



Royal Activities and International Cooperation

The Thai Red Cross Society

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Foreword

“...the well-being and happiness of the people are a benefit that is difficult to be measured in terms of money.”

Royal Speech on the occasion of the Royal Birthday Anniversary (1991)

As the Kingdom of Thailand celebrates the auspicious occasion of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's eighty-fourth birthday anniversary in 2011, the National Identity Foundation takes great pride in presenting this exclusive publication in honour of our beloved King and members of our royal family.

The world's longest-serving monarch, His Majesty is now in the sixty-fifth year of a remarkable and noteworthy reign. From the beginning, our King has worked unceasingly to bring comfort and relief to disadvantaged people in rural Thailand. This selfless dedication, and that of other members of Thailand's royal family, has improved the lives of the country's poor and needy and, benefitted other countries in the world. To date, over four thousand royal development projects have been initiated; all of which aspire to improve the livelihood and lifestyle of the people of Thailand.

From our experience at the foundation, often through overseas lectures in Europe, Australia and other parts of the world, we have encountered an element of surprise on the part of many people not previously aware of the humanitarian activities of Thailand's monarch and members of the royal family.

This exceptional publication, which portrays nine activities and development projects illustrating the humanitarian aspects of work undertaken by Thailand's royal family over a long period of time, has been compiled from experiences recounted by scholars, practitioners and experts all of whom have taken great pride in serving alongside our King and other members of our royal family.

It is our wish that you, as a valued, overseas friend of our country, will find this portrayal of royal activities enlightening, educational and inspirational; sufficient, at least, to allow us the pleasure of welcoming you back to the Kingdom of Thailand.

Dr Suvit Yodmani
Bangkok, Thailand, 2011

Royal Activities and International Cooperation

Note from the Editor

Compassion is the deep concern shown to less fortunate people through humanitarian acts of selflessness inspired by a desire to tackle poverty and alleviate human suffering. In Thailand, such actions are exemplified by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej

Thailand's royal institution, which has prevailed for almost eight hundred years, endures under the aegis of the Royal House of Chakri and the stalwart guardianship of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

A significant turning point in the country's recent history occurred in 1932 when a bloodless coup d'état transformed the Kingdom of Siam – renamed Thailand in 1939 – from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy, leaving the ruling monarch as a titular head of state.

By chance, constitutional reform presented a unique opportunity for the youthful King Bhumibol to interact closely with the people of Thailand. His Majesty embraced the opportunity with patience and understanding, taking great care not to impede or hinder the business of government. In due course the King earned the love and respect of both the people and government officials.

Subsequent excursions to the remotest parts of the kingdom enabled the Thai monarch to learn firsthand of the plight of marginalised people, particularly ethnic minorities. Desolate villagers, hooked and dependent on the opium trade, were eking out a living on the hillsides of northern Thailand. Indiscriminate slash-and-burn farming methods were turning large tracts of forested land into endless fields of poppies. To the farmers, poppy cultivation was essential to fulfil longstanding trade deals with unscrupulous traders – and to feed the farmers' addiction to opium. Driven by poverty, this appeared to be their only survival option. But opium became both a means of survival and an instrument of destruction for the hill people and their environment.

Confronted by what seemed an impossible task, the King resolved to tackle poverty as the fundamental source of the hill people's hardship and, at the same time, lower their dependence on poppy cultivation. Acting with the farmers' implicit cooperation, and with help from government agencies, His Majesty set out to forge an alternative, sustainable lifestyle that could be adopted by impoverished villagers.

This initiative was the start of a series of royal development projects beginning with the King's Royal Project in the northern hills of Chiang Mai and surrounding provinces. Over time, villagers were given the means to lead an alternative and legitimate livelihood growing fruits and vegetables for personal consumption and sale. It was a project of vital importance; the King's intervention almost certainly prevented a humanitarian and environmental disaster in rural Thailand.

Today, more than four thousand royal development projects, enacted over many years under the principles and spirit of humanitarianism, are well documented, thoroughly understood and greatly appreciated by everyone living in the Kingdom of Thailand. Yet they are less well-known outside the country.

