fundamental Principles, humanitarian values, and diffusing information on the national society formation process to various public groups, including audiences in government and other possible stakeholders;
- Organizing an election of 62 atoll representatives for the first general assembly in all administrative regions, and providing them with the necessary orientation;
- Preliminary planning for the first general assembly during which the national society would be formally launched.

However, the above achievements were realized with difficulties, some of which seriously challenged the process. In particular, some members of the working group brought their own agendas and a code of conduct had to be developed in an attempt to manage the risk of political influence. These developments raised concerns about the credibility of the process within some parts of the government and some sectors of the general public.

As the working group became increasingly dysfunctional, the International Federation reached an agreement with the remaining members that this initial process be disbanded in favour of a new group to be formed in consultation with the government.

Steering committee

Before the dissolution of the working group, a tripartite steering committee consisting of designated members of the working group, the Government of Maldives — represented by Ministry of Health — and the International Federation was established in June 2006. Some of its key tasks were to provide

approval of decisions of, and support on, policy and other related matters to the working group. The committee was chaired by the deputy minister for health.

The first joint assessment mission

Between 9 and 12 October 2006 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation conducted a joint mission to assess the progress made in the national society formation process. The mission also aimed to work with key in-country stakeholders to develop a strategy and plan of action that would ensure progress of the process in a manner that would enable it to be recognized by the ICRC and accepted as a member of the International Federation.

While it acknowledged the several achievements of the working group, the assessment team expressed concerns regarding the qualitative aspects of the membership and functioning of working group. It was observed that some members were not conforming to the minimum requirements as they were not adhering to the laid code of conduct. In light of this, among others, it was recommended that the working group be dissolved immediately.

The interim planning group is formed

Consequently, an interim planning group (IPG) was established to replace both the working group and the steering committee. IPG had a clear, specific mandate of immediately taking over and completing the work started by the working group and the steering committee. Specifically, IPG was tasked to:

- Seek approval from the joint statutes commission in Geneva on the final draft of the statutes (to be presented to and adopted by the first general assembly);
- Finalize arrangements for the issuance of a presidential decree (for formal recognition of the national society by the government);
- Organize election of Malé representatives (to participate in the first general assembly — 62 Atoll representatives had already been elected under the guidance of the working group);
- Organize the first general assembly of the Maldivian Red Crescent and hand over the next phase of the process — national society development — to the first governing board.

To ensure that IPG would be balanced, represented, credible and able to deliver, the joint assessment had advised that membership be drawn from the various stakeholders involved in, and with an interest in, the national society formation process. Another prerequisite was commitment by each member to respect and adhere to the Fundamental Principles. It was also recommended that IPG be comprised of 20 members — five from each of the four stakeholder teams outlined below:

- The original working group (to be nominated by the International Federation);
- The government (to be appointed by the ministry of health);
- The pool of elected atoll representatives (these representatives would participate on a rotational basis, one per atoll, with each attending three consecutive meetings so as to guarantee participation of all atolls over time while allowing continuity for three consecutive meetings — to enable completion of time-bound tasks during each term);
- Local and/or expatriate Red Cross Red Crescent staff (from the International Federation's delegation and the partner national societies with in-country presence).

To guarantee neutrality, IPG was to be chaired by the head of the International Federation's delegation, who would also be one of the five members from the Red Cross Red Crescent team.

Progress towards outcomes

Capacity and Organizational Development

Programme component	Component outcome
National society development	A Maldives National Society is formed, recognized and functioning.
National society and community capacity building	Capacity of the National Society is developed in community disaster preparedness and post-disaster response, through an

	integrated approach for the formation and building the Maldivian Red Crescent capacities at the branch level.
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Achievements

A second ICRC and International Federation joint assessment mission was conducted between 12 and 19 June 2007 as a 'mid-term' review of the Maldivian Red Crescent formation process. The focus of this second assessment was to review progress in the context of legal base establishment, preparation for the election of Malé representatives, and planning for the first general assembly.

While work on the structure and mechanisms was very well advanced, the team assessed that the link with future potential programmes and services had not been developed. The assessment mission therefore recommended development of links with existing core Red Cross Red Crescent programmes as well as building on those programmes.

Legal base

The main focus during the formation process has been to establish the legal base of the Maldivian Red Crescent. In its initial stages of existence, the IPG formed a statutes sub-committee (and engaged local legal experts) to focus on meeting the essential legal base requirement. The sub-committee drafted statutes and rules of procedure through a consultative process, which involved atoll representatives so as to include branch perspectives. Furthermore, IPG also finalized a draft presidential decree through which the Maldivian Red Crescent would gain recognition locally. The content of the decree and its provision would in principle be the basis of the future Red Crescent Act. The drafts were then shared with the attorney general's office in late 2007 for government's comment and feedback, and thereafter promulgation.

