

# Tsunami two-year progress report: Thailand



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
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*"Fish offering is much more useful for us than giving us money. The more fish we have to feed, the higher income we can earn," fishermen said.*

*To date, more than 2,500 households have received recovery support in various forms, ranging from fishing gear and tools, sea creature breeding, equipment and raw materials for the job diversification group.*

## Executive summary

In Thailand, the tsunami killed 5,395 people and injured 8,547 (with some 2,932 still unaccounted for). The six provinces affected were Krabi, Phangnga, Phuket, Ranong, Satoon and Trang. It was a disaster that not only affected Thais but many tourists too at popular resorts in the south-west of the country. Because of its relative development and accessibility, many of the early news images from the tsunami that were etched on to the globe's consciousness were from Thailand. While much focus has been on the huge international fundraising effort, it is worth noting that within Thailand the government received more than USD 32 million in public donations to support those affected by the tsunami.

The government-led tsunami operation has been impressive by any measure. After an initial slow start, the emergency and subsequent recovery strategy has been effective. Thai Red Cross Society (TRCS) has been a key partner of government as communities have rebuilt their lives and livelihoods. The disaster has also brought new opportunities, exposure and ways of working for TRCS as it has engaged with several partner national societies who came in the aftermath of the tsunami and who remain committed after two years to leave both affected communities and TRCS with a positive legacy after so much suffering.

Because of the strong government lead, the Red Cross was able to focus on areas of proven competence. Achievements have included: a strong legacy in disaster management that is providing better community support; better local national society structures that are connecting TRCS more closely with communities; and community

## Key facts and figures

Programme	Estimated no. of people served
Livelihoods	24,536 people
Emergency relief & disaster management	5,480 people
Shelter, housing or community structures	120 people

reconstruction that has focused on 'softer' development such as psychosocial support to complement the 'harder' infrastructure initiatives of the government and others.

Significant achievements include the heroic and very visible – and appreciated – work of TRCS volunteers. As

always, it was the Red Cross volunteers who were among the first on the scene because they are community-based before, during and after any disaster. It was not simply a case of presence but effective action that really distinguished the volunteers in the minds of many.

2006 has been the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the accession of His Majesty the King of Thailand to the throne. The royal family is highly revered and the fact that the King's daughter is the honorary patron of the TRCS has had a huge positive effect on the profile of the national society. This coupled with the tremendous work of Her Royal Highness in the aftermath of the tsunami – and still ongoing – has placed the Red Cross in the hearts and minds of many Thais. It has been additionally poignant during a year of major political instability that included a military coup in September.

The tsunami operation was not, and still is not, without its problems. Coordination remains a challenge but significant progress has been made to ensure that partners work effectively together behind TRCS priorities. The national society's ability and confidence in managing these relations has strengthened considerably.

TRCS is proud of its achievements in supporting coastal communities whose world was literally turned upside down on 26 December 2004. The progress includes communities better prepared and trained in disaster risk reduction; fishermen and women faring better as a result of livelihood support; psychological healing for thousands including children; and thousands of others benefiting from better health care and a recovering eco-system. TRCS continues to benefit from greater exposure to Federation partners (as a result of the tsunami). It is engaging constructively, particularly with the secretariat. One output is a national society playing a fuller role as a member of the Federation sharing its knowledge with other national societies, i.e. via a greater use of the Federation's disaster management information system (DMIS).

However, significant needs remain, particularly in terms of ensuring a sustainable positive legacy for both communities and the national society.

For the future, the tsunami recovery strategy of the International Movement of Red Cross and Red Crescent will be the high-level framework within which the national society's strategic focus sits. In particular the attention in Thailand will be on improving "quality & accountability" and to integrate "organizational development" in the core areas of programming.

