



Tsunami Briefing

January 6, 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.

In this first *Tsunami Briefing*, we reproduce a news release that was sent to various media on Wednesday, January 5. This release gives a summary overview of how our partners responded in the early days of the disaster that hit their countries.

TSUNAMI AID DELIVERED BY PARTNERS INTERNATIONAL

SPOKANE, WA – Three days after the devastating tsunamis washed away the lives and livelihoods of tens of thousands of people around the rim of the Indian Ocean, an Indonesian relief team supported by Partners International delivered a truckload of supplies—5,000 blankets, medicine, five tons of rice, 300 boxes of instant noodles, 700 boxes of bottled water, used clothes, fish, vegetables, and—because the team was already trained in the local language and customs—words of comfort and hope to the traumatized survivors.

The team of doctors, nurses, and church workers returned from Banda Aceh, at the northern tip of the Indonesian island of Sumatra, in shock at the scenes of destruction. “The streets were almost free of dead bodies but there were still hundreds of corpses under the ruins, inside the ditches, floating on the river. The smell was horrible. Only a small part of the city had electricity, and there were no telephone lines or clean water,” reported the team leader.

With major relief organizations now able to enter the previously closed province of Aceh, Partners International’s local partners are seeking to reach people who have not yet received help. For example, one of the worst-hit areas being investigated by the relief team can only be reached by an eight-hour boat trip.

In order to develop a relief strategy and coordinate the immediate efforts to reach the neediest in Aceh, two of Partners International’s Area Directors are in Medan, Indonesia, to help convene a meeting of indigenous and foreign Christian relief agencies on January 8-9. Training in relief management will also be offered to increase the effectiveness of local initiatives.

The relief team heard stories that point to the pain that will last long after relief efforts are completed: anguish at the loss of children, parents, and friends. “Wiping back her tears, Marlina told us how she struggled for survival against the tsunami,” said the team leader. “For five days she and her child floated in the ocean on a board. Finally they were discovered by some fishermen. Her skin was so severely burned by the sun that it had peeled off and bruised.



Relief supplies being delivered to Banda Aceh by Partners International-supported church workers.

But she was thankful to be alive. Marlina did lose one child when her daughter was ripped from her hands as the wave crashed down on them.”

Partners International’s Area Director in Indonesia said, “This is a long-term venture. The role of Christians, in addition to providing essential food, water, and medical aid, is to share the comfort and hope that comes from a Savior who knows what it is to suffer terribly. Contrary to popular belief, people in greatest need yearn to talk about God and life and how to make sense of loss and pain.”

Also within days of the earthquake-spawned tsunamis, Partners International’s local partner ministries were visiting hospitals and survivors in south India. “There are no human words to explain the deplorable condition of the people,” said Rev. Moses Swamidas of Bible Faith Mission. Partners International has wired funds so that they can provide food, shelter, and clothing to survivors in Tamil Nadu state, 18 miles from the mission’s office.

One partner ministry leader, Vasantharaj Albert, who was vacationing on the beach with his wife, Mano, and family on Christmas Day, left the seaside only ten hours before the tsunami struck. He returned three days later by bike with Mano. “The loss of life in this particular fishing community is not great, but the damage to the fishing boats will run into several million dollars,” said Vasantharaj. “We have decided to help fishermen repair their broken boats and even fund them to make new ones so that they can regain their livelihood,” he added. Mano leads a vocational training ministry among very poor women who in the face of this crisis have pledged \$700 to help survivors (India’s average annual per capita income is approximately \$400).

In addition to assisting its partner ministries, Partners International will work with other indigenous Christian relief and development agencies in Indonesia, India, and Sri Lanka.

INDONESIA

Partners International’s Area Director in Indonesia has been key to organizing an incredible Christian coalition that has formed to work together in Aceh. The groups involved are:

- The Evangelical Fellowship of Indonesia (100 denominations)
- National Council of Churches (100 denominations)
- Pentecostal Council of Churches
- National Prayer Network - 400 chapters
- Unreached Peoples Group Network
- CBN Indonesia

The first meeting of this group takes place January 6-9. The goal is to jointly plan effective short- and long- term relief and development ministry. Our partner ministries Cahaya Suku, Dairi Christian Fellowship, and ETSI are all participating. In addition to our Area Director in Indonesia, Partners International’s Project Coordinator from Spokane is there; our Area Director from Cambodia who has experience in relief and development work; and a Malaysian Chinese colleague who also has extensive experience in disaster situations.

Two areas are currently being assessed for possible ministry: one is along the north coast where Cahaya Suku is planning on adopting an area. The other is islands off the west coast. The plan is to survey the north coast from January 8-11. The assessment team will fly into Aceh on Saturday night and spend three days driving back along the north and east coast to survey for possible places that Cahaya Suku could place church planting teams and do rehabilitation projects. Part of the survey is to study the possibility of medical teams coming in.

Partners International’s Area Director of East Asia, Dr. Ben, is organizing a team of seven to ten doctors

and dentists to arrive next week and stay for two weeks. They are not going to Aceh itself, but to those islands along the west coast of Sumatra, just south of Aceh. They will be accompanied by Indonesian church people and medics. Their plan is live in the boats during the two weeks and move from one island to another, as there are many small inhabited islands along the west coast of Sumatra.

