

Appeal 2004



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Southeast Asia Country Summary:

Thailand

National Context

The Kingdom of Thailand is strategically poised in the centre of Southeast Asia. The majority Buddhist country is a constitutional monarchy, with the king as head of state and the prime minister as head of government.

Thailand, a middle income developing economy with relatively good social indicators, is rapidly recovering from the economic downturn that followed the 1997 Southeast Asian financial crisis. Increased consumption and investment spending pushed GDP growth up to more than five per cent in 2002 despite a sluggish global economy. There is disparity in income levels between segments of society, especially between the capital, Bangkok, and outlying rural areas.

A high incidence of HIV/AIDS and large population movements within and across its borders are some of the nation's humanitarian concerns.

National Society Priorities

Established as the Red Unalom Society in 1893, the Thai Red Cross Society (TRCS) was recognised by the ICRC in 1920 and became a member of the Federation in 1921. It is represented in all 75 provinces and 193 districts of the country.

Disaster preparedness and response: The relief and community health, and volunteer bureaus of TRCS provide assistance in times of disaster to people living in remote areas. Together with the government, the society provides emergency support by stockpiling essential relief goods and by making flat bottom boats and vehicles as well as telecommunications equipment available. The society also provides knowledge and technical skills through its trained personnel.

Medical and health care services: The TRCS manages two modern hospitals, the 1,777-bed King Chulalongkorn Memorial teaching hospital, and the 500-bed Queen Savang Wadhana Memorial hospital. The Red Cross College of Nursing runs specialised undergraduate and graduate level programmes. The society also operates twelve primary health care stations in remote areas and several other medical centres. In addition, it manages a first aid and health education training centre that provide first aid and special educational services to the public. The AIDS Research Centre of the TRCS has a leading role in Thailand and the region on prevention, counselling, treatment and research on HIV/AIDS. The society also runs the 'Anonymous Clinic' for HIV testing and advice and provides support to people living with HIV/AIDS.

Blood/Eye/Organ donation services: The public health ministry has entrusted the formulation and implementation of the national blood programme to the TRCS national blood centre. This establishment receives voluntary blood contributions, which are supplied to patients nationwide; its facilities are also used for research and training. The TRCS maintains an active eye and organ donation centre.

Community services: Activities range from child, elderly and disabled support services and disaster relief services to other services to disseminate the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and international humanitarian law. The TRCS has active volunteer and youth programmes.

Red Cross Red Crescent Priorities

The TRCS is active in regional networks and one of the leading members of the Asian regional taskforce for AIDS (ART). Chairmanship of the Southeast Asian secretaries general forum was also held by the society for much of 2003.

Partnerships

The Netherlands/Australia/Thailand cooperative HIV research project (HIV-NAT) comprising the TRCS AIDS Research Centre and centres in partnering countries serves as an excellent example of external collaboration. The society also works with various universities and government hospitals in the country and conducts training courses in several areas of competence for the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other Red Cross Red Crescent national societies.

Federation Secretariat Support

The TRCS is a member of several regional networks, including the first aid and water sanitation working groups, the regional blood advisory and (former) blood donor recruitment groups, the organisational development forum and the regional disaster management committee. The society currently hosts the ART secretariat, which recently underwent an external performance evaluation of the past five years. Most recently the regional health unit supported the ART secretariat at the 14th International Conference on the Reduction of Drug-related Harm.

The Federation secretariat organisational development unit offers support to TRCS in programme management, resource development and mobilisation, youth network and gender balance. Federation standardised tools in organisational development are also regularly provided to the society. In addition, the unit collaborates with TRCS in fundraising and youth exchange visits, which help to enhance the visibility of the society in the region.

Disaster management support to the community-based disaster management (CBDM) programme involved initial training, followed by exchange visits to Cambodia and the Philippines to learn about the CBDM programmes in these societies. Training workshops and subsequent individual sessions on the disaster management information system has enabled the TRCS focal person regularly to contribute disaster related information to the Federation website. The unit recently facilitated a cross-border disaster response agreement between the TRCS and its Malaysian counterpart.