

Tsunami two-year progress report: Southeast Asia



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 185 countries.

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Executive summary

Activities managed from the Regional Delegation in Bangkok have been mainly in the form of technical support and capacity-building to affected countries in Southeast Asia. Detailed accounts of programmes in these countries are provided in separate country reports.

Key areas of regional technical support are health and care, particularly public health in emergencies, psychological support and water and sanitation with hygiene promotion, disaster management, including enhancing disaster response capacity, and organisational development support. The regional delegation has also played a key role in coordinating with other international organisations and in promoting the legal preparedness of countries facing disasters through the International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles (IDRL) project.

Essentially, the regional tsunami programme has been in the large part – and remains as such – a means to reinforce the competency and capacity of the host national societies, who are the key partners in the programme.

Background/Operational context

Throughout 2005, the recovery in most tsunami-affected regions of Southeast Asia was impressive. The challenge during 2006 was to maintain and even increase momentum to effectively support people affected in a sustainable long-term way. This was done in Thailand, which has witnessed rapid reconstruction and recovery. All unidentified bodies of those killed by the tsunami are due to be buried in November 2006, including some foreigners. Each body will contain a microchip with data on it in the event of retrieval by their families. In Malaysia and Myanmar too there was progress but with more

challenges. The initial response in Malaysia saw affected families receive financial disbursement to construct new homes. Meanwhile, in Myanmar, small recovery programmes increasingly focused on long-term capacity building of communities.

In general, the region's robust economic growth continued although the fruits of which are clearly not enjoyed by all populations. The threat of an avian flu pandemic remains and regular more local disasters continue to be a feature of the region, such as the worst flooding for more than 50 years in many parts of Thailand.

Achievements and challenges

Health and Care

The tsunami highlighted the initially unprepared and weak programmes (of the respective national societies as well as the Federation) especially in public health in emergencies (PHiE) and psychosocial support (PSP). The regional programme, as such, focused on strengthening key elements in the national societies and the Federation to meet these needs. The programme has gained momentum and the progress which has been made in PSP, watsan, PHiE, CBFA (as basic health care), and HIV and AIDS issues in emergency situations, must be maintained.

The emergence of avian influenza as a potential catastrophe diverted much attention away from long term support to the tsunami programme, highlighting the need for adequate resources to cope with emerging health crises.

The regional programme has provided coordination and played a backup role in providing technical support to tsunami operations at country level, in particular in Thailand. The long term goal has been to enhance PHiE

capacities to ensure optimal response to the inevitable future disasters. It has focused on psychosocial support (PSP), water and sanitation, CBFA (BHC), and integration of HIV and AIDS in emergencies. Achievements have included:

- Enhanced national society capacity to provide psycho-social support to people affected by disasters
- Development of regional guidelines on integration of HIV and AIDS prevention, care and support in humanitarian response
- Enhanced capacity to deliver community-based health care and first aid at provincial and community levels

Disaster Management

The long-term goal of the regional approach has been to build on existing quality human resources in terms of disaster management. In a region that is so hazard-prone, there is a need to extend the reach of this capacity.

Achievements have included:

- Enhanced emergency response capacity of individual national societies and regionally through training, simulation exercises, deployment of regional disaster response teams (RDRT).
- Provision of essential equipment for RDRTs to meet field assessment coordination team (FACT) and other Federation global tool standards.

Organizational Development

The regional approach has supported national societies at all levels, from branch to headquarters, to be better in disaster management. This entails a more holistic approach that includes such issues as health, discrimination and sustainability. Despite challenges, especially around human resources and systems, notable progress has been achieved, including:

- Better volunteer management systems and training in individual national societies
- Enhanced technical and operational skills of programme managers through training on project planning, monitoring and evaluation, resource mobilization and fundraising
- Stronger human resources and systems through staff on loan exchange from one national society to another and technical support from the Federation.

Coordination with other partners and stakeholders

The Federation's Southeast Asia regional delegation, based in Bangkok, has continued to be engaged with post-tsunami programming. The engagement has been a mix of short and long-term programming, responsive to lessons being learned along the way. The delegation remains committed to flexibility so as to adapt from experience and improve technical assistance and coordination in future.

Relations with partner national societies are good and coordination is resulting in more focused and open programming. The delegation remained committed to ensuring that the various partnerships and operating alliances puts the host national society at the centre of decision making and humanitarian work.

During the recovery phase, the regional delegation has coordinated and managed, with national societies, the support to tsunami programmes in Thailand and Malaysia directly. Technical support has been provided to country delegations in Myanmar and Indonesia for their tsunami work as appropriate, and will continue to be so.

Cross-cutting issues

The tsunami presented a window of opportunity for governments, international organizations and others to save lives in the future via better 'legal preparedness' for disasters.

The Federation's International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles (IDRL) programme, has been at the forefront of the Movement's effort to break the global pattern of inadequate preparation on legal issues that has commonly arisen during the course of international assistance.

The IDRL Asia Pacific programme, based at the Federation's South-East Asia Regional Delegation, in Bangkok, has worked with governments, regional organizations, international organizations, donors and other stakeholders to improve current regulatory structures. The IDRL has worked to a six-point agenda at national, regional and international levels.

Outlook

Within Southeast Asia, partner national support behind host national society priorities will remain strong through 2007 and beyond. The Federation too will remain engaged in a coordination and facilitation capacity. Much of the tsunami work – because it already has a strong mutuality with ongoing capacity building initiatives as well as the ongoing potential threat of avian influenza – has been incorporated into the more regular and longer term work of the regional programme.

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Annex I: Malaysia

Overview: The tsunami affected about 8,000 people in Kuala Muda, Kuala Triang in Kedah as well as Balik Pulau in Penang destroying lives, livelihoods and infrastructure. Sixty-nine people were reported dead and eight unaccounted for. The response from within Malaysia was extraordinary. Fishermen were particularly hard hit with thousands losing boats and equipment. The private sector alone donated USD5.8 million (cash and in-kind donations) to the Red Crescent's relief fund.

Post-tsunami programming in Malaysia has been slower than anticipated with plans still being carried over. The focus has been to build on the existing strength of the Malaysian Red Crescent Society, which is strong in terms of human, financial and material resources. The national society has maintained its tradition of effective disaster response, as demonstrated in its leading role in RDRT (see above and below) while also investing in improving emergency preparedness at the community level. Much of the competency and capacity of the national society in this regard is volunteer based and regional support has recognised this explicitly.

The Red Crescent intends to maintain its ability to deploy rapidly within the region to assist sister national societies in times of crisis. Within 24 hours of the tsunami striking, Malaysian Red Crescent disaster response specialists were at work in Aceh province.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Coordination: Cooperation between the Malaysian Red Crescent Society and the Federation's regional delegation has been good. A memorandum of understanding (MoU), signed in 2005, remains valid and will be the basis of future partnership between the national society and Federation. Assistance has been provided in psychosocial support, community based disaster preparedness and logistics to help the national society be better prepared for future emergencies. The Malaysian Red Crescent's commitment to effective coordination has also been demonstrated through its support of the evolving regional disaster response team (RDRT) concept, its upcoming RDRT Induction course and deployment cross-regionally (i.e. in the aftermath of the Pakistan earthquake).

In the early days after the tsunami, Malaysian Red Crescent, with the assistance of the ICRC regional delegation in Bangkok, established a tracing service. The Red Crescent also plans to call on the expertise of the Vietnamese Red Cross in terms of the planting of mangrove saplings in Kota Kuala Muda area. Relations with the government, UN agencies and other actors remain strong.