

Regional Emergency



PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK

FAQ

Gives you answers to most frequently asked questions about emergencies and psychosocial response.

ABOUT US

Gives you a brief description of the Regional Emergency Psychosocial Support Network and its objectives.

NEWS

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- Organizations database (name, mission-vision, contact details and services offered)
- Information database – a collection of relevant international laws, research studies and training modules relevant to psychosocial response in emergencies. (author, subject, title, geographical scope)

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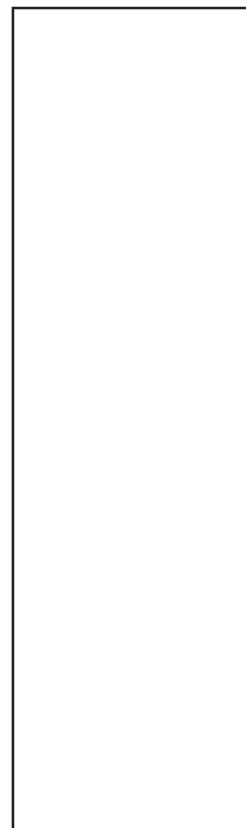
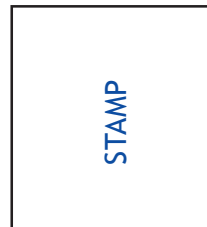
SECRETARIAT

Psychosocial Trauma and Human Rights Program
Center for Integrative and Development Studies
University of the Philippines

Address:
Bahay ng Alumni, Magsaysay Avenue
University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City 1101 Philippines
Telefax: 63-2-435-6890 / 63-2-929-3540
Email: admin@psychosocialnetwork.org

Regional Emergency Psychosocial Support Network

c/o PSYCHOSOCIAL TRAUMA AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM
UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies
Bahay ng Alumni, Magsaysay Avenue
University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City Philippines 1101



www.psychosocialnetwork.org



REGIONAL EMERGENCY PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Regional Psychosocial Network August 2002 – November 2003 A Period of Progress and Completion, Continued Hope for 2004

Fifteen months after its proposed creation during the First Asia and Pacific Regional Experts' Meeting on Psychosocial Response in Emergencies in Bangkok, Thailand in August 2002, the Regional Network on Psychosocial Response in Emergencies for Children and Their Families Affected by Armed Conflict and Natural Disasters reported major accomplishments and even exceeded projected targets. "We are basically up and running, and we have a lot and fulfilled expected outputs," said Dr. Elizabeth Protacio-De Castro, Convenor of the Psychosocial Trauma and Human Rights Program of the University of the Philippines – Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP-CIDS PST), the concurrent Secretariat of the Regional Network. "There have been very good responses from people doing psychosocial and emergency work in the region," she said.

In its function as a resource center, the Regional Network built a relevant and up-to-date database, with 342 entries already uploaded and available for on-line viewing as of October 31, 2003. With most of its materials related to disaster, children in situations of armed conflict and child refugees, emergencies and internal displacement, the bibliographic database contains entries with country-specific information covering the Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor, Cambodia, Australia, and other neighboring countries as well as entries of a generic or universal nature. As an information exchange hub, the Regional Network successfully launched its website on March 21,

2003 at the Balay Kalinaw of UP Diliman, Quezon City. Among one of the hundred and fifty guests who graced the occasion were Terrel Hill of UNICEF representative in Manila and Viktor Nylund, who was then working with UNICEF-East Asia and Pacific Region Office in Bangkok. Apart from the e-group, the Regional Network has also regularly issued quarterly newsletters, with the maiden issue released in December 2002, and a special issue in January 2003. Copies of the newsletters have been regularly sent by post to members of the network and organizations, while viewable and downloadable versions of the newsletters were featured in the site, www.psychosocialnetwork.org.

As a training coordination center, the Regional Network hired the services of Dr. Les Spence as consultant. A UN-Inma enabler from Australia, Dr. Spence has done a lot of work on grassroots-based initiatives on self-help. As part of his consultancy work for the Regional Network, he traveled to Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam,

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SPECIAL FEATURE

Report on the Field Trips by Dr. Les Spence

(The following is the text written by the Regional Network Consultant, Dr. Les Spence regarding his insights over the three trips to the Southeast Asia and the Pacific Region that he conducted as part of his consultancy work for the Regional Emergency Psychosocial Support Network. Dated December 8, 2003, it contains his observations and a message of heartfelt thanks for all the people he met in all the countries that he visited. In this document, Dr. Spence made reference to a paper he had written on interfacing service delivery and self-help. Entitled "Interfacing Alternative and Complementary Well-Being Ways for Local Wellness, a copy of the paper can be viewed at the following link: http://www.psychosocialnetwork.org/faq_interfacing.htm.)

