



SOUTH/SOUTHEAST ASIA & EAST AFRICA: EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMIS

Fact sheet No. 36 – updated 9 Aug 2008

BENEFICIARY COMMUNICATION

Introduction



The International Federation's recovery officer engages on a group of women from the IDP community on Meedhoo Island. Safwan Amjad/International Federation.

From the very onset of the tsunami response, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has maintained the importance of communication, that programmes will only succeed when beneficiary needs and opinions are accounted for.

Programmes in the tsunami affected countries are now proceeding into the fourth year, but till today, the voices of those directly or indirectly benefiting from them continue to be heard by the Red Cross Red Crescent.

Indonesia: Putting the 'customers' first

In April, a group representing the community of Aceh Barat district traveled to Banda Aceh to meet and convey to BRR¹ their disappointment in a programme. The demonstration continued for a few days until the Irish Red Cross offered to facilitate a session via radio, giving the community and BRR an opportunity to find solutions. The discussion led to a commitment by BRR to pursue the matter with a higher authority, which culminated in a satisfactory to the beneficiaries.

¹ BRR is the agency for rehabilitation and reconstruction of Aceh and Nias (*Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi Aceh dan Nias*)

The is one example of the Irish Red Cross' efforts in improving beneficiary communication. It is the only partner national society with a programme specifically addressing beneficiary communication; community outreach. One of the activities in this programme is a radio session which broadcasts on-air live discussions, bi-weekly dramas and daily public service announcement on various topics.



Irish Red Cross held an 'Information Day' to target students and their parents, and beneficiaries of secondary education cash assistance programme (SECAP) to regularly remind them of the importance of the programme and the programme's procedures. International Federation/Vina Agustina.

the team received 11 calls and 38 text messages from 49 clients, whereas in July this year, 3,530 clients have conveyed their messages via numerous text messages, phone calls, email, letters to dedicated post office box, Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) staff/volunteer and even fax.

Radio broadcasting is only one of many tools used by the International Federation in beneficiary communication. Communication to beneficiaries is an integral part in many projects implemented by the Red Cross and Red Crescent. In the transitional shelter programme, the International Federation and its implementing partners brought local communities together and informed them on the nature of the programme and its implementation. Furthermore, the communities were involved in the construction of the shelters and even supervision of the construction processes. This involvement has created a sense of ownership towards the programme and the shelters, as demonstrated by their active participation in the rebuilding and maintenance of their new homes. Similarly, in the water and sanitation projects of the International Federation, communities are involved in the planning and implementation process, creating an environment supportive to the programme and its sustainability.

Sri Lanka: Participatory approach towards a defect free execution of programmes

The beneficiary is the most significant part of a project. In the execution of projects in Sri Lanka, beneficiary participation is evident right from the planning stage. It has facilitated the project planners to identify the requirements of the community with regards to specific sectors.

The shape of the project is often designed based on the needs of beneficiaries. Every aspect of a project is planned so that the requirements of beneficiaries are met by project activities. The end-result is always the satisfaction of beneficiaries whose needs are adequately fulfilled. The importance of communication with beneficiaries leads to the planning stage of a project. They are consulted before all infrastructure works commence. They participate in community meetings concerning hygiene promotion and other related aspects. The formation of water user groups is evident for transparency of project implementation with constant community participation. The water user group of

Dickwella and Weligama in Matara district in the southern coast of Sri Lanka is one of those examples. During the phase of implementation, water and sanitation issues are discussed at the beneficiary meetings. The “cash for works” system enables beneficiaries to be directly engaged into the activities where they take part the implementation and communicate with authorities and fellow beneficiaries.



Fertilizer distribution for cinnamon farmers, Galle. International Federation.

phase of implementation, constant contacts and communication with beneficiaries are very useful for a satisfactory and defect free execution. It facilitates the benefactors, within the operation, for a transparent and joint function rather than being unilateral.

The frequent contact and communication with beneficiaries are further enhanced with psychosocial support projects. To reduce mental trauma, creative activities and psychosomatic communication are importantly prioritized. This includes people regardless of age, sex, religion, race etc. The activities organized on cultural, religious and seasonal occasions are evident in various places. The children's clubs, community facilitator trainings, women's groups and community volunteers ensure a proper beneficiary participation.

With the intention of improving the health of people, all community-based health and health infrastructure project activities are designed and implemented in a participatory approach. The awareness programmes and other related training are given to beneficiaries with their full participation. The local health authorities are actively participating in all phases of the project cycle with required support and advices.

With reference to livelihood projects - aimed to enhance the capabilities of people and their means of living including food, income and assets – the beneficiary participation can be discussed at different phases. It is originally linked with the initial stage of the projects. The consultations with beneficiaries are arranged through meetings and focus group discussions to explain and inform the project objective/s and for conducting household livelihoods needs assessments. It enabled the highlight of requirements of the community for a satisfactory achievement.