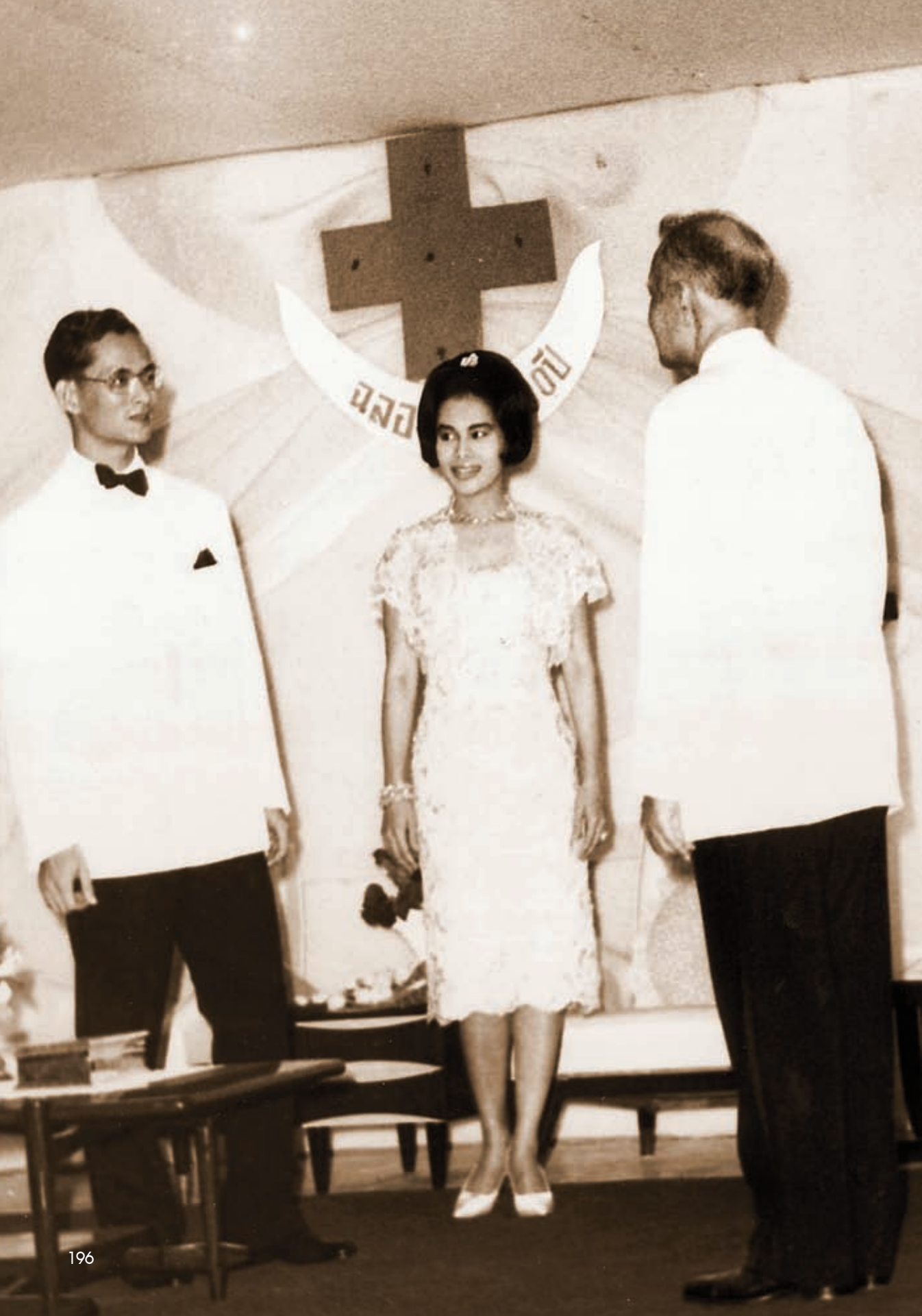
Royal Activities and International Cooperation, released in celebration of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's eighty-fourth birthday in 2011, portrays some of the projects inspired and nurtured by Thailand's royal family. By embarking on a journey through the pages of this unique publication, readers may gain a useful insight into the origin of these projects and the way they have impacted the livelihood and lifestyle of many people in Thailand and even in the international arena.

Nowadays, royal development projects are administered by appointed managers and teams determined to uphold the humanitarian principles established and practised by His Majesty from the beginning of his reign. The overriding objective in each undertaking is to improve the quality of life of people so they have enough to meet their needs, with additional opportunities to earn a reasonable income for their families.

Throughout his noble reign, HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej has conscientiously elevated the interests of the Thai nation above personal interests. It is not surprising therefore that the citizens of the Kingdom of Thailand believe their country's most redeeming characteristics are embodied in the altruism, concern and compassion shown over many years by Their Majesties the King and Queen and other members of Thailand's royal family. The monarchy stands as a revered institution whose nationwide respect and admiration has been earned as a result of tireless efforts spent improving the health and well-being of Thai people.

The small sample of royal development projects in this publication, all initiated and nurtured by members of Thailand's royal family, are presented out of heartfelt concern for the less fortunate and with infinite respect for the future of mankind.

Frank W. Skilbeck, Editor
Bangkok, Thailand, 2011





The Thai Red Cross Society



The Thai Red Cross Society is Thailand's foremost humanitarian organization



The Thai Red Cross Society

The Thai Red Cross Society, founded in 1893 and one of the oldest society's in the region, is the main humanitarian entity in Thailand providing public services as an integral part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (IFRC). The movement constitutes the world's largest humanitarian organization with one hundred and eighty-six members.

The IFRC enshrines an international humanitarian mission that relies on the support of some ninety-seven million volunteers around the world. Its ideals, which are universal, are to protect human life and health; to ensure respect for the human being, and to prevent and alleviate human suffering, without any discrimination based on nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class or political opinions.

In common with the IFRC, the Thai Red Cross Society (TRCS) upholds the seven fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

In times of war and peace, conflicts and disasters, the Thai Red Cross Society provides humanitarian aid and relief services through its thirteen bureaux and seven specialised agencies.

A society born out of armed conflict

It is said that necessity is the mother of invention: If we absolutely need to do something that has never been done before, we will find a way to do it! So it was with the Red Unalom Society of Siam.

In 1893, a territorial dispute between the Kingdom of Siam and France over the left bank of the River Mekong erupted into armed conflict resulting in deaths and injuries on the Thai side. From this dispute arose urgent need to extend humanitarian assistance to those injured in the conflict. Something had to be done in the aftermath of war.

This led to a concerned group of charitable ladies, led by Thanpuying Plian Pasakornravongs, to seek an audience with HM Queen Savang Vadhana to obtain approval from HM King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) to establish the Red Unalom Society of Siam to provide relief and assistance to injured soldiers and war victims. Considering it a commendable idea, the King gave his consent, at the same time granting royal patronage to the society from when it came into existence in April 1893.

King Chulalongkorn also encouraged a drive to raise public donations that resulted in a start-up fund of over four hundred thousand Thai baht – a huge sum in those days. His Majesty appointed Queen Savang Vadhana as the “Founding Mother” of the Society; Queen Saovabha Phongsri as president, and Thanpuying Plian Pasakoravongs as secretary general of the Red Unalom Society of Siam. Thirty years prior to this, Henry Dunant had founded the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva, Switzerland.



Inauguration of the Red Unalom Society of Siam was approved by HM King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) to aid casualties of war



HM Queen Savang Vadhana



HM Queen Savang Vadhana (seated centre) with high-ranking officials of the Red Unalom Society of Siam – later renamed the Thai Red Cross Society

On his return to Thailand, via Japan, after studying in the United Kingdom, HRH Crown Prince Vajiravudh (later King Rama VI) paid a visit to a Japanese Red Cross hospital and was most impressed by what he saw.

Following the death of King Chulalongkorn, the Crown Prince acceded to the throne as King Vajiravudh (Rama VI). Still carrying with him impressions of the Japanese Red Cross hospital he had visited, one of the King's early duties was to persuade his younger brothers and sisters to pool funds with the Red Unalom Society to build a hospital on the King's private property. The hospital was named King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital in commemoration of the late King and was placed under the supervision of the Red Unalom Society also known, from 1914, as the Red Cross Society of Siam. The name changed again in 1939 when "The Kingdom of Siam" became "The Kingdom of Thailand".

