

Appeal 2004



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Southeast Asia Country Summary:

Philippines

National Context

The Republic of the Philippines, an archipelago of more than 7,100 islands covering an area of 1,600 km, comprises three main islands - Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The Filipino population is basically of Malay race and predominantly Christian. Population density is high, with more than half of the Filipino people residing in urban areas. The economy is driven by agriculture, light industry and support services and is recovering from combined effects of the spill-over of the Asian economic crisis and poor weather conditions. In 2002, the Philippines recorded GDP growth of about 4.6 per cent but also incurred a record budget deficit. Government reforms are seen to include privatisation, reforming the tax system, and promoting additional trade integration within its region. The Philippines suffers from the effects of rapid deforestation, frequent cyclones and periodic volcanic eruptions. Sporadic armed fighting in some areas in the south has been a socio-political concern.

National Society Priorities

The Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), formerly a chapter of the American Red Cross, was declared an independent national society and recognised by the Movement in 1947. Its general assembly is held every two years, when elections are also held for the board of governors. The last elections were held in December 2001. With 84 chapters and nine sub-chapters, PNRC is represented in almost all provinces of the country. At present, the total membership is estimated at seven million, mostly youth.

Disaster management: The PNRC provides emergency assistance during natural disasters and armed conflicts. Volunteers are regularly trained in disaster preparedness and response. Radio communications networks and warehouses are maintained for pre-positioning relief supplies. The society also has a disaster preparedness scheme - the Integrated Community Disaster Planning Programme. Psychological first aid services have recently been introduced to assist disaster victims.

Health: Courses in nursing are needs-specific for home or disaster situations. The PNRC complements the government's primary health care programme by training volunteer health care workers in remote areas, implementing water and sanitation programmes and strengthening the local health system, providing medical equipment, supplementary medicines and support to health centres. It also trains student nurses from public and private universities in community-based nursing and health services and enhances home health care support by training caregivers.

Blood: The national blood programme is rated number one in the country providing voluntary, non-remunerated blood donations through a network of regional and chapter blood centres. The national blood centre in Manila also provides clinical laboratory services, ranging from blood chemistry to urinalysis. It also maintains a registry of rare blood group types.

Safety services: Safety courses conducted by PNRC include first aid, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and other life saving skills, accident prevention, and training of emergency medical technicians.

Social services: Apart from psychological first aid, PNRC provides welfare assistance to the disabled and other vulnerable groups. It operates two centres for women in crisis.

Youth: The youth programme has four objectives: protection of health and life, providing opportunities for community services, fostering international friendship and peace, and dissemination of international humanitarian law and the Movement's fundamental principles.

Red Cross Red Crescent Priorities

The society receives support from several sister societies including the Danish Red Cross (disaster preparedness and street children), the Japanese Red Cross (youth programme/artesian wells with toilet components), and the Spanish Red Cross (primary health care, disadvantaged women and relief).

Partnerships

The PNRC collaborates with the Rotary Club of Pasig to maintain a registry of rare blood types, and with the Philippine Blood Coordinating Council for professional education.

Federation Secretariat Support

The Federation Southeast Asia regional health unit is funding the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) preventive programme in PNRC. The health unit will also appeal for the society's measles eradication programme. Other support includes technical expertise in the water sanitation project, and staff training on disaster management information sharing. The regional organisational development unit has facilitated the financial resource development of the national society, including an exchange visit to discuss fundraising initiatives, and will support a candidate from PNRC for a management course. In association with its counterparts in the sub-region, PNRC has been involved in regional gatherings - facilitated by the regional delegation - including the water sanitation, first aid and blood advisory working groups, regional disaster management committee and the OD forum. The national society also contributed to the Red Cross curriculum development workshop recently held by the regional disaster management unit.