

THREE-YEAR REPORT TO THE AFAD CONGRESS

Timeframe: May 2000-August 2003

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1. **THE PHENOMENON OF INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES IN THE SEVEN COUNTRIES WITH AFAD MEMBERSHIP.**

In Asia, the phenomenon of involuntary disappearances has reached alarming proportions. Involuntary disappearances in Asia is an unresolved problem and in some countries, a continuing phenomenon. With minimal or even without support from government, organizations of families of the disappeared generally do their work with many impediments.

A number of developments on the phenomenon of involuntary disappearances have transpired in Asia, at least, in the countries where AFAD member-organizations are based. Still, in general, while AFAD continues to project this regional phenomenon, no significant and concrete improvement have been achieved in so far as individual cases and general situations are concerned. The following is the most recent information sent by AFAD member-organizations.

In China, an estimated number of 3,000-4000 persons disappeared during the bloody massacre on June 4, 1989. Families of the victims fear to come out in the

open and cannot even publicly mourn for their disappeared. A group of brave mothers formed the Tiananmen Mothers and have gathered evidence to sue the government for its responsibility in the killings and disappearances that cost thousands of lives. Fourteen years after the gruesome massacre, justice still remains elusive. Ding Zilin, president of the organization made demands on the Supreme People's Procurate pressing for four unambiguous goals: to call for a thorough investigation of the June Fourth incident, to punish the guilty, to vindicate the wronged and to provide compensation for the victims and their family members.

In the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, involuntary disappearance has become a regular phenomenon, with at least 2,000 reported cases during the period 1991-1993. Added to this is the ingrained practice of most police personnel to cremate the bodies of the victims, thus depriving the families of the opportunity to ever see their loved ones again. More often, human rights defenders, in their struggle to end this problem, are themselves victimized.

This is further exacerbated by the effort of Indian authorities to ignore this violation. For example on July 18, 2001, , the Association of Disappeared Persons (APDP) in Kashmir held a short ceremony formally laying down the foundation for an intended monument dedicated to the *desaparecidos* of the Kashmir valley. A few hours after the ceremony, Indian police took the foundation stone along with its brick base and accused the organizers of trespassing on government land.

In a more recent development, poor and hungry families of the disappeared in Jammu and Kashmir continued being hungry by staging a hunger strike on April 17-24, 2003 so that the Indian government, through its Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Syed would finally admit the 3,744 cases that occurred from 2000 up to the present. Such an admission is in stark contrast to his earlier pronouncement stating that there are only 60 persons who disappeared and the rest had crossed the line of actual control.

In Indonesia, while enforced disappearances have been an almost daily occurrence during Suharto's "New Order" regime, only a few cases have been documented so far, many of them belonging to the Student Protest Movement. While new cases continue to occur without let-up, proper documentation still has to be done on the *PKI* supporters and sympathizers who were deliberately liquidated in 1965 and dissident ethnic minorities from Aceh, Irian Jaya and the former province of East Timor. Even with the assumption of former President Abdurrahman Wahid to power, the violence continued. During the administration of President Megawati, two of the most recent cases were the disappearance of *KontraS* activists in Aceh, disappearing in March of this year not to mention many other cases in the country's militarized areas. Adding insult to injury, the office of the Commission For the Disappeared and Victims of Violence or *KontraS* has been raided twice. The first incident happened last year perpetrated by some 300 armed men believed to be in collusion with the military. The second incident occurred on May 26, 2003 on the occasion of the International Week of the Disappeared and perpetrated by some 150

elements of the Youth of the Veterans in obvious cahoots with the police. The resolution of past cases is distant and a cessation of the on-going violence is difficult to imagine.

The phenomenon of enforced disappearance in Pakistan is to be viewed in accordance with the political and cultural ethos of the country. Pakistan was created in 1947 through the voluntary withdrawal of British colonial rule. Its creation was not the outcome of a revolution, but by a historical convulsion. Army and civil bureaucracy blocked the path to democracy and rule of law. Time and again, its constitutional structure has been unlawfully shattered, altered and abrogated to meet the requirements of incumbents to the chief executive office. Constitutional transformation was legalized by the judicial branch of state. The initial derailment from the constitutional path nearly made Pakistan into a failed state. A caucus of army, civil bureaucracy and judiciary usurped the rights of the people. The theory of social contract has been replaced by the theory of might is right. The state is not governed by the will of the people but by the might of the garrison. One consequence of such a situation is that involuntary disappearances continue to occur. The Truth and Justice Commission has documented only 254 cases thus far but it is certain that there are more cases. Of these cases, only twenty-two victims' families have been organized .