During July to October, I was able to link with 43 organisations and spoke to over 250 people in Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor and Australia during three trips. Detailed trip reports on these have been sent already to the Secretariat.

The people I met were local people offering support to local people in their local areas following human-made and natural disasters in the Region. The people I met were sensitive to the local cultures, beliefs, ceremonies, indigenous psychologies, and community based psychosocial mutual-help ways.

Almost all the organisations I met used local psychosocial ways - that is the 'service' they offered was 'support for locals engaging in their own self and mutual help.' Some had adapted Western ways. A few used Western Ways based on expert prescribed and delivered individual-based 'client vulnerability', 'pathology' and 'mental ill-health'. Almost all the organisations and networks I linked with was based upon culturally sensitive local resiliency, competency, and wellness-based approaches.

An example of these approaches was the organisation Balay Rehabilitation Center based in Manila. Below is a quote from Balitang Balay, one of their magazines:

'Balay's psychosocial rehabilitation work revolves around the family and community. Family involvement is crucial in the healing process. In particular, members of the family, that is the parents, siblings and significant others play a vital role in the recovery or degradation of the child/youth victim.' A quote from their magazine Vol X1 No. 1 Jan - Mar 2003.

A theme that was repeated everywhere was that the individual as the focus of 'treatment' was generally unsuitable in the local area (and in the Region). Individuals are so embedded in their family/friendship groups and in their village/community, that the whole unit is the only useful focus of change as implied in the above Balay quote.

A key aspect was that I could arrive in each country with few contacts or appointments and see in a few days so many of the very people and networks I was seeking engaged in community psychosocial support; it demonstrates the power of networking.

Another feature was how almost all of these organisations blended to together a 'service delivery' approach with an 'enabling of local community mutual help' approach. I discussed this at length in the paper on interfacing service delivery and self help.

I have been linking for over 15 years with indigenous networks in the Region. A feature of these networks is voluntary support by people who have exquisite ways of befriending people and offering nurturing support. This happens spontaneously in everyday life as a context presents itself. There is a tendency for these natural nurturers to recognise another natural nurturer when they meet one. There is a tendency for these natural nurturers to become friends with one another and to informally share stories - to pass on rumours of what works and to network. I found a similar process occurring naturally and spontaneously in East Timor, with some evidence of it in Cambodia and Vietnam. I sense that I would find this process everywhere if I were there long enough.

Another psychosocial support process I found in my travel tends to not be widely noticed. It was hinted by Arndt (1994), namely, 'support the community structure people naturally call upon in times of grief and suffering'. Here I am talking about the resumption of commonplace everyday life communal behaviours. These ARE normalising. In Baucau in East Timor I saw people engaged in a myriad everyday things that is 'everyday in Baucau' - shopping in the market, fetching water from the central spring, walking home with live chooks,

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Report on the Field Trips... (continued from page 5)

when they do not have wellness. The affected local people are the authority on their own 'wellness.' Only they know what is missing and when they do not have wellness. Almost all of the people I met followed the wellness approach rather than a mental illness-mental health pathology approach.

Some of the organisations had received and were receiving training and education from United States, Australia and European sources. There was some evidence that Western ideas were being adapted to local culture. Some First World ways that they had been taught had been dropped because they did not fit local way.

For example, a lot of money had been spent in Indonesia on EMDR, an eye-movement based approach to trauma support. It has since being dropped. It was taught as a 'stand alone' process. It necessitated an individual focus. When an EMDR practitioner was not getting outcomes, they had no other skills.

