

# 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

Up-to-date information on activities and events involving the network and its members can be accessed here.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

Gives you access to the searchable database:

- Resource Persons database (name, contact details and services offered)
- 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)

### ONLINE REGISTRATION

Individuals and organizations may use this form if they wish to be included in the searchable database. Inclusion will be decided on by the Secretariat in accordance with the criteria set by the group.

### MESSAGE BOARD

Where you can post messages for discussion!

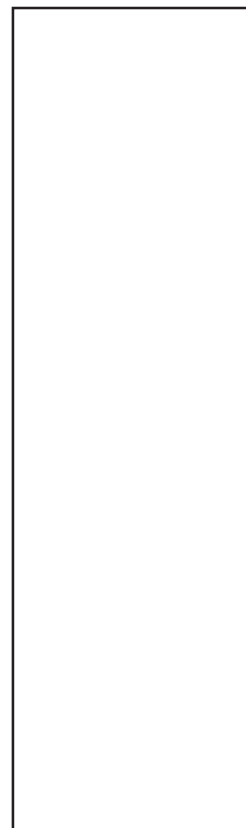
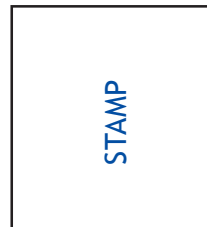
### SECRETARIAT

**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](mailto: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



# REGIONAL EMERGENCY PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 3 Number 4 October-December 2004 ISSN 1656-295X

[www.psychosocialnetwork.org](http://www.psychosocialnetwork.org)

## UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN IN THE TSUNAMI-AFFECTED COUNTRIES Guiding Principles

(The following is based on a document that was released by the Inter-agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children as a guide for organizations working in the tsunami region. It was prepared and is endorsed by UNICEF, UNHCR, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Rescue Committee, Save the Children UK and World Vision. This text is based on a more comprehensive document put out by the same agencies, providing more detailed guiding principles for all emergency situations. Entitled "Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children", this document can be viewed at the following link: [http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/english\\_guiding\\_principles.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/english_guiding_principles.pdf)).

The earthquake and the tsunami of 26 December 2004, like many other natural disasters and displacements of population, led to the separation of large numbers of children from their parents and families. Without any specific person watching over them, separated children who have been placed in holding centers may not receive sufficient life-saving aid, and may also be exposed to the dangers of sexual abuse and exploitation. Separated children also face danger from child traffickers who may exploit the disaster. Sri Lanka's government fears that children who have been reported missing from hospitals and emergency shelters are being trafficked as domestic aids and for sexual exploitation. Similarly, UNICEF has received reports that children have been trafficked out of Aceh, Indonesia; authorities in Indonesia have since ordered a short-term ban on the movement of children out of Aceh and the country.

The following guiding principles should apply to the care and protection of separated children.

Even during these emergencies, all children have a right to a family and families have a right to care for their children. Unaccompanied and separated children should be provided with services aimed at reuniting them with their parents or customary care-givers as quickly as possible. Interim care should be consistent with the aim of family reunification, and should ensure children's protection and well-being.

Experience has shown that most separated children have parents or other family members willing and able to care for them. Long-term care arrangements, including adoption, should therefore not be made during the emergency phase.

However, action to help separated children does require a long-term perspective and long-term commitment on the part of the organisations involved. These organisations must also seek strong cooperation and coordination, and aim to speak with one voice.

see page 6



### What's Inside...

REPSN Pretest in Mindanao.....	2
Typescript.....	3
Tsunami Terror.....	4
News Dispatch.....	5

## SPECIAL FEATURE

### Regional Emergency Psychosocial Support Network International Team Conducts November 2004 Pre-Test in **Mindanao**

From November 14 to 20, 2004, an international team formed by the Regional Emergency Psychosocial Support Network (RESPN) conducted the pre-test of the "Practical Guidelines for Psychosocial Support in Emergencies" in Barangay Takepan, Pikit, Cotabato Province in the southern Philippines. The pre-test is the second major activity undertaken by the RESPN towards the formation of an emergency psychosocial response team for the region, the importance of which is even more highlighted after the catastrophic tsunami that struck Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent in late December last year. The Mindanao Office of the Balay Rehabilitation Center, which has been active in psychosocial rehabilitation work in Takepan for more than five years, acted as the local host.

