

Year-End Organizational Report

January to December 2001

PART A. – THE ORGANIZATION

1. BRIEF REGIONAL SITUATION ON THE PHENOMENA OF INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES IN ASIA

Note: This situation is an excerpt of the speech of AFAD Secretary-General delivered before the Asia-Europe People’s Forum in Seoul, South Korea in October 2000. Not much has been changed since then. Particular country situations vis-à-vis disappearances could be seen in the two issues of “The Voice”, the official publication of AFAD.

Disappearances in Asia

In the Asian region, the problem is almost at par if not even worse than that of Latin America. Sri Lanka alone has already reported the highest number of disappearances ever recorded with 60,000 documented cases. Of the said number, only 16,742 have so far been established and verified by the UNWGEID and only 3,500 to 5,000 families have received minimal compensation.



In Kashmir, a region hotly contested by both India and Pakistan, there have been 2,000 reported cases of disappearances for the period 1991 to 1993. Additional information, however, has proven to be difficult to gather due to intense government repression and the ingrained practice of most security personnel to cremate the bodies of their victims.

In the Philippines, there are about 1,672 cases of involuntary disappearance. 759 of which were recorded during the Marcos regime, 830 during the incumbency of Mrs. Aquino, 66 cases during the Ramos administration and 17 under the present Estrada government.

In Thailand, the episode that first triggered a national inquiry into the phenomenon of involuntary disappearances was the brutal crackdown on the pro-democracy demonstration in May 1992. Aimed against Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon, the violence broke out in the vicinity of the Royal Plaza Hotel and the Ratchadamneon Ave. According to government data, 175 persons have mysteriously disappeared in the aftermath of the said event. Unofficial sources however, place the number of those missing as considerably higher at 293.



In Indonesia, the phenomenon of involuntary disappearance occurred within the context of the government's anti-insurgency campaign. The province of Aceh, for example, was placed under the Military Operational Zone (DOM) from 1989-1998. As a result, about 5,000 to 39,000 people disappeared under very dubious circumstances. According to testimonies, these atrocities were perpetrated by *Kopassus*, the army special forces headed by Suharto's son-in-law General Prabowo Subianto. Though these were done to neutralize these separatist *Gerekan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM/Free Aceh Movement), most victims as it turned out were neither members nor sympathizers of the said rebel group. Over the past ten years, 15,000 people have disappeared, most of them coming not only from Aceh but also from other Indonesian hotspots such as Irian Jaya and the former province of East Timor. Shortly before Suharto's fall from power, the military began targeting student activists, the most controversial of which was the army's assault upon Trisakti University in May 1998. In the said event, 4 students were killed and 14 others were reported missing. This partly comprises the 23 total cases of student disappearances from 1996-1998 – a number which continues to grow with each passing day.

Impunity and the Search for Justice

Due partly to the coverage that they have enjoyed in the international media, the extent of their support from other kindred groups in the human rights community and their superb organizing and lobby work, our sisters, brothers and counterparts in Latin America have already made significant inroads in the struggle for justice. The recent decision by the Chilean

Supreme Court to strip former strongman Augusto Pinochet of his senatorial immunity manifests the hold of civil society groups upon public opinion and also their strength in pressuring governments and decision-makers.

But here in Asia, the situation is far different. Even as I speak, no big fish has ever been put into prison and most military officers, if ever they get caught, never suffer harsh penalties but only receive mild slaps in the wrists. Moreover, the various government agencies tasked to investigate cases have proven to be either ineffective or totally spineless.

In Sri Lanka for example, the Presidential Commission of Inquiry on Disappearances (PCID) was formed on December 27, 1994 to inquire into alleged cases of disappearance and recommend legal actions. Yet, hardly has the ink upon its constituting papers dried up when it became a subject of controversy. According to the Commission, only cases that occurred after January 1, 1998, could be scrutinized despite the fact that most disappearances happened between 1979 and 1988. Moreover, there were complaints that the PCID was powerless in giving ample protection to families and witnesses who were often times harassed by the security forces and given death threats. It was even criticized for its cumbersome procedures that were occasionally made worse by red tape and bureaucratic delays.

In Indonesia, the military personnel are practically immune from prosecution. Oppositionists, on the other hand, are usually given harsh penalties for even the slightest offenses. In July 1998 for instance, two months after the raid on Trisakti University, the military admitted the involvement of its men in the shooting of unarmed, protesting students. This, after the police arrested seven Kopassus soldiers for alleged kidnapping and torture of dissidents. This led to Probowo's replacement by Gen. Muchdi Purwopranyoto as *Kopassus* head. Its chief intelligence officer, Colonel Chairawan was also removed from his post though he was not relieved from active service. Yet, army spokesperson Major-General Syasmul Ma'arif tried to downplay the entire affair by claiming that his fellow officers have not perpetrated any culpable violation of the law, but have merely committed "procedural errors" in the accomplishment of their duties. As for Suharto, the prospects of his possible imprisonment seems vague, with a panel of medical experts concluding that the former strongman is unable to stand trial and could well suffer from another stroke if he is made to attend the hearings.

In Thailand, relatives of the victims of the May 1992 massacre filed a lawsuit against five members of National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC), the ruling military junta at the time of the bloodshed. On April 5, 1995, the five defendants pleaded their innocence of the charge, arguing that what they did was in accordance with the law and with the prevailing situation. The

Thai Supreme Court ruled in their favor exempting them from any penalties whatsoever.

A further blow was again experienced when the Thai Defense Council passed a resolution on June 28, 1999 stating that it would only disclose just eight pages of the 600-page government investigation into the massacre. The Council defended their decision by invoking a clause in the Act of Official Information, which allows the authorities to conceal certain information for security reasons. Human rights activists have appealed against the resolution but to no avail. Until today, the Thai government has remained adamant on its position.

The Philippine case is also bleak, despite its supposedly wide democratic space and respect for civil liberties. Fourteen years after the fall of the dictatorship, the masterminds remain at large and even the Marcoses who were primarily responsible for various human rights violations have made a political come back. Though a Commission on Human Rights was set-up in 1987 to look into reported cases of possible human rights violations, the CHR has proven to be very weak. For one, the Commission is a simple investigative body with no prosecutory power. While it may have the mandate to examine incidents involving human rights, it would still have to refer the said cases to the appropriate courts. Because of this, most witnesses are wary of identifying themselves, since they are not given the proper protection that can only be accorded by a court-of-law.

Even the “Task Force on Disappearance” created by then President Ramos produced nothing. Though it was spearheaded by the CHR and had the support of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and other human rights NGOs, the body also included the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police and the Department of National Defense – the most notorious institutions with regard to human rights violations.

