Post-Tsunami Update — July/August 2005 —

United Nations Activities in Support of the Relief and Recovery Efforts of the Sri Lankan Government and Its People

Broad coordination and a willingness to listen is key to the reconstruction process

You may have missed it, but it's worth a mention: On 25 July, The New York Times and The International Herald Tribune, two highly-respected papers, published a joint editorial. It had high praise for the efforts of governments and relief agencies in warding off an outbreak of disease in the aftermath of the tsunami in Asia's hard-hit countries (see page 11). They said it was no fluke, but due to extensive campaigns of hygiene awareness, the provision of safe water and sanitation and sound health practices and assistance. The editorial, while highlighting one aspect of the successful emergency relief effort, draws attention to the essential dynamic of such success - that government, UN agencies, NGOs, donors and a host of other actors harnessed their talents to address critical needs. The editorial concluded “People worldwide who gave generously to help the tsunami victims can be satisfied their money saved lives, and will go on saving them.”

As we enter the reconstruction phase, such cooperation and coordination between the government and other actors is getting even more effective and concerted. There now exists a “Global Consortium” of organizations — created in part through the efforts of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, former U.S. President Bill Clinton. The Global Consortium, and a number of other initiatives, include UN agencies, donors, the international financial institutions, bilateral organizations and NGOs. They meet regularly to coordinate policies and programmes sector by sector — all in support to the reconstruction efforts of the Sri Lankan government and its people.

Progress is apparent: More than 80 per cent of transitional shelters are now complete, and for those that need upgrading and/or improved water and sanitation provisions, government, UN agencies and NGOs are working hand-in-glove to get the job completed. Such upgrading and the completion of the full allotment of transitional shelters that are needed - 55,000 in all - will be completed well before October and the onset of the monsoons. There is also visible progress in more than 1,100 villages in 11 tsunami-affected districts in the country through 460 focus-group discussions. The objective of these consultations is to better determine the needs of the people.

UNDP consults tsunami-affected people about the recovery process

UNDP has initiated peoples' consultations on post-tsunami recovery in the tsunami-affected districts in the south, east and northern coasts of the island, aimed at strengthening people’s participation in the rebuilding efforts. One of the lessons learned in the initial phase of the relief and recovery effort is that the concerns and aspirations of the tsunami-survivors themselves must be an integral part of the decision-making process if reconstruction is to succeed.

The UNDP peoples’ consultation is designed to meet this goal and respond to some tsunami-affected families who have felt by-passed in the decision-making process.

Take Achala Lakmali of Beruwela, for example, who lost all her possessions to the giant waves. She and her husband now share a house with eight other relatives in the suburbs of Beruwela. Lakmali said that the failure to listen to the affected people has led to a disconnect between assistance and needs on the ground.

“We got a lot of cooking utensils, but no one has given us assistance to build a house because we live with relatives. We pay a rent and have been asked to leave but we have no place to go. It is good that someone is finally asking us what we want,” Achala said.

The UNDP consultations will take place in more than 80 per cent of transitional shelters are now complete, and for those that need upgrading and/or improved water and sanitation provisions, government, UN agencies and NGOs are working hand-in-glove to get the job completed. Such upgrading and the completion of the full allotment of transitional shelters that are needed - 55,000 in all - will be completed well before October and the onset of the monsoons. There is also visible progress.

Public consultation is critical to the recovery process

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Produced by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
in the more lengthy process of creating permanent housing. The coordination and planning process is complex and lengthy and is being increasingly fine-tuned. The initial issues of “Post-Tsunami Update” have drawn attention, of course, to some of the successes in the relief and recovery process and to the proactive efforts to address any flaws in such a huge relief and recovery exercise. This issue of “Post-Tsunami Update” does that as well but it does more: It includes themes and articles that address a variety of social concerns critical to a return to a sense of normalcy and the restoration of dignity to the lives of tsunami-survivors. They include initiatives to address special psycho-social concerns; efforts to increase the participation of women in the decision-making process and an initiative in 1,100 tsunami-affected communities to factor-in the concerns and desires of local people in the reconstruction of their lives and livelihoods. Such broad-based involvement and coordination is critical to the challenging agenda that is before us in building Sri Lanka back better.