## Background/Operational context

Government-led reconstruction and recovery efforts have been impressive as has the international engagement in support of Thai Red Cross Society (TRCS). However, this and much else has been overshadowed in Thailand on the domestic agenda because of the political instability that has gripped the country during 2006. There has been no elected government since February, when the-then Prime Minister called an election on 2 April that was later declared invalid by a court. Subsequently Thailand was governed by a caretaker administration, amid many protests. The caretaker government did not pass a budget or enact new policies, stalling major spending. Elections were scheduled for October 15 when on September 19 a military coup seized power. The army chief declared that the coup was necessary to unite the country but that the military had no intention of holding on to power in the long term. Martial law is still in place as well as limits on political activity.

The political instability, plus high oil prices and an ongoing insurgency in the south, tended to push the tsunami down the national agenda. In the violence which has increased, 1,700 people have been reported dead over the past two years. The new Prime Minister has said that the internal problems of the country, specifically the unrest in the south and the plight of Burmese refugees at the border with Myanmar, will be given high priority. In terms of natural disasters, several areas of Thailand experienced some of its worst flooding for 50 years, severely testing the preparedness and response of the TRCS.

## Achievements and challenges

### Health and Care

The programme has been in support of government efforts, focusing on areas of RCRC competence. It is important to note that community health and school water projects have been integrated with disaster management and organizational development initiatives. The programme covers six tsunami-affected provinces, reaching 108 communities, 90 schools, 16 health facilities and three childcare centres. It has benefited more than nine million people.

The Movement has focused on four areas:

**Health and care infrastructure including emergency medical response system:** Finnish Red Cross, French Red Cross and the Federation have supported TRCS in this area. The focus has been on strengthening the capacity of emergency medical response system both



*The elderly are happy to receive a visit from Red Cross volunteers. "I am pleased with the training offered to us. I'm glad I can help look after other villagers who need medical care. The villagers are also happy having us visit them regularly." says 35-year-old Prinya Songsaeng, who has become an active Red Cross volunteer under the Federation- supported first aid and health care programme.*

locally and in national headquarters by providing medical/surgical equipment to affected health facilities, including hospital renovation. In addition, childcare centres have been upgraded and schools constructed.

**Blood Services:** Finnish and French Red Cross have supported TRCS to strengthen blood donor recruitment in the six tsunami-affected provinces as well to develop software for the national blood bank.

**Community health - psychological support, basic health care services and first aid:** These initiatives have built capacity of the communities to help themselves, in terms of rehabilitation and preparedness for future disasters. Finnish Red Cross, Swedish Red Cross and the Federation have supported TRCS in this regard.

**Water and Sanitation:** The Movement has focused on i) rehabilitation of the water system and increasing sanitation specifically in health care facilities and schools and ii) strengthening the ability to deploy an emergency response water and sanitation unit from headquarters during future disasters.

### Progress

The programme has been fundamental in the sense that it has in many respects filled gaps in government support to affected populations. In this sense, TRCS interventions were both front and last line of support. The result has been the prevention of far worse subsequent casualty

figures as well as the building of national society capacity in the provision of such vital community support.

Three child development centres were upgraded in the tsunami-affected area of Ranong, benefiting 250 children. The Saladan health centre and Lanta district hospital in Krabi were upgraded by enhancing the capacity to provide emergency services to the people on the island including foreign tourists. More than 200,000 people are benefiting from this project. TRCS is in the process of establishing TRC village health volunteer committees and psychological support volunteers in each of the six affected provinces, to provide basic health care services and psychological support. Currently, 193 volunteers and 33 trainers are providing health care services to the affected people. The services are benefiting 3,292 families and 13,730 people. Household first aid kits have been distributed but more will be done in this respect. The water and sanitation project is in partnership with the TRCS provincial chapters, educational services area office, the American Red Cross, and the Federation's SE Asia regional delegation, based in Bangkok.