One Western idea that has been adopted by a number of organisations in the Region is individual and group debriefing. There are many voices and some solid research that seriously questions the efficacy of using debriefing. Some research and feedback suggests that debriefing may itself be traumatising to those who survived well, and may increase trauma in the traumatised. The Melbourne Age Newspaper 4 October 2001 published an article entitled 'Why Trauma Victims Don't Need Trauma Counselling,' by psychologist B. Arndt. In talking about the presence of trauma specialists at the World Trade Centre aftermath, Arndt writes:

'This time the presence of trauma specialists (using debriefing) is being openly criticised. In a letter to the New York Times, 19 psychologists advised therapists not to 'intervene in ways that - however well intentioned - have the potential to make matters worse'. Citing research showing certain forms of psychological debriefing are not only likely to be ineffective but even harmful, the psychologists advised against debriefing, suggesting instead that their fellow professionals 'support the community structure people naturally call upon in times of grief and suffering'

I have sent references to many articles discussing debriefing to the Secretariat. Almost all of the organisations I met follow Arndt in 'supporting the community structure people naturally call upon in times of grief and suffering.' Resonant with this is the use throughout the Region of all aspects of the local cultural artistry, drawing, puppetry, plays, drama, singing, chanting, ceremonies, rituals and the like. There were many examples of children's artwork and cultural artistry I collected - especially in the Philippines, Vietnam and East Timor.

I want to take this opportunity of thanking all the people I met for sharing with me and making the past few months some of the richest in my life. Thank you all. And may our sharing have vital flow-on. ■

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He commented that the Regional Emergency Psychosocial Support Network had further energized something that is profound. "This calls out for further nurturing," he said. (MPP)

United Nations General Assembly Body Adopts Resolution on IDPs

The Global IDP Project reported on December 17, 2003 the adoption by the UN General Assembly of a resolution on the protection and assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs). In the resolution, the UN General Assembly expressed concern about the very large numbers of IDPs throughout the world, in particular the problems faced by women and children. Calling upon governments to provide IDPs protection and assistance, the resolution highlighted the use of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as a vital tool for dealing with the issue of internal displacement. In the resolution, the UN General Assembly also acknowledged the role that national human rights organizations have been playing to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of IDPs. Emphasizing the need for "an effective, accountable and predictable collaborative approach," the UN General Assembly acknowledged the need for stronger inter-agency efforts in addressing the internal displacement issues. (MPP) ■

Source: "UN General Assembly Adopts Resolution on IDPs" http://www.idproject.org/weekly_news/weekly_news.htm#1

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editorial Consultants

Elizabeth Protacio-De Castro, Ph.D
 Agnes Zenaida V. Camacho
 Faye Alma G. Balanon
 Joseph H. Puyat

Writer
 Marco Paa Puzon

Layout Artist
 Omna C. Jalmaani

Circulation Staff

Yasmin Ortiga
 Mary Rose Echague

Michael Quilala
 Julio Abas

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Participants churning out ideas during one of the workshops in the 2nd National Consultation Workshop held in Misamis Oriental, Philippines

the Coalition strongly urges the inclusion of the issue of child soldiers and DDRR concerns in the peace talks and negotiations between the Philippine government and rebel groups. Particularly, these are the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army/National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA/NDF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Both groups have been fighting the government since the 1970s.

"The challenge to address the issue of child soldiers – to prevent the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, to secure their demobilization, and to ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration in society – remains pressing as ever. Resolute in reaching out to the affected communities, the coalition calls upon the members of the peace panels to recognize the issue of child soldiers, and to ensure that it becomes part of the agenda of the peace negotiation. The coalition calls upon the government to follow its obligations for the protection of children in general and child soldiers in particular, and upon the armed opposition groups to adhere to humanitarian law," reads the press statement issued on the final day of the event. (MPP)

**Regional Psychosocial Network
 Project Consultant Concludes Final Leg
 of Visits to SE Asia, Expands Network
 in Thailand, Indonesia and East Timor**

Throughout the month of October 2003, Dr. Les Spence, Project Consultant for the Regional Psychosocial Network, conducted the final leg of his visit to Southeast Asia, covering Thailand, East Timor and Indonesia. In Bangkok, Spencer

met with psychosocial health professionals affiliated with organizations such as the Jesuit Refugee Service and the Asian Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education. He also traveled to Mae Sot near the Thai-Burmese border and linked with the people from the Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB), which administers and facilitates human rights, leadership and media training for Burma's diverse communities. While in Mae Sot, he also met with Dr. Cynthia Czubyrs of the Mae Tao Clinic. The clinic assists over 32,000 Burmese illegal aliens and migrant workers in Thailand and runs 23 schools for the children of these migrant workers.