INDIA

Church Growth Association of India (CGAI)

From our Assistant Area Director for South Asia:

Staff and volunteers worked late into the night to pack relief materials into two big trucks. What impressed me most was the 50+ volunteers from the Women's Self Help Groups who had donated Rs.40,000 (about \$900) toward the purchase of relief items, had themselves gone and bought things and accompanied the group on January 4 to do the distribution work. A few leaders of the IMS (Indian Missionary Society) also accompanied the Church Growth Relief Team.

About 70 people, including ladies from Self Help Groups, CGAI staff, Rev. and Mrs. Vasantharaj Albert, IMS leaders and volunteers including myself left around 8.30 a.m. in 3 vans, one Tata Sumo and 2 big trucks to a place called Anichankuppam in Villupuram District, which is one of the affected areas. The distance was about 200 kilometers from Chennai.

Rev. John Selvaraj, one of the trainees of CGAI now pastoring a church in Tidivanam, Tamil Nadu, was the main contact person, who had been working in this area for more than 10 years... [Because] he knew the village head and the people in the village, a list of all the families was prepared in advance and the village head was present throughout the distribution work. It was done in a very orderly way. When a name was called, a representative from that family came and received the items.

Each family was given a bag of 25 kilograms of rice, clothes, cooking vessels, mats and other household things. People appreciated this very much. Some of the village leaders after the distribution was over, commented that this was the first time everything here was done in order without chaos or confusion and everyone was satisfied. Relief items were distributed to about 200 families, but there were another 11 or so who did not receive supplies. One of the recipients said, "We will share among ourselves with those who did not get." It took about five hours to distribute to the families.

Before the distribution work began, one of the ladies of the Self Help Groups spoke saying we have contributed towards this in the midst of our own need because we love you and want to share in your sufferings. She explained how the 40 groups voluntarily contributed and raised Rs.40,000 and how they themselves had gone and bought the things which they felt would be useful to those who have lost everything in this tragedy.

The village head gave a vote of thanks and said how much the people in the village have appreciated your timely help. Other leaders also expressed their thanks for coming to their village. This relief effort was a partnership between CGAI, the self-help groups and IMS and emphasized the theme, Together Each can Achieve More (TEAM).

Story of a Fisherman: Peter (name changed after conversion) was the first one to accept Christ in Anichankuppam, where relief work was done by CGAI. He has led about nine others to the Lord in that village. He went through a lot of persecution when he first became a Christian, but never gave up his faith in the Lord. His boat and net are completely destroyed. He had also put up a temporary shed where weekly prayer meetings were being conducted, but it is now destroyed by the tsunami. He is one of the

key people in this village through whom a church could be established. When asked what his immediate need was, he replied, “Repairing the house and buying a new boat and nets.”

Vinnarasu Association of India

Partners International assistance to this group is new. Following a project proposal on relief and rehabilitation from a Joshua Vision India Master Trainer, Dr. Vijayam of JVI said, “I think he has collected good information and being a local man he has already gotten involved with relief work. He is also a member of the core group of Non-Governmental Organizations Coordination committee for relief and rehabilitation with a strong board for his organization.”

The plan is to help in Kanyakumari District in Tamil Nadu in South India. Thousands of fishing boats, huts and fishing nets were washed away. They will identify approximately 100 affected families and part of what they hope to provide includes:

- Temporary Shelters
- Utensils (Kitchen/bed room) like plates, cooking vessels, cots, plastic chairs, mat, etc.
- Children’s education, notebooks, School/College uniform, Shoes, etc.
- Purchase of New Fish Nets
- 10 fishing catamarans

The most important aspect of the long term plan for tsunami victims is construction of new semi-permanent houses and permanent equipment for their life occupation—fishing.

Bible Faith Mission

Rev. Swamidas has visited affected areas 18 miles from the BFM office. Partners International has advanced funds to help them provide clothing, food, medicine and some utensils to those in need. Further plans are being made to respond long-term to the needy. Rev. Swamidas recounts one tragic story:

While we were in Kulachal we met one man named Kasthar (30) who lost his two daughters Arulvani (8) and Sandhya (5) and his mother-in-law (55). He and his wife in a miraculous way escaped with injuries. Being Sunday at 9.30 am they all were at home. He was standing on the door and watching his daughters reading a book. All of a sudden his wife told him that the water is coming from the sea (The Sea is nearly 300 ft. away from their home). Instead of looking that side he said sometimes the sea is like that. Before he finished that sentence he saw the water like a mountain with a roaring sound enter and the wall of his house fall down on his body at the same time as it fell on his wife. He wanted to save his children but within seconds he was thrown away. Finally he could catch a coconut tree at the same moment he saw a girl crying for help. He caught her hand thinking that she was his daughter. Suddenly he realized that she was not his daughter. After few hours when he searched for his children and family he found his wife. Very soon he saw the bodies of one of his daughters and mother-in-law. They searched for their second daughter. They think she must have drowned.

SRI LANKA

National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL)

Partners International is also helping this alliance that was founded in 1952. The NCEASL’s membership consists of five denominations, and 74 Churches and Christian organizations representing more than 200,000 Evangelical Christians in Sri Lanka. The NCEASL and Alliance Development Trust have already dispatched 22 consignments of emergency assistance to affected areas.