Following royal decrees in 1918 and 1920 it was renamed the Siam Red Cross Society (SRCS), recognised by the ICRS in 1920 and as a member of the International Federation in 1921. A year later, the society hosted the first Oriental Red Cross Conference convened by the League of Red Cross Societies in Bangkok. The Thai Red Cross is one of a few societies in the world operating its own hospitals.

As relief work is one of the mandates of the Red Cross and Red Crescent throughout the world, the Relief and Community Health Bureau was established in 1920 and has been active ever since.

In 1922, the Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute was inaugurated and given the responsibility of researching and producing vaccines and sera. Later the Snake Farm was established to produce antivenom sera – the second farm of its type in the world.

A number of other significant developments followed including the inauguration of the Junior Red Cross Division (1922), which underwent a name change to Red Cross Youth; first Red Cross Fair (1925); establishment of the Thai Red Cross Volunteers Division (1940), and that of Red Cross Provincial Chapters throughout the country in 1962.



Meanwhile, the Queen Savang Vadhana Memorial Hospital in Si Racha, Chon Buri Province, founded in 1902, was transferred to the Thai Red Cross Society in 1928; the first floating clinic, the *Vejapah*, came into service using a barge graciously donated by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1955. The Thai Red Cross Rehabilitation Centre was set up in 1962; the Eye Bank of the Thai Red Cross for cornea transplants came into operation in 1965, and the National Blood Centre was established in 1969.

Under the Royal Patronage

Since its inception, the Thai Red Cross Society has enjoyed the close involvement and continuous support of Thailand's royal family and, up to the present day, remains under the royal patronage.

Early in the present reign of King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX), HM Queen Savang Vadhana, the Royal Grandmother, served as president of the Thai Red Cross Society. In 1954, HM Queen Sirikit accepted a special membership in the Thai Junior Red Cross under Her Majesty's royal patronage and Her Majesty was appointed by the King to take over the presidency of the Thai Red Cross Society in 1956 after the demise of Queen Savang Vadhana in 1955. Later, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn assumed the role of executive vice president of the society's council.

For more than a century, under the royal family of Thailand's guidance and assiduous support, the Thai Red Cross Society has expanded in size and scope, reaching out to those in need whether within or outside the Kingdom.

By remaining true to its mission to alleviate human suffering and provide health services to the most vulnerable, including children, women, the elderly and the physically and mentally challenged, the society's humanitarian concern aptly complements the ideals and principles of the Royal House of Chakri.



Up to the present day, the Thai Red Cross Society remains under royal patronage



The Society has expanded in size and scope with guidance from Thailand's Royal Family



Royal activities undertaken by the president of the Thai Red Cross Society



Her Majesty Queen Sirikit visited refugee camps in Thailand's border areas

The society's main activities

In pursuit of its mission to alleviate human suffering and provide health services to the most vulnerable, the Thai Red Cross Society directs its efforts in four core areas: medical and health care services, disaster preparedness and response, blood transfusion services, and the promotion of the quality of life of vulnerable people. All four areas respond to the humanitarian needs of society that form the underlying work of the Thai Red Cross under the seven fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

The work of the Thai Red Cross Society is not restricted to Thailand alone: its efforts extend into neighbouring countries such as Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia. A spokesperson at the Thai Red Cross Society headquarters in Henry Dunant Road, Bangkok, touched upon the “sensitivities” of helping other countries. He said the society “...wants to offer assistance, but just can't go in with offers of help...we prefer them to approach us first.”

This is an area, he explained, where HM Queen Sirikit and HRH Princess Sirindhorn are able to help by dealing with any delicate or sensitive issues “...because neighbouring countries hold great affection for Her Majesty and Her Royal Highness with whom they feel comfortable in discussing their own country's humanitarian needs.”





The King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital is a leader in many fields including neurosurgery, eye surgery and cardiac surgery

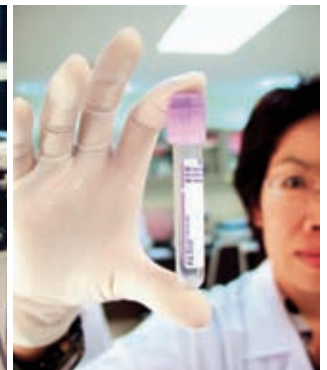
The hospital provides training for nursing students of the Thai Red Cross College of Nursing

Medical and health care

In Thailand, two general hospitals under the supervision of the Thai Red Cross Society provide medical and health care services: the King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital in Bangkok and the Queen Savang Vadhana Memorial Hospital at Si Racha on Thailand's eastern seaboard.

The Red Cross Rehabilitation Centre in Samut Prakan Province, which is close to Bangkok, also provides physical treatment and rehabilitation services for long-term patients. Various other health care and specialized units, such as the Eye Bank, Organ Donation Centre, and AIDS Research Centre were established at different times.

The King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital deals with primary to tertiary or referral cases for inpatients and outpatients and provides training facilities for medical students of the Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University and for nursing students of the Thai Red Cross College of Nursing. It has been the mainstay of the Thai Red Cross in times of peace and in times of disasters. The hospital was recognised in 2002 for its highly professional standards with the Award of the Hospital Accreditation Certificate by the Institute of Hospital Quality Improvement and Accreditation of Thailand. A leader in many fields, including neurosurgery, eye surgery and cardiac surgery, for example, the hospital registered several "firsts" in medical history: first cornea transplant in 1962; first kidney transplant in 1972, and first bone-marrow transplant in 1991. Thailand's first test-tube baby was born there in 1987.





The Queen Savang Vadhana Memorial Hospital is located on the Gulf of Thailand in Chon Buri Province

The Queen Savang Vadhana Memorial Hospital in Si Racha, Chon Buri Province provides a complete range of medical services with specialised clinics in urology, eye ailments, ENT problems, diabetes, allergies and much more.

The hospital has a mobile blood donation service and personnel skills are constantly developed to stay abreast with changes in medical science and technology.