Unique to the pre-test is the level of interaction between the international team and the local people. Throughout the pre-test, the international multi-disciplinary team interacted with local leaders, their children, and host families. "Given the limitations and the short period allotted, the team achieved the objectives of the pre-test, especially in drawing out local contexts, identifying local healing ways, and natural nurturers," says international team member and UP CIDS PST research fellow, Faye Balanon, who was in charge of coordinating the pre-test. "But the pre-test would not have been successful without the support of the local people."

One of the objectives of the weeklong event was to pre-test the methodologies in establishing rapport, gathering data, and networking or interfacing in the "Practical Guidelines for Psychosocial Support in Emergencies," which was developed after the consultative workshop in Tagaytay City in August 2004. The document contains important training materials, guidelines, methodologies, and approaches to be used as reference by people and organizations involved in psychosocial care in emergencies. The other objective of the pre-test was to share and provide venues for the people of the community, the team, the non-governmental, people's, and government organizations to share experiences in self-help and on local healing ways during emergencies. The international team was composed of former Psychnet consultant and Unique (Unique and Indigenous) Networks - Intercultural Normative Model Areas (UN-INMA) enabler Dr. Les Spence, UNICEF-EAPRO consultant Chantal Dorf, Pulih (Indonesia) founder Elizabeth "Kristi" Poerwandari, Cambokids (Cambodia) project coordinator They Chanto, Isaac Jacob of UNICEF Sri Lanka, theater arts consultant Perlyn Bunyi, Balay Mindanao coordinator Maricar Edmilao and volunteer Cerrie Joame, Nagdilaab Foundation coordinator Esperancita Hupida, and UP

CIDS PST staff Balanon and researcher Marco Puzon. All the team's members, except for Jacob, Edmilao, Bunyi, and Joame, had attended the Tagaytay City consultative workshop.

Prior to their departure for Cotabato, the team members met on November 13 at the Sulo Hotel in Quezon City for an orientation. Also present was UP CIDS PST Convenor and RESPN Secretariat Head Dr. Elizabeth Protacio-de Castro. During the orientation, Dorf presented and discussed the practical guidelines, which she had developed, while Balay Executive Director Lorena dela Cruz gave an orientation on the culture, way of life and socio-economic and political conditions in Takepan. During the open forum, Dr. Protacio-de Castro and the team discussed the schedule of activities to help achieve the objectives of the pre-test.

On their arrival in Takepan on November 14, the team made a courtesy call with local officials, headed by Barangay Captain Tiburcio Flores. They also made a courtesy call with Fr. Bert Layson, a key person in the rehabilitation and healing efforts in Pikit, of the Immaculate Conception Parish in the *poblacion* area of Pikit. The following days brought the team to different parts of Takepan and Pikit, where they met a cross-section of the community, ranging from school children to midwives, religious leaders and farmers. The local people and the international team shared and exchanged stories about how their people worked to overcome the difficulties of the conflict aftermath. One of the highlights of the pre-test was an activity conducted with more than 200 children at the Takepan Central Elementary School, during which the international team and the children shared and exchanged games and songs. The teachers expressed joy to hear the laughter of the children, who were no strangers to war and armed conflict.