In Jakarta, Spence met separately with UNICEF Programme Officer Amanda Melville, and with the chiefs of the Child Protection and Emergency Units. While in the Indonesian capital, he also met with representatives from the International Catholic Migration Commission Indonesia, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, the Center for Trauma Prevention and Intervention, and faculty members of the Departments of Psychiatry and Medicine from the University of Indonesia and the Indonesia University. Spence also traveled to Bali, and linked with people working in the island before and after the bombing of Sari Club in 2001.

The network consultant also traveled to East Timor and met with the chiefs of the Child Protection, Juvenile Justice Units of UNICEF. He also met with representatives from the various organizations working in East Timor, such as Sister Aileen Brady of Timor Aid, and Marie Olandeena Caero of the East Timor Women Against Violence and For Children Care. In East Timor, Spence followed up links with people he met in Manila during the "Fifth Biennial Conference of the Asian Association of Social Psychology" in mid-2003. He met with Doctors Juliette Sto. Tomas and Oliver Segui of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims – East Timor Project, and Alexander Loh. The latter brought Spence to Baucau area in the northeastern part of the island. While in Baucau, Spence witnessed what he called as "networking in public places in real life."

In his report, the network consultant noted the "growing appreciation of how many very special people there are in the region – people who, on their initiative, and emerging themselves from trauma to wellness with the support of other locals, have evolved energies supporting local mutual help using psychosocial wisdom and way."

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PROFILE ■

Balay Rehabilitation Center, Inc.

Contact Person/Designation: Lorena De la Cruz
Address: P.O. Box 1075, Quezon City Central Post Office, 1100 Philippines / 25 Maalindog St., UP Village, Diliman, Quezon City Philippines
Telephone Number: (063-02) 434-0271, 426-3825
Website: www.balay.org
E-mail: balay@info.com.ph; balaysrv@info.com.ph

Balay is engaged in grassroots-oriented, culturally responsive, community-based psychosocial rehabilitation work in the Philippines. A human rights institution offering a healing alliance with traumatized victims of internal displacement, political detention and other survivors of human rights violations. In helping these people, Balay takes steps to care and bring them back to their place in the family and the community as productive, rational, self-reliant and empowered individuals. Balay provides a combination of services to partner-advocates based on assessed needs. The organization practices standard methods of interventions, recognizing and developing indigenous ways to help people cope with difficult situations. (MPP)

Khmer Youth Camp for Culture (KYCC)

Contact Person/Designation: Mr. Khan Sovithy
Address: 236 St., 376 Boeung Keng Kang 3 Khan Chamkarmon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Telephone Number: (855) 12 736 166
Website: www.geocities.com/kycc_org
E-mail: sovithy@hotmail.com, kycc@globalyouth.com

Established on January 1, 2001, the Khmer Youth Camp for Culture is a non-governmental organization aimed to improve the knowledge and development of Khmer society towards

peace, equality, and freedom of rights under democracy. KYCC wants children and adults to join in preserving the national heritage of Cambodia, giving them an opportunity to know and create ideas through workshops and playing in the community. KYCC allows them to share experiences for self-development and for the protection of culture, peace, and environment. The organization maintains a library and playground for children and conducts mental health peace education campaigns in the communities. It also conducts culture and study tours as well as a non-formal education program. Some 55 girls and 62 boys have joined the 177-member KYCC since its inception three years ago. (MPP)

CARE International Australia

Contact Person/Designation: Manager QPER (Quality Programming and Emergency Response)
Address: GPO Box 2014, Canberra ACT, Australia 2601
 218 Northbourne Avenue, Canberra ACT, Australia
Telephone Number: (61) 2 6279 0200
Fax Number: (61) 2 6257 1938
Website: www.careaustralia.org.au
E-mail: info@careaustralia.org.au

The second largest foreign aid organization in Australia, CARE Australia envisions a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security. It is the organization's mission to serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world. As advocates for global responsibility and promoters of innovative solutions, CARE Australia draws its strength from the organization's global diversity, resources and experience. The foreign aid organization facilitates lasting change by strengthening capacity for self-help, providing economic opportunity, delivering relief in emergencies, influencing policy decisions at all levels, and addressing discrimination in all its forms. Its emergency response team equipped to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies around the world has helped countless of people across a number of countries. (MPP) ■