Formerly known as the Pasteur Institute, the Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute, established in 1922, undertakes research and produces vaccines and snake sera. A year later, Thailand established the Snake Farm to produce antivenom sera for snake-bite victims milking highly venomous snakes on a daily basis to make antidotes for snake bites.

This delicate operation can be observed by members of the public at venom-milking and snake-handling demonstrations at the institute which also gives visitors comprehensive information on herpetology and toxicology. Located on Henry Dunant Road in Bangkok, the Snake Farm has also become a popular tourist attraction.



At the Snake Farm venomous snakes are milked daily to make antidotes for victims of snake bites



HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn chairs conferences of the society's council

Disaster preparedness and response

Right from the beginning, the Thai Red Cross Society has provided relief in times of disasters and national emergencies – not just in Thailand but in the region and internationally through its Relief and Community Health Bureau working in conjunction with other groups. Through its response to a series of disasters and emergencies (during peacetime and times of conflict) the bureau has synchronised its operations for disaster preparedness and response gaining recognition for the Thai Red Cross – and Thailand – in all corners of the world.

Alert and prepared under a twenty-four-hour state of readiness, the Disaster Operations Centre responds to tragedies and emergencies in line with national and provincial plans for disaster preparedness, response and rehabilitation. It coordinates information

on epidemics and disasters, appropriate care and assistance, and on the availability of resources at all sites to evaluate needs and issue proper directives. The aim is to respond in good time to ensure relief materials and medical supplies are sourced and prepared for distribution to meet each developing circumstance.

The bureau, which began operations in December 1920 as the “relief section” of the Siam Red Cross Society, also



The Disaster Operations Centre operates under a twenty-four-hour state of readiness

provides the public with first aid training courses as part of disaster preparedness.

In the context of regional disasters, the catastrophic tsunami in the Indian Ocean in December 2004, following a major, offshore earthquake near Sumatra, Indonesia, galvanised the Thai Red Cross Society into emergency relief action as well as short- and long-term recovery programmes.

In recent times, Thailand's borders have strained under the weight of hundreds of thousands of displaced persons escaping from armed conflicts, for example, in Cambodia and Myanmar. At such times, the Thai Red Cross Society was on hand with relief supplies and offered assistance programmes providing food, clothing and other items. Timely action by the society has averted major human tragedies in the wake of horrendous conflicts; in particular unspeakably cruel acts of genocide against Cambodian citizens who fled across the Thai border to safety.

The Thai Red Cross was also quick to respond with relief efforts when a devastating tropical cyclone (Cyclone Nargis) came ashore in Myanmar's Ayeyarwaddy Division causing over one hundred thousand deaths and many more injured and displaced people. And in January 2010, the magnitude 7.0 M_w earthquake that struck the Caribbean nation of Haiti affected an estimated three million people prompting one of the greatest responses in the one-hundred-and-fifty-year history of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The Thai Red Cross Society contributed donations totalling 3.69m U.S. dollars to support relief efforts. At the time, Bekele Geleta, secretary general of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) expressed his appreciation and extended his profound admiration and pride in the Thai Red Cross Society's initiative. Acknowledging the generosity of all Thai people, Thai Red Cross staff and volunteer workers, Mr. Geleta said it demonstrated great commitment and solidarity towards helping alleviate human suffering in Haiti's devastated communities.

**The moment magnitude scale (abbreviated as MMS; denoted as M_w) is used by seismologists to measure the size of earthquakes in terms of the energy released. The scale was developed in the 1970s to succeed the 1930s-era Richter magnitude scale (M_L). Even though the formulae are different, the new scale retains the familiar continuum of magnitude values defined by the older one. The MMS is now the scale used to estimate magnitudes for all modern large earthquakes by the United States Geological Survey.*



Wherever needed, the Thai Red Cross Society responds with relief supplies, food and clothing



Regular blood donors are honoured with certificates presented by HM the Queen

Blood transfusion services

Blood, “the fluid of life”, especially in the context of life-saving transfusions, is under the jurisdiction of the Thai Red Cross Society’s National Blood Centre (previously Office of the Blood Service Unit) graciously inaugurated by Their Majesties the King and Queen of Thailand in 1953. It is entrusted with procuring and storing adequate, safe supplies of blood for the whole of

Thailand. Over the years, blood donors have increased in number since the first group of ten donors gave blood following the example of HRH Prince Paribatra Sukhumbhand who, at the time, was executive vice president of the Thai Red Cross Society.

Donor recruitment drives take place in Thailand on a year-round basis with special campaigns organised to coincide with auspicious occasions in the lives of Thailand’s royal family. Regular blood donors are honoured with pins and certificates often presented by HM the Queen (president of the society), HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn executive vice president of the Thai Red Cross Society, and HRH Princess Soamsawali.

The centre was appointed WHO Collaborating Centre for Training in Blood Transfusion Medicine (2004-2007), and has cooperated with the Japanese Red Cross since 1995 in organising the Red Cross and Red Crescent Symposium on Blood Programmes in the Asian Region, Securing Safe Blood. Also, in conjunction with the Thai Society of Haematology, the Thai Red Cross hosted the XVI Regional Congress Asia of the International Society of Blood Transfusion in Bangkok from November 12 to 15, 2005.





The Princess Sirindhorn Eye Surgery Unit started in 1995

Community health and quality of life promotion

The Thai Red Cross Society operates twelve Red Cross Health Stations around Thailand with each one directed towards improving the wellbeing of people through health and welfare education to home visits and blood donation campaigns. These stations also serve as relief centres in times of disaster. One unit of particular interest at health stations is the Princess Sirindhorn Eye Surgery Unit started in 1995 to coincide with the Princess' fortieth birthday anniversary.

More remote areas, and areas populated by disadvantaged citizens, receive medical and dental services from mobile units including a floating clinic aboard the barge *Vejapah* donated by His Majesty the King in 1955. The floating clinic offers medical and dental care to residents living alongside the Chao Phraya River and canals in central Thailand.

Since the very beginning, the Thai Red Cross Society has expanded its organization and increased its services to serve the people in keeping with the Red Cross spirit and with help and support from all sectors of society in particular Thailand's royal family which has been the inspiration of the movement since it began.