However, for unknown reasons, there was neither clear direction nor official reply from the attorney general's office on the documents. Consequently, subsequent amendments to the draft statutes were made by assuming and second-guessing the reluctance of the government to take the process forward. After making adjustments to the draft statutes IPG re-submitted a revised draft in January 2008. Upon reviewing the statutes, the attorney general's office advised that Law no. 1/2003 and the regulations pertaining to the formation of associations adequately provided for the formation of the Maldivian Red Crescent; the government suggested that the national society be registered under that law. This recommendation was reviewed by the ICRC and the International Federation, which clarified that for a national society to be recognized by the ICRC, and consequently be admitted as a member of the International Federation, it must be recognized by the legal government of its country on the basis of the Geneva Conventions and through national legislation.

The IPG reverted to the government and stressed the importance of having the Maldivian Red Crescent established as an auxiliary to public authorities. It pointed out that so far, only one of the 10 conditions — a national society be constituted on the territory of an independent State where the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field is in force — is fulfilled. To this end, IPG advised that pending development of a Red Crescent Law, recognition by the government could be done through a presidential decree. This would enable the national society to embark on fulfillment of the other nine conditions and expedite its recognition.

To help the government understand the conditions for recognition and to find a solution to the status quo, IPG invited ICRC and International Federation legal advisors on national society legal base and integrity to meet with the attorney general's office and clarify the contentious issues. The meeting took place in May 2008, during which outstanding issues were ironed out and it was thought there would be a way forward.

Members of the statutes sub-committee of the IPG were later informed that the government was now comfortable with the amendments made to the draft statutes and that they had been approved by the attorney general's office. However, no written confirmation was obtained to confirm the same. The committee was also informed that some minor amendments needed to be made to the draft decree to reflect the role of ministry of health as the 'reference ministry' for the Maldivian Red Crescent; formal recognition would then be granted via a presidential decree.

To finalize the process, a liaison group within the IPG statutes sub-committee was tasked to work directly with the attorney general's office in making the amendments. The team worked hard and submitted the final revised draft for approval in July 2008.

Meanwhile, on 7 August 2008 the Maldives embraced a new constitution which came into effect upon ratification. This development had far-reaching consequences on the national society formation process; IPG was informed that the power previously vested on the president to issue decrees no longer existed. The presidential decree through which the Maldivian Red Crescent would gain legal existence would now be untenable.

Because of this development, IPG formed yet another sub-committee — recognition process sub-committee — to pursue a new and better option for recognition of the Maldivian Red Crescent by the government. This new sub-committee, with support from the ministry of health, approached the ministry of legal reform, information and arts for a way forward. The latter confirmed that issuance of a presidential decree at a time when the country was getting a new constitution would have thrown the status of the national society into a legal void.

The ministry of legal reform, information and arts committed to work with the IPG sub-committee and relevant government authorities to develop a Maldivian Red Crescent Bill which would then be tabled in the *People's Majlis* [parliament]. Remarkable progress has since been made in this regard; the draft Red Crescent bill was introduced to the parliament for first reading on 5 November 2008. The date for second reading has been allocated as 17 November 2008.

Planning for the first general assembly

In addition to the legal base establishment, IPG initiated planning for the inaugural general assembly of the new Maldivian Red Crescent. To this end, an elections sub-committee was formed; it developed election procedures and — with support from the International Federation — oversaw election of representatives who are to participate in (or form quorum for) the first general assembly. The 80 representatives were elected through two separate processes; 62 representatives from the atolls were selected in 2006 while 18 Malé representatives were elected in November 2007.

The elections sub-committee is still active and is responsible for vetting the 80 representatives with the intention of weeding out those who have plunged into political activities. When the committee establishes beyond reasonable doubt that a representative is directly involved in political activities — in contrary to the Fundamental Principles and the code all agreed to adhere to — such a representative would be required to step down. Should such a circumstance arise, the IPG has ruled out conducting new election; instead, the runner up in the previous election would automatically become the new representative. The vetting will be done on a regular basis, leading to the inaugural general assembly.

Programmes and services

While pursuing the legal base development issue, IPG formed a programmes and services sub-committee to identify potential programmes/activities that could be carried out by the Maldivian Red Crescent. The sub-committee met with programme teams of the International Federation as well as the American, British, Canadian and French national societies to deliberate on possible activities. It also met with groups of volunteers, such as the First Aid Practitioners' Network, to determine how such groups could be engaged to work with the nascent national society.