During the relief phase, the government and national society both became aware of their limitations to provide emergency operative procedures. As such, it was decided that a mobile operation theatre would be set up to provide emergency care during disasters along the Andaman coast, and treatment and corrective surgery of cleft lips, cleft palates, cataracts, in rural areas (during non-disaster periods). It is the first such model in Thailand, representing a great opportunity for the Thai Red Cross and the Ministry of Public Health to set up and strengthen an emergency medical response system in the country. Discussions at ministerial level have confirmed the high priority of this project. The initiative is part of an emergency medical response system being set up in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health. This project will most likely be funded by the Finnish Red Cross.

**Finnish RC** has progressed in terms of strengthening community health infrastructure with construction underway in five of seven planned hospitals. Initiatives in voluntary blood donation and first aid have also contributed to the community's "health capital".

**Swedish RC** has played a huge part in support of the thousands of Swedes who were affected. Psychosocial and logistical assistance was given to almost 3,000 people. The engagement prompted a major partnership with TRCS that led the two national societies to learn a lot from each other, i.e. around various approaches to volunteer management as well as first aid.

**American RC** has supported Thai RCS, provincial and local government and the community in the rehabilitation and construction of community and school water and sanitation facilities in Phang Nga province. The programme, which will expand to an additional five provinces, is underway in more than 30 communities, schools and health centres and will benefit 12,000 people.

#### **Impact**

TRCS has increased its reach to communities via the national society's health promotion work. The huge effort to provide psychological support to both foreigners and Thai citizens has ensured that this element of disaster management will be more central to future operations. As PSP volunteer Ms Utairat Leamkoh, said: "PSP makes me understand myself; then I can use my knowledge to help others. I am happy and always smile when I have a chance to help people and make them happy." Health infrastructure for future emergency response has been strengthened.

#### **Challenges**

The provincial Red Cross chapter has limited project implementation capacity. Therefore, a top-down approach tends to be applied at the beginning of programming. However, capacity is now developing along with project implementation.

In addition, making community health projects - such as psychological support, basic health care services and first aid – sustainable, is an ongoing challenge for Thai Red Cross.

#### **Future priorities**

**Health and care infrastructure including emergency medical response system:** Strengthen the emergency medical response system in national headquarters in collaboration with relevant organizations.

**Blood services:** Focus on blood volunteer recruitment in the six tsunami- affected provinces and improvement of the IT system.

**Community health:** Increase the coverage within the tsunami region to complement gains already made in psychological support, basic health care services and first aid. In addition, lessons learned and experiences from the tsunami will be applied elsewhere.

**Water and sanitation:** Increase support within the tsunami-affected provinces. This will include being able to deploy a water and sanitation emergency response unit

(ERU) during times of disasters in support of the government response framework.

### **Disaster Management**

TRCS, in many ways a strong national society, was understandably stretched and had to learn quickly around its approaches to disaster management as a result of the tsunami. The situation propelled some immediate as well as more reflective lessons. The disaster management programme has strengthened response and has brought chapters closer to the community, which is priority for TRCS leadership.

The RCRC Movement for the past two years has generated integral progress in institutional as well as community preparedness.

In terms of the national society, the programme has enhanced its institutional preparedness via formulation of a draft disaster management strategy, development of a disaster operation centre and establishment of a sea rescue emergency response initiative. 150 TRCS staff and volunteers are better prepared as a result of various Movement trainings.

In terms of community preparedness, the Movement widely supports beneficiaries in the six affected provinces. It is apparent that at-risk communities are better prepared for future disasters because of community based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR), public awareness and early warning system and fire prevention initiatives. Sixteen at-risk communities are indicated in the plan for the TRCS' CBDRR intervention.

Key supporters in this programme are the Federation, American, Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish RC and Hong Kong branch of China RC. American Red Cross has confirmed funding for the whole DM programme over two years (2006-2007).

#### **Progress**

**Federation:** Institutional and community preparedness has been a major combined achievement. 100 TRCS staff and volunteers from national, regional and provincial chapter levels are now more capable as indicated above. TRCS through the relief and community health bureau continues to integrate disaster management plans within related bureaus to ensure better management and coordination. TRCS headquarters' disaster management centre has been strengthened in terms of infrastructure. It is now a strong pillar of a holistic approach to providing better disaster management systems in support of affected provinces.