*The floating clinic on the barge *Vejapah* provides medical and dental care to riverside residents*





Role and involvement of Thailand's Royal Family

At all stages in the development of the Thai Red Cross Society, members of Thailand's royal family have played an important, guiding role. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej is patron of the society and HM Queen Sirikit serves as president with HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn as executive vice president also chairing the Thai Red Cross Council. Other key personnel include Mr Phan Wannamethee, who is secretary general of the Thai Red Cross Society.

When it was established in 1893, the society was known as the Red Unalom Society of Siam formed with private funding from the royal family. It was renamed the Siam Red Cross Society in 1920 with Queen Saovabha Phongsri as its president. A year later, the society joined the ranks of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The society's close association with the nation's royal family is not just a time-honoured tradition; support from the royal family

constitutes a driving force behind the organization's great success and prestigious status in the world. With Her Majesty the Queen at the helm, the latent power of Thai womanhood has been harnessed, as can be seen from the strong network of volunteers formed by wives of provincial governors and other high-profile ladies who eagerly support the diverse activities of the Red Cross.



The Queen inspired a network of volunteers to support the society

Early in the present reign, the Queen graciously accepted a special membership of the Thai Junior Red Cross taking the unit under Her Majesty's royal patronage. After HM Queen's Savang Vadhana the Royal Grandmother passed away in 1955, His Majesty the King conferred upon HM Queen Sirikit the presidency of the Thai Red Cross on the Queen's birthday on August 12, 1956. This marked the beginning of a whole new era for the Thai Red Cross Society benefiting the poor and underprivileged, not only in Thailand but around the world.

Her Majesty's poise and composure, great compassion and kindness, combined with firsthand experience gained during extensive royal visits accompanying His Majesty the King to remote rural areas of the country, inspired her to embrace wholeheartedly the Red Cross operation and take it to new heights.

Under the gracious leadership of Her Majesty, Thai Red Cross activities expanded by leaps and bounds with the establishment of the Thai Red Cross Provincial Chapters throughout the country in 1962. The Thai Red Cross Rehabilitation Centre in Samut Prakan Province came into operation in the same year; the Eye Bank for cornea transplants in 1965; the National Blood Centre in 1969; the Thai Red Cross Children's Home in 1981, and the opening of the Thai Red Cross Programme on AIDS in 1991 – today known as the Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Centre.



Thai Red Cross activities have expanded under the gracious leadership of HM the Queen





More health care and relief service centres followed: The Organ Donation Centre was established in 1994; the Cardiac Centre in the King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital in 1995; the Princess Sirindhorn Eye Surgery Mobile Unit in 2001 and the First Aid and Health Care Training Centre and the Craniofacial Centre in the King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital. In 2005, the Queen Sirikit Centre for Breast Cancer was established also in the King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital. Today, the Thai Red Cross Society forms a major network of health care and relief services and is by far the biggest humanitarian organization in Thailand.



Today, the Thai Red Cross Society constitutes a major network of health care and relief services



Provincial chapters and district branches

Performing under the jurisdiction of the Thai Red Cross Society (TRCS), provincial Red Cross chapters were established in 1962 in each of Thailand's seventy-five provinces. Each provincial chapter has its own district branches carrying out the work of the TRCS at district level across the entire country. Staffed mainly on a volunteer basis, the work covers the society's four main areas of interest: disaster relief, blood donation services, quality of life promotion, and social welfare services.

Working with the society for over twenty years (with the early part spent in Betong District in the southern province of Yala at the border with Malaysia) Mrs. Prissana Pongtadsirikul, who is director general of the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, spoke of her role as chairman of the Thai Red Cross provincial chapter in the province of Chachoengsao in Thailand's central region.

“For the past six years I have worked with the Chachoengsao chapter helping with projects initiated by Her Majesty the Queen and by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn,” she said speaking of the holistic centres

Red Cross chapters in seventy-five provinces of the country are staffed mainly on a volunteer basis



initiated by the Princess for people of advancing age in the eleven districts of Chachoengsao Province.

“Apart from providing help for the elderly, Her Royal Highness also focuses on the requirements of young people particularly their education. Today, every provincial chapter helps to take care of students under Her Royal Highness’ patronage from elementary school until receiving a bachelor degree, if they have the ability.”

Much of the work carried out by the chapter, Mrs. Prissana explained, entails visiting students at their homes to see how they live, and then discussing with teachers what more is required to help them further. “We report back to Her Royal Highness who makes certain each chapter is able to support the students with money, uniforms, books...even reading glasses if required. Funding comes directly from Her Royal Highness’ foundation into students’ accounts.”

Explaining how the chapters work with representatives from government departments, Mrs. Prissana said. “We never work alone. We try to integrate with government agencies. For example each province has a human security and welfare office under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and we work with them in helping to develop the quality of people’s lives.”

Where patients are concerned, the chapters work closely with hospitals and personnel from the Ministry of Public Health.

Volunteers involved with blood donors liaise with provincial hospitals and, for disaster and relief work, with the Ministry of Interior.

“A few years ago I worked in Sa Kaew Province that borders with Cambodia,” Mrs. Prissana said. “We had a close working relationship with a Cambodia Red Cross chapter. We even helped Cambodians gain access to hospitals in the province for minor surgery with transportation provided by a Red Cross mobile unit that used to journey to Sa Kaew from Bangkok.”

Fundraising is an essential part of the Thai Red Cross Society and each chapter focuses on this important aspect on a year-round basis. “Our big event in Chachoengsao is our annual charity fair to raise money,” Mrs. Prissana said. “We also have people coming to us to donate money on their birthdays...strange as it may seem, some people even like to donate money after attending a funeral service.”



Each Red Cross chapter works closely with hospitals and personnel from the Ministry of Public Health



Civil war in Cambodia fully tested the Thai Red Cross Society's humanitarian response

Refugees at the border

One of Thailand's eastern neighbours, Cambodia, tested the state of readiness of Thai Red Cross facilities in 1979 after the country was invaded by the Vietnamese army along with allies from the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation (KUFNS). Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge forces retreated towards the Thai border but, by that time, Cambodians had already endured four years of cruel war and genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge, acts that impelled thousands of frightened citizens to mass along the Thai border.

