



## SOUTH/SOUTHEAST ASIA & EAST AFRICA: EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMIS

Fact sheet No. 23 – updated 15 May 2006

*This fact sheet is the third in a short series where the tsunami operation in a specific country is given particular focus.*

### Country in focus: Sri Lanka

A teardrop-shaped island in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka lies 29 kilometres from the southeastern tip of India. The country's 20.4 million population is made up of Sinhalese (74%), Tamil (18%), Muslim (7%), Burgher (1%) (descendants of Dutch and Portuguese colonists), and others. Sri Lanka is well ahead of its neighbours in terms of human development; it has one of the highest literacy rates in South Asia while life expectancy is 75 for women, 70 for men. Sri Lanka is also home to the world's first woman prime minister and president.

The island's enormous development potential has been seriously undermined by the 20-year-old civil war between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which has caused over 60,000 deaths and displaced up to 800,000 people.

Conflict-affected populations in the north and east were among those hit by the December 2004 tsunami, which ravaged almost two-thirds of Sri Lanka's coastline, killing over 35,000 people and displacing up to 500,000.

More than 5,000 Red Cross volunteers from all over the country responded, helping to rescue people, recover bodies, and distribute food, clothing, tents and other relief items. Over 20 national Red Cross Red Crescent societies are now working directly in Sri Lanka on the post-tsunami recovery and reconstruction programme. Construction of houses and hospitals, building water and sanitation infrastructure, restoring livelihoods and increasing health awareness are some of the key areas of support.

Nearly 18-months after the tsunami, over 300 projects are taking place or being planned across the country. The scale and complexity of the operation calls for strong coordination – a role the International Federation is increasingly taking on. At the moment, field representatives stationed at five points across the country are working hand-in-hand with Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SRCS) branches and partner national societies (PNS) to share information, and ensure high quality programmes that benefit the most vulnerable populations.



### Sri Lanka Red Cross – Key Facts

- ✓ First Red Cross in Ceylon was the Central council branch of the British Red Cross, formed in 1936.
- ✓ In 1949, the Central council was replaced with the "Ceylon Red Cross Society"
- ✓ The Society was renamed "Sri Lanka Red Cross Society" in 1972.
- ✓ Over 217,000 members
- ✓ Over 5,000 volunteers
- ✓ 26 branches
- ✓ The number of Sri Lanka Red Cross staff has increased six-fold since the December 2004 tsunami



*Distribution of fishing nets, boats and motors is part of the Red Cross livelihoods restoration programme. In Ampara, German Red Cross is assisting up to 300 fisher families; 45 families have already received fishing equipment.*

April 2006 saw a significant escalation in the number of killings and violent incidents reported from the north and east of Sri Lanka, which has had a substantial impact on the work of SLRCS and its partners. The situation worsened on 26 April when a suicide bombing in Colombo, targeting the Sri Lanka army commander, killed 11 people and injured 26 others. Hours after the attack, the Sri Lanka air force launched targeted air strikes on LTTE positions on the outskirts of Trincomalee district, supported by heavy weapon fire from the army and navy.

The difficult operating environment continues to severely restrict movement in certain areas, leading to the suspension of some Red Cross activities. At least 22,000 people have been displaced as a result of the air strike. Sri Lanka Red Cross and its partners have focused on assisting these internally displaced people (IDPs) through support for initial assessments, relief items and hygiene kits, and transporting injured people to hospital and health services, including first aid and mobile clinics. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Sri Lanka Red Cross maintain a permanent presence in conflict affected areas.

#### **Operational focus: Sri Lanka**

##### *Construction*

Some 2,032 houses are under construction on 74 sites across 11 districts. In the south of Sri Lanka, the Australian Red Cross is supporting construction of 42 houses; French Red Cross is funding 70 per cent of a project to build 312 houses; Belgian Red Cross Flanders is close to completing 51 two-storey twin houses; Spanish Red Cross have completed 33 houses and are working on

a further 23; Irish Red Cross is reaching roof level of eight, four-storey blocks housing 64 apartments; and Belgian Red Cross Luxemburg has finished 137 houses and is building 52 more.

##### *Health*

- Medical equipment is being purchased for three hospitals; tender procedures are underway to procure equipment for 18 other health facilities. The designs for Mirissa and Weligama hospitals have been finalized.
- Forty-eight patients from an eye screening camp in Trincomalee were referred to Kandy hospital for cataract operations; the camp, part of a Japanese Red Cross funded programme, also distributed 315 pairs of glasses.
- A mid-term review of the Red Cross psychosocial programmes in three eastern districts has highlighted the need for greater measures to prevent alcohol and other substance abuse, domestic violence and child abuse.
- In April, 348 candidates trained in basic first aid passed a countrywide first aid exam.



*More than 2,000 houses are under construction on 74 sites across 11 districts in the county.*

### *Water*

- Some 178 new houses in two resettlement areas in Galle district have been connected to the main water supply through a Federation funded project. Implemented by the National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB), the project has entailed extending the existing water supply scheme to benefit 880 people who have moved into newly built houses in Walahundoowa and Lechemee-B Estate, each located a few kilometres inland from the coast. The pipeline extensions will also provide mains water to existing villages in the area.