The establishment of the Farmer Organization is a good step in the livelihood sector in relation to beneficiary participation. The Cinnamon Farmer Organizations in Balapitiya, Hikkaduwa and Ahungalla in Galle district, are important. At monthly meetings in each Cinnamon Farmer Organization, the farmers discuss their worries and their needs and they propose recommendations and possible solutions.

The cash for work system in which the beneficiaries are paid, financially, for helping clean up their communities reflects the clear participation of beneficiaries. The post of community supervisor is a direct result of beneficiary

participation. The beneficiaries selected for the projects elect the community supervisors who assist the staff of national society to implement the projects.

In the context of disaster management, direct communication to beneficiaries has been major in the implementation phase. This includes the general public, school students and teachers and related government authorities. The disaster awareness and training programmes have been common features with fine participation of beneficiaries. The theoretical and practical knowledge required for disaster management is given to beneficiaries. The formation of village disaster response teams, community disaster response teams, village disaster management committees and branch disaster response teams have been practical and result-oriented examples of beneficiary participation.

Maldives: Bridging the gap and separating genuine concerns from rumours

During the early stages of implementing tsunami recovery programmes in the Maldives, it became evident that beneficiary participation was inadequate, partly due to communication gaps. Members of the affected communities were not receiving clear information about housing and water and sanitation projects that were being implemented to their benefit.

With other smaller projects completed and handed over, focus in 2008 shifted to the Dhuvaafaru Island project. Beside the technical complexities, the logistical challenges and the time required to build this new settlement, a major challenge emerged in the form of tensions between host and the internally displaced persons communities. The information gaps that existed resulted in confusion and frustration, and in part led to tensions, as well as misunderstandings between these communities, the International Federation and the concerned government bodies.



A member of the internally displaced people community peruses his copy of the bi-monthly newsletter. Safwan Amjad/International Federation.

Originally, island offices were mandated to manage the needs of tsunami-displaced populations. The officials [mainly chiefs and their assistants] had no prior experience of such a situation and had not received any special training in how to handle it. Lines of authority were also unclear between local officials and officials of the communities that had been displaced from other islands. The result was insufficient attention to the specific needs of both communities, a lack of understanding of individual island communities' sensitivities, and under-reporting of incidents of conflict between host and displaced communities.

Originally, island offices were mandated to manage the needs of tsunami-displaced populations. The officials [mainly chiefs and their assistants] had no prior experience of such a situation and had not received any special training in how to handle it. Lines of authority were also unclear between local officials and officials of the communities that had been displaced from other islands. The result was insufficient attention to the specific needs of both communities, a lack of understanding of individual island communities' sensitivities, and under-reporting of incidents of conflict between host and displaced communities.

Additionally, the lack of a strong tradition of local organization and participation in the development process at community level made effective communication and conflict resolution – with both the displaced and the host communities – more difficult. This was, to some extent, compounded by the situation where some officials [at both national and local levels] did not adequately provide clear, timely information to the communities. Instead of raising their concerns with the relevant authorities, several members of the internally displaced people community expected the International Federation to advocate on their behalf. This resulted in a situation where the International Federation was at times blamed for matters which did not come within its remit.

In light of the challenges highlighted above, ways were sought to stimulate greater community participation by promoting five-pronged communication between internally displaced people communities, host communities, island authorities, the government and the International Federation. A community involvement plan was prepared, whose implementation was to be led by the 'recovery' team. This team was to play a community liaison role, among others.

Operational Highlights

Indonesia

- The Indonesian Red Cross (Palang Merah Indonesia/PMI) conducted a series of activities to celebrate World Red Cross Day. Focusing on a climate change related theme, with support of some partner national societies, PMI distributed stickers and pins with messages on the climate change issue. Hundreds of people from Red Cross Youth, volunteers and the public participated in the event. In addition, the Red Cross Red Crescent held a photo exhibition, a singing and first aid competition to celebrate the day.
- In recognition of the International Sanitation Year 2008, PMI and the International Federation held a hygiene promotion campaign by screening movies with health messages in 40 villages of Jangka and Gandapura sub-district in Bireun. Hundreds of people participated in the activity. This event was held as part of the Federation's exit strategy in the Bireun district water and sanitation project.
- PMI and the Swiss Red Cross have completed the reconstruction of Inshafuddin Islamic boarding school in Banda Aceh. The school has 12 classrooms, two laboratories, two teacher rooms and two administration rooms, a kitchen with dining hall, one library, multi-purpose hall, dormitories for both teachers and students and also a flat for a caretaker. More than 200 students and 10 teachers benefit from the facility.
- Two PMI offices have been handed over to PMI Aceh Tengah and Bener Meriah branches. The offices are built on a 280 metre square land provided by the Federation. The fully equipped facility supports the PMI branches in implementing their humanitarian operation in their respective areas.
- PMI and French Red Cross have completed their largest tsunami operation located in Pidie district. Thousands of people have benefited from houses, schools, livelihood and water and sanitation projects. The French Red Cross will continue its support to PMI with a disaster management programme in Bener Meriah.
- British Red Cross has closed down all of its activities at the end of June 2008. It has completed its recovery programmes in Aceh Besar and Aceh Jaya.
- The German Red Cross has completed 628 houses in Calang and will hand them over to PMI Aceh Jaya Branch office in a ceremony to be held beginning of July. The ceremony marks the milestone of total 1,499 houses completed by the German Red Cross. Hand in hand, PMI and German Red Cross are committed to rehabilitate and reconstruct targeted communities' houses, schools and health facilities in Pulau Sabang and Aceh Besar.
- PMI Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar branches with support of the Australian Red Cross continue to coordinate the response to accident and disasters in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar. The joint exercise team extended the coordination level by involving the national rescue team, fire brigade, amateur radio organization and the police department. To evaluate the exercises, establish the efficiency of the system and introduce this