Civil war broke out with the foreign-backed troops involved in a battle for control of the country, which resulted in tens of thousands of displaced Cambodians – starving, desolate and terrified – fleeing into Thailand's Trat province to an area known as Khao Lan.

The numbers of refugees continued to grow causing great concern for Thailand's security. This led Prime Minister General Kriengsak Chomanan to order that the border be closed.

Doctor Suvit Yodmani, Thailand's government spokesman at the time, recalled that some forty thousand refugees were amassing at the Thai border. "For security purposes, the Royal Thai government tried to seal the border between Thailand and Cambodia." The situation, he explained, was extremely dangerous with much fighting going on; refugees seeking sanctuary were blocked from entering and many were turned back only to be shot at by military waiting on the other side.



The Queen intervened in the developing crisis on the Thai-Cambodian border

“Without wishing to take sides in relating the actual events that took place, I can say there was a tremendous amount of death, suffering, disease and famine. So, somehow, the Thai government had to come to a decision on what to do after sealing the borders to ensure security.”

Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, in her capacity as president of the Thai Red Cross Society (by far the largest humanitarian organization in the country) called for a solution after receiving details of the developing crisis on the border.

Doctor Suvit explained: “Her Majesty reacted very strongly after receiving a report from Prof. Dr. M.L. Kashetra Snidvongs, at that time secretary general of the Thai Red Cross Society, expressing grave concern for what was turning into a humanitarian crisis. Prime Minister Kriengsak was in charge of the Thai government at the time – a brilliant strategist by the way – and he realized it was essential for Thailand to provide humanitarian assistance.”



However, before reopening the border, the prime minister ordered the relocation of some villagers to safer areas; then, with the assistance of the UNHCR, camps were established for the refugees. “This was accomplished, and in late October 1979 the PM inspected the border areas and publicly declared the border open,” Dr. Suvit added.



Her Majesty flew to border areas to obtain a firsthand assessment of conditions in refugee camps

The present secretary general of the Thai Red Cross, Mr. Phan Wannamethee, also spoke of HM Queen Sirikit’s personal intervention during these tense days on Thailand’s border: “Her Majesty sought to provide shelter for these people under the emblem of the Thai Red Cross.” Subsequently, the secretary general explained, the Queen took care of the refugees for over five years until they were transferred to proper refugee camps. “This showed Her Majesty’s compassion towards the Cambodian people...and it was purely her own initiative.”

Her Majesty flew to the camps to see the situation firsthand and was greeted by sights that shocked her deeply. The Queen was appalled by scenes of hunger, illness and sheer exhaustion on the part of many refugees. Representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also arrived at the border to survey the situation.

Under the direction of Her Majesty, the Khao Lan Thai Red Cross Centre was established to oversee the border camps that provided shelter, food and medical care to desperate refugees, most of whom were poor families with small children.

The Queen was not without support from her





own children during visits to these desolate scenes along the Thai border. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, at the time a young military officer, worked to establish security at the camps. Her Majesty's second daughter, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn was also on hand to oversee the opening of schools in the camps so children could be taught self-help and life skills to help prepare them for the future.

Today, the Princess serves as executive vice president of the Thai Red Cross and is a champion of children's rights.

When the border reopened, Thailand was faced with a steady stream of refugees that proved an enormous challenge for the Thai Red Cross. To assist, other camps were set up in Thailand to cope with the growing number of refugees. The most well-known of these was Khao Idang Holding Centre a huge compound of bamboo and thatched houses located close to Aranyaprathet in Thailand's Sa Kaeo Province.

Recalling the Cambodia refugee crisis of 1979, UNHCR regional director Kitty McKinsey said: "It was a huge turning point in the history of the UNHCR. It was the first real emergency we really were active in, anywhere in the world." The UNHCR had to set up camps all along the border to take care of hundreds of thousands of refugees pouring into Thailand. By 1980, the population of the camp had grown to one hundred and sixty thousand.

"What was very clear," the regional director explained, "was that by opening the door to the Cambodian refugees many lives were saved. We do know that Her Majesty the Queen was instrumental in taking care of many children. We know that she personally flew to the site to see the Cambodian refugees and set up the Khao Lan Thai Red Cross Centre for the children."



HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, was on hand to oversee the opening of schools in the refugee camps

According to the UNHCR, Her Majesty was responsible for taking care of at least five thousand orphans and unaccompanied refugee children. The regional director said that the Queen's personal interest in the fate of the children was invaluable to the UNHCR because it demonstrated to the Thai public and to the government the importance of taking care of refugees. It also illustrated the importance of protecting refugees which made it easier for the UNHCR to operate.

By 1986 the border camps at Khao Lan had closed but memories of how HM Queen Sirikit, the Thai Red Cross Society's president, had allowed sanctuary for some three hundred and fifty thousand refugees from a neighbouring country over a period of twenty years, remain undiminished. Today, the "Royal Compassion Museum" stands on the site of Khao Lan's former campsite to ensure no-one ever forgets what happened on the Thai-Cambodian border.

Even today, unfortunate victims of conflicts in neighbouring countries continue to view Thailand as a safe sanctuary; a land where they can harbour hopes of a better life, their care entrusted to the Thai Red Cross Society.

In 1991, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit received recognition in Washington D.C. when she was presented with an International Humanitarian Award as "...an individual of international stature who has made an outstanding contribution to improvement in the quality of life and the uplifting of large numbers of people."



The Princess serves as executive vice president of the society and is a champion of children's rights



Assisting victims of earthquakes and cyclones

As befits her royal parentage, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn looks beyond Thailand's borders to help those in need.

When a 7.8 M_w earthquake struck China's south-western province of Sichuan in May 2008, the Thai Red Cross immediately donated two hundred thousand U.S. dollars to its Chinese counterpart, along with two hundred and fifty tents and cooking utensils.