Morover, so far, only a small number of families have benefited from the financial assistance program of the government. In 1993, Congress allocated PHP 4 million (\$153,000) for the welfare and rehabilitation of the families of the *desaparecidos*, as well as the surviving victims. This amount was subsequently increased to PHP 5 million (\$193,000). It is estimated that each family may receive the amount of PHP 10,000 or \$ 200. Unfortunately only more than 200 families have received this amount because of the difficulty to officially prove the disappearance and the families’ relationship to the victims.

Though civil society groups have been very active in the campaign for justice, their work has also been hampered by several difficulties. FIND for example, has been conducting forensic search-missions to locate and identify the remains of dead *desaparecidos*. Yet, there are cases when the witnesses

refuse to cooperate, fearful of possible reprisal from the perpetrators. There were also instances when the bodies were removed from the burial site shortly before the arrival of an exhumation team.

The extent of impunity in the Philippines has been so great that it has caught the attention of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (UNWGEID). The Commission on Human Rights has also admitted that from 1987 to 1990 alone, it has already received 7,944 reports of human rights violations. Of this, only 1,509 reached the court and only 11 cases succeeded in having the offenders punished.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Since the launching of the core group of the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) on June 4, 1998, the Federation has made some accomplishments in terms of international solidarity, lobby and campaign. Organizationally, from an original membership of three member-organizations from the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Kashmir-India, it has grown to five member-organizations. Added to the original three-member organizations are organizations from Indonesia, which is KontraS and an organization from Thailand, which is The Relatives Committee of the May 1992 Heroes. The Federation is now composed of five member-organizations from five countries.

These five-member organizations, with the regional secretariat as its center of service and coordination, are the key players in the implementation of the Three-Year General Plan of Action adopted during the AFAD Founding Congress held in Manila, Philippines on May 23-31, 2001 on the occasion of the International Week of the Disappeared.

The year 2001 is the second year of the implementation of the General Plan of Action, the culmination of which ended half of the implementation of the Three Year Plan of Action, which started in June 2000, immediately after the AFAD Founding Congress. How far has the Federation implemented the Three-year General Plan of Action could be seen in the previous report as well as in the activities mentioned below.

In terms of consolidation as well as expansion, despite its best efforts, the Federation was faced with a number of limitations. While it is true that the self-initiated regional activities of the Federation had contributed much to the consolidation of the member-organizations, due to financial limitations, activities held solely for this purpose were found wanting. Thus, efforts for consolidation both of each member organization as well as of the whole Federation were limited, indeed. What was important was the consciousness of maximizing regional activities for consolidation purposes.

During the period, country visits to member-organizations were not comprehensively done. As a matter of fact, only the member-organization in Thailand was visited by the Secretary-General after her trip from Geneva back to Manila. Much could have been done, too, in terms of exchange of updates through the e-mail, but regular communications, almost always, come from the Regional Secretariat to the member organizations. Mutual communications have still to be achieved by some member-organizations.

Expansion efforts were done during the first quarter of the year when the AFAD Council planned to visit organizations which are potential members of the Federation, e.g. organizations in East Timor and Pakistan. Furthermore, it wrote letters to other potential members, e.g. Mothers of the Tiananmen Square massacre victims in China as well as a group of families of the disappeared in Manipur, India.

Untoward problems, however, prevented the visits to East Timor and Pakistan to be materialized. KontraS of Indonesia, which was assigned to visit East Timor, was not able to do so because of the re-organization of the former, thus preventing the assigned person to continue the visit. With the September 11 bombing in New York and its consequences in other countries, one of which was Pakistan, it was no longer possible to conduct a visit to Pakistan. Thus, expansion areas were not visited.

In a visit of the AFAD Secretary-General to the United Nations in New York, she received the application of the Mothers in China, which was facilitated by the Human Rights in China. It is then envisioned that a visit to China be done during the first quarter of the year, with the idea of requesting a translator to facilitate the meeting of the AFAD Secretary-General and the Mothers of the Tiananmen Square massacre victims in China.

Consolidation is limited to internal efforts in the national levels as well as maximization of regional activities. The pace of expanding the Federation is quite slow due to the above-mentioned reasons and also due to limited resources.

It is significant to note that AFAD's relationship with the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared Detainees (FEDEFAM) has been maintained through joint activities and recently, through AFAD's participation in its recent 16th Congress held in La Paz, Bolivia.

In as far as the AFAD Secretariat is concerned, during the first half of the year, it was then composed of two persons, the Secretary-General and the Publications Officer. An additional personnel was hired in July, a full-time Secretary-Bookkeeper who was able to boost the working force of the

Federation. Due to other priorities, however, the Publications Officer resigned in October this year. It was then decided that the hiring of a new Publications Officer be done during the second half of January. In the meantime, the two personnel are doing the work of the Publications Officer.

The idea of fielding one staff member in each member-organization is envisioned in order that a comprehensive implementation of the General Plan of Action be ensured and that the tendency that the work be concentrated in the Secretariat level be eventually eradicated.

As before, AFAD member-organizations, in varying levels, continue to support each other through support statements during important events and whenever there are issues to be responded to. Mutual support between AFAD and FEDEFAM through their Secretariats as well as their member organizations has also been sustained.

As earlier realized, the achievement of a full-blown Federation is an uphill struggle, indeed. Much as the Federation wants to consolidate and expand itself, it has not yet totally transcended the pangs of birth, considering the limited resources, the skeletal secretariat, the member-organization's own weaknesses and limitations in view of their uneven development, the varying cultures and languages and the internal problem in the countries concerned.

But looking back, AFAD has blessings to count as could be seen in the realization of its regional activities, its regionally-synchronized activities, varying levels of implementation of its agreed resolutions, the level of projection it has so far, achieved and the impact it has so far, created among its member-organizations.

3. CONCRETE MAJOR ACTIVITIES

AFAD's Three-Year General Plan of Action adopted by its Founding Congress, is classified into three components, e.g. International Solidarity, International Lobby and International Campaign.

These are geared towards the direction, to wit:

Ensure the stepping-up of efforts for the establishment of a full-blown federation concerned on disappearances in Asia in cooperation with the rest of the similar federation/s and/or organizations in the rest of the world concerned on the same issue in the common fight against impunity and in

the prevention of disappearances. Respond concretely to national needs of member-organizations and the regional concern of the whole Federation in the context of the general phenomena of involuntary disappearances. Take an active part in the process of concretizing the international movement against involuntary disappearances through sustained cooperation with FEDEFAM in Latin America and the rest of the organizations from other continents. All these efforts are geared towards forging unity with our Asian brothers and sisters and the peoples of other countries in our collective struggle for common interests.