In a very recent development in the Philippines, after almost a couple of decades of struggle of the victims of human rights violations during the Marcos regime, the

Supreme Court declared that the enormous wealth of the Marcoses kept in Swiss banks are ill-gotten. Therefore, such wealth is to be turned over to the Philippine government, which has the responsibility to allocate money to compensate some 10,000 victims of human rights violations during the Marcos regime. Among the victims of these various forms of human rights violations such as involuntary disappearances, political detention, torture, the families of the disappeared will get the lion's share of the compensation that they rightly deserve. While it is true that the long wait is not yet over, this development is a great political and moral victory for victims of human rights violations - a triumph of the good over evil.

However, much still remains to be done . While the demise of the Marcos dictatorship brought a restoration of democratic rule, the succeeding administrations have not yet brought justice to victims of involuntary disappearances and their families. More than 1,750 cases reported to and documented by the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND) are still pending with a single perpetrator being punished. The fourteen cases being filed in court remain unsolved due to the absence of witnesses or their difficulty to testify due to fear of reprisal and harassment, not to mention the slow pace of local courts in handling human rights cases. A law penalizing enforced or disappearances has yet to see the light of day despite years of lobbying at the Senate and House of Representatives.

In the southern part of Sri Lanka for example, there are about 60,000 cases of enforced disappearance, most likely the largest in the entire world. Of this number,

only 16,742 cases have been established and verified while a mere 3,500 to 5,000 families and victims have been granted minimal compensation. While the three visits of the UNWGEID to the country were able to confirm this wanton transgression of human rights, the Sri Lankan government has yet to implement the Working Group's recommendations.

In Thailand, there are 293 cases of disappearances, which occurred during the brutal suppression of the May 1992 demonstration against Army General-turned-Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon. Families continue to press the Thai government to disclose the more than 600-pages report about the massacre and reveal the whereabouts of the victims. Yet, despite such persevering efforts, the Thai government merely offered sketchy reports of what transpired. While some families of the victims have received relief assistance, they still demand for the return of at least, their loved ones' remains for proper cremation. The government, on the other hand, transfers the burden of finding the possible location of graves of missing persons to the families of the victims.

While the above data are bad enough, they data do not yet include thousands of other cases in many other Asian countries.

11. THE ORGANIZATIONAL SITUATION OF AFAD

Since the Founding Congress of AFAD, the Federation has been attempting to consolidate and expand in order more effectively carry out the different components of its work, thus achieving its direction. Such efforts, while generally successful, have also faced many difficulties in different respects.

THE AFAD CONGRESS

It is positive to note that after three years of hard work, the AFAD Congress has presently convened according to the scheduled year. It was unable to convene during the month as specified in the Constitution, (which is May) because the AFAD Council deemed it fit to meet in August. May is too close to the schedule of the session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. Our Founding Congress was not able to consider such proximity of events since lobbying during the Commission on Human Rights is one of the major annual activities of AFAD.

This Second Congress of AFAD, centered on the theme: “Strengthen AFAD’s Unity Amidst Diversity – A Key to An Effective Human Rights

Advocacy ” was initially prepared by the AFAD Council during its Special Meeting in Manila, Philippines in January 2003. A more thorough discussion about the content of the congress was produced during the Council’s Regular Meeting in Geneva, Switzerland in April 2003.

Co-sponsoring this congress is the Non-Violence International, which is based in Bangkok. Ms. Sirinath.... is taking charge of the preparations in Thailand in cooperation with the Relatives Committee of the May 1992 Heroes.

THE AFAD COUNCIL

The AFAD Council has regularly met since the Founding Congress up to the present. It has held meetings once a year and convened special meetings given the opportunity.

In terms of composition, a number of the present Council members are not originally elected by the last Congress. Some who were elected are no longer the officers of their organizations, thus, the organizations, with the approval of the Council, appointed new representatives to AFAD. Two new members from Pakistan and China also appointed representatives to the AFAD Council.

The AFAD Officers, originally composed of a Chairperson, Secretary General and Treasurer is currently left with one person. Due to a major

organizational problem within the Federation in 2003, the Chairperson resigned on the second year of his term. The Treasurer, while regularly attending the Council meetings before leaving AFAD, was not functioning according to job description. Due to an internal problem within his organization in OPFMD, he is no longer connected with the latter and therefore, is automatically not part of the AFAD Council.

