

Appeal 2004



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Southeast Asia Country Summary:

Singapore

National Context

Singapore was founded as a British trading colony in 1819. Since gaining independence in 1965 the island city-state has grown to be the region's financial, information technology and life-sciences hub. The parliamentary republic, with an elected president as head of state, has a mixed ethnicity of Chinese, Malays, Indians and other groups. Although not prone to sudden onset of disasters, environmental concerns in Singapore include industrial pollution and limited natural fresh water resources.

National Society priorities

First established as a branch of the British Red Cross in 1949, the Singapore Red Cross Society (SRCS) was incorporated by an act of parliament in 1973 and, in an effort to remain relevant in providing for the needs of the less fortunate, continuously updates its constitution, most recently in 2001.

Disaster preparedness: The SRCS plays a part in Singapore's national society disaster plan. Together with the health ministry, its response during a disaster includes an ambulance service, set-up and operation of first aid posts and psychological support to victims and volunteers. The society continuously trains staff and volunteers in first aid and other skills preparing them to respond during emergencies and disasters.

Blood donor recruitment programme: Since the inception of its blood collection programme in 1984, SRCS has emerged as the country's authorised national blood donor recruiter. In partnership with the Health Sciences Authority for the national blood programme, its chief functions are to recruit and retain blood donors, increase public awareness, and organise blood drives in the community. The programme has an annual collection target of 65,000 units of blood.

Red Cross training centre: The SRCS annually trains more than 5,000 individuals in standard and industrial first aid and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. It acts as the secretariat for the National First Aid Council (NFAC), the body that promotes and heightens awareness on first aid and standardises first aid training in Singapore. Together with the NFAC and other partners, the society aims to train at least one member in every household in first aid, by 2020. Besides conducting courses on its premises, instructors also reach out to the public, in schools and the work place.

Youth activities: The society runs programmes for youth of all age groups, with a range of activities that promote community service and impart leadership skills to youth between the ages of 9 and 16. The society's humanitarian network programme targets youth between the ages of 17 and 25, encouraging life saving skills and habits, social responsibility as well as instilling a sense of global citizenship. These youth in turn promote these values to their peers.

Organisation and planning: The society's main strategic directions are to strengthening its role in disaster preparedness, enhancing services for community needs and encouraging volunteerism.

Red Cross Red Crescent Priorities

The SRCS has participated in major emergency appeals launched by the Federation and ICRC, significantly: the Balkans crisis (1999), Turkey (1999) and Gujarat (2001) earthquakes, China floods (2002), humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan (2002) and Iraq (2003), and the Bali bomb blast (2002).

The national society has also been involved in a number of bilateral programmes with the Red Cross societies of Indonesia and East Timor.

Partnerships

The SRCS cooperates with a number of corporate organisations as well as civic and community organisations to bring humanitarian services to the less fortunate, both at home and abroad. This includes partnerships with corporate, civic and community organisations to organise blood drives with employees, members and the community; collaborations with relief organisations such as Singapore International Foundation and Mercy Relief to provide aid to victims of conflicts and disasters abroad; and teaming up with corporate organisations in raising funds for both local and international humanitarian services.

Federation Secretariat Support

The regional disaster management unit has negotiated with the Finnish Red Cross to set up a basic health care emergency response unit (ERU) in Singapore and provide it with technical expertise. At the same time human resources will be deployed from within the region. The unit's overarching involvement in the region, with Singapore as an important player, has been in bringing national managers of the regional disaster management committee together for greater regional cooperation. The SRCS participates and contributes to the Southeast Asia secretaries general forum. It is also a member of the regional organisational development forum, which has been instrumental in bringing organisational development practitioners together to learn and support each other. During the SARS outbreak in 2003, the SRCS and the Federation shared information on health in emergencies. The Federation provides technical advice to the SRCS in its projects in Indonesia and East Timor.