



SOUTH/SOUTHEAST ASIA & EAST AFRICA: EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMIS

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Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement cooperation – fitting together the pieces of a complex humanitarian response

When major disaster strikes, the capacity of the local Red Cross and Red Crescent society to provide assistance is often stretched to breaking point. When this happens, sister national societies, the International Federation and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are often asked to provide help. The earthquake and tsunamis of 26 December 2004 were unquestionably among the most calamitous natural disasters in living memory, outstripping local national societies' ability to meet the needs of vulnerable people.



When a major natural or man-made emergency occurs, all three components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement cooperate to allow for the most efficient utilization of humanitarian resources.

From around the world, Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, the International Federation and ICRC sprang into action. More than 20 national societies established direct operations in tsunami-affected countries and almost 100 – an unprecedented number – raised funds to help survivors rebuild their lives.



This massive influx of expertise, material and financial aid provided challenges in the operational arena – in some 10 different countries with varying humanitarian requirements and sometimes unstable political environments. What is most important is that resources are best utilized to avoid gaps, duplications and culturally inappropriate aid delivery. Indeed, where many problems emerged during the very difficult early weeks of the response to the tsunami it was the communication between and the cooperation of all components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement that identified issues to be resolved and dealt with them in as timely a manner as possible.

Coordinating the resources of all representatives of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement ensures holistic aid programmes providing sustainable outcomes for tsunami-affected populations.

The need for close and effective cooperation amongst the Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies working together in tsunami-affected countries in support of host national societies fulfils two important objectives: 1) to support the host societies in the daunting task of helping to rebuild tsunami-affected lives and infrastructure and thereby build their own

capacities; and, 2) to build a working model for the future of Movement cooperation and coordination when again the world's largest humanitarian organization must respond to major natural disasters.



The widespread damage to transport infrastructure in tsunami-affected countries requires a coordinated approach to ensure the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Successful coordination between all components of the Movement ensures a holistic approach to humanitarian aid delivery and also attempts to alleviate gaps left by smaller aid organizations that leave affected areas as their resources are exhausted or their programmes completed.

After the enormously challenging initial relief phase of the tsunami operation, the importance of Movement cooperation was further highlighted as hundreds of relief and recovery projects were identified and have begun to be implemented. Without exception, all projects are being carried out in difficult and challenging environments. Logistically, the transportation infrastructure remains uncertain especially in Indonesia, with many roads still in ruin and bridges weakened by the impact of the earthquakes and tsunamis.

New challenges, new partnerships

Many of the programmes being implemented in tsunami-affected countries stem from the traditional Red Cross and Red Crescent expertise in disaster mitigation, including projects in health and care, water and sanitation and preparing communities for responding to future disasters. Other activities are relatively new endeavours for the Movement, such as the large-scale plans for permanent and temporary housing and for re-establishment of livelihoods.

Across tsunami-affected countries, Red Cross and Red Crescent partners are collaborating as consortia on specific projects. One good example of a consortium underway is the ambulance project that is building Indonesian Red Cross ([Palang Merah Indonesia](#)/PMI) capacity to deliver a vital emergency service to the communities it serves.

Before the tsunami struck, PMI used ambulances in Aceh province primarily to transport the bodies of casualties during the former conflict. With the establishment of the Movement coordination framework following the tsunami, several national societies aligned to support the development of a more broad-based PMI ambulance service, including: Australian, German, and Norwegian Red Cross societies as well as the Hong Kong branch of the Red Cross Society of China. As well, the Saudi Red Crescent and the Taiwanese Red Cross Organization donated ambulance vehicles. The lead partners for this consortium are the Australian Red Cross for Aceh and the German Red Cross for North Sumatra.

A pilot programme to build a sustainable service with properly trained personnel is now well underway in two branches: Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar. Once the programme is up and running in these two branches, the service will be expanded to Calang, Teunom, Meulaboh and Nagan Raya.

As the host national society for the Movement framework presence in Indonesia, PMI has been integrally involved throughout the planning and realization of the ambulance project, including policy development as well as practical implementation.