Based on those engagements, the new national society will not be expected to take on additional burden of tsunami recovery work; instead it will focus on traditional Red Cross Red Crescent programming at the community level. However, specific 'software' components could be taken on by the Maldivian Red Crescent as determined by its governing board on a case-by-case basis — especially where they are viewed to provide the in-route to engaging communities. More specifically, core programmes (disaster management, health and care, and humanitarian values) are currently being implemented by the International Federation's secretariat in support of the national society formation process. These will become some of the core programmes of the new national society once it comes into formal existence.

Besides programme matters, the sub-committee attempted to determine the material resources that the Red Cross Red Crescent partners could donate to the Maldivian Red Crescent — both in Malé and the atolls — when they ultimately exit. Consequently, some Red Cross and Red Crescent partners have made provisions in their exit strategies to hand over some of their assets to the nascent Maldivian Red Crescent when they leave.

Volunteer base development and management

The programmes and services sub-committee also started working on a Maldivian Red Crescent volunteer database, building on the data and information provided by Red Cross Red Crescent partners. For instance, volunteers who were recruited to assist with the psychosocial support programme of the American Red Cross — as well as with other community programmes being implemented by other Red Cross Red Crescent partners — are an important part of developing a firm foundation for the Maldivian Red Crescent, especially in the atolls. Already, there is a pool of over 2,000 such volunteers who have expressed their interest to join the new national society.

To facilitate proper volunteer management practices in the future, the volunteer-related work began by the programmes and services sub-committee has now been taken on by a volunteer policy and procedures sub-committee. This new sub-committee is undertaking the preparation of Maldivian Red Crescent volunteer management policy and procedures. The documents developed will be passed on the first governing board of the national society for adoption if deemed appropriate.

Humanitarian Values

Programme component	Component outcome
Promotion of Principles and Values	Awareness of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the Fundamental Principles is increased.

Achievements

While the main focus during the formation process has been to establish the legal base of the nascent national society, almost equal emphasis has been put on dissemination of information on the role that the Maldivian Red Crescent will play as an auxiliary to public authorities.

Promotion of Fundamental Principles, advocacy and information diffusion

A plan for promoting the nascent national society throughout the country was developed, and its implementation has gone well so far, following the recruitment of a communications consultant seconded to the IPG. The promotion work aims at ensuring that community leaders, community members and opinion leaders understand the role the Maldivian Red Crescent will be playing once it becomes operational.

The advocacy work and information diffusion also aims at promoting the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Internally, promotion of the principles and values has been integrated into orientation and induction programmes for Red Cross Red Crescent staff as well as of atoll and Malé representatives.

Promotion of the nascent Maldivian Red Crescent has so far been done using personalized letters, TV, light emitting diodes (LEDs), radio, a web log (blog), SMS as well as special campaigns, promotions and interviews on print and electronic media. Two significant dissemination campaigns were held during the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day celebrations on 8 May in both 2007 and 2008. The main events in both years were fun runs which were followed by dissemination of general information on the Red Cross Red Crescent to the larger public in Malé and in atolls where tsunami recovery work is still ongoing. Participants who would like to become members or volunteers of the nascent Maldivian Red Crescent, in future, were requested to register their details in provided forms. Names of interested people have been entered into a database; they will be contacted once the national society is formally established and encouraged to register as members or volunteers.

In the same vein, Red Cross Red Crescent partners continue to support the IPG by advocating for support within targeted communities and encouraging direct beneficiaries and community members at large to consider themselves as potential Maldivian Red Crescent members and volunteers.

Looking ahead

Formal existence of the Maldivian Red Crescent will see the role of the International Federation’s delegation in the Maldives transition from an ‘implementer’ to ‘facilitator’, putting effort on nurturing the new national society. In the meantime — while awaiting approval of the Red Crescent Bill by the parliament and its subsequent ratification by the president — the delegation is supporting the IPG in developing a two-year strategic development plan. The draft plan will then be tabled for adoption by the inaugural general assembly so as to guide the development of the new national society during its first two years.

Once the plan is finalized and approved, priorities in the short-term will include:

- Developing core organizational structures — including functional atoll branches and island units;
- Developing policies, systems and procedures;
- Recruiting, training, and managing a diverse, gender-balanced staff team;
- Recruiting and developing a diverse, gender-balanced volunteer network;
- Training and mentoring the national society’s leadership and senior management;
- Guiding the new society in designing and implementing programmes that are responsive to local vulnerabilities and focused on the areas where they can add greatest value;
- Establishing continuous and strong linkage across all programmes;
- Constructing a headquarters building;
- Entrenching fiscal and programmatic accountability;
- Disseminating information on the national society’s role and mandate to members of the public and key stakeholders within the public and private sector.

How we work	
<p>The International Federation’s activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation’s mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".</p>	<p>Global Agenda Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters. • Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies. • Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability. • Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.
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