For the last 12 months, the following activities had been conducted. These does not include the self-initiated activities of each member-organization which were part of its usual program:

A. Solidarity

1. Expression of empathy and support for the family of slain union leader, Filemon, Ka Popoy Lagman

On the second week of February, 2001, members of the AFAD Secretariat attended the wake and funeral march of militant labor organizer Filemon Lagman. Being the first politically-motivated crime under the Arroyo administration, AFAD issued a statement calling for a quick investigation into the matter. It also facilitated the drafting of several messages from AFAD member-organizations and support network from Asia and Latin America.

Filemon Lagman is a younger brother of AFAD Chairperson Edcel Lagman.

2. AFAD Annual Council Meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland in April 2001 –

AFAD conducted its annual Council meeting immediately after the lobbying activities for the ratification of the United Nations Draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which were conducted on the occasion of the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UN CHR). Council members from different countries, except the one from Kashmir, India who was not issued visa, were present to discuss the following:

- Evaluation of the six-month implementation of the program of AFAD since after the Founding Congress;
- Discussion and Approval of the Plan of Action for 2001;

- Discussion on existing membership vis-à-vis plan implementation as well as potential membership in Pakistan, East Timor, Manipur, India and China.
- Discussion and approval of the 2001 budget.

The Federation always sees to it that Council meetings are held immediately after the lobbying in Geneva, Switzerland in order to maximize the presence of AFAD Council members, thus, saving on transportation expenses.

While Council meetings are held for administrative purposes, it could not be denied that solidarity is being fostered through exchange of ideas and experiences.

3. AFAD Secretariat's Support for the Relatives Committee of the May 1992 Event –

On the last week of April, the AFAD Secretary-General, Mary Aileen Bacalso, together with one of the AFAD Council members, Daisy Valerio, went to Bangkok, Thailand to personally convey to the officers and members of the Relatives Committee of the May 1992 Heroes, AFAD's support in the light of the 9th anniversary of the May 1992 Event.

It was an opportunity for the two Council members to integrate with the families of the victims, to learn from them the updates of their struggle, which had given them renewed hopes. It was then learned that the Thai government had decided to give the members a certain amount of money for the establishment of a monument in honor of all victims of the May 1992 event.

4. Simultaneous Commemoration of the International Week of the Disappeared on the last week of May -

Based on its usual practice, the Federation's member-organizations held simultaneous activities to commemorate the International Week of the Disappeared. Varying forms of activities were conducted. A central statement for this event was used for dissemination by the member organizations and was disseminated to the international contacts of AFAD.



A major activity conducted was the National Lawyers' Conference in Manila, Philippines. It was one of the follow-up activities of the Asian-Latin American Lawyers' Conference entitled: **Between Memory and Impunity**. Attorney Roberto Garreton, presently the representative of Mrs. Mary Robinsons of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for Latin America and the Carribean, was the guest speaker. He spoke on the human rights situation of Latin America, with emphasis on the phenomenon of involuntary disappearances and impunity and the legal struggle, which contributed to the combat against human rights violations in the continent. Ms. Laurence Gillois, a French lawyer based in Indonesia, then coordinating the follow-up of the Jakarta resolutions, was also present. The activity enabled Filipino lawyers' to be informed of the results of the Jakarta conference, discuss the particular situation of the Philippines and adopt its own resolutions vis-à-vis the campaign for justice of the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearances (FIND).

5. Simultaneous commemoration of the International Day of the Disappeared on August 30, 2001 through the simultaneous presentation of the AFAD slide production-

The year 2001 is the third year since AFAD simultaneously commemorated the International Day of the Disappeared. This day was first commemorated by Latin American organizations. During the AFAD Founding Congress, the Federation decided to also commemorate the significance of the occasion.

Based on the AFAD Council plan, the AFAD Secretariat was able to complete a 22-minute slide production entitled: **The Phenomenon of Involuntary Disappearances in Asia and the Response of AFAD**. Four sets of slides were produced and were sent to AFAD member-organizations to be presented simultaneously during their respective activities during the day.

In the Philippines, FIND presented the slide production during a forum with an audience of more than 500 people from the different sectors of society, the representatives of whom presented a symbolic sign of commitment for the cause of the disappeared and their families.

In Indonesia, KontraS came up with a series of activities during the last week of August. The presentation of the slide production, with the necessary translation from English to Bahasa, was presented on August 30 in order to culminate the week-long series of activities.

In Sri Lanka, the presentation of the slide production was done in a seminar conducted during the OPFMD's commemoration of the International Day of the Disappeared.

A Spanish version of the script was later produced and was used during AFAD's participation in the 16th FEDEFAM Congress held in La Paz, Bolivia.

Exchange of solidarity messages was also done among AFAD members and between AFAD and FEDEFAM for the purpose of giving mutual support.

Annex 1--- A copy of the script of the slide production.

6. AFAD's participation to the 16th Congress of FEDEFAM held in La Paz, Bolivia on November 20-25, 2001 -

AFAD once again, participated in a Congress of FEDEFAM – its 16th Congress and 20th anniversary. Such participation is very significant, indeed because it was achieved despite the short notice and the fact that the AFAD Secretary-General, who then was at the same time, the FIND Co-Chairperson, had to preside a National Assembly of FIND held at the same dates with the Congress of FEDEFAM and during which, her term as Co-Chairperson was to end.

The then FIND National Executive Council, knowing the value of AFAD's sustained cooperation with FEDEFAM, decided to allow its former Co-Chairperson to attend the FEDEFAM congress. She presided the FIND National Assembly for two days, after which, she was allowed to leave to be able to attend the internal meeting of FEDEFAM. To note, due to time constraint, she was unable to attend the public session, but was able to make it to the internal meeting.

She presented the Spanish version of the slide production and delivered a speech to manifest AFAD's strong sense of solidarity with FEDEFAM. Her personal presence despite an equally important activity in the Philippines, was in itself, a manifestation of solidarity.

7. Solidarity statements during important occasions and in response to the burning issues of the day –

The AFAD Secretariat wrote statements during significant occasions of its member-organizations and also during difficult situations of each country. Such statements were issued both to express solidarity and also to project AFAD's positions on the said issues. Details of the said statements could be found under Campaign.

8. Follow-up of membership applications of Pakistan, China, Manipur and the possibility of forming a group in East Timor-

After the AFAD Council meeting, the AFAD Secretary-General immediately made follow-up letters to all prospective member-organizations.

China responded positively by sending the much-awaited application letter of the Mothers of the Tiananmen Square victims massacre. A possibility for a country visit is being envisioned during the first quarter of the year 2002, and to be facilitated by Human Rights in China, which is based in New York. There has to be a translator for the AFAD Secretary-General to be able to talk to the Mothers of the Tiananmen Square Massacre Victims. A clear arrangement on the latter's possible membership to AFAD has to be made considering that the members of the Mothers of the Tiananmen Square massacre victims are not allowed to go out of their own country.