The pre-test is the latest development after the establishment of the RESPN during the Regional Experts' Meeting on Psychosocial Response in Emergency convened by UNICEF-EAPRO in Bangkok, Thailand 2001. "Recent events, like the tsunami and the flooding that struck areas in the northern Philippines point out to the urgent need of an emergency psychosocial response team," says Dr. Protacio-de Castro. "More importantly, there is the need to help identify local psychosocial support systems, especially in the areas struck by calamities, and to identify people in the local cultural context - the natural nurturers who could support the psychosocial needs of the community after the team has left." (MPP) ■

#### Separated and Unaccompanied Children (continued from page 6)

Durable arrangements

During the emergency period permanent care arrangements other than reunification should be avoided.

- Efforts to develop, and to place children in, long-term residential facilities should be discouraged
- Adoption must be avoided so long as there is reasonable hope of successful tracing and reunification.

Should reunification not be possible within an appropriate period, or found not to be in the child's best interests, other medium and long-term options such as foster care, group homes or adoption will need to be arranged.

- Decisions about long term placements must be considered and decided individually for each child, in the context of national child welfare policy, legislation and practice, and corresponding to the child's best interests and his/her developmental needs.
- At all times, children must be kept informed of the plans being made for them and their opinion taken into consideration.
- In any form of care siblings must be kept together.
- The provision of care should be based on the best interests of the child and should not be used to promote political, religious or other agenda.
- Communities should be supported to play an active role in monitoring and responding to care and protection issues facing girls and boys in their local context.

These provisions apply to both short and long term care arrangements.

#### Adoption

Adoption, and particularly inter-country adoption, should not take place during the emergency phase.

Any adoption must be determined as being in the child's best interests and carried out in keeping with applicable national, international and customary law.

When adoption is deemed in the child's best interest, priority must be given to adoption by relatives, wherever they live. If this is not an option, preference will be given to adoption within the community from which the child comes, or at least within his or her own culture.

Adoption should not be considered:

- If there is a reasonable hope of successful tracing and reunification;
- If it is against the expressed wishes of the child or the parents;
- Unless a reasonable time has passed during which all feasible steps to trace the parents or other surviving family member have been carried out.

These principles are particularly relevant in light of incidents like those in Sri Lanka, where the government has received complaints that children displaced by the tsunami are being taken away for adoption without proper authority. Sri Lanka's National Childcare Protection Authority (NCPA), a state organisation working for the welfare of children, has made public appeals to refrain from taking children away for adoption. According to a government official, the majority of the displaced children in the tsunami-hit coastal parts of the country are living in refugee camps. However, some of them have not been able to trace their parents or relatives, while others are not sure if their parents are among the living. The Sri Lankan government has issued instructions to provide extra protection to the children and maintain proper records to ensure that children are not taken away by individual groups for adoption. Persons intending to adopt children have been urged to follow legal procedures and not take children of their own will, as their relatives or parents may yet be traced. There have been reports of cases in which children have been located by their parents a week after the tsunami disaster.

These principles represent the views of the following agencies: the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Save the Children UK (SCUK), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and World Vision International (WVI). Organizations wishing to work on behalf of separated children are strongly encouraged to endorse these principles. ■

### EDITORIAL BOARD

#### Editorial Consultants

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

#### Writer

Marco Paa Puzon  
 Beatrice Torre

#### Layout Artist

Omna C. Jalmaani

#### Circulation Staff

Yasmin Ortiga  
 Mary Rose Echague

Michael Quilala  
 Julio Abas

**Separated and Unaccompanied Children** (continued from page 1)

All actions should be properly coordinated with the government authorities.

The following key definitions, principles and good practices form an agreed platform for partner organisations.

**Definitions:**

**Separated children** are those separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.

**Unaccompanied children** are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

**Orphans** are children both of whose parents are known to be dead. In some countries, however, a child who has lost one parent is called an orphan.

**Preventing separation:**

Organizations and authorities must ensure that their actions do not inadvertently encourage family separation. Separation can be provoked when families lack the services they need to care for their children and believe such services would be available elsewhere, or when residential child care facilities are created which may provide better services than the family is able to access.

