

21st Annual Southeast Asia Red Cross Red Crescent Leaders Meeting

5-6 September 2024

Session 9 Overview

Session Title Cross-border collaboration between Thai Red Cross Society (TRCS) and Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS)	
Presenter(s) and National Society(s)	Chair(s) and National Society(s)
Thailand Red Cross Society	Myanmar Red Cross Society

Key Objectives of the Session
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Provide a brief overview of current humanitarian situation in Myanmar and background to SEANSs' support to MRCS● Present Thai RCS and Myanmar RCS binational humanitarian initiative (TRCS and MRCS)● Identify future SEANSs' actions related to the humanitarian impact of the situation in Myanmar

Background and Current Issues - Key Insights & Contextual Factors

Prior to the 19th Annual Southeast Asia Red Cross Red Crescent Leadership Meeting (5 to 6 October 2022), Brunei Darussalam Red Crescent (BDRC) proposed a plenary session on the humanitarian situation in Myanmar. During this session, chaired by BDRC, two representatives from MRCS governance presented on the humanitarian context, MRCS's capacities, operation to respond to the complex emergency, IFRC network partners, partnership with AHA Centre, challenges to the operating context, and key components of the future 2023 Unified Plan for Myanmar.

As a result of this meeting, several SEANSs offered support and resources. MRCS was tasked with drafting a proposal to be circulated to SEANSs. In late February 2023, MRCS sent a letter to SEANSs to formally request support. Subsequently, MRCS convened SEANSs to an online meeting to identify and secure resources for a planned project to respond to situations of migration and displacement in Myanmar.

In the 20th Annual Southeast Asia Red Cross Red Crescent Leadership Meeting (September 2023), hosted by Cambodian Red Cross, MRCS presented an update on its overall actions in migration and displacement followed by a discussion on humanitarian needs in country.

With IFRC technical support, MRCS enhanced its previous proposal. Now as a multi-year proposal that surpasses the identified support from some SEANSs, MRCS continues to seek resources for full project implementation. Based on discussions between MRCS and SEANSs committed to supporting the project, it was determined that a multilateral project through the IFRC would contribute to enhancing MRCS's foreseen planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting.

As a result of the discussions between SEANSs, and agreement between senior authorities of both countries in January 2024, MRCS formalized its request to TRCS to seek cross-border humanitarian assistance for IDPs. The Thai Red Cross responded positively, emphasizing their readiness to support this initiative based on the principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement the TRCS had previously coordinated and collaborated with MRCS in many humanitarian situations such as Cyclone Nargis, Cyclone Mocha, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the complex emergency in Myanmar. TRCS also provides humanitarian assistances on the Thailand side of the border such as vaccination, foods, and relief items in temporary shelters along the Thai-Myanmar border. This was part of a broader effort that included financial assistance and medical supplies from the Government of Thailand and the Thai private sector. Because of the successful outcome of Thai Myanmar Red Cross Societies bilateral works in humanitarian assistance, the two societies have even become more closer.

With the approval of the Government of Thailand for a binational initiative, TRCS confirmed that food and non-food items that would enable the MRCS to respond to the humanitarian needs of IDPs in Myanmar. Concurrently, MRCS conducted initial rapid assessments to determine which populations and locations could be reached by this principled humanitarian aid.

On 25 March 2024, TRCS provided MRCS with 4,000 relief bags, aimed to reach 20,000 people. The handover ceremony was held at the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge 2, which connects Mae Sot in Thailand and Myawaddy in Myanmar.

MRCS distributed this support in Kayin State: Nabu, Paing Kyong, and Thamanya. MRCS collaborated with local leaders and the AHA Centre monitored the distributions.

TRCS continues to provide principled humanitarian aid to people from Myanmar in Thailand. In April 2024, the TRCS reached 3,000 displaced people in temporary shelters in Mae Sot district, Tak province. The distribution was supported by local government agencies, private sectors, civil society organizations, NGOs, and local communities.

The collaboration between the Thai Red Cross Society and the Myanmar Red Cross Society has demonstrated the value of coordinated work between National Societies, as well as contributing to effective and principled humanitarian aid to people in need.