Miguel Bermeo
UN Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator in Sri Lanka

ACTED promoting hygiene messages
In Batticaloa district, the NGO ACTED has completed training 90 women as volunteer community hygiene promoters. With the support of district Public Health Inspectors, they have been trained in techniques to communicate hygiene messages particularly to women and children and are now actively promoting improved hygiene practices in their communities. The training included safe water handling and storage, food hygiene, safe latrine use, hand washing and solid waste management. ACTED has also produced visual information and educational material – leaflets targeting the particular concerns of women and colouring books for children. The colouring books, which come with colouring pencils as well, contain pictures promoting good hygiene practices with basic messages in Tamil.

Enhancing education
Save the Children in Sri Lanka (SCiSL) reports that it has provided 542 pre-school children and 17 teachers from 14 pre-schools in Trincomalee district with child and teacher packs. In Ampara SCiSL has provided livelihood support through partner organizations in the agricultural sector to some 137 families. SCiSL has also signed an agreement with the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DOFAR) to provide 400 fishing boats, engines and fishing gear to fishermen who have lost their livelihoods, and is in the process of verifying a beneficiary list. SCiSL is also in the process of establishing 50 libraries to on recovery issues (including resettlement, livelihoods, etc.), to increase their understanding of the recovery process and to share information from these consultations with all relevant stakeholders such as line ministries, TAFREN and the Ministry of Finance and Planning.

“It is important to listen to and give voice to the communities throughout the recovery process,” said Dilrukshi Fonseka, the project liaison officer for UNDP. She said that the failure to do so would isolate the communities and feed into their existing feelings of victimization and resentment. So far, consultations have been completed in Kalutara, Beruwela Panadura and Galle districts in the south, and are scheduled to begin in Jaffna, Matara and Hambantota.

The project is being carried out by the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka in collaboration with the University of Colombo, which will in turn collaborate with regional universities in the south, north, east and the south-east.

“The Peoples’ consultations are timely because they will help the Government and others understand the needs on the ground and formulate policies and projects accordingly,” Professor Lakshman Dissanayake, director of the University of Colombo Community Extension Centre, which is coordinating and conducting the consultations said. He also pointed out that these consultations would enable the Government to adopt a bottom-up approach to tsunami recovery in the country.

The findings from these consultations are being compiled to be shared with all relevant stakeholders.

Women: not just vulnerable or victims but key actors in the recovery and reconstruction process
Whenever programmes for tsunami survivors are developed, women tend to be put in the same category as children, the aged and the disabled -- in the most vulnerable group. This notion of women being victimized and vulnerable is evident in many plans and policies. But what we see at the field level is often quite different.

Women are survivors, care-givers, providers, breadwinners, organizers and negotiators – most of all they are fighters. We come across such women often, in the South, the East, the North, throughout the country. Yet too often they are dismissed as weak and vulnerable, passive and needy and too often they end up marginalized on paper, in policies and overall planning. The time has come to rethink this notion, to change perspective, to look at them not as a vulnerable lot, but as valued partners in the reconstruction process.

Let me take you through a few stories I heard from the tsunami-affected areas to facilitate your own judgment. I met women who have organized themselves into camp committees and started negotiating with the Divisional Secretariat concerning relief arrangements. They demand their rights; they put forward substantive arguments and refuse to concede to official red tape and bureaucracy. They stand their ground and insist on having their concerns acknowledged and attended to.

In another situation, women have organized themselves into a taskforce to confront incidents of gender-based violence. They raise complaints and make their concerns known. They collaborate with NGOs and strategize to combat violence against women in the camps. They get themselves trained to be most effective and their energy and actions create a ripple effect among the survivors. They keep a special eye out for the girl child and form informal networks to protect her within camps.

Women have faced the hardships of living in the camps and of bringing up their children in the harshest of accommodations. They queue up endlessly for relief items and ensure the men don’t hijack the family’s life-saving rations to pay for booze. They struggle to send their young-ones to school and look tirelessly after the sick and the aged.

