



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

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### Psychosocial support programmes

Psychosocial traumas are the invisible wounds suffered by many people caught in the wake of large-scale disasters. The recovery process for these traumas often takes much longer and is less visible than the more tangible physical reconstruction of homes and communities. Preparedness is vital to be able to provide quality services that address the psychosocial needs of the affected population.

Psychosocial support programmes (PSP) are an on-going process that aim to meet the mental, emotional, social and spiritual needs of individuals who have experienced deep emotional shock. To address the long-lasting and often harmful effects of trauma and stress, the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RC) psychosocial support programmes place particular emphasis on the emotional and psychological aspects of the recovery process, using creative approaches designed for different target groups to help affected people, individually and collectively, renew social interactions, and take adequate and appropriate steps to address and control their situational responses in the decision-making processes.



During the emergency phase following the tsunami, PMI Satgana (disaster response) teams recovered some 45,000 bodies from the mud and debris along Aceh's inundated west coast. Danish Red Cross PSP delegates offered psycho-social counselling to help these dedicated PMI volunteers cope with the tragedy in their midst.

Indonesia or PMI) and Federation emergency operations centre in Banda Aceh to deliver PSP services. This Movement partner set a precedent by working with PMI to start a radio programme that aired in the spring of 2005, where people phoned in to share their tsunami experiences with fellow listeners.

This initiative has evolved into "Rumoh PMI" (PMI House), a popular radio show supported by the Irish Red Cross community outreach programme.

The TRCS is making a long-lasting contribution to psychosocial well being in and around Banda Aceh with the construction of a community centre specializing in PSP services. The centre's facilities include meeting rooms, a disaster studies library and a multi-functional sports field.

A professional team has been locally hired to train PMI Aceh branch staff and volunteers to deliver psychosocial activities in their own communities.

### Indonesia

In the days, weeks and even months following the tsunami, many people in Indonesia's Aceh province showed few obvious signs of their loss and suffering. Yet, with more than 167,000 lives lost, there was not a family untouched by this sweeping tragedy.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is renowned for its effectiveness in disaster response. Less obvious, however, is the speciality of some Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in providing post-disaster psychosocial services. In Aceh, three national societies – the Turkish Red Crescent, and the American and Danish Red Cross Societies have been playing a lead role providing psychosocial support.

On 3 January 2005, just days after the tsunami struck – a Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) psychosocial support programme (PSP) team arrived at the joint Indonesian Red Cross (Palang Merah

Activities include handicrafts, computer literacy and language training, as well as health-related courses such as psychological first aid, maternal child care and personal hygiene – to reintroduce a sense of normalcy and opportunity into the lives of people affected by the tsunami. One of the TRCS most effective outdoor courses was “nature is still my friend”, where children cleared debris from the shoreline to help overcome their fear of the sea.

The PSP community centre built, equipped and staffed by TRCS will be officially handed over to PMI on 26 December 2006 to commemorate the 24-month mark after the tsunami.

The Danish Red Cross (DRC) is well-known for its PSP expertise. During the tsunami emergency response phase in Aceh, the DRC focused their efforts on assisting people in the hard-hit towns of Meulaboh and Teunom. The DRC’s practical approach to help communities return to a sense of well-being included the provision of school kits for children as well as the construction of traditional *meunasa* (gathering places), and livelihood-based establishments of coffee shops and tea stalls for social interaction.

In the current recovery phase, DRC is conducting a well-planned programme for introducing PSP techniques into schools. Beginning by gaining acceptance from school authorities, the DRC then works with local PSP specialists to prepare teachers for delivering PSP-related curricula (inventing games, acting-out plays and drawing). This approach recognizes that teachers are often best placed to identify individual cases that need special attention for onward referral to professional counsellors.



Children traumatized by the tsunami gather outside their school for a "drawing picnic" where they create a collective mural that helps them express their feelings and also reinforces a sense of cooperation amongst them.

DRC is also making a strategic contribution to the development of PSP capacities of PMI. DRC support of PMI PSP began six months prior to the tsunami, responding to an initial expression of interest from PMI, and has continued with assistance in the development of a standardized PSP training curriculum for PMI volunteers, including the Satagana disaster response teams positioned in PMI branches across the archipelago.

The American Red Cross (ARC) is also working with PMI to build the national society’s PSP capabilities. PMI staff and volunteer training programmes are underway in the Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar branches, and are expanding to include the Calang branch in Aceh Jaya district.

The ARC’s collaboration with PMI allows them access to schools, where teachers are trained to deliver PSP-related creative and expressive activities such as drawing, mural painting, traditional dancing and team sports, with the intent to help traumatized children express their anxieties in safe and accepted ways.

One innovative activity is the preparation of a school-based disaster response plan by teachers together with their students, which involves risk assessment and evacuation routes, as well as physical and psychological first aid.

A third component of the ARC programme is an effort to help rebuild the community’s social fabric – to address the disruption of traditional support systems. Activities include the facilitation of burials according to local customs and the subsequent grieving process and related rituals, as well as the establishment of informal education so that school dropouts and students needing remedial teaching can have a safe alternative to continue their learning.