The CBDRR project has been implemented in eight tsunami-affected villages in Phang Nga, Trang and Satun. This initiative has increased disaster preparedness, including an early warning system, for over 4,000 people (980 households) through the:

- Introduction of HVCA approaches
- Increasing knowledge of disaster preparedness of communities at risk
- Strengthening of community organization for disaster management for at-risk communities
- Promotion of community participative risk reduction measures covering structural and non-structural mitigation approaches incorporating multi-hazard risk reduction interventions i.e. organizing evacuation drills, provision of radio communication equipment and life jackets, and improving community early warning systems in villages
- Raising of public awareness and advocacy through school-based campaigns and activities
- Building a close networking among local stakeholders
- Local authorities and communities replicating aspects of the project in other tsunami-stricken areas.

Closer coordination with partners, i.e. the Federation's SE Asia regional delegation and Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), benefited TRCS in terms of learning around early warning. Partnerships with key disaster related organizations have been established, such as UNDP South-South for training on community based disaster risk reduction, the Thailand national disaster warning centre (NDWC) for earthquake and tsunami early warning systems, etc.

**Nordic RC:** The sea rescue emergency response capacity of coastal communities has been enhanced via training. The Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish RC have supported TRCS efforts to be in harmony with the navy, marine police and relevant government ministries so that emergency response is better coordinated and more effective in future. Over 80 TRCS staff, local authorities and volunteers in Krabi, Phuket, Phang Nga, and Trang undertook the training and serve as search and rescue volunteers.

**The Hong Kong branch of China RC:** provided temporary shelter for 30 households in Kuraburi, Phang Nga Province during the emergency relief phase. It also raised awareness of fire prevention especially in camps and temporary shelter. Trainings were conducted for over 1,300 community members in five tsunami-affected provinces, together with the distribution of education materials and fire extinguishers.

**American RC:** is supporting disaster preparedness projects to complement TRCS' role in the national disaster management plan, as well as to raise public awareness of disaster preparedness through community-based education.

### Impact

At the institutional level:

- The disaster management plan has been redefined with greater clarity and integration of different sectors.
- Stronger capacity of staff as a result of training
- The disaster management centre at national headquarters and provincial RC chapters have been strengthened and an integrated disaster management system is beginning to take shape

At the community level:

- Thousands of people in at-risk communities are better organized and prepared for future disasters.
- Coordination mechanisms for communities in disaster management have been strengthened.

### Future priorities

- Finalize an integrated disaster management strategy, contingency planning and formulation of standard operating procedures
- Complete the development of a disaster operation centre and establish disaster operation systems at RC provincial chapters together with continued stronger national society disaster response and preparedness.
- Integrate public awareness and CBDRR in the 16 at-risk communities selected by TRCS.

### Challenges

- The national society's role is not as clear as it could be in the event of an emergency because of an incomplete DM plan.
- The continuing absence of an agreement on minimum standards for the community preparedness programme is a constraint.

### Recovery

At the aftermath of the tsunami, TRCS has taken a significant role in livelihoods recovery and delivered a wide range of support via TRCS funding as well as RCRC Movement support.

The Federation, French RC and the Hong Kong branch of China RC have been the main supporters in this area. French Red Cross has confirmed its willingness to fund

the whole Federation livelihoods recovery programme over two years (2006-2007).

### Progress

**Federation:** The restoration of coastal livelihoods in six tsunami-afflicted provinces enabled the return of economic life to communities. The Federation's recovery programme continues to support 3,600 households until the end of 2007. Major beneficiaries are fishermen, fish farmers, the latter being a 'forgotten' group of those affected. The initiatives also included an option in job-diversification for coastal and women's groups.

By December 2006, more than 2,500 households (more than 10,000 people) would have received recovery support in various forms, ranging from fishing gear and tools, sea creature breeding, equipment and raw materials for the job diversification group. Training has been a part of the approach.