They aspire to continue the home-based enterprises they used to do and ask for new skills. They suggest new livelihood options and request attention. They continue to make “Kadayappam” the food for breakfast, in the limited space available in the camps or in the temporary houses. They look around for...
orders for short eats in the nearby schools or business ventures. They take a basketful of vegetables and walk from house to house to make a buck out of it. They seek to acquire the skills necessary for survival in their new and challenging environment and explore livelihood options for themselves and their families.

Women battle for their legitimate rights to land and negotiate with the provincial secretariat to incorporate them in the rightful female heads of families. They want the daughters to have the land in their names. They make their presence known at the divisional secretariat and at the provincial councils with their demands.

Some of these women have faced the conflict situation and have been tempered by the experience. They have negotiated with the rebels to get their children back and have shouldered the responsibility of providing for the family income. They have absorbed the shock of civil strife and have grown resilient from it. They were once again hard hit and challenged by the tsunami, but nature could not claim total victory. These women are true survivors, and they will continue to survive and help others survive as well. Such is the power of women! And who can disregard or dismiss such strengths?

Jesinda Jeganathan, 36, lives in a 10-foot by 10-foot, tin, beach shack in the Zahira College tsunami relief camp in Batticaloa District. Her thoughts are not on the tsunami which flattened her camp in Batticaloa District. Her thoughts are on the tsunami which flattened her house, destroyed her livelihood and killed her relatives, but on the future that awaits her. “Right now we don’t see much of a future for us. We are unable to say what the future in the next five months would be like,” said Jesinda. About 1,300 people died and another 630 are missing from Jesinda’s village, Navalady – which recorded the highest number of deaths from a single village in Batticaloa. The tiny fishing village on the sandy patch between the lagoon and the sea, has almost disappeared after the tsunami. While the surviving men have either gone back to fishing or to clear the debris for cash, the women-headed households, the widowed and young girls remain at home without livelihoods or a say on their needs. Jesinda for instance said her family received no livelihood assistance in the absence of her husband who is a fisherman currently working on a short term contract overseas.

“Since my husband is not there to ask for fishing equipment we didn’t get any… and we were never given a chance to participate in the camp committees or to give our opinion on the needs of women in the camps,” she said.

However, helped by a few local community-based organizations, funded by UNDP to empower and develop capacities of affected women, Jesinda and hundreds like her are coming out of their tin shacks to make representations in camp committees, to win equal employment opportunities, to voice their needs and to help plan and implement rebuilding activities.

“Earlier we never got a chance to talk. Now we get a chance to say what we want,” Jesinda said.

Suriya Women’s Development Centre, which is one such organization that UNDP funds, mobilizes local organizations to form a coalition to address gender- and land-related issues. At a South Asian conference on Gender Concerns in Post-Tsunami Reconstruction in July, which was organized by Suriya and funded by UNDP, more than one hundred women from Banda Aceh, India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bangladesh came together to discuss common issues that tsunami-affected women face and to plan common strategies and share resources on better participation of women in rebuilding.

“There are gendered experiences of displacement and one of the important issues that has surfaced repeatedly is the increase in violence against women within families and communities. By analyzing social realities using a gender-based and rights-based perspective, we can bring into clear focus the impacts of disasters on women’s lives,” Suriya officials said.

More than 130 representatives from five tsunami-affected countries participated in the conference. And, unlike many regional conferences that are held in the capital, this get together was held in one of the worst affected tsunami districts of Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka, yards away from the tsunami debris and relief camps, and be managed by children in Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Ampara, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu. An agreement was signed between SCiSL and the Tamils’ Rehabilitation Organization (TRO). SCiSL will provide books, play material and furniture and also train children to manage the libraries. These libraries will be housed in semi-permanent structures at the IDP camps with a view, under SCiSL’s five-year plan, of eventually merging them into regional libraries. Save the Children in Sri Lanka has also provided 1,700 mosquito nets for Ampara; 3,043 hygiene kits for Jaffna; 1,936 pairs of slippers for one- to five-year olds, 1,174 pairs of slippers for six- to nine-year olds, 567 pairs of slippers for ten- to 13-year olds, all in Jaffna; and 1,027 primary school kits and 971 secondary school kits, all also in Jaffna.

