



PARTNERS *International*

Tsunami Briefing

January 10, 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 second *Tsunami Briefing*, we bring you edited reports from our staff and partners on the scene. These reports were filed over the weekend.

INDONESIA

From Partners International's Area Director in Indonesia:

It is hard to truly understand the extent of the tragedy in human terms. The church is trying to grasp it as well and find their way to minister in the midst of the tragedy. We are so busy trying to provide immediate help as well as find a strategy to move forward.

For the past few days, several of us have been in Medan assisting in the Christian response to the tragedy. One of our team has been training the Christians in how to respond. He has been working with the national Christian coordination network to organize their response. I have been meeting with our three partner ministries to help them target their church planting ministries to the needy areas.

There are three areas of activity right now:

1. Today (January 8) the assessment team of Partners International staff and local partners leave for the capital of Aceh and will drive down the north/east coast of Aceh in two rented cars. The north coast was affected by the tidal wave but not like the total devastation of the West Coast. The purpose of the survey is to determine both short-term (3-6 months) and long-term (church planting-related) ministry projects. We will return Tuesday afternoon from the survey trip.
2. Dr. Ben, our East Asia Area Director, recruited a 14-member medical team that will spend two weeks doing medical work. They will travel on two different boats and a partner ministry leader will be on each boat. They will be doing a survey at this time to determine how best to assist those in the area. One boat will go to the Nias islands, the other to the islands further north called Simeulue and Pulau Banyak. Wati, leader of the Dairi Christian Fellowship will be aboard one of the boats and ministering to her congregations on the islands.
3. Wati is also sending some students to survey the west coast on a project organized by the Christian coordination office in Medan.

There may not be any more communication from us until Tuesday. We have several specific prayer requests since we are not sure if we will have communications with the outside world until Tuesday:

- A heart of compassion to extend the love of Christ to those in misery.
- Health and safety of the team
- We need a couple of qualified community development staff to work with church planting ministries.
- On our survey, we are looking for places that the Lord wants us to use compassionate ministries to do church planting. Ask for discernment.

From Partners International's Area Director based in Cambodia (because of his extensive experience in relief and development work, we sent him to Indonesia to help out at this time):

We have used the term "ground zero" loosely in the past but the devastation here truly reminds me of photos of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, except this is so very much bigger. It truly goes on for hundreds of square miles. This is just incredible. It is by far the largest disaster that Christians have the opportunity to respond to. This is the hour for Christians to shine.

The first night our survey team arrived we slept on the sidewalk, like many people, as there is only one guest house/hotel still operational in this city of what used to be 300,000 people. There have been many earthquakes and aftershocks since the big one. We were awakened early this morning by an earthquake of 6+. So we see that some people are wisely choosing to flee their earthquake-damaged houses.

This had all the elements of a mega-disaster. The largest earthquake recorded anywhere for 40 years followed by several tsunamis rushing inland as fast as a jetliner. Houses already weakened by the 9.0 earthquake were then knocked flat like dominos. We saw where the waves swept debris into the trees 25 feet off the ground, a mile or so inland from the coast. This happened along a stretch of coast 600 miles long. The powerful waves roared inland here in Banda as far as four miles. We saw many bodies, maybe a hundred, being pulled from the wreckage two weeks after the initial earthquake and tsunami.

Today I walked for hours into the devastated areas towards that awful smell and saw many more bodies. Because the debris is piled up in some places 2-3 stories high, the workers will be daily uncovering many bodies for weeks to come. The Indonesian government announced they would quit trying to count accurately the number of dead.

Around us are survivors who are doing their best. A driver took us around the devastated area in the city while also describing how he lost his wife and child. He took us to the refugee camp he is staying in which had quickly been put together. He and several others are sleeping under a piece of plastic as they try to put their lives back together. Partners International hired him on the spot to drive teams of relief workers around the area for at least a month.

Christians are responding. Relief teams, especially of Indonesian Christians, are coming in, making the 12-hour drive from Medan, the nearest unaffected city. Our partner ministries are part of these teams.

I will try to update you and propose some strategies as long as I am here. Pray for us all.

