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Unifem S'pore to send team to East Timor.

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UNIFEM Singapore will send a medical and dental team to East Timor when the situation there becomes more stable, said its chairman, Dr Kanwaljit Soin.

Members of the Singapore chapter of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (Unifem) will join other non-governmental organisations involved in rebuilding East Timor.

They have been invited by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to join the effort.

The date of the mission and team strength have yet to be finalised.

Dr Soin told The Straits Times on Monday: "We would like to help the people there when the time is...right for us to go in."

Unifem aims to help poor women and children in the developing world to help themselves.

The Singapore chapter was set up in January last year. Its volunteers, from various professions including doctors and dentists, have already made six trips to Bintan island in Indonesia's Riau archipelago.

Last Sunday, an 18-member team, comprising doctors, dentists and nurses, returned home after a six-day trip to Thailand for the first time.

In this latest trip, they treated about 3,000 refugees, mainly from the Karen tribe, living in two villages near Mae Hong Son, a town in north-west Thailand.

Work done by the team included cleaning infected ulcers, treating cataracts, scabies, skin infections as well as dental treatment.

The Lee Foundation sponsored \$45,000 worth of medical and dental equipment and supplies for the trip.

Dr Soin said Unifem Singapore plans to make one big trip a year into the region and also beef up its health screening facilities.

"We also hope to work more closely with the locals to train them in simple procedures and health screening practices if they need our help."