UNICEF constructs semi-permanent classrooms

One-hundred and ninety-five semi-permanent, modular-type classrooms are being fabricated by UNICEF in 15 schools in Akkaraiapattu and 18 schools in Kalmunai to benefit close to 5,000 students in Ampara district. These children are currently accommodated in temporary classrooms. Work is currently on-going in Trincomalee and Ampara district by UNICEF to ensure that all temporary school buildings, including a total of 84 classrooms, are upgraded to semi-permanent buildings with half cement walls, cement partitions and color washing. Seven other structures, with 28 class rooms have already been completed in Trincomalee. In Galle, UNICEF agreed to provide five more schools, with 24 class rooms, in addition to the temporary buildings, with 28 classrooms, it has already provided. About 1,800 students will benefit from these new classrooms.

WHO-sponsored staff deployed for psycho-social coordination

Eleven WHO-sponsored staff, currently recruited through the Deputy Provincial Director of

UNDP helps empower tsunami-affected women in Asia

Thirty-six-year-old Jesinda Jeganathan squats with her face resting on her palm outside her 10-foot by 10-foot, tin, beach shack in the Zahira College tsunami relief camp in Batticaloa District. Her thoughts are not on the tsunami which flattened her camp in Batticaloa District. Her thoughts are on the tsunami which flattened her house, destroyed her livelihood and killed her relatives, but on the future that awaits her. “Right now we don’t see much of a future for us. We are unable to say what the future in the next five months would be like,” said Jesinda. About 1,300 people died and another 630 are missing from Jesinda’s village, Navalady – which recorded the highest number of deaths from a single village in Batticaloa. The tiny fishing village on the sandy patch between the lagoon and the sea, has almost disappeared after the tsunami. While the surviving men have either gone back to fishing or to clear the debris for cash, the women-headed households, the widowed and young girls remain at home without livelihoods or a say on their needs. Jesinda for instance said her family received no livelihood assistance in the absence of her husband who is a fisherman currently working on a short term contract overseas.

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Some organisations dealing with gender issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of NGO</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact No.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suriya Women’s Development Center</td>
<td>20, Dias Lane, Batticaloa</td>
<td>065 222 3297</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHADOW</td>
<td>Eravil East, Main St. Kalavanchicudi</td>
<td>065 225 0159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affected Women’s Forum Ampara</td>
<td>RKM Road, Akkaraiapattu 8</td>
<td>067 227 8237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Development Foundation Ampara</td>
<td>Sagama Road, Akkaraiapattu 8</td>
<td>067 227 8357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim Women’s Research and Action Forum</td>
<td>290, Main St. Kalmunai</td>
<td>077 663 6175</td>
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Muslim Women’s Research and Action Forum 290, Main St. Kalmunai 077 663 6175

SHADOW Eruvil East, Main St. Kalawanchicudi 065 225 0159

Suriya Women’s Research and Action Forum 20, Dias Lane, Batticaloa 065 222 3297
conducted in a native language with simultaneous translations.

The conference focused on violence against women in camps, lack of decision making powers, representation of women in rebuilding activities, land rights issues and livelihood development issues.

“One of the biggest issues is the lack of participation and consultation in decision making. Usually participation is done when a programme is about to be implemented, when it is too late,” said Sunila Abeysekara of INFORM, a women’s rights based organization.

The participants said that one of the main problems faced by women in relief camps is sexual harassment and abuse. Ruth Manorama from India said that some young girls have been forced to remarry in the tsunami-affected districts due to the lack of a livelihood and support to displaced girls.

“Some adult young girls who have been orphaned are being forced into marriage while some women have committed suicide because they were forced to remarry,” said Manorama.

In addition to sexual harassment, Shaliny Jauer from Maldives said that reconstruction efforts and rebuilding of livelihood in the affected islands of the 1,200 archipelago have ignored the land rights of women while neglecting the commercially unregistered but self-employed women who have now lost their livelihood after the tsunami.