Deliberate separations can be prevented by:

- ensuring that all households have access to basic relief supplies and other services, including education;
- limiting the development of residential care options, and restricting its use to those situations where it is absolutely necessary;
- avoiding the removal of children to other countries for any reason unless critical medical care cannot be provided. This should be provided as close as possible to their home.

**Tracing and family reunification:**

- Identifying, registering and documenting unaccompanied and separated children are priorities in any emergency and should be carried out as quickly as possible.
- Registration activities should be conducted only by or under the direct supervision of Government authorities and mandated agencies with responsibility for and experience in this task;

- The confidential nature of the information collected must be respected and systems put in place for safe forwarding and storage of information. Information must only be shared among duly mandated agencies, for the purpose of tracing, reunification and care;
- Tracing is the process of searching for family members or primary legal or customary care-givers. All those engaged in tracing should use the same approach, with standardized forms and mutually compatible systems;
- The validity of relationships and the confirmation of the willingness of the child and family member to be reunited must be verified for every child;
- No action should be taken that may hinder eventual family reunification such as adoption, change of name, or movement to places far from the family's likely location until all tracing efforts have been exhausted.

**Care arrangements**

**Emergency care**

- Care for separated children should be provided in a way that preserves family unity, including of siblings, ensures their protection and facilitates reunification. Children's security should be ensured, their basic needs adequately met, and assistance provided for their emotional support.
- Community care, including fostering, is preferable to institutional care, as it provides continuity in socialization and development.
- However, children not in the care of their parents or customary caregivers may be at heightened risk of abuse and exploitation. The most appropriate carers may need extra assistance to assure children's protection and material needs are met. Provision must therefore be made for monitoring and support to foster families.
- For those children for whom institutional care is the only solution, centres should be small, temporary and organized around the needs of the child. It should be made very clear that the objective of residential care is reunification or placement in the community and rigorous screening procedures should be in place to ensure only appropriate admissions.
- Removing children from familiar surroundings will increase their distress and can hinder their recovery. Children should not be removed to other countries for any reason unless critical medical care cannot be provided and then, this should be as close as possible to their home and they should be accompanied by a care-giver known to the child.

see page 7



Annotated bibliographies of recent and not-so-recent publications, studies, reports and other documents on psychosocial trauma, child soldiers, IDPs, and related issues. Please visit [www.psychosocialnetwork.org/online\\_resources.htm](http://www.psychosocialnetwork.org/online_resources.htm). Works featured in this section are available for reference use at the PST Library.

**MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES, CHRONIC CRISES AND EARLY RECONSTRUCTION**

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies  
 December 2004  
 ISBN: 1-58030-C34-0  
 E-mail: [coordinator@ineesite.org](mailto:coordinator@ineesite.org)

Described as “a tool to be used in efforts to achieve the minimum level of educational access and provision to fulfill the right to quality education for all”, this handbook presents the global minimum standards for education in crisis settings such as natural disasters and complex emergencies. These standards, which articulate the minimum level of educational access and provision to be attained in a situation of humanitarian assistance, were developed through a broad and consultative process that involved over 2,250 individuals from more than 50 countries. While the handbook does not provide detailed strategies and programs that can be implemented in the field, it offers a set of minimum standards, key indicators and guidance notes that inform humanitarian action in the context of education.

The contents of the handbook are divided into five main parts, each dealing with one of the five categories of minimum standards. Part 1 focuses on the essential areas of community participation and the use of local resources when applying the standards contained in the handbook. Part 2 deals with partnerships to promote access to learning opportunities and inter-sectoral linkages with various aspects of the learning environment. Of particular interest in this section is a checklist for gathering information that is useful in addressing issues of psychosocial well-being and recovery, such as the violation of child rights, the hardship and stress faced by parents, children's opportunities to play, and social services for refugee adults and children. Part 3 discusses the elements that are critical in promoting effective teaching and learning. Part 4 looks at the administration and management of human resources in the field of education. Part 5 focuses on the formulation, enactment, and coordination of educational policy.