Meanwhile, in Sri Lanka in January 2006, British Red Cross with the [Sri Lanka Red Cross Society](#) (SLRCS) distributed 19 deep sea boats, engines and nets together with 25 shallow water vessels. The distribution was part of a larger project to hand over 61 fibre-reinforced plastic boats, 39 shallow water vessels, 83 engines and sets of fishing gear to restart fishing in Vaharai, a politically sensitive area in Batticaloa, in the northeast of Sri Lanka. The project aims to restore livelihoods of 240 tsunami-affected families and to help diversify livelihoods and empower fishermen.

Following the British Red Cross' project from its conception to implementation, it is clear to see the positive results of this internal and external coordination. An initial assessment was conducted by a British Red Cross livelihoods expert, together with the SLRCS team in Batticaloa (an important source of local knowledge) and ICRC representatives, who have valuable experience of working as an international organization in the conflict-affected north and east.

The results of the assessment were shared with the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and the lead NGO coordinating boat replacement in Batticaloa district. Affected fishing populations requiring support were identified and humanitarian teams split up to cover the needs. This coordination prevented over-distribution of boats, which may lead to over-fishing. In addition, various criteria and guidelines were established to identify eligibility for boats, to guarantee standards, consistent support and avoid any possible friction among fishing communities throughout the district.

The planned project was then discussed at the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's coordination office by technical experts from ICRC, the Federation, SLRCS and other national societies involved in boat distribution and livelihoods projects. The project had to meet certain criteria laid out in a checklist for all Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement projects – including clear identification of beneficiaries, demonstrable cost effectiveness, addressing gender and youth issues, planning for sustainability and an exit strategy. The project was approved and implementation began.

Cooperation from an early stage with ICRC, which has been working in the north and east for over 20 years, meant that possible complications transporting boat engines across conflict-affected areas were avoided.

The SLRCS staff working on the project is also getting valuable experience on how to design and implement sustainable livelihoods support programmes in cooperation with other partners (NGOs, governments, local authorities). This, combined with direct community work, is giving SLRCS greater recognition among communities at the field level. The increased skills and capacity will create a stronger SLRCS branch that will continue to operate in Batticaloa long after the international organizations and NGOs have left.

In East Africa, persistent conflicts and civil/political unrest make all operations in Somalia particularly complex, and close coordination with all Movement members is essential for effective programming and service delivery. As an example, German Red Cross was keen to work directly with the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) following the tsunami, but operational and security constraints posed some major challenges. Arrangements were made through the Movement coordination structure to work with the International Federation in supporting SRCS through an agreement to establish four new SRCS clinics in Bari region, with the Federation providing logistical, monitoring, supervision and support services. The clinics are now fully staffed, resourced and operational, providing essential health services to remote communities affected both by the tsunami and other recurrent disasters.

Latest operational developments

Indonesia

- In the transitional shelter project, 788 galvanized steel frames have been constructed to date in 23 villages, with 282 transitional houses completed with wooden walls and flooring. Timber shipments arriving in the next few weeks will provide for the construction of a further 6,300 shelter units as project implementation increases with the continuing arrival of wood.
- Revised numbers for construction of permanent homes to be built by the International Federation and its members is now 30,024 houses; 975 are presently under construction and 858 have been completed.
- The total number of beneficiaries for distribution of food and relief items in Aceh and Nias totals 668,592 individuals in 158,895 families. Distribution of 420,000 family hygiene parcels has been completed in seven operational areas (Meulaboh, Teunom, Calang, Lam No, Aceh Besar, Pidie and Lhokseumawe), with another 30,000 food parcels distributed on Nias in early February. Distribution has been completed in all operational areas of all remaining relief items from the 2005 distribution plan, including the replacement programme for 21,000 worn tents. Procurement of items for the 2006 programme has started with an initial supply of stoves, family hygiene parcels, and complementary food parcels.
- The Federation and Red Cross and Red Crescent partner national societies working in Aceh province are supporting the involvement of PMI volunteers in the fourth round of the national polio immunization campaign. Initial plans have also been made for the fifth and the sixth rounds, which the authorities foresee as necessary in an attempt to stop the spread of the polio virus in the province.
- The Federation has completed the handover from ICRC of water distribution by tanker trucks to the temporary living centres at Lhong Raya stadium for 2,000 internally displaced people. The programme deploys two water tanker trucks, each with a capacity of 8,000 litres, and a further three trucks each with a capacity 5,000 litres to provide water to the camp on a daily basis.
- A borehole has been built to feed water to an elevated 5,000-litre tank for water supply to the Olora transitional shelter settlement in Gunung Sitoli on Nias Island. As of the end of January, four ablution blocks, each consisting of four latrines, four bathing stations and four adjoining septic tanks, are now completed and functioning to serve the residents of the Olora settlement.
- Federation production of drinking water in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar continues with a daily average production of 24,000 litres of safe drinking water.
- The donation of land by local governments has made possible the construction of PMI branch offices and emergency storage facilities in 16 of 23 targeted branches. Subsequently, structural designs are in preparation for these buildings.
- Radio licenses have been obtained from the government for the relay stations in seven PMI branch offices for deployment of PMI's early warning system (EWS). The EWS project will use a combined HF/VHF radio communication system to cover all high-risk areas in Aceh and North Sumatra.