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Indonesia, East Timor, the Philippines, and northern Australia to help expand the linkages. More than ample materials were collected from the contacts in these countries. All these constituted the first of the two training phases delineated in the Regional Network's function as a response conduit. Dr. Spence, whose help was invaluable for the consolidation of existing materials and initiatives, also developed the emergency kit or training module. This formed part of the second training phase – the training of a regional emergency response team, with a common language, vision and understanding of the lessons learned in the region. The training kit/modules have been reviewed by the Secretariat. It is now scheduled for pre-testing

in the early part of this year to coincide with the proposed regional training course. Dr. Protacio-De Castro remains optimistic that the Regional Network, through the Secretariat, would be able to secure the funds for this training to happen soon.

The two-year funding for the Regional Network supported by UNICEF-EAPRO ends by January 31, 2004. The secretariat is currently negotiating for new funding from UNICEF to continue the project for another two years. "We hope that organizations would actively use the resources of the network and continue to visit the psychnet website. This will surely benefit a lot of countries in the region", Dr. Protacio-De Castro added. "We have started something good here but we have to continue and make it work." (MPP) ■

International Education Peace Institute
Training Course on Education for Conflict Resolution Set for February 2004

From February 21 to 28, 2004, the International Education Peace Institute will be holding a training seminar in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Designed for practitioners, policy makers, and administrators in the field of education, socio-economic development, conflict resolution and related fields, the seven-day focuses on two topics: The Conceptual Framework of Education for Peace, and The Practical Application of Education for Peace and Conflict-Free Conflict Resolution (CFCR). The training seminar draws on experiences gained through on-going initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the United States, and other countries. For more information, please visit www.efpinternational.org, or write to info@efpinternational.org. (MPP)

SEA Coalition to Stop the Use of
 Child Soldiers Southeast Asia
Regional Workshop in Bangkok Moved to March 2004

The Southeast Asian Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers announced the rescheduling of the regional workshop in Bangkok, Thailand on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and rehabilitation of child soldiers from November 2003 to March 22 to 24, 2004. The aim of the workshop is to enhance efforts for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation in the region, particularly looking at the situation of children involved in armed conflicts in Indonesia, Burma (Myanmar), and the Philippines. A follow-up activity to the research on children and armed conflict in the region, the workshop is an opportunity for local, regional and international organizations to learn, build capacity, network and collaborate on programs for children involved in armed conflict. The experiences of other regions in developing programs will be presented in the workshop. Among others, the workshop will consider specific concerns, like legal and policy frameworks and the protection of children involved in armed conflict; and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict as an advocacy tool in the demobilization process. Other themes in the workshop include juvenile justice in post-conflict environments, and strategy development for enhanced programming related to demobilization of children. For more information about the workshop and registration, please contact Jean-Luc Bories of UNICEF-EAPRO through jlbories@unicef.org or Glenda Ramirez of the SEA Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers at seacoordinatorchildsoldiers@yahoo.com. (MPP)

Refugee Studies Centre
International Summer School in Forced Migration Slated in July 2004

The Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) at Queen Elizabeth House of the University of Oxford in England announces the holding of the International Summer School in Forced Migration from July 7 to 23, 2003. The course aims to provide those who work with refugees and other forced migrants with a broader understanding of the issues of forced migration and humanitarian assistance. The three-week residential course, to be conducted at the Wadham College, combines lectures and seminars by international experts, small group work, case studies, simulations, and individual study. Participants to the course will examine, discuss and review theory and practice and develop communication and analysis skills useful for the workplace. For more information, please visit www.rsc.ox.ac.uk or write to summer.school@qeh.ox.ac.uk. (MPP)

Philippine Coalition to Stop the
 Use of Child Soldiers Southeast Asia
Coalition Holds Second National Workshop on Child Soldiers, Presents Ten-Point Action Plan for 2004-06

From November 10 to 12, 2003, 56 individuals from 31 organizations from all over the Philippines gathered at the Lauremar Beach Hotel in Opol, Misamis Oriental for the Second National Consultation Workshop on the Use of Children as Soldiers in the Philippines. Organized by the Manila-based The Philippine Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and hosted by the Iligan City-based NGO Birth-Dev. Fdn., the event focused on child protection issues in the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) of child soldiers in the Philippines. With significant representation from organizations based in the southern island region of Mindanao, the participants included three former child soldiers and representatives from non-governmental organizations, government agencies, international organizations and the country of Burma. The participants faced the challenge of leveling off differences, collating and sharing experiences and formulating inputs from the workshops into a ten-point plan of action.

