



La **(LRC)** ss

Lao Red Cross contributes to the promotion and protection of human rights in the Lao PDR

I. Background, status and role

1. Lao Red Cross(LRC) was created on 1st January 1955, and recognized by ICRC on 23rd May 1957 and later became Member of IFRC on 25 October of the same year.
Since the establishment of the Lao PDR in 1975 LRC has passed through different stages of development, starting from being part of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare before finally obtaining an independent status on 4 April 1992 (separating from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare) to have its own mandates as a leading humanitarian organization and auxiliary to the Government). LRC proposed its mandate which was then approved by the Government in its decree No. 188/PM' dated 30 Nov 1993. Thereafter, LRC proposed its new mandate which was incorporated into PM's degree 36 dated 21 April 1999. Since its establishment, LRC is considered as a social organization by the Government and its new mission of " social organization auxiliary to the Government in humanitarian services that includes provision of relief to the poor, disaster victims; and helping protect lives of people of all ethnic groups, actively participating in humanitarian efforts in conformity with the 7 basic principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement

II. Organizational structure of the Society.

2. The Lao Red Cross is organized at four levels: Central level, Provincial level in all 17 provinces and , District level.
3. The Society of each level has 5 divisions, namely Health Promotion Division, Blood Center/Division, Disaster Preparedness and Response Division, Information and Funds Raising Division, Administration

III. LRC' role in the human rights promotion and protection

3. LRC's activities to promote and protect human rights in Laos are carried out through its providing assistance to the people of all ethnic groups, in particular the vulnerable remote communities for their better living conditions and livelihood and their human rights.
- 4.LRC has its goals and strategic objectives in its 4 core programme areas to protect health and lives of Lao people as well as to promote and protect their human rights.
The goals of the 4 core programmes will be achieved by a set of specific and measurable objectives as presented below.

5. Disaster Management Programme.

Goal: To provide sustainable livelihood and better quality to the vulnerable people living in disaster prone area.

Objectives:

- To improve community awareness, preparedness, and response capacity to cope with disasters.
- To equip LRC with necessary preparedness, and response capacities and mechanisms to deal with, mitigate the impact, and gradually help reduce the risk of disasters.

6. Health in the Community Programme.

Goals: To provide the vulnerable people especially women and children in communities access to good health that may help to increase their life expectancy.

Objective:

- To provide access to hygiene promotion and health care services for vulnerable people everywhere for prevention of disease and to improve sanitation, without any discrimination.
- Reduction of HIV vulnerability, stigma and discrimination and improved quality of life of PLWHA (People living with HIV/Aids).
- People requiring blood transfusion services have access to safe and adequate blood nationwide.

7. Promotion of Fundamental Principles and Humanitarian Values.

Goals: To educate and disseminate the fundamental humanitarian laws, rights, principles, and values among the people living in Lao PDR in order for them to respect others, enjoy great peace and prosperity.

Objectives:

- To improve public awareness and understanding of Red Cross and Red Crescent's movement and disseminate the 7 Fundamental Principles and International Humanitarian Law.
- The 7 basic principles are 1. humanity, 2. Impartiality 3. Neutrality, 4. Independence, 5. Voluntary service, 6. Unity, 7. Universality.

8. Organizational Development Programme

Goal:

To develop Lao Red Cross organizational development programmes in order to become a well-functioning society by year 2010.

Objectives:

To build the capacity of LRC in order to systematically attain the characteristics of a well-functioning society by efficiently building its foundation, capacity and performance.

9. LRC regular activities being implemented are:

- Encouragement of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation for patients.
- Clean water supply and environmental sanitation to vulnerable people and remote communities.
- Provision of First Aid training, hygiene education, nutrition/TBA training to vulnerable and remote communities.
- Disaster preparedness and response to victims including the early warning system for flooding to vulnerable community people.
- Information and Fund Raising for sustainability.
- Tracing people's relatives missing.

10. All the goals and objectives mentioned above are for humanitarian practice and in the reality LRC has many projects implemented to protect health and lives of Lao people in particular those living in vulnerable and remote areas.

V. Achievements, difficulties and challenges.

11. Achievements

- Community-Based Health Development program implemented in 3 northern provinces (Huaphan, Xiengkhouang and Phongsaly). Education component and micro-credit are additional components to this project.
- Community-Based Health Project in 3 southern provinces (Saravan, Sekong and Attapeu).
- Help Age Home Care Project implemented in Naxaithong District, VTE Capital and in Luangprabang Province.
- Blood donation project in across the country.
- Community-Based Disaster Preparedness Project in Khammouane, Bolikhamxai, Savannakhet and Vientiane provinces.
- HIV/AIDs Project
- Health Equity Fund implemented in Savannakhet, Saravan, Sekong, Champassack and Xiengkhouang financially supported by Swiss Red Cross, World Bank and ADB.

Around 200,000 people benefiting from those projects such as:

- Vulnerable people got access to clean water supply.
- Children in remote areas received and completed primary education.
- People in remote areas especially women received non-formal education.
- Women in remote communities got access to micro-credit to improve their livelihood.
- Women in remote areas have equal right and dignity as men.
- Poor people in remote areas got access to health service in hospital.
- Elderly received care from volunteers and families through Help Age Home Care Project.
- Patients requiring blood transfusion received sufficient service.
- HIV-affected people got care and visit by project staff and communities receive peer education on AIDs as project activity.
- Disaster victims received emergency relief The latest ones are Ketsana victims in 2 provinces (500 families in Sekong and Attapeu). Assistance to these victims will also continue as the 2nd and 3rd phase.
- Provided equipments, boats with engines, loud speakers for early warning system to 23 villages of 5 districts along the Hinboune and Sebangfai rivers in 2 provinces of Khammouane and Savannakhet.
- Implemented Health Equity Fund in 18 poor districts of 5 provinces.
- 13. Humanitarian law was disseminated in Vientiane Capital and other provinces by LRC.

12. Difficulties

- Human resources are limited in both quantity and quality.
- Limited LRC fund. The majority of fund sources is from partner national societies (PNS).

13. Challenges

- Frequency of disasters with more and more destructive strength.
- Population will increase and vulnerable groups will also increase.
- Extension of *urban towns and an increasing number of migrants from country-side to urban towns and neighboring countries.*

Communicable diseases and HIV/Aids might seriously outbreak (H₅N₁ and H₁N₁).

VI. Recommendations and future plan and direction

14. Recommendations:

- LRC proposes that the Lao Government study and approve LRC Law as prepared by LRC.
- Need for more budget for humanitarian activities
- LRC proposes that the Lao government study and agree LRC's new decree already sent by LRC HQ to the Public Administration and Civil Service Authority.

15. The future plan and direction:

Prepare LRC's strategic plan for 2011-2015.

Reported by: LRC