From Dr. Ben, Partners International's East Asia Area Director based in Australia:

Tomorrow night (Jan. 11), 14 of us, God willing if we all get our seats, will fly to Kuala Lumpur then to Padang (eight doctors, one dentist, two nurses, one dental assistant, and two logistic persons). When we arrive in Indonesia on Wednesday morning, we will go by two boats as two separate parties to the islands off the coast of Aceh.

The islands are those stretched between Simeulue and Nias Islands. There is little information about Simeulue Island because it is further away. It apparently has a population of less than 100,000 and it was next to the earthquake's epicenter. We will then visit other inhabited smaller islands as well. We hope we can be of much help to these islanders and serve them well. Please pray for us. We will live in the boats.

We will have with us local Indonesian church planters who know these islands. Our goal is to establish a good Christian presence, build strong relationships with the locals, and probably set up some basic medical clinics as well if the need is there.

On January 21, we return to land. Six of us will then go to Banda Aceh. Partners International's assessment team is there right now. They will give us a good idea of where we are to go. We plan to visit this area for 4-5 days and our goal will be the same as above.

We hope this first trip can lay good ground for other teams to follow. Pray that we can establish long-term medical and holistic ministries including church-planting ministries in the islands and in the mainland Aceh province, giving valuable help to our indigenous Indonesian church partners this way.

INDIA

Church Growth Association of India (CGAI)

In the first *Tsunami Briefing* we had a report from our Assistant Area Director of South Asia. This is a report on the same event, but from CGAI's ministry leader, Vasantharaj Albert. The photos are new too.

The whole world was shocked on the "Black Sunday" when the hungry Tsunami mercilessly swallowed many lives into its greedy fold. Instead of debating why God allowed this, we jumped into action, which is the responsibility of the Church.

With our encouragement, the poor Self Help groups of "Women In Self Help Action in Lord's Love" (WISHALL) gathered together and decided to collect funds from every member of their groups—gifts totaled Rs. 40,000 (around \$888)! They went to the shops themselves and purchased the necessary relief materials and made neat bundles so that all the relief materials could be systematically distributed without any confusion. Indian Missionary Society (IMS) members also joined their hands with us and they gave two trucks without rent to transmit the relief materials along with a liberal offering.

Anichankuppam is a remote fishing hamlet on the seashore. It is comprised of 310 families. On the day the Tsunami came the waves were 13 feet high and forced people to climb up the coconut trees for safety. Sadly, one elderly woman who was trying to climb the tree was hit badly to the trunk of the tree and she



Survivors receive relief supplies from CGAI.



Rev. Vasantharaj Albert with survivors at the relief distribution.

floated as a corpse. The water level stood up to neck deep for hours. Due to this 38 houses were completely washed away by the killer Tsunami. Six people perished. There are about 100 boats and about 120 nets that have been damaged in this village.

Pastor John Selvaraj who had been working in the Tindivanam area for more than 10 years has a small fellowship in the village Anichankuppam. He made the arrangements with the help of the local people to distribute the relief materials. The local village head and the people affected fully cooperated with us in the orderly distribution. A list of all the families was prepared in advance and the village head was present throughout the onerous job. Nobody rushed and created mayhem. 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 25 kilogram bag of rice, clothes, cooking utensils, mats and other household items. Thus they made untrue what we heard about some people looting the relief materials at the moment of the arrival.

Even the government lent its helping hands by not collecting any charge at the three toll gates we crossed and by giving us permission to distribute the materials in the particular village. When we met the Sub-Collector he was very supportive and immediately granted us permission without making us wait unduly.

The staff of CGAI burned the midnight oil, meticulously kept the accounts, and loaded and unloaded the relief materials. At the end of the five-hour distribution under the scorching sun, the village head Sadayandi thanked the whole team for their gracious action. He added that “even the government did not distribute the materials in this systematic way.”

Now they have enough materials to sustain their life for two to three months, but their livelihood is at stake. They don't know any other occupation except fishing. Without boats and nets it is impossible to go into the sea. To sustain them in the future we have to provide those fishing nets and boats.

There was also a small prayer house in that village. Now it has been erased in the tsunami tragedy. We can also help them to construct a couple of church buildings to keep worship going.

The hard work among the women self-help groups, IMS, CGAI, cooperation of the local pastor, the people, and government emphasizes that partnership can be very effective in delivering the goods.



Destruction at Anichankuppam village.



Anichankuppam village's boats destroyed.



A prayer at the relief distribution.