Red Cross Youth in Banda Aceh march to campaign on climate change. International Federation/Vina Agustina.

cooperation to the broader communities, the PMI and its partners hold one accident/disaster simulation every six month.

- PMI and Irish Red Cross handed over 100 meter square reservoir and permanent water system to the community in Dayah Mamplam village, Leupung sub district, Aceh Besar.

Sri Lanka:

- 60 community water committees in Polhena, Paramulla, Madiha East, Madiha West, Suduwella, Kottegoda, Beliwatta, Denuwala, Paranakade areas, in the southern coast of the Matara district were formed.
- The Onchiliya Watta housing site in the Kalutara District, is a reconstruction in own land with full participation of beneficiaries. The beneficiaries select the house designs and comment on specific desire regarding design and participate fully in construction.
- 160 community volunteers have been trained as community psychosocial support facilitators as of June 2008 in Colombo-North divisional secretariat division with the object of enhancing resilience through community-based psychosocial support.
- The community-based health project in Matale, is implemented with a participatory rapid appraisal in both district level and community level identifying health issues and developing project proposal.
- Due to the heavy rain experienced over the month of May 2008, many districts were affected with floods. The Colombo branch deployed its branch disaster response team of 30 people in affected areas for need assessments. Food items, dry rations and other required services were provided to the affected people.

Maldives:

- **Community meetings:** Uncertainty about the ongoing work had led to false rumours and misconceptions about the projects and the role of the International Federation. Aware that clear, accurate and timely information is the key to allaying any fears and stopping the spread of rumours, the International Federation – alongside concerned government bodies – begun organizing several public meetings with the IDP community. Communities are given sufficient notice to prepare in advance [and appoint spokes persons to present their concerns] or to make time to attend, and enough time is allocated to listening to and responding to their questions.
- **Newsletter:** Dissemination of information to beneficiaries continues to be carried out through a bimonthly newsletter – in the local language, *Dhivehi*. To date, five issues have been distributed, with the last one circulated in April 2008.
- **Site visits:** Visits to Dhuvaafaru are organized for the future occupants to get a firsthand view of their soon-to-be home. The visits have been useful in dispelling rumours; for example, a group of women who were taken to see their new island were pleasantly surprised that the houses under construction were much better than they had been led to believe by some fellow community members. However, the visits are regulated for safety reasons because Dhuvaafaru is a construction site.
- **Visual aids:** Community members are encouraged to carry cameras to take photographs and record videos showing the progress on site; they can then share those with other community members. The International Federation team also takes photographs and includes them in the bimonthly newsletter.
- **Field-based team:** To enhance beneficiary communication, the Federation formed a field team – comprising of a field officer (based at the Ungoofaaru office) and six field assistants (based on the five islands hosting the ex-Kandholhudhoo community) – to ensure instant reach by the internally displaced people. This team continues to disseminate information and organize various events for the communities.
- **Direct community engagement:** Focus group discussions have continued to play a key role in communicating with beneficiaries, with the recovery and field teams using them to pass key messages to and to collect views from the communities.
- **Community perspectives:** The International Federation is undertaking a participatory community perspective project to document the views of beneficiaries through a documentary. Planning for this project

has well advanced, with the engagement of a suitable media research and production consulting company. The project will kick on during the third quarter of 2008.

- **Other tools:** A series of communication tools – to be used in preparation for the relocation – are currently being drawn up. These include large-scale maps of Dhuvaafaru Island showing the location and numbering of each house, posters explaining the relocation process, and other general information [such as possible defects and how to get them repaired).
- **Manual:** During the actual relocation, each family will receive a ‘manual’ explaining various things aspects of the houses [for instance what can and cannot be flushed down the toilets, and simple house maintenance tips].

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