In as far as Pakistan is concerned, it was only during the third quarter of the year that Mr. Farooq Niazi, coordinator of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a group of 15 families of the disappeared, responded to earlier communications sent. There was a problem in communications between the AFAD Regional Office and the group in Pakistan.

The plan of visiting the organization in Pakistan, made as early as during AFAD's Founding Congress, did not materialize. Mr. Shantha Pathirana, AFAD Council for Sri Lanka, was supposed

to make a visit, but visa problems hindered him from doing so. There was also a problem in communication between Mr. Niazi and Mr. Pathirana. This problem has been compounded by the difficult security situation in Pakistan after the September 11 bombing in New York. Thus, the matter will have to be taken up again during the AFAD Council meeting to be held in Geneva in March or April 2002.

The group in Manipur did not answer to the letter of AFAD. For whatever reason, it still has to be verified.

B. Lobby

1. Participation in the parallel activities conducted during the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in cooperation with the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared Detainees -

Through the support of FEDEFAM, concretely through the extension of its consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council to AFAD representatives, AFAD was able to conduct and/or participate in the following activities:

1.1 Meeting with the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (UNWGEID) during the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights -

AFAD member-organizations from four countries presented their country situations as well as their particular appeals to the UNWGEID through its then Chairperson Ivan Tosevsky and then Secretary-General Miguel de la Lama. The common appeal was the support of the UNWGEID to the United Nations Draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

FIND, the organization in the Philippines complained of the non-inclusion of its report to the 1999 report of the UNWGEID which, according to the latter, would be tackled during its meeting in New York.

The KontraS of Indonesia reiterated the possibility for a visit of the United Nations Working Group to the country. KontraS, through the suggestion of Mr. Tosevsky, promised to write a letter to the UNWGEID requesting for a visit. Apparently, the UNWGEID was interested to visit Indonesia.

The OPFMD of Sri Lanka presented the government of Sri Lanka's performance vis-à-vis the UNWGEID's recommendations during its third visit in October 1999. The two OPFMD representatives actually expressed their misgivings for the UNWGEID's praise to the Sri Lankan government. To note, the UNWGEID mentioned that it is satisfied with the Sri Lankan government's interest in the work vis-à-vis the issue of involuntary disappearances.

The representative of the Relatives Committee of the May 1992 Heroes appreciated the UNWGEID because for the first time, the situation of her group was published in the latter's report.

It is unfortunate that because of visa problem, the representative of the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) was not able to attend the meeting.

With the presentation of each country and the synthesis made by the AFAD Secretary-General, the UNWGEID promised to continue working on individual cases provided that they receive specific reports based on the UN format. Since it was also reiterated that each member-organization needed to get a copy of the UNWGEID's list of cases, such lists were later provided for by Mr. de la Lama. Hence, it was agreed upon that each member of AFAD would come up with a process of comparing lists and ensuring that necessary cases as well as general situations be regularly submitted to the UNWGEID.

Regarding the lobby for the ratification of the United Nations Draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, as stated in its report, the UNWGEID mentioned that it is supportive of the initiative. Its then Chairperson, however, personally believed that the initiative is already a duplication of the already existing international mechanisms.

1.2 Co-sponsorship of FEDEFAM and AFAD of a Forum on Involuntary Disappearances in the World on the occasion of the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights

Principally organized by FEDEFAM, this forum was one of the NGO-led parallel activities during the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The said

initiative, done on the occasion of FEDEFAM's 20th anniversary, was motivated by the desire to present the global dimension of involuntary disappearance and assist in ratifying international instruments that would protect and promote human rights, particularly the Draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. The AFAD Secretary-General spoke about the phenomenon of involuntary disappearances in Asia.

1.3 Direct lobbying with Asian governments for the latter's support to the UN Draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

AFAD, in cooperation with FEDEFAM, spoke with some Asian governments, e.g. Sri Lankan and Philippine governments.

The Sri Lankan government representatives mentioned that it is explicitly supporting the draft Convention, through its statement delivered a couple of years ago during the session of the UN Commission on Human Rights (UN CHR). The government representatives said that there was no need to reiterate the government position. AFAD was able to sense, however, that Sri Lanka also insinuated that with existing mechanisms, there is a duplication if a new treaty be ratified by the United Nations.

The Philippine government representatives presented an ambivalent position to the draft Convention. Despite the incessant lobbying of AFAD and FEDEFAM, the final statement of the country representatives was that they would neither support nor block the draft treaty.

To summarize, the gains of the activities above-mentioned are:

- a. The Federation was able to present the extent of disappearances in Asia to other NGOs from other continents;
- b. Greater solidarity and cooperation were forged between AFAD and FEDEFAM;
- c. It projected AFAD as a distinct federation of Asian organizations working on the issue of involuntary disappearances.
- d. It became a venue for creating a wider network, not only among organizations of families of *desaparecidos* in other

continents but also among other advocacy groups in other countries.

- e. It became part of a greater lobby effort among the NGO community that prompted the UNCHR to create an inter-sessional body to study the draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and to appoint an expert for this purpose.

2. Cooperation with the diplomatic community in the Philippines

The AFAD Secretariat, being based in the Philippines, had given diplomatic briefings to the different foreign embassies by visiting them in their offices and inviting them to joint AFAD-FIND activities. The embassies whom AFAD related with during the year are: embassies of Chile, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia, Canada. These embassies were also furnished copies of the two issues of the AFAD magazine, The Voice, the AFAD Book entitled *“Between Memory and Impunity: A Conference of Asian and Latin American Lawyers on Disappearances and Impunity”* and important AFAD statements.

It is important to note that one of these embassies, the embassy of The Netherlands, donated a computer to the Federation. Its Foreign Office in The Hague, being visited by AFAD and FIND in April 2001, also supported and approved the application for funding of the Organization of Parents of Disappeared Persons for the holding of a National Lawyers’ Conference in January 2002.

The Embassy of the United Kingdom gave a voluntary donation to the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearances (FIND) for its National Lawyers’ meeting.

The rest of the embassies are very supportive to the issue of involuntary disappearances.

3. Follow-up of AFAD’s application for consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

AFAD made a follow-up of its application for a Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). To note, during sessions of the Commission on Human Rights, AFAD always borrowed the accreditation of FEDEFAM, which has a Consultative Status, Category 11, with the UN ECOSOC. But because FEDEFAM’s mandate is limited to Latin America,

AFAD has to have its own Consultative Status. Concretely, AFAD sent the additional requirements, which the United Nations asked. So far, AFAD has not yet received any word from the UN ECOSOC in New York regarding the status of its application.