The handbook expresses the INEE's commitment to the belief that all individuals—children, youth, and adults alike—have a right to education in emergencies.

A copy of the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies handbook is available at the following link: [http://www.ineesite.org/standards/MSEE\\_report.pdf](http://www.ineesite.org/standards/MSEE_report.pdf).

**PAKIKIPAGKAPWA DAMDAMIN: ACCOMPANYING SURVIVORS OF DISASTERS**

Ma. Lourdes Arellano Carandang, Ph.D.  
 First published in 1996  
 ISBN: 97-15691579

This 180-page book describes Carandang's and her Ateneo de Manila University team's UNICEF-funded efforts to give psychological aid to those affected by natural disasters such as the 1990 earthquake and the 1991 Mount Pinatubo and 1993 Mayon Volcano eruptions. It addresses the need for post-disaster relief and rehabilitation beyond the physical, acknowledging the vulnerability of disaster survivors, especially children, to the long-term psychological effects of the traumatic experiences they have undergone. Unlike other books on psychosocial rehabilitation which use the symptom-oriented method, it takes a psychological approach in examining the inner world of survivors by “letting them speak for themselves”. It also discusses the important role that children play as the barometers of the psychological and emotional climate of disaster-stricken communities, describing them as the perfect entry points for gaining rapport. In addition, Carandang examines the phenomenology of carers or disaster helpers, asking how they see themselves and how they sustain the level of energy that their work requires.

Using a narrative and personal tone, the book also describes the tools that the team found effective in getting children and adults to share their thoughts about and make sense of their traumatic experiences, ultimately helping them along the road to recovery. These tools, such as a play therapy, writing, support system, and hypnosis were used by Carandang and the rest of her team in order to help those suffering from psychosomatic reactions and explain to survivors that the disasters were not their fault in order to bring them out of self-blame.

Described as a “helping manual” for disaster helpers, psychologists, psychiatrists, teachers, social workers, volunteers, and even disaster survivors themselves, the book may be particularly relevant to those involved in the recent landslides in Luzon and in the December 26 tsunami. It is currently being reprinted. ■

# Tsunami Terror: Online Forum on Tsunami Crisis

## Created by Children and Adolescents

In 1995, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) created Voices of Youth, a website for young people who are interested in issues of human rights and development. Voices of Youth aims to offer all children and adolescents a safe and supportive global cyberspace within which they can explore, discuss and partner on issues related to human rights and social change.

On 30 December 2004, young people from around the world created a space on Voices of Youth on which they can discuss the tsunami, its impact, and how they can help. This online space called "Tsunami Terror" offers a timely and useful forum for young people in the region and elsewhere to express the emotions they experience as they see and hear about this unprecedented crisis in Asia and the shocking numbers of children and young people who have lost their lives or their dear ones. "It is indeed sad and heart breaking to see our countries being washed away by the massive tsunami that hit on the 26th of December 2004. It was unbelievable. How painful to see the people who were victims of it cry for the loss of their loved ones, property and everything they ever owned," shared "Simigalo17" from Sri Lanka. Nisaa Pramono, a 9-year-old girl from Jakarta, Indonesia, wrote "There are some children who have lost their parents and there are mothers who have lost all of their children and even there are men who lost their wives and children. How do you feel if your parents are suddenly taken away to the wild salty sea and never see them again? How do you feel if your sister or brother bodies are found dead behind the rumbles of your house? Well that is how the children in Aceh feel now. I have many friends who lost their relatives there. We have to care about how they feel, they need us! Please help them any way you can."

Other survivors expressed feelings of gratitude for the efforts to provide aid. "What is most noticeable about this is that the tsunami also brought in the feelings of love and humanity along with sea water. I just want to tell that the relief sent by countries like the USA, Saudi and the UAE is deeply appreciated by all the people in the country," said 15-year-old "Ashinbangalore" from Bangalore, India.

