



CARE International Country overview

Thailand

Country snapshot

- Population: 63 million
- Life expectancy at birth: 69.6 years
- Adult literacy rate: 92.6%
- Access to improved water source: 99%
- GDP per capita: US\$8,677
- Infant mortality rate: 18 per 1,000 live births
- Maternal mortality rate: 110 per 100,000 live births
- HIV prevalence: 1.4%

Source: UN Human Development Report 2007/2008

Program overview

CARE's work in Thailand began in 1979, initially responding to the Cambodian refugee influx along Thailand's borders. The Raks Thai Foundation (the local name of CARE in Thailand) became a member of CARE International on January 2003, becoming the first CARE member from a developing country.

Environment and natural resources

Thailand's Northern highland areas are vital watersheds for the water that flows to the central agricultural zones and supplies the industries and bustling urban life of Bangkok. Upland communities, mostly made up of ethnic minority groups, have depended on the natural resources in these areas for generations. But cash-crop contract farming and large forest concessions to private investors are jeopardizing the future of highland communities. CARE/Raks Thai has been working for more than 20 years in Chiang Mai, Lamphoon, Mae Hong Son and Nan provinces to support sustainable agriculture practices, agro-forestry, natural resources management and education.

Health and HIV/AIDS

At the height of the AIDS epidemic in Northern Thailand in 1993, CARE/Raks Thai began the "Living with HIV/AIDS Project" to directly support individuals, families and communities affected by HIV and create a supportive social environment for affected

people. Today, CARE/Raks Thai has programs in all regions of the country working with various marginalized populations on HIV prevention, care and support for affected families, and to help fight discrimination and promote reproductive health rights. CARE/Raks Thai interventions include: direct support to individuals who are at risk of HIV infection and to families affected by HIV/AIDS; support for people living with HIV/AIDS, groups and networks; youth-initiated programs; and programs to increase access to health, and improve rights through advocacy for policy changes.

Livelihoods and micro-enterprise development

Thailand experienced a decade of rapid economic development in the 1980s, yet there continues to be more than 10 million people living in poverty, with the largest concentration of poverty in the Northeastern region. Unfavorable soil and lack of water for agriculture, limited natural resources and the distance from seaports make this area particularly vulnerable. CARE/Raks Thai programming focuses on developing livelihoods for poor rural communities through traditional occupations in cotton and silk weaving, related woven products, wood and bamboo products, pottery, and other local cottage industries. More recently, CARE/Raks Thai has supported village industries in collaborating with small-industry entrepreneurs. The range of activities includes occupational group strengthening, production skills, technique development, revolving funds and marketing skills.

Education

CARE/Raks Thai began its education program with the production of the Uncle Witty Owl magazine to encourage children to read and promote awareness of environmental and health issues. Over the past five years, CARE/Raks Thai has promoted education reform working with local teachers to develop community learning centers in general education, environmental education and occupational choice. Leadership, analytical and life skills for youth is another important programming target.

Disaster preparedness and emergency response

CARE/Raks Thai provides emergency relief and long-term rehabilitation support for victims of disasters, and works with communities to prepare for and reduce the risk of future shocks. CARE was one of the first agencies in Thailand to respond to the tsunami of Dec. 26, 2004 that killed more than 5,000 people and devastated lives, houses and occupations in six coastal provinces. In the emergency phase, CARE/Raks Thai provided shelter and medical supplies to 3,000 families. As the area began to recover, CARE shifted to rehabilitation activities such as an occupational revolving fund that has been used to help people repair occupational equipment or to develop new livelihoods. CARE/Raks Thai also supports health and psychosocial activities for villagers and youth, environmental restoration projects, and community disaster-risk management.

Major donors

Allianz, Asian Education and Friendship Association (AEFA), Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC), Canada South East Asia Regional HIV/AIDS Programme (CSEARHAP), European Commission, Ford Foundation, GlaxoSmithKline, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Government of Denmark, Heifer International, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Japan Fund for Global Environment, Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund, Krung Thai Card Public Company Limited, Merck Thailand, Rockefeller Foundation, Thailand Health Promotion Institute, Thailand Ministry of Public Health, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and private donors.

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