4. Presentation of AFAD during the meeting of FIND officers in a meeting with Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on August 29, 2001 and Vice President Teofisto Guingona on September 17, 2001

The AFAD Secretary-General, who is also FIND's former Co-Chairperson, together with other officers of FIND, met with Pres. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in order to appeal that the bill entitled: **An Act Criminalizing Involuntary Disappearances and for Other Purposes** be considered as an urgent bill. Furthermore, it presented FIND's and AFAD's appeal for support of the Philippine Government for the ratification of the United Nations Draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. The two appeals were responded to positively by the president who looked into the possibility of making the bill urgent and that the draft Convention be supported by the Philippine government. The event was also an occasion for the existence of AFAD to be presented to the President through the presentation of the first copy of the book entitled, "Between Memory and Impunity."

Upon the recommendation of the Philippine President, FIND also sought an appointment with Vice President Teofisto Guingona, who is also in-charge of Philippine Foreign Affairs. Thus, the support of the Philippine Government for the ratification of the United Nations Draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances was requested. Furthermore, FIND brought up the matter regarding the application of FIND for a Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, on which, the staff of the Vice President, promised to make the necessary follow-up.

During this occasion, AFAD was also mentioned as an existing Asian Federation that looks into the problem of involuntary disappearances in Asia.

5. Assistance re. FIND's application for Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)–

As earlier mentioned, FIND submitted its own application for consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council. During the personal presentation of the application of FIND to the UN Economic and Social Council, it was the AFAD Secretary-General, in

her capacity as then Co-Chairperson of FIND, who presented the application in May 2001 during the session of the UN ECOSOC in New York. The application, however, was deferred due to the fact that the delegate of India questioned FIND's coordination with the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) in Kashmir, India. In an informal conversation with the delegate of India, FIND learned that India was afraid that if granted consultative status, FIND would share the status with the APDP which, he said, is going to attack the Indian government.

In December this year, FIND received another invitation from the UN ECOSOC to once again, defend same application during its next session on January 14-25, 2002. This time, FIND has a new Co-Chairperson who would be the one to present again and defend the application. AFAD helped in the lobbying through the following efforts:

- a. wrote a letter to Atty. Roberto Garreton, former Ambassador of Chile and is presently the representative of Ms. Mary Robinsons of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for Latin America and the Carribean, asking for advice;
- b. wrote a letter to FEDEFAM members in countries which are ECOSOC members, e.g. Bolivia, Chile, Colombia asking the latter to write and speak to their respective governments and furthermore, write to the rest of the members of the UN NGO Committee.
- c. Tips

6. Assistance in FIND's supposed participation during the 65th session of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (UNWGEID) in November 2002

The AFAD Secretary-General, who is also the former Co-Chairperson of FIND, assisted in the preparation of the supposed trip of the Honorary Chairperson of FIND, Edcel Lagman, who is also AFAD's Chairperson to Geneva, Switzerland. Mr. Lagman was scheduled to deliver an oral intervention on the phenomenon of involuntary disappearances in the Philippines and to meet with the contacts of FIND both in Switzerland and in The Netherlands.

AFAD's assistance was done in the form of editing of FIND's report, the writing of the history of FIND's work in the United

Nations and briefing for the FIND representative. This also includes technical assistance in the travel preparations, e.g. tickets, visa, etc.

It was FIND, which was ready to present an oral intervention in that particular session because it had the necessary data and information. Despite efforts made by the AFAD Secretariat to collect information from other Asian countries, it was unable to receive data from AFAD member-organizations which could have made a regional report possible.

However, due to inevitable circumstances, Mr. Lagman, who already traveled from Manila to Kuala Lumpur, had to return to the Philippines due to a major engine trouble of the airplane. He was unable to make an oral intervention before the UNWGEID. Hence, only the written report was sent by e-mail and by fax to the UNWGEID and to organizations related to FIND.

C. Campaign

1. Participation of the AFAD Secretariat in the now historic People Power that culminated in former Philippine President Joseph Estrada's ouster from power and the rise of Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to the presidency

AFAD, along with thousands of ordinary Filipinos and scores of multi-sectoral organizations participated in the 5-day People Power 11 Uprising, which began in the late hours of January 16 and ended in the people's march to the Presidential Palace on the 20th. It should be noted that AFAD Chairperson Edcel Lagman was deeply involved in the said events, being part of the prosecution team against Estrada in the Senate impeachment trial. AFAD issued an official statement supporting the Filipino people for their heed to impeach the former president.

2. Publication of AFAD's very own magazine, The Voice

In January, the Federation published the maiden issue of its official magazine, The Voice, which highlighted the first-ever Asian and Latin American Lawyers' Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia. It also contained articles on the human rights situation in the different AFAD member-countries and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Seoul, South Korea. Published twice a year, a follow-up issue

appeared in October with *desaparecido* monument in Kashmir, India as its cover story.

Annex 2 and 3 - A copy each of the Maiden issue and second issue of The Voice.

3. Continuous follow-up and implementation of the Nine-Point Resolution of Asian and Latin American Lawyers' Conference –

AFAD persistently implements the resolutions of the Asian-Latin American Lawyers' Conference by organizing echo activities and national conferences in the different Asian countries. A National Conference was organized by FIND in the Philippines in May 2001. On the last quarter of the year, the OPFMD in Sri Lanka made the necessary groundwork for the holding of its own National Lawyers' Conference containing an update on the implementation of the resolutions and brief summation of the Federation's succeeding activities. KontraS of Indonesia was also scheduled to hold its National Conference, but did not materialize due to other important priorities.

The last quarter of the year also saw AFAD preparing for the Summing-Up activity on the implementation of the Jakarta Conference to be held in Bangkok, Thailand on January 14-16, 2001.

4. Publication of AFAD book, entitled: *Between Memory and Impunity: A Conference of Asian and Latin American Lawyers*

In order to have an official reference of the results of the very enriching conference of the Asian and Latin American lawyers on the subject of involuntary disappearances and to facilitate implementation, AFAD launched a book entitled, *Between Memory and Impunity: A Conference of Asian and Latin American lawyers*. The launching was done in time during the commemoration of the International Day of the Disappeared. Specifically, the said publication is a chronicle of the highlights of the Asian and Latin American Lawyers' Conference held in Jakarta, Indonesia from November 27-December 2, 2000 and the Resolutions that were adopted by the participants.

The book is now in circulation. It has, so far been distributed with a minimum price of US \$ 6.00 to the AFAD contacts in the Philippines. Because of the extremely expensive mailing cost, only a few copies were mailed to the other Asian countries, to AFAD contacts in Europe, North America and South America. The rest of the copies will still have to be sold out by the AFAD member-organizations.