Awareness of the importance of sustainable livelihoods has been another successful feature of the programme. It has been promoted through participative mangrove rehabilitation activities, youth camps, and restoration of sea animals to affected mangrove areas. By December 2006, 480,000 fish and various sea creatures would have been distributed to 16 villages in two provinces of Phang Nga and Krabi benefiting 8,000 people. However, this intervention needs to run on a long-term basis to increase the likelihood of sustainable livelihoods.

**The French RC** has provided a range of recovery initiatives to ensure significant support received on the ground to those most in need. This support included: fishing equipment, including boats and tools, shelter and schools reconstruction, jobs training to communities and various support to schools and their pupils.

**The Hong Kong branch of China RC:** distributed fishing gear to 899 families in Kuraburi, and Phang Nga province. An organic farming project is to be implemented in four villages in Ranong province, to help tsunami-affected fishermen seek a new sustainable livelihood through farming of Thai herbs.

Regarding the well-being of children, HKRC has supported the reconstruction of a sports field in one primary school. Through the provision of a computer and printer set to 31 primary and secondary schools, HKRC has supported tsunami-affected students to learn and take advantage of technology.

**The Swedish RC** has supported schooling of children and the salaries of kindergarten teachers as a gesture of

investment for a better future for some of the affected coastal communities.

### Impact

At an institutional level:

- National society capacity in livelihoods recovery has increased
- TRCS is increasingly in charge of implementation, which is regarded as a great success by beneficiaries

At the community level:

- Income sources and economic wellbeing for over 2,500 households of at-risk communities have been restored
- Jobs diversification and opportunities through equipment and training to 3,000 people in over 500 households has been provided
- Improved coastal ecology rehabilitation through the planting of 150,000 mangrove plants and release of 480,000 fish and other sea creatures benefiting 16 villages (8,000 people) in Phang Nga and Krabi
- Promoted sustainable livelihoods mechanisms in local communities
- Strengthened community organization and coordination mechanisms for livelihoods recovery
- Expanded networking with government authorities

### Future priorities

- Complete the restoration of the livelihoods recovery in the affected provinces
- Continue more ecosystem restoration initiatives in other in-need areas
- Advocate to communities to adopt more sustainable approaches

### Challenges

- Enhance capacity and involvement of RC chapters in the livelihoods programme
- Apply a "door-to-door" assessment to ensure needs of individuals have been met, while acknowledging that livelihoods recovery is time consuming.

### Coordination with other partners and stakeholders

The Federation Recovery Office in Phuket has led effective coordination of partner national society (PNS) support to TRCS. During 2006, relations between American, French, Finnish, Swedish and Hong Kong branch of China Red Cross strengthened as well as their respective partnerships with TRCS. Support behind TRCS priorities is more effective and harmonious. The national society is slowly taking charge of the coordination and technical meetings. Thai Red Cross has made it clear

it wants to concentrate on existing project implementation before becoming involved in new initiatives. This has caused some difficulties as some partners have been keen to go in new directions but these issues have been mostly resolved. TRCS has made clear its strong preference for all partners to work through the International Federation. Discussions on PNS taking over programme support, either through direct funding or by taking over implementation, partly or entirely, have made significant progress. Decisions from all partners are being finalized.

American, Finnish and French Red Cross have all signed Integration Agreements with the Federation. Swedish Red Cross concluded its support to Swedish citizens on 30 April but is maintaining its engagement in other aspects, such as TRCS' sea rescue and emergency response programme. The Hong Kong branch of China Red Cross is considering how to best use the remaining funding earmarked for Thailand.

TRCS continues to have high expectations of the International Federation since the national society accepted an international dimension to its programme support of affected populations. TRCS remains an organization staffed with highly professional individuals, who push themselves, and the departments they belong to.