This e-space also provides young people and others with a space where they can share information on the ways in which they can help those who have been affected by this crisis. One of these was Rusiru Abeyasinghe, an 18 year old from Sri Lanka who wrote "As a Sri Lankan who witnessed the horror first hand, and as a person who tries and I am still trying my best to get involved in relief efforts I know the trauma that people especially children are going through in Sri Lanka. They should be helped to rebuild their lives and to forget what they have gone through. The Children need stuff like toys or stuffed animals (teddy bears etc.) or books or something that could get their mind off the horror of losing their parents and families and homes." He also suggested artistic and creative ways in which young people could help these children: "May be u guys can draw up some pictures, which would help soothe the minds of the children affected by the tsunami. Another thing that all of you could do together with your class

(this doesn't need money either) is to write letters to these kids, assuring them that you will be there for them, to help them out of what has happened. We can translate those and give them to the kids. They can write to you people in return explaining their situation. That could be a good way to help them get rid of their trauma, by telling it out to somebody else." Many young people from the USA, Australia, the UK, and Canada expressed their desire to help, suggesting fundraising activities like caroling, bake sales, and golf charity events or donation drives for toys and books. Information on the organizations through which their contributions could reach the affected areas was shared by some.

Other ideas involved providing tsunami victims with the means to communicate their thoughts and needs with the rest of the world. "Lucy12" from Romania suggested "Create volunteer centres where the victims of the tsunami (especially children and teenagers) could access freely the internet" allowing them to "get in contact with other young people around the world and receive their thoughts of love and solidarity, ask directly for the material help they really need, and learn how they could protect themselves and avoid being the victims of child traffic", among other things. "Kenny" from Singapore said, "we could have a MIRC-style of channel setup up [live chat facility], where all the children and helpers including youth members, NGOs, counsellors can go into the channel and chat with them. Make them feel that they are not suffering all by themselves and we're helping them as much as we can. Seeing that the whole world coming together to chat with them will be indeed a reassuring feeling to them; building up their confidence and also for us to know what's inside their mind."

Still other young people on the forum voiced their concerns about the inadequacies of the relief efforts. "I live in Singapore and daily I've been reading of news saying that aid which is sent to these countries are sitting on the airport tarmacs unable to be distributed. I think we should think of ways to send out the food, water and medicine to these affected areas especially in hard hit Indonesian Aceh. The people are swarming military helicopters making it difficult for the soldiers to send them aid and also the bad weather lately with rain and wind makes things worse," related 22-year-old "mingzy". She also raised the issue of security, saying "I think that police are needed to protect the refugees and tighter security must be enforced in the tsunami devastated areas. I understand that staff and personnel in the affected areas are stretched thin. hopefully more kind souls in the area and form a type of watch team?" "Sangsaka", an Indonesian in the USA, expressed her worry that the donated money would be misused by the government: "Please, don't u ever cheat with the money and fund they gave to our country, just don't mess around with those money, use those money to build the new houses, new school, new public society, use the money wisely...just imagine if that could have happened to your children one day and your children will be crying out loud, devastated for help, please put it in your mind Mr. President...don't u ever do that to them.....I will be so ashamed as

see page 5

## NEWS DISPATCH

### Association of Southeast Asian Nations ASEAN Meet on Tsunami Devastation Held in Indonesia

On January 6, 2005, leaders from Asian countries devastated by an earthquake and tsunami met in Indonesia's capital to develop a strategy to help with relief efforts. The one-day meeting was organized through the 10-member Association of South-east Asian Nations, or ASEAN, and included leaders or representatives from India and Sri Lanka. It also brought together leaders or representatives from the United States, China, Japan, New Zealand and Australia, as well as the United Nations, World Bank and World Health Organization. The meeting focused on the immediate challenges thrown up by the disaster that has killed 120,000 in 11 countries, as well as longer term reconstruction needs. Plans for setting up a regional tsunami warning system were also discussed.