Annex 2– Copy of the Book “ *Between Memory and Impunity: A Conference of Asian and Latin American Lawyers*”

5. Issuance of AFAD Statements regarding the most burning issues of the day – As part of an even greater social movement for human rights, AFAD issued statements underscoring its unequivocal stance on various topics. These include:

- the disappearance of PR consultant in Manila, Salvador “Bubby” Dacer by alleged Estrada henchmen;
- the People Power 11 Uprising against Estrada
- the construction of a monument for *desaparecidos* in Kashmir, India and the subsequent brutal actions taken by the police;
- the anniversary of the disappearance of Redemptorist priest, Fr. Rudy Romano;
- parallelism between the prosecution of former Philippine President Joseph Estrada and Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet;
- the death of militant labor leader Filemon “ Ka Popoy” Lagman;
- the arrest of the suspected murderers of Bishop Juan Gerardi of Guatemala;
- the 9th anniversary of the May 1992 event;
- Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo’s first State of the Nation Address (SONA);
- Letter of solidarity to KontraS-Indonesia after Abdurrahman Wahid’s ouster from the presidency;
- The commemoration of the International Week of the Disappeared;
- the commemoration of the International Day of the Disappeared;
- The stealing by the Indian government of the Monument stone after the groundbreaking done by the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP);
- The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York;
- The disappearance of persons in Mexico;
- The 53rd anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It should be noted that a number of AFAD’s statements appeared in the “ Letter to the Editor” Section of several dailies in the Philippines, particularly Today and the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

Annex 3 – Copies of selected AFAD statements that appeared in the newspapers.

6. Slide Production on the Asian Phenomenon of Involuntary Disappearances

The slide production earlier classified under solidarity is principally for the purpose of information dissemination regarding disappearances in the Philippines and the projection and promotion of AFAD. It is expected that the production could be used also for the purpose of consolidation of each member- organization as well as of expansion to other Asian countries.

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

The Federation continues to beef-up its secretariat through on-the-job training. Being based in the Philippines, through participation in FIND-sponsored staff development activities, e.g. management training, human rights trainings, deepening of knowledge of one another by recounting personal histories, regular assessments of work and performance evaluation.

Because of the scope of the Federation, which is regional, there was no opportunity for the other Secretariat members to attend to any regional activity during the year, which was the lobbying for the ratification of the United Nations Draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. Doing so would be so expensive. But it is a long-term plan of the Federation to eventually involve the other Secretariat members in the AFAD activities for the purpose of deepening their knowledge on the Asian situation and the dynamics of the Federation. Attendance of Secretariat members in regional activities may also be possible if the venue would be in the Philippines.

In as far as the AFAD Council Members are concerned, the activities of the Federation had, for certain, contributed to the deepening of their understanding on the situation of the countries where AFAD works and also of the organizational situation of the Federation.

The AFAD Secretary-General, who usually represented AFAD in public functions both locally (in the Philippines, where the Secretariat is based) and internationally had more opportunities in learning from the experiences of other countries.

5. MAJOR INVESTMENTS MADE BY THE ORGANIZATION

With the limited resources AFAD incurred during the year, it did not purchase any major pieces of equipment. Besides, the Secretariat, being

based in the office of FIND, still continues to avail itself of the equipment of FIND.

The equipment purchased by the Federation during the year is a fax machine, which has a long-term value especially so if, in the future, it decides to have an office outside of FIND. An internet is also being installed in the new computer donated by the Royal Dutch embassy. Such is very basic to the work. With the hiring of a full-time Secretary-Bookkeeper in July, it was necessary to purchase an office table and a bookshelf with which to file the accumulated books. With the breakdown of the monitor of the second-hand computer purchased in 2000, AFAD was also compelled to purchase another second hand monitor.

Unfortunately, the laptop, which it purchased more than a couple of years ago, and which helped very much in documenting the activities of the Federation, broke down during the last quarter of the year. This had slowed down the pace of the work of the Federation considering that most of its files in the e-mail could no longer be retrieved.

AFAD, being on its third year as a Federation, explores into the possibility of moving to another office in order to ensure its own identity, independence and continued growth. Hence, with this in mind, being envisioned is the purchase of additional basic office equipment, e.g. photocopying machine, a scanner for the publications, a new laptop, a conference table and an additional table for a prospective new secretariat member. But the purchase of these pieces of equipment be scheduled according to the availability of resources.

The possibility of writing mini-proposals for the purchase of such equipment is also seen as a solution to the inavailability of budget for such a basic need.

6. DEVELOPMENTS IN NETWORKING ACTIVITIES OF AFAD

AFAD's networking activities done in the past are being sustained through the systematic distribution by its member-organizations of its magazine, The Voice. The magazine has served as AFAD's voice in the region in the absence of a regular regional activities due to financial constraint. The Voice is being disseminated in Asia, Latin America, Europe, North America and some parts of Africa. Much remains to be done, though, in improving the publication's circulation and feedback-monitoring.

The regular use of the e-mail sustains and expands AFAD's network. AFAD has received, although still a few, feedbacks on its statements. The plan to have its own web-site as a very good means of information-

dissemination did not materialize due to financial difficulties. However, its being listed in a web-site in Belgium gives AFAD a venue to be known to the international community. It has not maximized its present web-site made by *Derechos*, an organization which is based in Canada, because it does not have any access to the password. Furthermore, AFAD lost contact with the person who made the said web-site.

AFAD continues to maximize the activities in Geneva to also visit other contacts in other European countries and to maintain good relations with the local and international press.

AFAD maintains its international network as follows: FEDEFAM network, organizations of families of the disappeared in South Africa and Croatia, Asian Human Rights Center, country-based NGOs in the different parts of the world, Amnesty International – International Secretariat and its different sections, mostly in Europe, Linking Solidarity based in The Netherlands, Foreign Offices in Switzerland, the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Germany, Spain, and the United States of America, some funding agencies who know AFAD, but are not necessarily funding the Federation.

AFAD is, of course, known to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and its Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. Since activities were held in different Asian countries, e.g. Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, the Federation is also known to the national authorities, the local NGO communities and the national media in the countries mentioned.

7. ORGANIZATION'S RELATIONS WITH LOCAL AND/OR NATIONAL AUTHORITIES (IF APPLICABLE) AND OTHER DONOR AGENCIES

The Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances, which is based in the Philippines, as earlier stated, is known to Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and to its Vice President Teofisto Guingona. Already, its existence has long been known to the Philippine House of Representatives and the Philippine House of Senate. It regularly furnished these national authorities with copies of its publications.

In as far as the other countries are concerned, through its activities in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand, AFAD is known to the national authorities as it earlier sought appointments with the national authorities such as their national Commission on Human Rights and other related bodies. AFAD also had an appointment with Indonesian former president, Abdurrahman Wahid who promised to look into the problem of involuntary disappearances in Indonesia and even in East Timor (previously perpetrated

by Indonesian soldiers) and opened to the possibility of supporting the UN Draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances as well as in inviting the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to visit the country. In the three countries mentioned, AFAD is known to the national media as it always had press conferences during activities held there. Since for security reasons, it is not possible for AFAD to hold activities in Kashmir, India, AFAD was not able to personally meet with the national authorities. It has, however, sent statements to the Indian embassy regarding the recent event that happened in Kashmir, particularly the stealing of the foundation stone after the groundbreaking of the monument for the *desaparecidos*. To note, the Indian government claimed responsibility of what happened with a justification that the land is a state property.

