



SOUTH/SOUTHEAST ASIA & EAST AFRICA: EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMIS

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Reducing Disaster Risks through Support to Livelihoods



Villagers plant a green fence to protect new mangroves from foraging animals. Other than helping to buffer coastal areas against high tides and strong winds, these mangroves are often linked to livelihood activities, as they can be fertile nurseries for shrimp and crabs. Federation/ Vina Augustina.

Livelihoods recovery in relation to disasters is often spoken of in a reactionary way: a post-emergency effort that helps people generate income for better economic self-sufficiency.

However, livelihoods support can also relate to disaster risk reduction in a number of ways. Helping people secure stable or diversified income that can withstand disaster threats means they have better control over their lives despite suffering endured. Putting in place sustainable mechanisms that enable people to recover quickly from livelihood losses can mitigate the damaging effects of natural catastrophes. In the meantime, some initiatives that aim to make communities and their environment less susceptible to disasters serve to protect their livelihoods at the same time. Participatory approaches are often used to involve the entire community in identifying the beneficiaries and directing the interventions to reduce potential tensions between those who receive assistance and those who do not.

In the tsunami recovery operation of the Movement, livelihoods programmes are an opportunity to bridge the gap between relief, recovery and development in anticipation of the next disaster. For a family, the first few weeks or months following a disaster are a period of meeting basic needs such as food, health care and shelter. As time passes, programmes that restore productive assets lost and help people get back to work ensure they regain dignity and are in command of their lives again. Sometimes, socio-economic changes brought about by large disasters such as the 2004 tsunami need to be adapted to. Old pursuits, such as agriculture on land that is now damaged permanently by seawater, may no longer be viable and programmes have to introduce new livelihood opportunities.

Ultimately, a steady stream of income that translate into savings or a range of assets equals safer and more resilient families, and therefore communities, which are better able to withstand external threats.



Indonesia: integrating livelihoods with disaster risk reduction



Fisher folk receiving deep sea boats will also be given equipment that will help reduce disaster risks in the open ocean. Federation/ Vina Augustina.

The Movement has established an integrated community-based disaster risk reduction programme, which also includes livelihood support. This is because disaster risk reduction initiatives can enhance sustainable livelihoods (see below for examples). In turn, implementing strategies focused on disaster risk reduction using the livelihood framework ensures better buy-in from the community. These communities are more willing to invest their time and effort in disaster mitigation projects.

A good example of this activity is the mangrove-planting project carried out by the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) together with the Australian Red Cross along the east coast of Simeulue Island. The project was carried out through a cash-for-work scheme, which provides income for the community involved in the mangrove planting. Originally, the mangrove plantations were developed to reduce the risks from high tides and strong winds. However, their function went beyond the risk reduction agenda. It was found that the community could use the coastal areas under the mangroves plantation to cultivate crab and shrimp. Hence, the project not only provided a short-term source of income, but also introduced a new livelihood option while addressing the risk of high tides and strong winds.

The British Red Cross is implementing some projects such as the building of dikes in some communities in Aceh Besar and Aceh Jaya. Another project the British Red Cross intends to embark on is the building of a flood channel in Pulo Nasi to help drain rainwater in the sea and prevent the paddy lands from being flooded. Both of these projects generate cash for work opportunities that benefit the individual. In the long term, these activities will lead to employment opportunities for in community members and support agriculture.

Another project that demonstrates an integrated approach is the PMI, Federation and Belgian Red Cross project to construct deep-sea boats for fisher folk in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar. Realizing that the recipients of the deep-sea boats have very little knowledge on disaster risk reduction, the Movement provided the fishers with navigation system equipment, radio communications and safety kits such as life jackets as part of a disaster awareness programme.

Maldives: communities know who are the most vulnerable

Two of the most important industries in the Maldives, tourism and fishing, suffered significant damage in the tsunami disaster. In addition to the loss of tourism, fishing equipment and agricultural land, many families also lost their entire life savings. Helping thousands of Maldivians to get back to work and providing possibilities to build resilience through new income generating activities is a critical task.

The approach to livelihoods work in the Maldives is an approach of sustainable livelihoods, one that aims to reduce vulnerability and provide better coping mechanisms in case of future disasters. This type of approach naturally requires a thorough identification of vulnerabilities. The French Red Cross and the British Red Cross are using a variety of participatory methodologies to map out and identify the most vulnerable households in the need of livelihoods support.

One of these approaches used by the French Red Cross is a participatory well-being ranking, where community volunteers review every household and give the households points based on agreed criteria (e.g. household items, health care, food consumption). Every household is assessed and ranked according to the criteria and



This woman demonstrates the use of her new sewing machine, which will help her generate an income. Federation.

and



the most vulnerable households are chosen for the assistance. This type of review naturally requires a lot of work done by volunteers; in the case of the French Red Cross programme, the community volunteers reviewed 400 households using ten criteria and identified 120 families who were in the most urgent need of assistance.