Despite its limitations, the Council functioned as the highest policy-making body in between Congresses. It made a periodic evaluation of work of the Federation and particularized the Three General Plan of Action through its annual planning; it made decisions on important organizational matters and resolved major problems of the federation. The council also decided on matters regarding membership. Moreover, in varying degrees, AFAD Council members also made sure that Council decisions were being carried out by their respective decisions.

The AFAD Council members, in varying degrees, principally communicate to the AFAD Secretariat. Communication, however, needs to be improved for more efficiency and effectivity in accomplishing the work.

The AFAD Secretariat

Due to budgetary constraints, the AFAD Secretariat has always been skeletal, thus, stretching its composition. During the last three years, the composition of the Secretariat differed periodically. Soon after the AFAD Congress to the period of October 2001, a full time Publications Officer/ Executive Assistant was hired to assist the Secretary General. The bookkeeper was full time. Towards the end of 2001, a full time Secretary Bookkeeper was hired, making the Secretariat a team of three persons in the year 2001. The then Publications Officer resigned for personal reasons. In the year 2002, another Publications Officer was hired part time, but also resigned after five months owing to the internal organizational problem of AFAD during the period. A couple of months after the resignation of the Publications Officer, the Secretary-Bookkeeper resigned for personal reasons. Thus, for five months in 2002, the AFAD Secretariat was left with one person, the Secretary-General.

For the last three years, the AFAD Secretariat has been acting as the center for coordination and service. It does the day-to-day work of the Federation and at the same time, facilitates the implementation of AFAD's international solidarity, lobby and campaign work .

Concretely, it has prepared and facilitated the actual conduct of regionally coordinated activities, initiating AFAD's information-dissemination drive through many different forms and representing the Federation in public functions both in its base country and other parts of the world. Most importantly, in between Council meetings, it links directly with member-organizations in the course of implementing the AFAD plan.

Considering its skeletal character and the increasing demands of the work, not to mention the communication difficulties with some members, the Secretariat needs to strengthen its capacity when financial resources permit through hiring of at least one more person. In addition, improvement of communication between members is a goal to strive for .

The Federation, based in the Philippines, after five years since launching its core group, has gained an identity as a regional federation of organizations concerned with the issue of involuntary disappearances. The regional activities of the last five years, its publications, official statements and recently, its website have made AFAD well known in the Philippines.

The AFAD Membership

From a Federation of five organizations, AFAD has expanded to seven organizations from China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The expansion of members is an added strength to the Federation.

The quantitative growth of AFAD from a core of three organizations in 1998 to a Federation of five members during its Founding Congress since August 2002, now a Federation of seven organizations has been gradual. It was fortuitous that the Federation did not immediately recruit as many members as possible considering its limitations to respond to the increasing demands of the work.

The increase in the quantity of membership unfortunately did not mean a corresponding increase in the number of people working in the Secretariat. With this limitation, the Federation has not yet reached a level wherein there is at least one person focusing totally on the work of AFAD. It would be an ideal for wherein one member, for instance, to attend to the needs of the other if assistance is required. In such a way, the work of the Secretariat is lightened .

Recently, a significant leap forward was achieved by the whole membership when all member-organizations responded, to different degrees , to

the request for solidarity action by the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons in Kashmir.

Possible areas of expansion are Burma and Nepal, whose representatives the AFAD members were able to meet in Geneva. Efforts to invite the Burmese organization as guests during the Congress was offered. Due to unavoidable circumstances, Burma is unable to participate.

111. AFAD's Financial Situation

Since the formation of the core group, AFAD has been relying on the funds of HIVOS for the comprehensive implementation of its work. The funds given by HIVOS, however, do not exceed beyond a third of the total annual budget, thus making it difficult to comprehensively accomplish the plan due to the lack of human and material resources.

During the last three years, the AFAD Secretary-General has been the only person raising funds for the organization considering the fact that the Treasurer, while active during meetings, has been unable to help in this regard. For three years since its founding congress, AFAD was able to get some small financial support from the following organizations:

1. Novib of The Netherlands – gave solidarity funds for the founding Congress;
2. Cordaid of The Netherlands – gave solidarity funds for the founding Congress;
3. Seafild of Canada, (based in Bangkok) – gave additional funds for the Asian-Latin American Lawyers’ Conference in November 2000;
4. The Royal Netherlands Embassy – very recently gave financial support for the creation of a website and the purchase of a new computer.