In as far as other donors are concerned, while initial efforts were made in this regard, AFAD, with its skeletal secretariat plus the fact that its Secretary-General was also working as Co-Chairperson of AFAD, did not concentrate much on looking for other sources of funds. Its request for funds from the UN Voluntary Funds for Victims of Torture was not granted because the project proposal was not within the mandate of the said agency. Seafild of Bangkok (CIDA), which initially expressed interest to fund the continuity of support vis-à-vis the implementation of the Jakarta resolutions, said that the program was closing in October, and thus, was no longer in the position to give funding to AFAD.

It is envisioned that one of the most important concentrations of AFAD for the year 2002 is to look for other sources of funds, while appealing to HIVOS to continue its financial support beyond 2002.

PART B. – THE PROGRAM

8. IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES OF THE ORGANIZATION

The implemented activities of the organization could already be comprehensively seen in number 3 (Concrete Major Activities). As it has already been enumerated, there is no need to reiterate each of the activity already mentioned.

9. ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FAILURES VIS-À-VIS TARGET

Referring to AFAD's Three-Year General Plan of Action, in terms of timeframe, AFAD is already half-way in terms of implementation. It may not yet have quantitatively accomplished 50% of its target for the three-year period, but it is consistent in

following its three-year target, in particularizing it every year during Council meetings and in ensuring that these be accomplished periodically both by the Secretariat and the Federation's member-organizations.

On Leadership and Administration

In terms of Leadership and Administration, AFAD consistently applies its duly-approved structure in running the Federation. Its Council regularly meets and looks for opportunities to maximize other activities to be able to meet beyond the minimum requirement. The Secretariat consistently does its task of becoming the center for coordination and service. It has come up with working policies on finances, personnel and relationship with member-organizations and vice-versa. In as far as the internal operations of the secretariat is concerned, it follows a certain agreed system, professionalized its services through a system of performance evaluation of individuals as well as of the whole team, systematized the finances by strictly following the recommendations presented by the external auditor and abides by existing rules of the Securities and Exchange Commission vis-à-vis financial responsibilities of the Federation to its personnel and vice-versa.

AFAD has not yet reached the level of conducting trainings as specified in the three-year General Plan of Action. It has, however, conducted basic seminars as well as the grand inter-regional conference of Asian and Latin American Lawyers' Conference which surely were in themselves, served as trainings for the AFAD Council members and the rest of the participants.

The scanning of the socio-economic and political development, while being done during annual meetings of the Council, is not being regularly updated. Member-organizations need to be always reminded on this, but even so, results are not quite positive. Hence, there is no periodic and updated regional situation on the phenomenon of involuntary disappearance in Asia because of the inability of the member-organizations of AFAD to submit updated written reports. Only the Philippine and sometimes Sri Lankan organizations give regular updates.

In terms of widening AFAD's network, this has been gradually achieved, especially with the birth of the AFAD magazine, The Voice. A wider network had been established during the period as compared to the time when AFAD just started.

Regarding the need to beef-up financial resources, AFAD has still to prove that it can, indeed, strengthen its financial capacity through the financial assistance of additional donors for the comprehensive implementation of its different aspects of work. There were factors that caused this, one is the secretariat's skeletal staff, which spread thin the concentration of the working force and equally important is the fact that the AFAD Secretary-General, during her first year and a half in office, also served as FIND's Co-Chairperson, which then had limited her time to concentrate on this matter. Thus, AFAD vows not to let any stone unturned in looking for more sources of funds during the year 2002.

International Solidarity

Although not yet fully developed, international solidarity is a relatively developed component of the work of the Federation. The Federation's establishment, is in itself, a concrete manifestation of solidarity among organizations concerned on a common direction. AFAD activities, e.g. meetings, joint activities, and visits to countries with special events were creatively maximized for this purpose.

Learning from each other's strengths and weaknesses is the most important gain of international solidarity among AFAD members. Appreciation of each one's strengths as well as weaknesses and sharing lessons to co-AFAD members is a very meaningful manifestation of solidarity. Helping one another in terms of fund-raising gives a boost to AFAD's morale. On important occasions and events, the issuance of a solidarity statement of one organization to its co-AFAD member gives both moral strength as well as political support.

The yearly simultaneous commemoration of the International Week of the Disappeared and the International Day of the Disappeared has been sustained by the Federation for the last three years. Though immediate results could not be seen, as yet, but the Federation's consistency in holding these activities gradually contributes to the projection of the Asian phenomenon of involuntary disappearances both in the national and international levels. AFAD's adoption of these originally Latin American activities is also significant to its Latin American brothers and sisters as this, in itself, is a manifestation of solidarity.

The slide production, which AFAD recently produced, is a concrete material wherein AFAD can share to other countries and other continents how the Federation was formed. The video

production envisioned to be produced within the three-year program has still to be realized.

More concrete expressions of solidarity have still to be done. These include internship within Asia and internship to Latin America; setting up of a letter-writing mechanism among individual families of the disappeared in Asia and between Asian and Latin American families of the disappeared; assistance in forming regional federations of organizations concerned on different issues in other continents and the establishment of linkages with solidarity groups. These targets listed in the Three-Year Plan of Action have still to be implemented during the remaining half of the term.

International Lobby

AFAD's experience in lobbying with the United Nations is relatively rich. For three consecutive years, it has consistently been present during official sessions of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UN CHR) and the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (UNWGEID). Its joint efforts with FEDEFAM had obviously strengthened its lobby work.

The most concrete result of AFAD's work, minimal though the latter's contribution may be because of its being new, is the creation by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights of an inter-sessional body to study the UN Draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the appointment of an expert for this purpose. That AFAD was able to contribute to the attainment of this stage of the international lobby is in itself another source of strength.

Much, however, remains to be done in between UN meetings in the national levels. For certain, AFAD member- organizations are doing their own lobby work, but how systematic and consistent are these efforts remains to be seen. There is a tendency for AFAD member-organizations to concentrate on their own parochial concerns, thus, could have forgotten that in their respective countries, they also need to follow-up efforts of the Federation in Geneva. This could have been realized had there been one person from the Secretariat who would concentrate on this. Ideally, a person to be fielded by AFAD to each member-organization is very important to ensure particularization of regional plans and ensure the improvement of coordination between the member-organization and the AFAD Secretariat.

The achievement of its own Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has still to be achieved. Even if at least, one of its member-organizations could have a Consultative Status, it would greatly help AFAD in having a bigger voice in the United Nations. The process is still being worked-out.

