

Tsunami two-year progress report: South Asia



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 185 countries.

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Executive summary

In the early stages of the operation, the South Asia regional delegation (SARD) played an important direct coordination role, especially in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. SARD deployed many of its staff as an interim measure for management and technical support, and facilitated the necessary administrative and human resource procedures for the deployment of other staff. Its support in disaster management, including mobilizing staff from within the region was of particular importance. Staff members were also involved in the early stages of coordination of information to the media.

After these key inputs in the initial stages, many of these responsibilities were taken over by Geneva headquarters and the Kuala Lumpur service centre as the operation developed. SARD's role moved more into technical and programmatic support in the core areas of health, disaster management (DM), organizational development (OD) and humanitarian values (HV). Some direct human resources support also continued, such as for the communication and information project in the Maldives.

Most recently (May 2006), an advocacy consultant was engaged by SARD to work on increasing integration of cross-cutting issues such as accountability to beneficiaries, community-based programmes and ensuring non-discrimination in programming – in all South Asia DM programmes, but focussing to a large extent on tsunami-affected countries.

Achievements, challenges and lessons learnt

Health and Care

The contribution of the regional health unit (RHU) to the tsunami relief and recovery operations over the last two

years has been in the areas of external coordination and representation, technical and management guidance in health programme development and implementation, as well as in strengthening country and regional emergency response capacity.

Key contributions

• Programme support and guidance -

While RHU was not involved in the emergency response, a large part of RHU inputs in the tsunami operations had been in providing technical advice to national societies (NS) and Federation country teams in the affected countries in the design and implementation of community-based health recovery programmes. Channels of communication with health managers of NS and country delegations, including partner NS, were maintained through regular visits and contacts.

In the provision of technical support, RHU had been providing moral support to health managers regarding inherent challenges in post-emergency operations.

• Coordination and representation -

Within the first few months after the tsunami, RHU represented the Federation in the World Health Organization-led regional emergency health coordination mechanism where strategies and priorities were agreed.

• Capacity building -

In the last two years, RHU has continued to involve NS and country delegations in tsunami-affected countries to participate in regional capacity building, knowledge sharing and networking activities, through regional health meetings and workshops.

RHU also contributed actively in strengthening regional emergency response mechanisms through

its participation in regional disaster response team trainings and review workshops, as well as its close work with the regional disaster management unit.

Constraints and lessons learned

Considering the scale of issues around health in the tsunami operation, further resources allocated to the unit to support this work would have been beneficial. The tsunami response regional framework (primarily to support operations in tsunami-affected countries) was used as an opportunity to initiate the creation of this capacity in the region. It is now identified as one of the two main areas for RHU programme support focus and a four-year programme framework has been developed. These regional initiatives have been recently reinforced with the adoption of a global health and care policy and strategy (2006-2010), which prominently places health in emergencies as a strategic area for the Federation.

Disaster Management

The regional disaster management unit (RDMU) has provided services to the tsunami-affected countries in South Asia – India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives – over the last two years. The RDMU support started immediately after the tsunami disaster, through the deployment of the regional disaster response team (RDRT) – nine RDRT members were deployed to the worst affected countries from the neighbouring countries in South Asia, with seven sent to Sri Lanka and two to the Maldives. The unit was continuously engaged in the recovery assessment mission, joint planning sessions with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and subsequently with a number of capacity building activities.

With the RDMU support, the national societies in the tsunami affected countries are now becoming significant parts of the regional disaster response system, which enables them to respond to multi-hazard disasters in a number of countries.

Specific contributions

- **Working with UNDP in the tsunami-affected countries -**

There was a global agreement made in Geneva between UNDP and the Federation, with a guidance note that illustrated potential areas of collaboration between the two agencies – multi hazard risk assessment, training, capacity building (particularly in early warning system) and recovery lessons learned. The RDMU put in considerable effort in implementing these agreed activities, with a series of meetings and consultations with the regional and local counterparts.

Other contributions

The RDMU provided knowledge sharing and learning opportunities to the national societies in the tsunami-

affected countries. In addition, all national societies in the tsunami-affected countries are members of the regional disaster management working group, which is a technical forum of DM practitioners engaged in developing common regional strategic directions as well as sharing experiences and knowledge.

Organizational Development

Management development

SARD organized the publication of a number of organizational development case studies, capturing the learning from the relief and rehabilitation operation. National societies across the region met and shared experiences on mobilizing resources during disasters, leading to renewed commitment to internal fundraising and new resource management plans of action.

Information and communications

Immediately following the tsunami, SARD arranged for international and local media interviews with the head of regional delegation (HoRD), the SARD programme coordinator and DM coordinator, as well as the Federation representative in Sri Lanka.

Support was provided to the India delegation on tsunami media coverage and technical support was given to the communications staff of the Sri Lanka delegation and the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS). A joint Red Cross Red Crescent tsunami communications strategy for Sri Lanka was drafted by the ICRC, the Federation and the (SLRCS), with the ICRC taking the lead on strategy production.

In the Maldives, following the success of the tsunami one-year report, jointly produced by the Maldives delegation, United Nations, World Bank and Asian Development Bank and launched at the tsunami one-year anniversary, SARD initiated and funded a tsunami recovery photo exhibition.

<http://www.ifrc.org/photo/maldives0506/index.asp>

Throughout 2006, the regional information team, through the country delegations, continued to provide technical support and capacity building/coaching, to the information officers of the national societies in the tsunami-affected countries.

Planning and reporting development

In the first year of the operation development activities concentrated on providing detailed technical support and guidance, as intensive training was not possible.

In 2006, the regional planning and reporting development project was significantly scaled up, including development of standard training materials and workshops held in India, Bangladesh and the Maldives. These efforts culminated in a regional training of trainers in December

2006. The momentum of these training initiatives will be closely followed up and built on in 2007.

Humanitarian Values

The tsunami response provided a good opportunity for the HV programme to educate new staff hired by Movement partners in India and the Maldives about the Movement. In Bangladesh, tsunami projects provided an opportunity for SARD humanitarian values (HV) programme to conduct a number of useful training sessions and workshops for the BDRCS to promote an understanding of HV. This reiterated to the BDRCS leadership the need for a HV programme and helped evolve a definition of the core area, specifically in the context of the national society. The result has been that the HV programme has progressed well in the national society, with new aspects of the programme being covered.

Because the relief operation was less intensive in Bangladesh, it was possible for work to be carried out to improve understanding of HV and how it relates to other relevant areas to improve BDRCS response to the tsunami, and for future disaster operations.

Constraints and lessons learned

Overall, a lack of preparedness in the national societies and the fact that the regional HV programme was defined only a few months before the tsunami struck, made it difficult to pursue the programme in the tsunami-affected countries.

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