That same year, tropical cyclone Nargis, the worst natural disaster in Myanmar's recorded history, took close to one hundred and fifty thousand lives and caused large-scale damage that completely wiped out many people's livelihood. The Thai Red Cross Society, under guidance from Princess Sirindhorn, despatched thirty tonnes of survival equipment including medicines, generators, snake antivenom and twelve

tonnes of food, along with a team of twenty doctors and nurses. In the aftermath of this large-scale tragedy, and as part of the recovery programme, the Thai Red Cross built a small hospital, a health care station, and renovated a blood bank in Yangon, Myanmar's former capital.

Speaking about the aftermath, Myanmar schoolteacher Tan Ku-Mar-See said his house was completely destroyed. "We felt helpless. We prayed even though we were terrified to speak. We had lost everything."



Under guidance from HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn the Thai Red Cross Society sent supplies to China and Myanmar when disaster struck in 2008



Today, an estimated one hundred and forty thousand Myanmar refugees live in camps along the Thai-Myanmar border, and a further 1.5 million live in Thailand as economic migrants.

Another massive earthquake disaster occurred in Pakistan in 2005 when eighty thousand lives were lost after a $7.6M_w$ earthquake struck Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Response from the Thai Red Cross was swift, and Thai Airways, the national carrier, assisted in flying five tonnes of relief goods to Islamabad for distribution. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn also donated private funds to assist relief efforts.

The catastrophic $7.0M_w$ earthquake in the Caribbean nation of Haiti in January 2010 prompted the Thai Red Cross Society to launch an appeal for public donations to help victims. The generous response from the Thai people meant that the Red Cross could make several, large donations. A transfer of over one million dollars was made to the account of the IFRC in January 2010 to support relief operations.

Expressing appreciation to Thailand for contributions when they grew to 1.2 million dollars, the IFRC secretary general, Mr Bekele Geleta, spoke of his profound admiration and pride at the Thai Red Cross Society's initiative that demonstrated great commitment and solidarity to help alleviate human suffering in the devastated communities in Haiti. The secretary general also expressed his sincere thanks to all Thai people as well as the Thai Red Cross staff and volunteers who were actively involved in fund-raising campaigns. Response to the Haiti earthquake was one of the biggest in the one hundred and fifty year history of the IFRC movement. But even more help was to come from Thailand.

On February 9, 2010, the Thai Red Cross Society made another donation to the IFRC societies amounting to one million dollars for relief and recovery efforts in Haiti. In all, 3.69 million dollars came from Thailand made up of fifty thousand dollars from the Thai Red Cross Society and 3.19 million dollars from public donations made through the Thai Red Cross Society.



Relief effort distribution in Pakistan



Leadership and support from the royal family

Thailand's royal family have a long history of being among the first to respond to local disasters affecting people's lives and livelihood. One of the worst natural disasters in modern times, and still fresh in everyone's mind, was the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, triggered by an undersea, 9.1 M_w earthquake off the west coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, which took the lives of over two hundred thousand people and left tens of thousands more injured, homeless and desolate.

In Thailand, entire families were wiped out by the huge waves generated by the tsunami. Even foreign visitors, holidaying in provinces bordering the Andaman Sea were affected. It was Thailand's peak holiday season and hundreds of visitors were among the dead and missing. Some managed to survive to tell of their ordeal.

British citizen Mr. Aaron le Boutillier, a tsunami survivor who was living and working on Phi Phi Island related his terrifying experience: "My ordeal started off in my room. It was ten in the morning and I heard everyone screaming and by the time I got to my balcony the tsunami had hit the street and water was rushing through the balcony of my bedroom." After surviving to tell the tale, Aaron decided to write about his experiences, and of others, in a personal odyssey "*And Then One Morning*", royalties for which have been channelled to those still traumatised from the tsunami and to several, supportive foundations in southern Thailand. For many people, writing



and talking about their brush with death was a vital step in the healing process.

Among those first on the scene in Thailand was the Thai Red Cross mobile medical team. With an estimated ten million people homeless, Thailand's royal family immediately took a leading role in relief efforts.

As news of the tragedy broke, HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn coordinated Thailand's military and police response, adopting a major role in providing emergency housing for orphaned children, and sourcing new boats for fishing communities. Simultaneously, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn established a base at the Thai Red Cross headquarters to oversee the distribution of relief supplies to disaster-hit areas. The Princess also coordinated much-needed blood donations for relief efforts and remained on hand to render assistance throughout the entire ordeal.

In the eyes of victims of the tsunami, particularly impoverished fishing communities who lost their loved ones and their livelihoods, Princess Sirindhorn stood as a beacon of hope. Even after the tsunami, Her Royal Highness asked Mrs. Pittraporn Sangkasaba, a former classmate, to oversee a special project in southern Thailand working with the Thai Red Cross to ensure poor families living in remote coastal and inland villages received medical supplies and support funds.

Speaking as a member of Princess Sirindhorn's "special task force", Mrs. Pittraporn said she worked with the Red Cross from the first day of the tsunami. "In order to learn of people's problems, the princess formed a group called 'Hippo' to coordinate with the Red Cross. All cash donations and goods handed to the Red Cross were given directly to the people in need.

"Three months after the Hippo group was formed," Mrs. Pittraporn explained, "Her Royal Highness formed the Sirindhorn special unit to continue the group's work to ensure continuity."



The Thai Red Cross Society distributed relief supplies to areas affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami





HRH Princess Soamsawali and her daughter HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha responded to calls for help when Bangkok was inundated with floodwater in 1995

Flooding is another form of disaster well known in much of Thailand. Flash floods in several parts of Thailand prompted a special, coordinated effort on the part of HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha (the Crown Prince's daughter, also known as Princess "Pa") to establish the Princess Pa Foundation, Thai Red Cross Society. The foundation, which originated from the Voluntary Project of Princess Pa, Thai Red Cross Society during the period of disastrous flooding in Bangkok in 1995, has enjoyed unpre-

cedented support from Princess Bajrakitiyabha's mother HRH Princess Soamsawali.

Offering financial support for the "decision-supporting system for flood warnings" as proposed by the Thai Meteorological Department, the foundation's main objective is to provide humanitarian support. It also seeks to complement government efforts and those of the private sector in relief missions for citizens affected by severe floods; to help those less-affected people to help the more-affected, and for those who are stronger to help the weaker by concentrating on survival and rehabilitation efforts.



