

## LDS Charities Project Rescues Infants

Thirty seconds after a heartfelt prayer was offered in the Latter-day Saint Charities office in Thailand, the phone rang with an answer.

Elder Robert Borden and his wife, Neva, had arrived in Thailand only a few weeks earlier in mid-April 2006 to serve as Latter-day Saint Charities country directors. Dr. Edward Kimball, a medical advisor for Humanitarian Services, had arrived in May on a short visit to help establish a Church-sponsored neonatal resuscitation training project.

However, with little time in the country and few contacts, the Bordens had not been able to find anyone with whom they could work to establish the program. Concerned about how soon Dr. Kimball would have to leave, the three knelt in prayer, asking for help to get in touch with the right people.

When the phone rang, Elder Borden answered, identifying himself as a humanitarian missionary for the Church. The caller thought he had dialed the wrong number and began to hang up. But feeling this could be an answer to their prayer, Elder Borden pleaded for him to wait and placed the phone in Dr. Kimball's hands.

Dr. Kimball explained the Neonatal Resuscitation Training (NRT) that Latter-day Saint Charities was trying to set up in Thailand. Several minutes later, Dr. Kimball hung up the phone and with his face aglow said, "We've got our champion."

The caller turned out to be Dr. Sarayut Supapannachart —Dr. Supa for short—secretary for the Neonatal Society of Thailand. With no equipment or budget, only a desire, Dr. Supa had prayed nearly every night for an opportunity to train doctors and nurses on neonatal resuscitation.

In September 2006, working with Dr. Supa, the Church sent volunteer medical specialists to train medical professionals, nurses, and even midwives in Thailand on the techniques of reviving infants who fail to establish adequate breathing immediately after birth. The program is self-sustaining, providing each health expert with the equipment to train others.

Because of Thailand's widespread population and sparse medical facilities in rural areas, the project has rescued thousands of infants. Teams for advanced-level training now exist in more than 90 hospitals and medical centers. In the first two years, more than 3,000 specialists who attend births received training as the project focused on teaching those in the poorest and hardest-to-reach provinces of Thailand. As the project spreads and gains support, Dr. Supa's goal of training 8,000 medical specialists is well within reach.

When Dr. Supa found out that medical supplies for the project, which include infant resuscitation dolls, came from fast offerings made by members of the Church, he and his colleagues at the Neonatal Society of Thailand felt compelled to pay for the translation and publication of the training textbooks needed.

“I cannot find good enough words or sentences to thank all the members of the Church who have sacrificed something to save others,” Dr. Supa wrote to Elder Wayne Facer, a humanitarian public affairs missionary in Thailand, on November 22, 2007. “Giving people money will not save their spirits, but saving their babies will ensure healthy and happy families for all and will give them the chance to have a good and fruitful life.”

The neonatal program continues to move forward in Thailand. “Train the trainers” sessions for doctors in Bangkok and midwives in the northern parts of the country took place in June 2008, under the direction of Elder Robert and Sister Theone Snow from Australia, who replaced the Bordens.

“Neonatal resuscitation is becoming the standard of care throughout all of Thailand thanks to dedicated Thai physicians who have been trained by LDS Charities volunteers who donate their time and expertise to share these life-saving skills with all those who attend deliveries,” Elder Facer said. “These are the heroes who are making this great program self-sustaining in the great land of Thailand.”

In each of the last two years 24 countries participated in the neonatal training as an ongoing initiative of the Church’s humanitarian efforts.

Debra Whipple, medical training team leader, gives neonatal resuscitation training to Thai physicians and birth attendants.