

Indonesian Red Cross SATGANA - volunteer rapid response team

Bali October 2002: a triggered bomb ripped through a bar, driving the injured out into the street where a moment later, a second and much more powerful car bomb exploded. Scenes of horror and panic inside and outside the bars followed. The final death toll was 202. Hundreds more people suffered burns and other injuries. The Indonesian Red Cross volunteer rapid response team in Bali – SATGANA – was active almost immediately after the bombing - working at the bombsite, hospital, and morgue and in the continuing efforts of the tracing service for victims and their families.

Sumatra November 2003: a devastating flash flood, triggered by heavy rains and deforestation, hit an area about 100 km north of the Sumatran capital of Medan. The flash flood washed away more than 400 houses and caused extensive damage to a hotel, cottages, kiosks, community houses, bridges, a primary health center, and electricity and communications systems. 245 people were killed or buried alive and approximately 1300 people were displaced. The SATGANA team in Medan was engaged on the first day of the operation on search/rescue and evacuation activities, together with the local government team.

These are two examples of the situations when SATGANA - the Indonesian Red Cross volunteer rapid response team has responded. The vulnerable people are assisted by the team with; first aid, food, care, shelter and to find their relatives.

The SATGANA team

A SATGANA team is specially developed and established to participate in the disaster management in the geographical area of the individual branch. Today there are approximately 70 established teams and more are in formation. To date, the Indonesian Red Cross has trained more than 2100 SATGANA volunteers. One SATGANA Team has a minimum of 30 volunteers. It is solely managed by volunteers but coordinated by the branch that might have employed staff or not. The team is headed by a “commandant” supported by a deputy commandant and two administrators.

The other 26 volunteers are sub-grouped into different functions:

- Search and Rescue
- Evacuation and First Aid
- Social Aid, Tracing, and Messaging Service
- Health services, Sanitation and Fresh Water
- Field kitchen and Accommodation
- Relief distribution

Each sub group is headed by a group leader.



Figure 1: Indonesia, Bali October 2002.

Recruitment

The SATGANA volunteers are normally recruited out of Indonesian Red Cross existing volunteers in Korps Suka Rela (KSR - Volunteer Corps with volunteers older than 17 years) organized by branches or universities, and Tenaga Suka Rela (TSR - Professional Volunteers) such as medical doctor and nurses.

Each potential SATGANA volunteer goes through a short interview and later has to provide some additional information such as blood group, relatives etc. The information about the volunteer is kept by the recruiting branch only.

Established SATGANA teams periodically carry out cadre establishment and new recruitment, so that the numbers of volunteers remains sufficiently high.

Training

Normally the potential SATGANA volunteer has already attended some Red Cross training. In many cases, the volunteers have more than 48 hours of training that include disaster management, tracing,

and message service, first aid and evacuation. After recruitment, the SATGANA volunteer gets a specific training, in total 120 hours, facilitated by instructors from the Indonesian Red Cross, the Fire Brigade, and the government's Search & Rescue Team.



Figure 2: Indonesian Red Cross volunteers clear the debris left by the floods

Equipment

It is the responsibility of the branch to assure that the SATGANA team has adequate equipment for the individual volunteers as well as the team as a whole. The SATGANA volunteer is responsible for having a uniform in accordance with the rules and guidelines and needs to pay for it out of his own funds. A special identity card is issued by the branch and is valid for three years.

Insurance

The Indonesian Red Cross provides insurance for some of the SATGANA volunteers, but not all. The responsibility for the insurance lies mainly with the branches. Group insurance is not common in Indonesia, where insurance companies insist of having names to every policy.

Reimbursements

Reimbursements to volunteers are given for travel and on a limited basis. The volunteers normally do not have to pay for accommodation and food. This is particularly practiced during trainings. On missions, the volunteers can sometimes be given a daily allowance amounting to 35000 Indonesian Rupees (3.9 USD/4.8 CHF) per day. The funding comes from the branches and chapters.

Reflections

In recent years, the Indonesian Red Cross has invested heavily in disaster response, including in the training and equipping of the SATGANA teams. The Indonesian Red Cross has built on its strength: the existing nation-wide network of 30 chapters and 354 branches and the large number of trained volunteers from branches, as well as from universities and professional groups like, doctors and nurses. They provide a solid human resource base for disaster management.

During the last few years, and particularly after the Bali bombing and other similar situations, the SATGANA teams have proved that the concept is working. It is a well-organized concept linking systematic volunteering with disaster response involving experienced, qualified, and motivated volunteers. The Indonesian Red Cross responds quickly with well-organized trained volunteers.

However, after Bali and the bombing in Jakarta, it became clear that only experienced and trained volunteers should be engaged. Some of the experiences were too overwhelming for some volunteers. Indonesian Red Cross has therefore begun to organize psychosocial support for volunteers who are subjected to traumatizing experiences.

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