A very positive development in this regard is that

the Evangelist Service for Development or *EED* gave a substantial amount of Forty Thousand Euros for the implementation of the following: Leadership Training Program; purchase of new office equipment, rehabilitation for the families of the disappeared and lobby.

The part-time bookkeeper submits monthly financial reports although on many occasions, reports have been delayed. As soon as reports are ready, they are sent by email to all AFAD members.

The annual external auditing has been conducted regularly. Results of external audit have been also regularly submitted to all Council members and discussed during Council meetings.

HIVOS has made it clear that with the coming of funds from *EED*, for purposes of transparency, it requires a comprehensive institutional external audit. Moreover, since the Chairperson and Treasurer are no longer part of the Council, HIVOS asked one of the AFAD Council members to sign the latest (2002) audited report.

1V. ACTIVITIES

Leadership, Administration and Finance

1. Planning and Budgeting – The yearly particularization of the Three-Year General Plan of Action is being accomplished by the AFAD Council. Plans were based on the situation of the region and the organizational situation of the Federation and its member-organizations.

Planning is always conducted every Regular Council meeting annually done in Geneva in time for the session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

The AFAD Council's annual plan serves as the basis for the detailed plan of the AFAD Secretariat. To varying degrees, it also serves as a basis for the plan of each member-organization.

2. Yearly External Audit and the Submission and Discussion of Financial Reports -

External auditing has been every year for the purpose of internal control and for compliance with the requirements of the funding agencies.

In the year 2002, there were two external audits because the bookkeepers resignation at the middle of the year. To ensure that records were clear before the bookkeeper's resignation, a mid-year audit was done.

The results of audits, (as mentioned above), were submitted to Council members and discussed during regular Council meetings.

In the absence of a Chairperson and Treasurer last year to co-sign the 2002 audited report, HIVOS requested that one present AFAD Council member sign the report.

2. AFAD Council Meetings – As already mentioned, meetings were conducted at least, annually. Whenever there were opportunities presented themselves to meet during important activities, the Council convened special meetings to discuss matters of immediate concern.
3. Fund-raising activities - Fund-raising was solely by the Secretary-General because for the last three years, the Treasurer did not function. In 2002, *KontraS*, through Usman Hamid, introduced the Secretary-General to a couple of funding agencies in The Netherlands.

Writing project proposals, presenting these personally to funding agencies and submitting reports were the efforts exerted .

The budget of AFAD is limited, so that whenever there were specific projects which were not part of the budget for that year, the task of preparing the activity, which also included fund-raising months before the actual activity, tended to increase pressure on the Secretariat.

4. Regular Submission of Year-End Reports - Year End Reports have been regularly submitted by the Secretariat both to its member-organizations and funding agencies. Summaries of the reports were published in previous issues of The Voice.

5. Staff Development Activities - Staff development activities both for the purpose of skills upgrading and enhancing working and interpersonal relationship within the Secretariat were conducted as part of the Secretariat's yearly budget.

At the regional level, AFAD also conducted trainings, e.g. input/discussion and on the job training regarding lobby work at the United Nations and leadership training. Trainings of this kind theoretically and practically prepared the AFAD members to do the work.

6. Formulation and Approval of Personnel and Finance Policies – The AFAD Secretariat drafted personnel and finance policies, which were presented to the AFAD Council for approval. The policies have not been recently updated, but most are still relevant and therefore, continue to be the existing documents followed by the Federation.

7. Country visitations – Country visitations both by the whole AFAD Council and the Secretary-General were accomplished . The AFAD Council, through the Federation’s activities in the countries where AFAD members are based, visited Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Due to security problems, the other countries have not yet been visited by the Council. These include China, Pakistan and Kashmir.

In between Council activities, the Secretary-General from time to time, conducted visitations to countries where AFAD has members, including China. But this has not been regularly done due to time as well as financial limitations.

8. Regular updating on the phenomenon of involuntary disappearances in different Asian countries occurred through the articles submitted to the AFAD magazine, *The Voice* and through the reports submitted during important AFAD activities,
9. Documentation of major AFAD activities through the production of proceedings and books – The purpose of which is to have an official record of important activities which might serve as a basis for future evaluation and summing up. These include, among others, the

Congress Proceedings, the Book entitled “Between Memory and Impunity,” and Proceedings of the AFAD Leadership Training.