Source: <http://southasia.oneworld.net/link/gotoarticle/addhit/100697/1893/10933>

### ACTIONAID Psychosocial Assistance for Tsunami-Affected Communities in India

After having worked with survivors of previous disasters such as the Gujarat earthquake, ActionAid recognizes that psychosocial care can be as important as material aid in helping people in tsunami-affected areas recover from their traumatic experience. ActionAid workers have released 20,000 leaflets and posters about the importance of psychosocial assistance in affected areas in southern India including Chennai, Nagappattinam, Kanyakumari and Cuddalore. The organization is also conducting training programmes for people from the affected communities. They are expected to deploy 700 psychosocial volunteers in the country. ActionAid encourages a comprehensive approach covering livelihood, psychosocial care, and entitlement that will make a difference in the recovery process. People are advised to share their feelings, relax and meditate, or seek comfort in community activities. Returning to school can also help to restore a sense of normality for children. ActionAid also believes that the active involvement of women can make a difference, saying that women counselors have been able to better understand affected women and children in past interventions.

Source: [http://www.oneworld.net/external/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.actionaid.org.uk%2F1469%2Fpress\\_release.html](http://www.oneworld.net/external/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.actionaid.org.uk%2F1469%2Fpress_release.html)

### Tsunami Terror (continued from page 4)

Indonesian if that happened." Other postings on the forum mentioned the unequal distribution of aid for the tsunami-affected areas. "Somalia in the horn of Africa was one of the badly hit countries in Africa by the Tsunami. There were many dead and thousands have lost home, villages have been wiped off. There were no media coverage from Somalia nor is there any help being sent to them. UNICEF and WFP are trying there best and thanks to them but what they got are not even close to enough I can say. With no government to give, distribute materials and any kind of resources to give to those affected the situation becomes more complicated. Nobody cares who dies in Somalia and what is the situation in there after the Tsunami. Somalia is wiped off from the atlas of the international community I guess. If not why is it not treated like the other countries. I feel for the people in Somalia, at least people in the other countries hit are getting food and what they need to live on, think about these people living in Somalia that have almost nothing being provided from the International community. I wrote this to make many of you and people out there know what is happening in other parts of the world. I think many of you didn't know what is happening in Somalia," wrote Zuhur from Somalia.

Some Voices of Youth members also posted reminders that the efforts toward helping tsunami-affected children and adults should not be limited to short-term solutions. "Once the immediate trauma is over, please realise and remember a common saying "PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE". Money is not everything; we need to be prepared and empowered to handle situations (not just natural calamities). So, keep the good work by contributing towards helping the victims but after that make sure that we all get empowered individually to face any situation...and when i say we, it refers to all, not just few of us who have the privilege to be on a computer and have other facilities...remember that while these words are written, thousands still die of calamities, hunger, terror, wars and diseases," wrote 25-year-old Tushar from India.

Despite their awareness of the many difficulties that tsunami victims continue to face, the members of this online community retain a sense of optimism that seems to come at least in part from the connectedness with other young people that the forum provides. As Rusiru from Sri Lanka wrote, "Thank you every body for the inspiring words in the forum. Living in a country affected by the Tsunamis and seeing what all of you ppl are doing to help us out in other countries makes me feel that we are not alone. That everybody else will help us come out of what we are in. Believe me the Sri Lankan ppl have got together as one nation, all differences have been cast aside and they are all working to bring the country back on to its rails. Living here and seeing it happen with my own eyes and through TV makes me proud of being a Sri Lankan. All the help that you are giving just helps us get even more inspired. Thank you."

The "Tsunami Terror" forum can be accessed on the following link: <http://www.unicef.org/voy/discussions/forumdisplay.php?f=68>. Other forums on the Voices of Youth website can be seen on <http://www.unicef.org/voy/discussions/index.php?>