Vietnam Red Cross Society plays active role in the response to COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam

In the fight against the COVID-19, Vietnam is widely recognized as one of very few countries to successfully control the spread of the pandemic with early effective responses and preventive measures. As an auxiliary to the government, active member of International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Vietnam Red Cross Society has been playing promptly and effective role, contributing to controlling the pandemic and supporting the vulnerable people affected.

Overall view on the role of VNRC in Covid response in Vietnam

As an active member of the National Steering Committee for prevention and Control of Covid-19, with the advantage of having an organizational structure nationwide, spreading from the central to grassroots level, with qualified staffs, 4 million members and over 3.8 million volunteers/youth, Vietnam Red Cross Society has played an effective role, promptly implemented the tasks and programs to support the Government, provinces and cities nationwide to prevent the spread of the COVID epidemic in Vietnam, as well as to promptly assist vulnerable people affected by COVID; at the same time, to effectively carry out the responsibilities of the National Society in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

A business continuity plan was timely developed with technical support from IFRC/ICRC and National Societies to make sure VNRC’s effective functional operations at all levels with revised and updated action plans on the Covid-19 prevention control during social distancing with regular online/virtual meetings on the Covid-19 response with internal and external partners of the RCRC Movement like Government agencies/UN/INGOs and private sectors as well as providing instructions to Provincial and city Red Cross Chapters and local branches.
During the outbreak period, Vietnam is transitioning into rainy season where extreme climate disasters/events are forecast to be occurred. To better prepare for disaster season while considering the worst scenarios of the Covid-19 pandemic, a Pre-disaster meeting was organized by Vietnam Red Cross Society with active participation of representatives from National Steering Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control, Disaster Management Prevention and Control Authority, government agencies, Met Office, UN agencies, disaster management working group, INGOs... to discuss preparedness and response plan, contingency plan as well as mapping resources for current and upcoming disasters.

**Implementation of preventive measures and support of medical items:**

As soon as there were signs of an epidemic in Vietnam, VNRC promptly implemented a number of communication activities to raise public awareness about disease prevention measures. Timely develop and deploy plans to mobilize resources to support frontline health workers/volunteers and forces with medical supplies and basic necessities. From March to May 2020, more than US $ 2 million has been mobilized both in cash and in kind, including medical supplies from domestic and international individuals, organizations and private corporates. As of June 2, 2020, nearly 7,000 communication events about the COVID-19 epidemic in the communities and schools were held with nearly 1.5 million attendees (including free distribution of soap, sanitizers, personal masks and voluntary blood donation); more than 15,300 leaflets distributed and 10,450 media articles on the mass media and on UNOCHA’s website as well as IFRC newsletters, contributing to raising public awareness and controlling the spread of the pandemic. Total 430,105 blood units were collected to fill up the gap of blood for treatment during the outbreak.

To date, nearly 2.5 million medical masks; 400,000 soaps and hand sanitizers; Over 11,000 PPE clothes were distributed and nearly 11,000 people received cash and voucher. At the quarantine areas, the local Red Cross staff and volunteers have mobilized and supported the local population with food, waters, masks and soaps to improve their health condition as a preventive factor.
Support to vulnerable people in early response and recovery phase

Vietnam Red Cross Society did provide prompt support to the vulnerable people affected by COVID including coordination with local authorities to select vulnerable people to receive these items based on selection criteria such as women, elderly, low-income wagers, etc.

During May 2020, Month for Humanitarian Actions Campaign was initiated and launched by Vietnam Red Cross Society to encourage individuals and organizations across the country to conduct practical activities to support vulnerable people in the community during the Covid-19 outbreak. 350 humanitarian markets in provinces/cities were organized, providing unconditional vouchers (14 USD value each) to 110,000 vulnerable people affected by the Covid-19 to exchange for free basic necessities of their choice. Text message campaign was also launched to mobilize resources for the Covid-19 response and support people affected by drought and saline intrusion which is happening severely in the Mekong Delta region, and the same with social for good campaign with Facebook and others.

International contribution and Movement’s participation

Within the RCRC Movement, Vietnam received great financial and technical support from IFRC, ICRC and sister National Societies including German Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross, Singapore Red Cross Society. On the other hand, as an active and responsible member of the RCRC Movement, Vietnam Red Cross provided international support to people of other countries, including China, USA, Cambodia, India with 802,500 face-masks, valued at USD 176,000, as well as USD 30,000 contribution to IFRC's Global Appeal on the Covid-19.
Regular updates on the Covid-19 progress and response to relevant stakeholders inside and outside the RCRC Movement were timely circulated out and updated guidance/instructions on the response were timely provided to provincial/city Chapters.

Successful stories were shared in diversified channels including the virtual meeting with Leaders of Southeast Asia Red Cross-Red Crescent Societies on Covid-19 and other Red Cross National Societies, IFRC, ICRC; Live interview with ABC Channel (Australia) on successful stories of Vietnam/Vietnam Red Cross on controlling the Covid-19; Virtual meetings to share best practices on the Covid-19 response with Singapore Red Cross and DHL; Circuit Breaker with Singapore Red Cross’s volunteers on the role of Red Cross volunteers in the Covid-19 operation, and recently Virtual Briefing for Member States to the UN in New York on the role of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Asia and the Pacific in response to COVID-19 and in anticipation of other risks.