10. Purchase of necessary office equipment – AFAD has purchased necessary office equipment to facilitate its work. The regional office is relatively well equipped with computers, printers, photocopying machine, a scanner, still and video cameras, a cassette recorder, office cabinets and tables, etc.

Solidarity

1. Internal Consolidation among AFAD members and reaching out to other Asian Countries – Through the AFAD members’ joint activities, they continue to learn from each others’ experience in terms of situations and in terms of response. The unified voice of the Federation in various activities was in itself an expression of solidarity.

Responding, in various ways, to the situation of different countries, is a concrete expression of solidarity. Through the years, solidarity has gradually improved through conscious reminders of AFAD members to one another.

2. Cooperation with *FEDEFAM* – AFAD has regularly participated in the last two Congresses of *FEDEFAM* in Mar del Plata, Argentina and La Paz, Bolivia.

Likewise on many important occasions of AFAD, it has received messages of solidarity, very important to boost the Federation's moral.

In times of crisis, too, such as the *KontraS'* office raid, the support of our Latin American counterpart was important for purposes of strengthening local and regional efforts and as a morale bolster.

3. Cooperation with Linking Solidarity in establishing *RADIF* - AFAD was present during three series of conferences held in West Africa, South Africa and East Africa. After five years of existence, next to *FEDEFAM*, AFAD has been perceived an example by its African counterpart.

Lobby

1. Annual participation in the session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) – In cooperation with *FEDEFAM* and recently with *RADIF*, AFAD has regularly participated in the sessions of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. During these sessions, AFAD attended official sessions of the UNCHR, joined *FEDEFAM*'s parallel activities, met with the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and established networks with NGOs in different parts of the world.

2. Adoption of resolutions to lobby for the establishment of regional and national human rights mechanisms during the Asian and Latin American lawyers' conference – Considering that in Asia, there are no existing regional human rights mechanisms which can be used in the fight against impunity, this conference passed a number of resolutions. Unfortunately, the implementation of many resolutions is quite limited because of the financial inability of the Federation to sustain the results of the conference. Efforts to raise funds for this

purpose did not garner positive results. After the summing of the resolutions' implementation, there has been no follow-up by the Federation in this regard.

3. Meetings with national authorities during activities conducted by AFAD in different Asian countries – During joint AFAD activities held in different countries where AFAD members are based, the Federation were determine to meet with national authorities. This in order to make use of international presence to pressure the government concerned to heed to the demands of the organization in the specific country. In addition , regional as well as international concerned were also brought up, e.g. the concern government's support for the United Nations Draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. Examples of this include: Meetings at the Office of the President in the Philippines, and both Houses of Congress ; meetings at the Governmental Commission on Human Rights in Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and meetings with the Foreign Office of Sri Lanka.

4. Establishing and sustaining relations with the diplomatic community in countries where it has AFAD member-organizations and in Foreign Offices of Europe - Conducting diplomatic briefings with embassies, giving information about the work of FIND through the AFAD magazine and visiting some Foreign Offices (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in Europe are efforts to complement the lobbying of AFAD at the United Nations level. The briefings are very important in terms of giving information which can be incorporated in the annual human rights report of these governments.

Campaign and Public Information

1. Establishment of a lawyers' network – AFAD convened an Asian and Latin American Lawyers' Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia in November 2000. The theme of the activity was: “Between Memory and Impunity.” It was a recognition of the indispensable role of lawyers in the search for truth, justice and redress. The results
2. Bi-Yearly Publication of The Voice – During these last three years, AFAD has regularly produced its magazine, *The Voice*. Since its maiden issue, 6 issues have been produced. After years of

collective effort, *The Voice* now contains diverse articles from AFAD members. It serves as a mouth piece for the Federation. Its distribution by the member-organizations, needs to be assessed to ensure maximization of each and every copy produced.

3. Issuance of AFAD Official Statements on issues and traditionally commemorated events - on many occasions, events and issues vis-à-vis its mandate,
4. Responses to requests for urgent actions – AFAD has responded to requests for urgent actions especially in cases stemming from Colombia.
5. Creation of the AFAD Website – In cooperation with The Royal Netherlands Embassy, AFAD has been able to create a website on the occasion of its 4th anniversary. A website is a very valuable form of information dissemination drive can reach a large audience.
6. Regionally coordinated campaign - AFAD member-organizations, conducted the first-ever regionally coordinated activities during the hunger strike of the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons

(APDP). While the Tiananmen Mothers Campaign in Hongkong and the *KontraS/ikohi* of Indonesia staged pickets in front of the Indian consulate/embassy in their respective countries , all the other members conducted information-dissemination drives to complement the effort. It resulted in a very successful regionally coordinated effort.