An essential benefit of the participatory process is that the community itself, through the volunteers, identifies the most vulnerable. This way they also accept the selection and feel that the right people are receiving the support. In the case of the French Red Cross project, beneficiary names were posted for one week for everyone's review and only a couple complaints or clarifications were made about the selection.

The selected families have now prepared proposals of what they would like to purchase with the proposed USD 400 (CHF 492) per household to improve their livelihoods. They also outline what they can contribute to the project and what type of support they would need. To date, the majority of the planned projects are sewing related, but there are also projects such as carpentry, small bakery and agriculture. Diversifying income sources of the households also builds resilience and helps the families to cope with sudden changes and disasters.

The British Red Cross is also implementing participatory approaches for the livelihoods grants programme. The programme is based on a variety of participatory assessments such as situational analysis and wealth ranking. Partner representative steering committees, consisting of community volunteers, have played an important role in the community based process. They assist in verifying information and preparing proposals for support as well as informed and consulted the communities. To date, the British Red Cross has distributed over USD 340,000 (CHF 418,200) to individuals, informal groups and organized community entities (such as cooperatives) in three different types of grants.

In addition to financial support, British Red Cross provides training opportunities to people who would like to improve their skills in relation to their livelihoods. This capacity building will help for example small businesses to manage their business more efficiently or improve the tailoring skills of a sewing cooperation. The acquired skills will help to build the livelihoods and improve the community members' possibilities to cope with shocks to their environment.

Sri Lanka: security for the entire community

In Sri Lanka, the Red Cross Red Crescent's livelihoods projects are supporting at least 15,000 households all over the country.

Understanding people's vulnerability context in order to protect and strengthen assets, capacities and resources has led to livelihood projects that are more integrated and holistic. These are initiated through participatory vulnerability and capacity assessments (VCA), a tool used by the Red Cross Red Crescent worldwide for more than 20 years. The VCA are conducted to identify priorities, vulnerabilities and existing capacities within the community, which are then used to design integrated interventions that benefit the entire community. Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) volunteers often play a vital role, working within their own communities to direct and provide inputs into the activities.

Another step towards a holistic approach is livelihoods support provided with the construction programme to both resettled and surrounding host communities. Such support promotes social cohesion and improves future occupancy rates of the housing sites, as it helps people feel more integrated into the structures and systems of the relevant community, making families more likely to stay in their new location. By working to prevent conflict, the Red Cross Red Crescent will ensure that new



A recipient of the Red Cross Red Crescent livelihoods programme in Ampara receives cattle as part of an asset replacement project. Federation.



tensions are not created and those that already exist in communities are not worsened by the interventions. This is in line with the humanitarian principle of 'do no harm'.

For those families that are being relocated inland to new houses, traditional patterns have been disrupted, particularly for environment-dependant occupations such as fishing. Therefore, there is a need to support these families to strengthen and/or diversify their existing livelihoods. Inequities that can arise from such targeted assistance are addressed through other forms of support to the entire community and not just the new settlers. Such support could range from infrastructure, water, sanitation, and health to community development.

In addition, communities organize and manage grants and income sources to pursue communal priorities and assist households that are made vulnerable suddenly through events such as fires or death of the family's breadwinner. In this instance, the community would use criteria that have been agreed with the Red Cross Red Crescent to provide such households with specific livelihoods support.

Ultimately, the aim the tsunami livelihoods programme in Sri Lanka is to build economic security and so reduce risk to disasters at the communal, household and individual level by strengthening assets and income generation opportunities.

Operational Highlights

In Sri Lanka:

- An external livelihoods review was conducted in July 2007 to examine the relevance of livelihoods approaches taken across relief, recovery and long-term development phases following the tsunami. In addition, the review sought to examine and recommend livelihoods entry points to strengthen and mainstream integrated and participatory approaches into SLRCS core programming areas.
- The Red Cross Red Crescent constructed or co-financed the completion of 9,914 homes. A further 9,996 houses are at various stages of construction. In the month of July, 122 completed houses on four different sites were handed over to beneficiaries in Kalutara and Matara.

In Indonesia:

- Since 2005, approximately 80,000 mangroves have been planted in three villages in Simeulue Timur sub districts under the PMI and Australian Red Cross project.
- Up to 255 fisher folk will benefit from the construction of 17 deep sea boats under the PMI, Federation secretariat and Belgian Red Cross project.

In Maldives:

- The French Red Cross has identified 120 families who will receive assets to improve livelihoods.
- A community nursery and learning centre, supported by French Red Cross, provides people with a possibility to broaden livelihoods into agriculture.
- Training-of-trainers in specialized tailoring is being provided to a community group, while business planning capacity building is being given to partner representative steering committees.
- Federation Secretariat handed over 59 completed houses to families in Kudahuvadhoo.
- Two supplementary water supply systems (desalination units), built by the Federation secretariat, were handed over to communities.
- German Red Cross and Australian Red Cross completed their operations (rehabilitating health facilities and waste management programme) and closed their offices in the Maldives.

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