She said that livelihood development of the affected women has become a great need in Maldives, especially since most women contribute to the household income and are involved in home based industries.

The two-day conference discussed disaster recovery and the challenges for women and women’s activism and mobilization in the post-tsunami disaster context. The participants made a number of recommendations to overcome their constraints and to better women’s participation in recovery efforts.

The participants shared strategies and mechanisms for lobbying within the participants’ work contexts, to provide a platform for future concerns and exchange on gendered concerns in disaster situations within the South Asian region, to produce papers that share experiences from South Asia leading to a publication on gendered concerns in the post tsunami context in the native languages as well as in English and to publish the papers in a resource book for South Asia and Sri Lanka.

The recommendations made at the conference will be presented to government and non-governmental authorities who will be responsible for equitable delivery of assistance in post-tsunami recovery.

For the time being, at village level individual women are taking the lead to change norms and to make life in relief camps easier for the displaced women.

“Now we do a lot of negotiating and play an active role in the community. Now we even attend divisional secretariat meetings,” Jesinda said adding that empowerment of women through local organizations have not only given them a voice but also the courage and confidence to face the challenges ahead.

Volunteers: the heart and soul of Red Cross/Red Crescent
A serious looking, bearded, young man glances up from his work and rises to greet us as we enter the Red Cross Red Crescent office in Pottuvil, a coastal town in eastern Sri Lanka. Dilshard Ahamed, 22-years-old, is the emergency unit coordinator for the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) Ampara branch.

Until six months ago, he worked in his family-owned guesthouse. In his quiet manner he explains that while he only recently joined the Red Cross as a staff member, he has been involved with the Red Cross for eight years, the last two as an active volunteer.

“I enjoy helping people and I thought the Red Cross in Sri Lanka was doing a great job, so I decided to become a volunteer,” Dilshard says. Dilshard and his family moved east from the capital Colombo only a few years ago to run the family business.

His mother and uncles took over the business and, until the disaster of 26 December, it was run by Dilshard and his cousins.

In an area well-known as a magnet for travelers and tourists, The Mermaid’s Rest Beach Resort enjoyed a prime location on a picturesque beach in the small village of Ulla, known throughout the surfing world as Arugam Bay.

When the tsunami struck, the resort was filled with guests, so many of
Dilshard’s family members were on hand to assist with the workload. Happily, the entire family and all the guests survived even though the resort itself was destroyed. The only reminders that a hotel once stood on the devastated site are the foundations and a signboard bearing the name of the hotel. Dilshard’s home, a few hundred metres from the beach, was spared the wrath of the crashing waves that devastated almost two-thirds of Sri Lanka’s coastline.

Drawing on his Red Cross training in first aid, rescue and, later on, relief distribution, Dilshard was keen to help. “After I made sure that everyone at the hotel was alright, I began to help the rescue effort. Together with other volunteers we provided a lot of first aid,” he recalls.

As the impact and extent of the devastation became known it also became clear to Ampara branch executive officer Sunil Dissanayake there would be a great demand for skilled volunteers, explains Dilshard. He helped set up an emergency unit and trained volunteers in First Aid. With assistance from the American Red Cross, the extra SLRCS volunteers also underwent training in relief distribution. It was fortunate, says Dilshard, that earlier in the year selected volunteers had also attended the psycho-social training college in Jaffna in the north of the country.

“I saw the destruction the tsunami caused in that short space of time and I wanted to help all those people who were affected. All of the volunteers who are involved with Red Cross feel the same way”, he explains.

Today Dilshard works closely with delegates from Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies from around the world who have come to Sri Lanka to help with relief and recovery programmes. Together with his team of dedicated young volunteers, Dilshard is often seen on the road traveling between camps of internally displaced people, supervising a relief distribution, or assisting his Red Cross Red Crescent colleagues.