### *Livelihoods*

- Training has been afforded to 1,375 people in skills ranging from tiling, wall painting, landscaping, aluminium partitioning and carpentry power tools; suitable tool kits have also been provided.
- The Korean National Red Cross is supporting livelihoods restoration to 68 families through targeted distributions of bicycles, sewing machines, mobile carts, compressors and paint guns.
- Spanish Red Cross continues a cinnamon cultivation programme to boost the livelihoods of 170 small hold farmers through restoration of cinnamon trees damaged by the tsunami. Cinnamon is Sri Lanka's fourth largest export earning crop.
- A CHF 13.5 million vocational training programme was launched by Canadian Red Cross in cooperation with the World University Service of Canada to provide vocational training. Priority will be given to women, orphans and disabled youth affected as a result of the tsunami and internal conflict.
- American Red Cross has entered into a five-year long partnership with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Sri Lanka to ensure that recovery and reconstruction activities will benefit livelihoods and reduce environmental vulnerabilities in tsunami-affected communities.

### *Disaster Management*

- The Movement has responded to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Trincomalee district by providing emergency assistance to affected communities and families displaced from their homes. Items such as hygiene kits, jerry cans, mosquito coils, sleeping mats, bed-sheets and kitchen sets have been distributed to more than 400 families so far. Additional relief stocks sufficient for 1,000 families have been sent to the SLRCS Trincomalee branch from buffer stocks maintained at the Red Cross regional warehouse in Ampara.

## **Operational highlights by country**

### ***Indonesia***

- In April, relief teams from the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) and the Federation distributed 69,689 hygiene kits, 41,403 food parcels, 34,088 stoves, and 3,498 baby kits throughout the operational area.
- Offshore timber for the temporary shelter programme is arriving in significant quantities at Belawan port in Medan, at an average of 18 containers of timber per day. At 40m<sup>3</sup> per container and 1.6 m<sup>3</sup> of timber needed to clad each shelter with floors and walls, sufficient wood to complete 450 shelters is now being processed daily for delivery to operational areas. With a backlog of 7,000 completed frames (of which 1,122 have so far been clad), and a target of 20,000 shelters to be built, the programme is now entering a period of increasing activity.
- The community-based first aid (CBFA) programme is a combined PMI/Movement initiative to introduce preventative health methods and to help build local health management capacity. Within the past 30 days an orientation workshop was delivered to PMI staff and volunteers at the Federation base camp in Meulaboh and to district health officers of Aceh Barat.
- The Federation's medical logistics department has procured equipment and furniture for the first five of 15 planned *pustus* (village health post) in the Meulaboh area.
- In April, the Federation conducted a participatory hygiene and sanitation transformation (PHAST) training course for volunteers in Aceh Barat Daya district working on community-level projects for PMI, and Red

Cross societies from America, Canada and Hong Kong. The course marks a milestone as it is the first PHAST workshop delivered by Acehese PMI trainers.

- The Federation continues to support PMI's involvement in development of the national early warning system. Installation of the radio communications equipment (high and very high frequency transmitters and repeaters) has begun in 22 PMI branches in Aceh that will form an integral part of the disaster warning network.
- Integrated community-based risk reduction (ICBRR) planning is an essential aspect of the tsunami and earthquake recovery process. A further 200 PMI board members, 60 volunteers and 20 staff from seven PMI branches in Aceh, as well as 1,000 community members from 64 villages, recently received ICBRR training-of-trainers instruction as part of the Red Cross Red Crescent's ongoing disaster preparedness efforts.

### **Maldives**

- Maafushi Island: 14 houses completed and handed over; Guraidhoo Island: phase one, 35 houses completed and handed over. Guraidhoo phase two: 11 more houses are under construction; Kudahuvadhoo Island: at least 57 houses have been started on Kudahuvadhoo phase two.
- Construction has been completed for the supplementary water supply systems on Kolamaafushi and Ghadhoo islands in Gaafu Alifu Atoll. The system on Maamendhoo Islands in Gaafu Alifu Atoll is nearing completion and will be handed over shortly.
- Following the delivery of 15,496 rainwater harvesting kits to 79 islands in the Maldives, a programme is being developed together with the American and French Red Cross societies and UNICEF to increase installation rates on all the islands through community participation and education.
- Tenders were invited in April for the design of a sewer system and road network on Raa Dhuvaafaru Island. A study was also started in April to determine the feasibility of installing renewable energy systems to supplement and reduce the reliance on conventional energy systems on Raa Dhuvaafaru. The sewer system, road network and supplementary water supply systems and renewable energy will provide essential services for the 600 houses and community facilities that the Federation is constructing on R. Dhuvaafaru Island for the relocation of the Kandoludhoo people.

### **India**

- Activities under the Canadian Red Cross "Integrated project for promotion of child development" initiative have been approved and will be carried in the 13 tsunami affected villages in Tamil Nadu where CRC is currently supporting crèches.

### **Somalia**

- Information carried out during a field pre-assessment in Somaliland has helped guided the formulation of a culturally sensitive psychological support training-of-trainers workshop module for Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) staff and volunteers.
- An operating theatre table and surgical accessories were purchased for Garowe Hospital.
- Representatives from SRCS and the Federation visited the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) to share the community management model developed in Somalia with MRCS. Lessons learned from the exchange included: the use of CBFA as an entry point for all community based activities and programmes; benefit of a well structured training division to coordinate capacity building for staff and volunteers; a wide range of HIV/AIDS programmes with good peer education and referral systems.

**For more details and news stories, photos and all operational updates related to the tsunami visit:**  
<http://www.ifrc.org/tsunami>