Psychosocial support training is now an integral part of PMI’s disaster preparedness programme. There is much work ahead to maximize PMI’s capacity for delivering PSP as an integral part of disaster recovery throughout PMI’s branches in all 33 Indonesian provinces.

## Sri Lanka

Providing knowledge and skills for the effective implementation of community-based PSP to affected populations is an essential part of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement's activities in Sri Lanka.

In the days and weeks following the tsunami, Red Cross and Red Crescent psychosocial support staff visited dozens of schools and affected populations in Sri Lanka to help people overcome their emotional trauma.

American Red Cross (ARC), in cooperation with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS), is running school and community-based psychosocial programmes in the south of the country.

Because of the sheer number of students needing assistance, Red Cross staff began training teachers in psychosocial first aid - how to identify common stress reactions, how to help people open up without pressuring them and how to listen, comfort and help people deal with their emotions. So far, 75,000 people have benefited from these activities, which also includes renovating community centres, training community volunteers as PSP facilitators, and developing community maps to identify and prioritize community resources and risks.

In order for this type of psychosocial first aid to be most effective people must have opportunities to express themselves, With the help of SLRCS, ARC is working with the Ministry of Education to train hundreds of pre-service teachers at the Kalutara National Teacher's College in south west Sri Lanka. This collaboration aims to encourage a shift in attitudes, from merely relaying information to developing information with students, and to make an impact on the education system as a whole.



The tsunami had an enormous negative psychological impact on survivors. Volunteers from Sri Lanka Red Cross gave psychosocial support to children affected by the tsunami. children are between 5 - 16 years of age.

The training programme has seen teachers adapt their role to better observe and communicate with students and in turn to help students express themselves better. The ministry of education has been impressed with the early results and the Red Cross has been asked to expand its programme to cover the 17 teacher's colleges across the country. Over the next three years, the programme will train over 2,200 teachers, and because it is taking place within the teacher training colleges, the impact on the education system will be long lasting and sustainable.

In June 2006, the Danish Red Cross (DRC) and SLRCS launched a schools-based psychosocial training manual, "We Are Little Children" that has been translated into Sinhala, Tamil and English.

The manual is designed as a practical training guide for teachers to support psychosocial well-being of children and has been approved by the Academic Affairs Board of the Sri Lanka National Institute of Education. The manual aims to increase children's natural resilience in everyday life by involving their teachers and family members in structured extra curricular activities such as plays, games and creative arts.

The DRC has extensive psychosocial experience in Sri Lanka. In the months following the tsunami, PSP teams working in the north and east of the island made more than 150,000 contacts with people affected by the tsunami and by conflict. Currently in Jaffna district, 2,901 children and their parents have been participating in a project to improve the psychosocial and physical well-being of school children affected by armed conflict in the area. The children actively participate in psychosocial and preventive health workshops after school and their skills in creative-expressive activities have improved.

As a result of this initiative, positive feedback has been received from teachers and parents that attendance at school is more regular and children are more attentive.

As the security situation in the north of Sri Lanka remains unstable, it is difficult to ensure regular attendance in the workshops both by beneficiaries and project staff. For the time being, all project activities have come to a standstill and it is currently not possible to be certain when project activities will resume.

The Canadian Red Cross (CRC) has responded to the psychosocial and health needs of people affected by disaster in Sri Lanka through a comprehensive, community-based approach that focuses on creating safe environments for children and families. Through SLRCS community health networks and partnerships with community agencies, CRC is building individual, family, and institutional and community capacity to prevent and manage psychosocial impact from crises and adverse situations. In accordance with RC/RC initiatives, the CRC regards PSP work as a priority and is committed to taking a long-term approach.

Based on community consultations, the main activities of the CRC-supported SLRCS volunteers in Galle, Anuradhapura, Vavuniya and Polonnaruwa districts have included:

- Psychological first aid training
- Child protection
- Family violence prevention
- HIV/AIDS prevention
- Suicide prevention
- Community enhancement

Together with SLRCS, the Canadian Red Cross has reached approximately 10,000 affected people, helping to provide them with PSP knowledge, skills and resources.

### **Maldives**

Within days of the tsunami the American Red Cross, in partnership with UNICEF and the Government of the Maldives, began providing psychosocial support to survivors on islands across the Maldives. In the first three months, the programme focused on helping survivors cope with the emotional impact of the disaster.

Emotional support brigades were established on 23 islands and trained counselors dispatched to provide psychological support services to over 22,000 people. Hundreds of teachers were trained to provide psychological first aid and to lead creative and expressive activities to help students share their grief.

Many of them used large “school kits” which contained much-needed supplies for lessons and creative activities.