The deployment of a TRCS emergency watsan unit during the 2006 Sukhothai floods was a good example of mentoring and respectful cooperation. The deployment came after extensive training with German RC, which then sent a specialist to oversee the unit's successful performance.

### **Working with Government, UN agencies and other actors**

Strong partnerships, established in early 2006 in close collaboration with the Thai Red Cross, have paid dividends in terms of effective and coordinated tsunami recovery programming. Good, ongoing relations exist with the Ministry of Public Health (health and care programme); Department for Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation (DDPM), Ministry of Interior (disaster management programme); Ministry of Labour (recovery programme); Ministry of Defence (health and care programme); Ministry of National Resources and Environment (health and care, water and sanitation and recovery programmes); UNICEF (health and care and water and sanitation programmes); UNDP South/South (disaster management programme, community based disaster risk management); Asia Disaster Preparedness

Centre (disaster management programme); National Disaster Warning Centre (disaster management programme).

### **Cross-cutting issues**

All partners agreed early on during their engagement that one of the key elements of their engagement and exit strategy was to leave a positive legacy in terms of TRCS capacity. Intentions have been there from the onset but specific efforts to be able to quantify and qualify this are now being put into effect. To this end, TRCS has developed benchmark data to measure progress at chapter level. Programme implementation still continues to evolve steadily.

The RC youth structure developed in 2005 has developed youth skills in first aid and disaster management. The youth project has had significant success with youth clubs in 16 schools to which more than 600 children belong. Thirty-three teachers and 130 Red Cross youth leaders and deputies are now fully trained as community resources in this regard.

TRCS is developing its chapters significantly and in the meantime it has conducted community vulnerability and capacity assessments. The youth structures are being harmonized with other TRCS programming to promote interdependence and synergy. A volunteering excellence workshop in June provided many insights for the TRCS into how to move forward with capacity building at chapter level. As a result, a volunteering taskforce has been set up to ensure harmonization and to attain a strong network of volunteers benefiting from relevant policy as well as surrounding support systems. The organizational development programme is a very high priority for the TRCS, as it allows for constructive reflection on long term development of the national society and enables breakthroughs from within an ongoing change process.

Thai RCS continues to nurture its volunteers. Following a workshop, entitled Volunteering Excellence, the NS is: establishing a steering committee under the leadership of the assistant secretary general; strengthening policy/guideline development; and third improving information management and the development of a database. All will enhance the role of volunteers in Thai RC and as a consequence strengthen the NS itself.

### **Future priorities**

- A Red Cross youth programme is established and contributes to reduced community vulnerability
- The capacity of provincial chapters is strengthened

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- Volunteer management is strengthened and contributes to reduced community vulnerability
- Enhanced interaction between organizational entities within TRCS organizational structure; strengthened lateral and hierarchical relations
- Development of joint responsibility for operation and coordination between partners to support efficient and effective programme implementation

### Outlook

In early 2007, American RC and the Disaster Tracking Resource Assistance Centre (DTRAC) will co-host the Listening Project. It will carry out exercises to engage a broad range of local people in open-ended conversations that begin from the idea that they have been participants in and/or observers of multiple international humanitarian assistance activities that are intended to be helpful. Listening teams will talk to people who have directly received assistance or been involved in international aid efforts, as well as local staff of international or local agencies, community and religious leaders, government

officials, civil society leaders, business people, etc. In addition, they will listen to the ideas and judgments of people who have not directly received or delivered aid, but who have observed its impacts.

### Expected Outcomes

- Learning whether (or not) there are any general patterns to ideas that are heard across contexts and types of assistance.
- Analysis of the ideas and insights to discover what, if anything, they tell us about how to undertake international work more effectively.
- Possible clarification of the balance, or priority, deemed right by recipients of the material aspects of assistance with the “messages” conveyed by the way in which it is given. (For example, learning may occur around recipients’ judgments of the usefulness of participatory processes initiated by aid workers; around how recipients determine the factors that ensure aid with dignity and around the relationship of the tangible aspects of aid to the intangibles.)

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