Sri Lanka

- A total of 58 sites have been identified for construction of 6,762 houses by the Federation. These sites are located throughout 10 tsunami-affected areas. In addition, 536 sites are available for reconstruction on owner's land. 1,050 houses are being constructed outside the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement framework. Over 2000 houses are currently under construction, and 167 units have been completed.
- Eight vocational training programmes are ongoing in Galle and Matara districts for 175 participants. This brings the total of completed courses to 21 with 525 people having received vocational training and a tool kit each. A total of 1,325 people will participate in the training.
- The second refresher course for existing first aid instructors was completed in Colombo in Sinhala. A further course in Tamil will be held at the end of February. The overall aim is to have trained first aid instructors for each of the 26 SLRCS branches, who will be able to train SLRCS staff and volunteers throughout the island.

- The construction of three temporary nursing schools has been completed. Each structure will accommodate 250 students in support of the Government of Sri Lanka's drive to train an additional 15,000 nurses by 2015. Construction of a permanent nursing school in Ampara is in the planning phase.
- Upgrading of sanitation facilities in transit camps in seven districts continues.

Maldives

- Nearly 14,000 rainwater harvesting kits have been delivered to 78 of the planned 79 islands, representing 99 per cent geographically and 93 per cent in terms of quantity.
- Housing construction on 50 houses is almost complete on Kudahuvadhoo, where a further 67 houses (with provision for 20 more should the need arise). The first seven of 46 houses on Guraidhoo have been completed, and 11 out of 15 planned houses have been completed on Maafushi Island. Official handover to the government will take place in late February or early March.
- The Federation has supplied material for 86 temporary shelters in phase one, and 66 in phase two for internally displaced persons.
- Dissemination teams were formed to make visits to all 20 atolls to inform island populations about the formation of the Maldives Red Crescent Society. Newly-produced information materials in the local Dhivehi language were produced and circulated.
- On 12-13 January the Movement joined together to support a public information campaign, also designed to heighten awareness of the Maldives Red Crescent Society in the capital Male. Water safety and first aid demonstrations proved popular and potential volunteers were registered.

Seychelles

- Communications equipment has been purchased which will be used for Red Cross and Red Crescent dissemination and public awareness campaigns as part of the organizational development programme.
- The headquarters staff of the Seychelles Red Cross Society paid regular visits to the branches and held orientation sessions to help make them more effective and well functioning.
- Ten fishermen were assisted with boat repair and provided fishing equipment.

Somalia

- Communities in the affected areas continued to get health care services in the 16 supported Somali Red Crescent Society clinics in Puntland (including the four newly opened clinics in Bari region).
- Planning began for a major new community-based first aid programme to be implemented this year. The objective is to empower communities to help themselves in emergencies and improve their basic health and hygiene conditions. The programme will also include a psycho-social support component.
- Full vulnerability and capacity assessment exercises in targeted regions are being planned now that all regional branches have received training in this assessment tool. Risk reduction initiatives and development of a SCRS disaster management strategy are expected to follow the trainings and exercises.

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