Since the emergency phase, the programme has expanded to include schools and communities on 80 islands in the most tsunami-affected atolls of: Laamu, Meemu, Thaa, Dhaalu, Gaafu Alifu and Gaafu Dhaalu. The programme is successfully bringing people together to rebuild their lives and their communities by:

- addressing survivors’ psychological state and re-establishing normal social networks and activities within the community: 25 volunteers from two islands in Laamu Atoll have been trained to convene community representatives, identify challenges facing the community and then mobilize residents to address the identified needs
- fostering cooperation between island communities to address common needs for livelihoods, health care, education and transportation. A particular challenge is working to integrate displaced and host communities.
- helping the Maldivian government develop its own long-term psychosocial support programme: 69 volunteers from various government agencies involved in emergency response have been trained and a referral system for mental health and social protection issues has been initiated together with UNICEF and government.
- learning successful approaches and tools to promote psychosocial well-being that can be shared with other humanitarian agencies and countries, and applied in the event of future disasters.

Over the next three years, the project will directly benefit 50,000 teachers, students and community members, helping them recover from the tsunami and preparing them to meet future challenges.

### **Operational highlights**

#### **Indonesia**

- Relief activities in all operational areas have been completed. In response to a special relief request by the PMI Aceh Selatan Branch, a further 200 hygiene parcels and 50 family tents have been distributed from remaining stocks for families affected by a recent flash flood in Labuhanhaji Timur sub-district.
- 600 training manuals have been distributed to strengthen branch capacities in health programme in Aceh and North Sumatra provinces. The content includes curricula on: first aid; family care; peer education; community health; life skills and the standard community-based first aid (CBFA) programme.
- The PMI/Federation water and sanitation (watsan) team continues its support of the Banda Aceh municipal water utility (PDAM). Current monthly production is averaging 8.21 million litres of safe drinking water in tankers to 29 distribution points.
- Watsan programme activities continue to meet immediate local needs and to strengthen community capacities. In Bireuen district on Aceh's east coast, the Federation is constructing rain water harvesting systems and drilling boreholes to access groundwater sources. A further 500 sets of latrines and septic tanks are being distributed and installed in Bireuen.
- A watsan project is well underway on Pulau Weh, an island just offshore from Banda Aceh. Activities include: construction and rehabilitation of wells; installation of latrines, washing areas, bathing facilities and rain water harvesting systems in nine villages benefiting some 3,600 residents.
- To date, the Transitional Shelter programme has progressed with the Federation constructing 13,046 galvanised-steel frames, with 11,177 of those now clad with timber for walls and flooring. Some structures have been completed and beneficiaries have moved in.

#### **Sri Lanka**

- The Federation and its partners have mobilised relief items from three strategically placed warehouses in Galle, Colombo and Ampara for civilians displaced from the conflict in the north and east of the country. The Federation has started procurement of an additional 14,500 hygiene kits to replenish its stocks and to support further ICRC distributions. See [http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf\\_appeals.pl?rpts06/SLcf01090603.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?rpts06/SLcf01090603.pdf) for further details.
- Construction of 3,893 houses is ongoing. So far, Red Cross Red Crescent partners have supported construction of 4,165 houses across 11 districts.
- Construction is almost complete on an Australian Red Cross funded water-supply project in Hambantota district, which will provide piped water to a pre school and 400 families living in Seenimodara and Moraketiya. The project has involved construction of a 100,000 litre capacity water tower, a 50,000 litre ground water collection tank, over 10km of high quality polyethylene piping for water delivery to each house and a high tech, low cost water treatment plant.
- Hospitals, supported by the Italian and German Red Cross societies, are providing badly needed emergency medical care to civilians affected by hostilities. At Vaharai hospital in Batticaloa district Italian Red Cross and ICRC, with support from SLRCS, are providing treatment to around 200 patients per day. In Mullaitivu district, a German Red Cross medical team is treating conflict-related injuries. ICRC is providing emergency medical supplies and the team will also be working in Kilinochchi hospital for two days per week. These two national societies have been involved in post tsunami recovery and rehabilitation and German Red Cross has initiated a three year capacity building programme in Mullaitivu involving training for medical staff, maternity care, general medical care and minor surgery.
- Ongoing livelihoods projects include an Irish Red Cross funded IT training programme for 200 school leavers and young adults with basic computer skills and English language knowledge, to improve their employment prospects. Japanese Red Cross is supporting a livelihoods project, training 150 women as nurse assistants and in the use of industrial sewing machines. The district involved has an industrial zone and several garment factories, as well as a high density of nursing homes.

#### **Maldives**

- On the island of Dhuvaaafaru, foundations for 206 out of the 600 homes have been laid, and block work for 110 of the homes has been completed
- Families from the displaced community of Gemendhoo have moved out of transitional shelters into the first 50 homes on Kudahuvadhoo
- The final 11 houses on Guraidhoo are almost ready and will be handed over to the community in the first week of October.

- The Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (VCA) carried out with islanders from Meedhoo and Maduvvari have been translated into Divehi and validated by the communities, allowing them to move ahead with drawing up their plans to address their vulnerabilities
- Construction of Supplementary Water Supply Systems (SWSS) are now complete on four islands in Raa and Baa atolls. Onsite training of the operators for the systems has begun and initial community discussions have been held to discuss the possibility and feasibility of installing a SWSS system
- The Federation construction delegate and a government representative took part in a phone-in radio programme on the “Voice of Maldives” as part of efforts to increase communication with beneficiaries

***For more details and news stories, photos and all operational updates related to the tsunami visit:***

***<http://www.ifrc.org/tsunami>***