



PARTNERS *International*

Tsunami Briefing

January 21, 2005

Partners International is committed to timely and accurate reporting on what we are doing together with our indigenous partner ministries to relieve the suffering, and contribute to the recovery of lives and communities, of those affected by the earthquake-spawned tsunamis. Partners International is a church-planting ministry that already has local partners on the scene who are able to help in relief and development in a culturally and economically appropriate way, and for the long term. We will provide these briefings as relevant information becomes available.

PARTNERS INTERNATIONAL'S MEDICAL TEAM

From earlier this week: "We had major problems getting the medications cleared through customs and had to hire two different boats than the ones we had originally lined up. The team of 14 has been working together as a group instead of breaking up into two teams. They have been traveling to the islands providing love and medical relief to the people. Yesterday the team cared for over 1,000 patients.

"Today they are going to care for the people in a refugee camp, and it looks like it will be another busy day. Everyone is doing fine, and God has protected us from sickness. The team is in high spirits though there were some moments of frustration in the beginning.

"The boats were a rougher trip than expected. It was 48 hours just to get to the first location. Most of the medical team experienced a lot of seasickness during the trip, making the trip especially hard. The team saved many lives, as some people were very ill. In all, they probably saw over 1,500 people, but there is no way to count for sure. They went to eight villages on four different islands. These villages aren't big, so they probably examined a large percentage of the entire population of each village."

As of today, January 21, medical team members are returning to Australia. Partners International's East Asia Area Director who led the team, Dr. Ben, and his wife have remained in Aceh to help our local partners there evaluate future medical needs.



Mark Bardwell, Projects Coordinator for Partners International, returned to Spokane after a ten-day trip to Indonesia. He traveled with our team to Aceh province and is helping to evaluate the priorities and projects for the region.

INDONESIA

Our Area Director in Indonesia left yesterday with Dr. Ben and his wife and some of the church workers to revisit two areas that have been tentatively selected for redevelopment work. A plan, including a budget, will be developed. To implement this plan, it is clear that our indigenous partner ministries will need to add new staff. The plan is likely to include projects such as:

- micro-enterprise loans
- meals for refugees
- educational assistance for refugee children
- rebuilding homes, clinics, and schools
- water pumps
- shrimp ponds
- salt flats
- tackle, nets and bait for fishermen
- health clinics

From Partners International's Area Director from Cambodia who has experience in relief and development work and is in Banda Aceh (January 17):

I met with our team of about ten Indonesian Christians distributing food in one of the villages they have selected. They showed me three areas they would like to assist. I described from our past experience how we helped former refugees get back to normal life. I encouraged them and updated them on what I am hearing about the overall big picture in the leaders meetings I am a part of in Banda. I described some of the possibilities of how those villages could be assisted long-term and listened to their ideas.

Aceh is a Muslim fundamentalist area. Interestingly, our ministry had made a friend of the local Imam and I sat and talked with him for some time. Just three weeks ago I would not have been allowed to enter this province. I may have been the first American Christian he had ever met. In this, the most conservative Muslim part of Indonesia, it was refreshing to have our stereotypes dismantled of what we think other people are. He was very personable and joined us for a meal. The team asked me to pray before the meal. It was a privilege to pray for the Imam and all the Muslims there as we work to help these people after the earthquake and tsunami. I want to point out that the relationship with him built by our partner ministry, Cahaya Suku, was key to my meeting him. They had been developing a relationship and he knew that they were Christians. I commended the rapid response of Cahaya Suku and other Christian groups in front of them and before the Imam.

Here in Banda I am attending coordination meetings and government briefings where the heads of agencies come together and discuss what they are doing and the needs of the province. I think these are crucial meetings for Christians to participate in. The internal coordination I've seen among the Christian groups of which Partners International is a part has been commendable.

INDIA

Partners International's Assistant Area Director for South Asia, Prem James, has visited our partner ministries and is helping them to develop a long-term response. Here is an excerpt from his report:

My personal observations regarding relief work:

- Most of the first line relief work is now over—e.g., food, water, shelter, immediate medical, etc.
- A long-term plan is required for rehabilitation.
- No one agency is adequate or has all the resources to do all the work so it will be good to identify agencies with whom we can work.
- It will be good if each of our partners concentrate on one village or help with rehabilitating "x" number of families.
- Grief counseling is a very needy area where Christians can be involved. I am glad that Tom Chandler [Area Director for South Asia] is arranging the seminar next month.

I visited the affected areas in Kanyakumari District which is in close proximity to our partners, Bible Faith Mission (BFM). BFM's strategy is to identify those who may be left out of any relief assistance either by the government or other agencies and then to reach those people (BFM's focus is ministering to India's Dalits or "untouchables").

I asked the government official who is responsible for all the affected areas in the Kanyakumari District about grief counseling. He said that after a few weeks people will slowly realize the loss of their loved ones and property when they go back to their own places. He asked us to submit a letter if we are interested in helping with grief counseling, and the government is going to have a meeting with all those NGOs who are interested in this. I have since shared this with Rev. Moses of BFM and Dr. Selvaraj of EMOS (Evangelical Mission Outreach Services).

The people who were affected in the region where our EMOS works are from fishing communities by the sea. They are totally dependent on the sea and fishing. This is the only vocation they know. They are all Christians except a few who are Muslims and Hindus. Many churches were destroyed. Nearly 5,000 families, mostly from Christian background, in this area have been affected.

More children and teenagers have been killed than adults. More than any other natural disasters before it, the December 26 Tsunami was especially cruel on children. Large numbers of children perished because they could not run away from the waves quickly enough or were unable to reach out to life-saving objects. Children account for 40 percent of those who died in Tamil Nadu. Many of the surviving children are separated from their families. Reports speak of children in shock and denial after the trauma of seeing one or both parents swept away by the waves and, in many cases, too young even to comprehend either the events of that day or their profoundly altered life situation. The immediate priority has to be to provide for their security, protection, and basic needs.

The EMOS team spent time in prayer daily till midnight for God's guidance for effective relief and rehabilitation work. One of the priority issues is to rebuild the lives of tsunami-affected families by helping them to return to fishing and normalcy. The team envisages the following steps to implement the relief and rehabilitation project:

- Step 1: Identification of 100 families to help. It has already been done with the help from local pastors.
- Step 2: Identifying 1,200 children in different locations and providing for their educational needs such as school uniforms, notebooks and other stationery.
- Step 3: Counseling the families to have hope for the future and confidence to go fishing again.
- Step 4: Provide a catamaran and fishing net to each family.
- Step 5: Invite all families for a one-day retreat and share the message of hope.
- Step 6: Continue to counsel and encourage them to be regular in Sunday worship.

Note: Partners International's President/CEO Jon Lewis and our VP for Ministry Advancement, Steve Delph, are in India now, with Tom Chandler and Prem James. They are visiting many of our partners there, including those involved in tsunami relief. We will share their reports when they are received.