In their ten-point plan of action for 2004-2006, the Coalition planned to execute, among others, the development of a standard DDRR framework for inter-agency cooperation, and the conduct of research and documentation of a national database. In the action plan,

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Special News Feature

Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), Red Cross East Timor (CVTL)
 International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC)
No Disaster is Too Small or Too Great

Two disasters of two differing magnitudes hit the Philippines and East Timor only two days part in mid-December 2003, prompting the respective national Red Cross chapters in these two countries into action. On December 17, a flash flood struck the villages of Meligo and Atudara in the southern East Timorese district of Maliana. While there were no reported deaths, the flash flood and the ensuing landslides devastated the area and left more than 400 people homeless. Two days later, heavy rains flooding and major landslides in more than five towns in two administrative regions in the Central and Southern Philippines left 174 people dead and injured 60. With damages to infrastructure, agriculture and property estimated to run in millions of US dollars, the flooding and landslides affected more than 5,290 people in the province of Southern Leyte alone. Three landslides occurred in the twelve villages in the towns of Lilioan, San Francisco, San Ricardo, and flooding was reported in the towns of Pintuyan and Malitbog, all in Southern Leyte. Flooding also hit the provincial capital Maasin. The remoteness of and the lack of infrastructure in the hardest hit areas exacerbated the situation, slowing down relief efforts and hindered assessment missions.

Nonetheless, immediately after the separate disasters had struck, the respective national Red Cross chapters began the difficult task of helping the affected communities back to their feet. The Red Cross East Timor (CVTL) had already provided the affected families in Maliana with kits and second hand clothing. Water and sanitation experts were sent to the villages with reported outbreaks of diarrhea. While the East Timorese government immediately distributed food to 26 families a week after the December 17 landslide, the CVTL reported food shortages among the flood-affected communities. With the next food distribution scheduled almost a month after the initial food distribution, families were reported to have resorted to eating only once daily. The CVTL and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) issued an appeal for support on behalf of the flood-affected families in East Timor. The Philippine National Red Cross meanwhile also began the dauntless task of helping the people in the affected areas in Southern Leyte and in the four other provinces in the Caraga region in the southern island of Mindanao. With almost 200 families sheltered in evacuation camps, the Philippine government immediately sent food and relief efforts to the two regions. The PNRC and the IFRC also issued an appeal for assistance to the survivors of the December 19 flooding and landslides.

The December disasters in East Timor and the Philippines again demonstrated the relentless drive of the IFRC and its national chapters throughout the world in its noble mission to help humanity in the face of natural and man-made disasters. For the men and women behind the world's largest humanitarian organization, no disaster is too small or too great. (MPP)

References: Articles from where this special news feature was based appeared in www.reliefweb.int. The preceding article is based from two stories issued by the IFRC: 1) "Floods leave food shortages in East Timor" by Rosemarie North, dated January 13, 2004, and 2) Philippines: Landslides and Floods Emergency Appeal No. 03/04" dated January 7, 2004.

Report on the Field Trips... (continued from page 2)

swapping news and banter under the shade trees at the top of the market - all of this a few hundred yards from the buildings used as the local torture centre. The locals know where the atrocities took place; and yet they are getting on with the familiar with their families - and this is engrossing and normalising.

'Everyday commonplace' occurs everywhere and it has potency for putting lives back to 'normal everyday.' And so much of

the work of the organisations I linked with does offer support within everyday unfolding contexts. Some of these contexts are far from normal. People may be in refuges, out on roadsides and in camps as refugees and internally displaced people. However, contact tends to be made informally and spontaneously by the local organisations I met. Almost all of the people I met tended to have a 'wellness' or 'wellbeing' focus, although these two words were rarely used. Wellbeing' is the state of being well. That they had a 'wellness' focus was more implied by their talk. Only the locals themselves know

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