VI. STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT) AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Leadership, Administration and Finance

In terms of Leadership, Administration , AFAD's strength lies in the fact that despite the changing composition of the Council and the fact that the only remaining officer in the Council is the Secretary-General, the Council was able to lead the organization and accomplish most of the plans it aimed to achieve during its three-year term.

Financially, there has been a clear system of control through strict policies, regular auditing and reporting. The weakness lies in the fact that AFAD's finances were not enough for it to comprehensively respond to the demands of the work. The

financial pressure made it difficult for the Federation to function. At the same time, its strength lies in the fact that the difficulty did not deter its operations. There are opportunities, but not yet tapped because of the overstretched functions of the Secretary-General and absence of a functional treasurer.

It is recommended that one of the criteria for nomination and election of a new set of Council members is that the person should be able to finish the term of three years up until the third congress. In addition, the council member must should give a higher percentage of commitment not only for his own individual organization but for the whole Federation. Moreover, individual member organizations, (as recommended by the funding agencies) should give a larger counterpart to the work of AFAD if indeed, they see the importance of the Federation.

SOLIDARITY

AFAD's continuing existence and growth lies in the strength of its solidarity work. There are varying levels of capacity among member organizations and they complement each other to further strengthen the Federation. During the last three years, AFAD has undergone major organizational problems, but such

problems have been overcome. While the interests of individual member organizations need to be responded to, the interest of the Federation should prevail and that principle has guided the Federation in the course of implementing its general plan of action.

AFAD's continuing cooperation with *FEDEFAM* and in a more recent development, with *RADIF* is mutually beneficial to both AFAD and its Latin American and African counterpart. It has strengthened the international movement against involuntary disappearances.

LOBBY

AFAD's voice at the United Nations has strengthened the belief that involuntary disappearances is a regional phenomenon. It has also modestly complemented the efforts of *FEDEFAM* in lobbying for the ratification of a draft convention on the protection of all persons from enforced or involuntary disappearances.

The weakness lies in the fact that in between sessions of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, a more systematic and thorough lobbying has not been clearly planned and carried

out. This is important because lobbying is not finished after the UNCHR session in Geneva.

It is recommended that the AFAD Council and the member-organizations should be conscious of the need for a systematic and thorough lobbying plan in between annual sessions of the UNCHR and the importance of implementing such a plan.

CAMPAIGN AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

The greatest contribution of AFAD to human rights work in the region is the projection of the Asian phenomenon of involuntary disappearances. Before the existence of the federation, projection was only by individual member organizations on the national issue of disappearances. AFAD's different forms of information dissemination activities and its regional activities both in Asia and Europe have strengthened the fact that this problem is also an Asian reality contrary to what the Asian governments might wish to claim.

The effort to elicit the support of Asian lawyers in the work for truth, justice and redress has been an important step in the fight against impunity. Large resources, however, are needed to

sustain the work already started. The concrete campaign for justice by the filing of cases in courts have been done individually by the AFAD member organizations. It has not yet reached the regional level wherein AFAD member organizations can mutually help each other.

AFAD has gradually reached a level wherein it is able to respond to the campaign needs of member-organizations. This was proven during the regionally coordinated activities that AFAD members conducted during the hunger strike in Kashmir. Conducting more activities of this kind in the future and responding to spontaneous requests of member-organizations are part of the challenges AFAD faces in the future.

Member-organizations are encouraged to consciously promote AFAD on the national level. There are many possibilities of doing so.

V11. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, amidst difficulties and limitations, AFAD has proven its relevance and viability through its successful implementation of its three-year plan of action. The problems it

faced in the course of plan implementation did not stop AFAD from doing its avowed mission, vision and goals.

To further quantitatively and qualitatively increase the results of its work, it also needs to increase the contribution of member-organizations in doing the work of the Federation. Moreover, with AFAD's increasing membership and the corresponding increase in the demands of the work, its Secretariat also needs to be strengthened quantitatively and qualitatively. Such an increase in membership will also prove that there is strength in numbers.

The task at hand is challenging . Amidst diversity in many respects, AFAD member organizations should strengthen their unity in order to be more efficient and effective in their fight against involuntary disappearance and against impunity. How to concretize the strengthening of this unity is for us a task and a challenge.