AFAD has earned the support of governments, especially the European governments, especially, in its indefatigable fight for human rights. It was able to get some financial support from these governments, e.g. the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada. It is important to sustain the relationship and to reach out to other governments to get the much-needed additional support.

International Campaign

AFAD's implementation of this component of work was more concretized in the holding of the Asian-Latin American Conference on Disappearances and Impunity, which was held in November – December 2000. To note, AFAD continues the follow-up of the implementation of the Conference Resolutions during the year 2001. The Conference aims to lay the foundation of AFAD's campaign against impunity through the help of legal luminaries whose involvement in human rights could contribute so much to its success.

The year 2001 is a period wherein the implementation of the Conference Resolutions is to be concretized. How far AFAD had evoked the support of the Conference participants in the implementation of the Resolutions will have still to be determined by the summing-up to be conducted by AFAD on the second week of January 2002 in Bangkok, Thailand. AFAD's determination in ensuring that the Conference was indeed, meant to eventually step-up the campaign against involuntary disappearances in Asia is beyond question. What should be determined are the actual capacities and limitations in doing the work.

AFAD's existence is known also through its magazine, The Voice and through the regular and timely releases of the AFAD statements on the burning issues of the day. The contents, distribution and feedback-monitoring however, have to be reviewed in order to determine how effective these materials are in serving their purpose.

The level of campaign activities of AFAD, at the moment, is still in its foundation-building. Its member-organizations have different levels of campaign activities, but information on such

activities will still have to be gathered and synthesized to serve as bases of the Federation's intervention.

In order to determine how far have AFAD's member-organizations reached vis-à-vis the campaign for justice, the Federation has to come up with an honest evaluation of the internal capacity of its member-organizations so that, based on this, a regional campaign, based on needs and actual capacity, be charted.

B. IMPACT OF THE ACTIVITIES ON THE TARGET GROUP

The impact of the activities on the target group has not yet been profoundly evaluated. It is imperative, therefore, that sometime during the three-year period, the AFAD Council should determine a way of knowing the impact of AFAD to individual families of the disappeared.

Impact, however, could initially be gauged from the results of previous activities of the Federation. If AFAD has to determine the particularities of the impact per country, the following are the initially-seen results:

- 1. In the Philippines, the existence of AFAD is appreciated by the individual members of FIND because AFAD is able to facilitate international projection of the issue of involuntary disappearances and the work of FIND;**
- 2. In Sri Lanka, AFAD is appreciated also because of the projection of the issue internationally. Concretely, the support of AFAD to OPFMD, especially in terms of exploring possibilities of funding, is very well appreciated. With the help of AFAD, OPFMD's project proposals on specific activities and even programs had been approved. It was able to incur vehicles from MIVA a funding agency based in The Netherlands through the help of AFAD.**
- 3. In Indonesia, AFAD is appreciated also because of the international projection that AFAD has facilitated, especially in terms of bringing the problem of involuntary disappearances in Indonesia in the regional as well as international levels. AFAD's being able to facilitate exposure to organizations which are relatively experienced in the work against disappearances had given KontraS some learning possibilities it in the future.**

4. In Thailand, the Relatives Committee of the May 1992 Heroes is indeed, grateful to AFAD for bringing its issue in the international level. Having seen its situation published for the first time in the annual report of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (UNWGEID), members of the Relatives Committee of the May 1992 Heroes were indeed, satisfied that initially, their situation is internationally-recognized.
5. In the disputed-state of Jammu and Kashmir, it is very important for the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), which is very much repressed in its area, to bring its situation to the international level, through the activities of AFAD.

In as far as the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared Detainees (FEDEFAM) is concerned, the existence of AFAD is for them, a reconfirmation of the global phenomenon of involuntary disappearances. AFAD's presence in the lobbying efforts at the United Nations gives a boost to the struggle for a ratification of the United Nations Draft Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

A more in-depth impact evaluation could later be done. But for this to be realized, what is important is the involvement of a greater number of families of the disappeared in each concerned country in the work of AFAD. They may not necessarily be doing the day-to-day work of the Federation, but being regularly updated on the work of AFAD, which is related to their efforts in the national level would instill in them the appreciation of the value of the Federation to their struggles.

PART C. CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATIONS FROM THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS

With the activities above-mentioned and the initial impact the Federation has effected to its member-organizations, it is certain that the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) is indeed, viable and relevant to the global struggle against involuntary disappearances. The Federation's seriousness in its campaign for justice and against impunity is beyond doubt.

But realistically speaking, the Federation has its limitations. The varying levels of development of each member-organization result in varying levels of cooperation vis-à-vis agreed plans and resolutions. The absence of full-time or even part-time AFAD working staff in each member-organization makes it difficult for the AFAD Secretariat to get regular

information from each member organization in between regional meetings of which to base its actions. Submission of written reports to the regional office is more often than not, a problem. Country visits by the Secretariat or by the Council members, which could have helped in knowing better the situation and in coming up with timely and correct interventions could not be done during the period, since resources are not available.

The AFAD Secretariat, on the other hand, which is only skeletal, is burdened by the bulk of the technical work. While it exerts efforts to strengthen itself through on-the-job trainings, staff development activities and integrating with FIND which is its base, it very badly needs the support of the other member-organizations in the course of its work especially so that AFAD, being a regional organization, depends so much on the information provided for by the member-organizations. The secretariat members' tendency to feel not-so-well-grounded is a consequence to this situation and if not corrected, could result in possible burning-out. As a matter of fact, it is perceived that one of the reasons for the resignation of AFAD's former Publications Officer was that he was expected to write as much as he could without much direct information from the member-organizations. The tendency of feeling drained is understandable. In such a situation, there is a need to strike a correct complementation of the secretariat's self-reliance efforts for self-strengthening and the much-needed support of the member-organizations. This is very important for it to sustain its efficiency and effectiveness.

Beefing-up the resources of the Federation would surely contribute much to the eventual comprehensive implementation of the work. This has to be done in the soonest time possible in order to implement a greater percentage of the targeted plan of action for 2000-2003. In the meantime, the best way to implement the work is cooperation among member-organizations. Sharing with whatever available resources its members may have while the Federation is still trying very hard to build-up its own resources is ideal for AFAD to be able to live up to its avowed mission, vision and goals. Equally important is the cooperation of each member-organization in carrying out the tasks which it places itself on its shoulders.

AFAD's impact to its member-organizations and to the external environment vis-à-vis its campaign for justice could already be felt, but much remains to be done in terms of intensifying the work of the Federation in order to realize its direction.

Such a conclusion is based in initial reflection sessions conducted by both the AFAD Secretariat and the AFAD Council.

The Federation has not subjected itself to an external evaluation. This may be done when the situation is ripe in order to have an objective view of its situation.