



SOUTH/SOUTHEAST ASIA & EAST AFRICA: EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMIS

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Gender equity in tsunami recovery

When countries or communities are struck by disasters, their social, political and institutional weaknesses are revealed. These fragilities often run along gender lines – disaster can disproportionately impact upon women and other marginalized groups. It is therefore important that relief and recovery operations are designed to take issues of gender equality into account: to ensure that the unique needs of women are met and that their voices are being heard.

In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, relief distributions included products specifically for women. Volunteers and staff were, and continue to be, instructed in the proper treatment of women, and in the special sensitivities of Muslim women. Great importance has been placed on working with and through women's groups in affected communities and villages ensuring that development and income generating projects will support them to rebuild their futures.

Interestingly, in the case of the tsunami, 60 per cent of deaths were women and therefore in many cases men were left to take care of children alone. Relief and recovery efforts must be flexible enough to adapt the gender focus to fit the situation. For example, programmes for children should not target only women, but also include single fathers.



An Acehese CBFA (Community Based First Aid) women's group gathers in a traditional 'Meneusah' meeting hall to review the content of teaching materials for a visit to disseminate hygiene and nutrition best practices in a barrack settlement.

issues that they are most likely to address, such as maternal care, nutrition and household hygiene.

Indonesia

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies water and sanitation (watsan) programmes provide clear examples of gender equity principles being put into practice in Aceh. For example, community watsan committees – groups convened to ensure that the needs of communities are included in the development of International Federation watsan programmes – must have an equal number of men and women. As a result, the design and locations of combined toilet, bathing and washing facilities (known locally as 'MCK's') afford women the appropriate level of privacy and access.

The PHAST (Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation) hygiene awareness outreach programme capitalizes on the traditional housekeeping role of women in some rural areas and uses them as advocates for appropriate hygiene practices within their communities.

Similarly, the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) also focuses on recruiting women for its community based first aid (CBFA) initiatives. As well as receiving general first aid training, female volunteers also receive information on

Women have also played a key role in PMI's support of national immunization days for polio and measles. As members of PMI's social mobilization groups, they are often uniquely placed to communicate the importance of childhood vaccination.

PMI and the broader Federation have also placed a special focus on the role of women in disaster preparedness planning and activities. Disasters that occur during the day can often kill or injure a disproportionate number of women and children as they are more likely to be in doors, whilst men are outside working. Women-only community planning meetings are being conducted to consult about necessary escape routes and early warning systems. To date, PMI's community based action teams (CBAT) that are being established across Aceh province comprise twice as many women as men.

Sri Lanka

During the relief and recovery phases of assistance, conscious efforts were made by the Federation and to address the different needs of men and women, children and the elderly. Federation assistance has also needed to be flexible to reflect the diverse socio-cultural, ethnic and religious environments in tsunami affected areas.

The Federation has been working with Government agencies to ensure equity in the selection of beneficiaries for housing relocation and reconstruction. Many Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies have individually adopted participatory approaches to project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation which ensure men, women, children and the elderly are involved in decisions that will affect their lives.



Mushroom cultivation in Kalutara, Sri Lanka

Over the longer term serious consideration will be given to the significant demographic changes brought about by the tsunami and how current and future programming can ensure that the rights of women are protected and promoted. Many Federation projects in Sri Lanka are seeking to strengthen existing community institutions and build community infrastructure (health and community centers) which can play a protective role within communities, and create an enabling environment for greater gender equity and equality.

The Maldives

Cultural and gender norms vary greatly across the Maldives. On some islands women have been more proactive than men in taking part in Federation programmes. For example, the disaster management programme has often seen greater participation from women in its community-based vulnerability assessments. On Raa Maduwaree the women's development committee has been much more proactive and helpful in identifying both the vulnerabilities and capacities of those on the island.

Female participation has helped ensure the success of water committees, helping to run reverse osmosis units that offer safe drinking water to local communities. Community-based awareness programmes on water quality request 50% female participation, which often includes the members of local women's development committees and health workers.

Talented local field officers, both male and female, assist greatly in outreach efforts to local communities – particularly with keeping them informed and involved with construction programmes.

Operational Highlights

Indonesia

- In late December 2006 the International Federation sent six M6 trucks laden with relief supplies from Banda Aceh to severely flood-affected areas in the south eastern Aceh province and north eastern districts of North Sumatra province. Items released from disaster preparedness inventories in Lhokseumawe and Meulaboh included tents, blankets, bed sheets, mosquito nets, hygiene kits and clothing. Medical supplies were also deployed from Banda Aceh, including general antibiotics and disinfectants; ointments to treat skin rashes resulting from contaminated flood waters and; specialty medications to alleviate widespread upper respiratory infections
- The International Federation's transitional shelter programme is entering its final phase with accelerated efforts on Simeulue Island aiming to ensure that remaining shelters are allocated and completed in the coming months
- International Federation water and sanitation achievements during the reporting period include: 150 fresh water wells rehabilitated and 200 latrines constructed in the Meulaboh area; 20 gravity spring water delivery systems built on Nias Island; three community "MCK's" (combined toilet, bathing and washing facility) constructed on Sabang; four PHAST hygiene training sessions held for 113 participants
- Induction courses on Red Cross Red Crescent principles, values and structure are ongoing, with 2-day sessions delivered to an additional 226 personnel in Banda Aceh, Calang, Lhokseumawe and Sigli. More courses are scheduled in the next 30 days for Lamno and Nias
- Construction preparation activities proceed for the construction of new Indonesian Red Cross branch buildings in all 21 Acehnese districts and two on Nias. Ground-breaking ceremonies have been conducted for the Banda Aceh, Pidie and Sabang branches, with a standard building blueprint agreed for all 23 structures.

Sri Lanka

- More than 16,000 houses have either been completed or are under construction. A further 13,000 are planned, bringing the total number of houses being built with Red Cross and Red Crescent support to close to 30,000.
- The Movement is supporting the government to rebuild health clinics and hospitals, as well as providing equipment and training for medical staff. Twelve health infrastructure projects have already been completed and handed over, another 18 are under construction, and a further 47 are planned

The Maldives

- Good progress has been made with construction on the island of Raa Dhuvaaafaru. Nearly 200 blocks have been cleared and designs for the two schools and electrical infrastructure are now complete.
- The second phase of housing construction on Dhaalu Kudahuvadho is well underway with the majority of foundations of the 59 homes laid.
- Eleven additional homes on Kaafu Guraidho are nearing completion.
- Construction of sewer systems on Laamu Gan and Kaafu Maafushi has commenced
- A pilot supplementary water supply system on K. Thulushoo has been completed and two additional supplementary water supply systems are being built on the islands of Kolamaafushi, Maamendho and Gadho on Gaafu Alifu Atoll

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