The Thai Red Cross Society has also taken a leading role in Thailand and around the Southeast Asia region in the fight against HIV-AIDS, in research as well as disease prevention, counselling and treatment. In 1991, a clinic for testing for HIV and counselling was established in Bangkok offering HIV testing and counselling on a discrete basis. More than one thousand people go to the clinic each month including foreigners wishing to take advantage of the clinic's "non-disclosure" policy.

Thailand's royal family also take a prominent role in addressing HIV-AIDS, particularly HRH Princess Soamsawali who, in addition to being a vigorous campaigner for the Princess Pa Foundation, is a driving force behind Thailand's HIV and AIDS awareness programmes. It is not unusual to see the princess among AIDS-infected patients – especially babies – in her drive for increased government funding to supplement the Thai Red Cross Society's efforts to fight the disease.

Commenting on Her Royal Highness' initiative, Dr. Prapan Panupak of the Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Centre said Princess Soamsawali is very interested and genuinely keen to help with HIV work. "Her Royal Highness contributed her own funds to set up a project called Preventing Mother-to-Child Transmission."

Princess Soamsawali's initiative has helped safeguard the future of thousands of unborn babies. Her fundraising efforts ensure that AZT is available to administer to HIV-positive pregnant women to protect their children from being infected.

In almost every facet of human tragedy, the Thai Red Cross Society plays a major role drawing on the strength of Thailand's royal family whose own ideals share a common goal with the principles and spirit of the Red Cross.



Princess Soamsawali is a vigorous campaigner for the Princess Pa Foundation and champions HIV and AIDS awareness programmes





The Thai Red Cross Society's Red Cross Fair is a major fundraising event normally presided over by Their Majesties the King and Queen

Fund raising

To support its work as a major humanitarian network, the Thai Red Cross Society relies on contributions whether in cash or in kind. A great deal of funding is needed to finance its operations and raising money is a major function of the society. The Thai Red Cross Society's Red Cross Fair, launched during the reign of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) and held on an annual basis, is a major fundraising event.

The first Red Cross Fair of Siam took place in 1924. An eight-member committee, chaired by HRH Prince Paribatra, was entrusted to organise the event. The objective was to publicise the activities of the Red Cross Society of Siam and to persuade members of the public

to join the Society as "citizen members" and as an annual, fun-filled event for members who subscribed one Thai baht a year.

Held on the ceremonial ground at Sanam Luang in Bangkok, the first Red Cross Fair was presided over by HM King Vajiravudh in person. Members of the royal family, high-ranking officials, societies,



associations and companies were all invited to enter street floats and join a procession that wound along various roads in Sanam Luang. The process was watched by huge crowds while officials, junior members, students and scouts went among the crowd persuading onlookers to become citizen members of the society. In its first year, over thirteen thousand new members were recruited.

The Red Cross Fair of Siam held in 1925 was presided over by HM Queen Savang Vadhana in her capacity as president. The Queen opened the fair with an added attraction of a fancy kite display and kite contest that first started in April 1924.

This event raised over three thousand four hundred baht of which three thousand baht went to purchase a hospital bed inscribed “*The Kite Contest Event at Sanam Luang B.E. 2467 (1924)*”, with the remaining amount channelled to the Red Cross Society of Siam.

The following year the kite contest raised over five thousand baht for the society, which that year had asked the League of Red Cross in Geneva, Switzerland to procure Red Cross balloons for sale at the fair. It resulted in a great deal of additional funding.

During the present reign of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX), the Red Cross Fair was moved to Ambara Garden in the Dusit Palace, Bangkok, extending to the Royal Plaza and Sanam Suea Pa. A great deal of activity takes place at the fair with support from government ministries and departments, institutions, government agencies, associations, and private companies some of which set up booths to sell donated merchandise to the public to raise funds.

The Red Cross Society publicizes all activities and provides health services and blood donor-drives at the fair, the opening of which is invariably presided over by Their Majesties the King and Queen with other members of the royal family supporting the event each day.

The annual Red Cross Fair, normally held over nine days from the end of March into the first week of April, has become a very



Their Majesties the King and Queen often attended gala dinner charity events to help raise funds for the Thai Red Cross Society



This Red Cross kite was flown by the young Crown Prince at a Red Cross Fair



The Red Cross Concert, performed by the Royal Thai Navy orchestra since 1964, is an important source of funding

popular event keenly anticipated by people from all walks of life. It coincides with a number of provincial activities around the country raising funds for the Thai Red Cross Society under the common concept of “Red Cross helps us, we help the Red Cross”.

Another, major annual event is the Diplomatic Red Cross Bazaar that has been organised by the diplomatic corps in Bangkok since 1967. Countries with diplomatic missions in Thailand unite in offering for sale a variety of their own countries’ products including handicrafts and delicacies.

An important source of funding for the Thai Red Cross Society comes from the Red Cross Concert that has been performed by the Royal Thai Navy orchestra since 1964. An artistic aspect was added in 1999 when a group of volunteer amateur artists contributed paintings to be exhibited and sold to raise funds.

Anyone who wishes to contribute to the Thai Red Cross Society may do so via the society’s website at www.redcross.or.th which gives details of how to make online contributions or conduct bank transfers. A senior official at the society’s headquarters in Henry Dunant Road, Bangkok described how some people choose to donate their inheritances to the Thai Red Cross Society.

“Because of the reputation of the Thai Red Cross and its association with Thailand’s royal family, many families without heirs donate their entire inheritance to the society.” The official also stated that some donations are sent directly to HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn who directs them on to the Thai Red Cross.

“People are also living longer,” the official explained, “therefore we have to ensure we also use donated funds to provide facilities to train doctors and other medical staff to take care of elderly patients with specific requirements.” To meet the many challenges of an aging population, the Thai Red Cross is constructing new facilities where senior citizens can go for specialised treatment for age-related illnesses and, later, receive specialist care during periods of convalescence.





On behalf of the Thai Red Cross Society, HM the Queen graciously accepted donations from the Diplomatic Red Cross Bazaar



Royal Activities

and International Cooperation

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