What are Dilshard’s plans for the future? “I am happy that the work I do has such a positive impact on the lives of the people of this district. There are tangible results of our work. I am happy too that I am contributing towards the development of my country and the Red Cross Society”, he says. “I plan to stay involved with the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement for as long as possible and hopefully realise my dream of becoming a water and sanitation specialist.”

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**First Red Cross permanent housing project completed for tsunami victims**

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is helping people’s plans and dreams take shape in the tsunami-affected districts of Sri Lanka. In the southern coastal town of Rekawa, these plans and dreams take on the shape of houses; homes for those who lost theirs to the devastating tsunami on 26 December 2004. ‘Little Malta Village’, a joint project of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society and the Malta Red Cross Society comprises 63 houses perched on a hill with shady trees, 350 metres from the original settlement on the beach.

The houses were handed over to the beneficiaries on 10 July, at a ceremony attended by the Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse and Maltese Red Cross Society President Prof L Cutajar. Lansinonona Wijesuriya is almost bursting with joy as she waits to receive the key to her new home. “I am very happy. I feel safe here,” she says. Ms. Wijesuriya’s son works in the capital Colombo and she lived alone. “My house was completely destroyed. I would have died too if I hadn’t been at the temple that morning,” she says.

Everyone, including the country’s Prime Minister, the new house owners and members of the Sri Lanka Red Cross and Malta Red Cross Societies have reason to rejoice: it’s the first completed permanent housing project to which a community made homeless by the tsunami has moved in. “It is an honour that it’s the Red Cross which completed the first housing project”, said Prime Minister Rajapakse as he addressed the throngs of people who attended the ceremony.

The family of Jaliya Ediriweera and his wife E.P.Esilin Nona, both 77-years-old, has prepared traditional Sri Lankan sweetmeats to mark the day. They invite members of the Red Cross to come share their joy, and their first meal in the new house. “We are very grateful to the Red Cross, they gave us food, water and now a house” says Ediriweera. “We would have had to live on the road if we didn’t get a house,” he adds. His home and coconut grove were destroyed in the tsunami. “We are grateful to the people of Malta, who provided the money to complete this project,” adds his neighbor Jagath Ratnawira.

The President of the Maltese Red Cross, Professor Cutajar, says the Government and public in Malta gave generously when the Red Cross launched an appeal following the tsunami, some giving their entire month’s pension. It is the first international operation for the Malta Red Cross Society, a relatively new National Society now celebrating its 14th year since inception.

“All in all, it’s been a very satisfactory outcome,” says Professor Cutajar with a smile.

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**WFP enters into agreement with the government to feed tsunami-affected people**

WFP has entered into a contract with the Government for the local procurement of rice from Sri Lankan farmers in the tsunami-affected districts. WFP announced that it reached an agreement with the Government to both support the continued relief food distributions to Sri Lankans affected by the tsunami and also provide support to local rice farmers.

Given the good Maha harvest for paddy earlier this year, an opportunity arose for pursuing the purchases of rice in Sri Lanka. WFP entered into discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Land and Irrigation last month to prepare the groundwork for this transaction. In accordance with the agreement reached recently between the Ministry and WFP, efforts were under way for the local procurement of 18,130 tonnes of rice in Sri Lanka. WFP’s two largest donors for the food assistance programmes in Sri Lanka, the governments of Japan and Australia, are providing the funding for the local procurements. The
Government of Japan is funding the purchase of 12,230 tonnes of rice that will be distributed to people affected by the tsunami; while the Government of Australia is funding 5,900 tonnes of rice that will be used in WFP programmes in the conflict-affected districts of the North and East.

Workshop on duties and responsibilities in democratic societies
A two-day workshop on “Improving Local Democracy through Citizen Participation” which was organized by the Eastern Rehabilitation Organization (ERO) and supported by USAID was held in Trincomalee. It was the first in a series of six workshops to be held in the district with the support of USAID. The objective of the workshop was to enhance the knowledge of local government officials and civil society leaders on issues of human rights, democracy and peace and also to create an opportunity for local leaders to discuss and identify immediate priorities regarding peace building. Another purpose of the workshop was to increase the level of awareness on duties and responsibilities in democratic societies.

Venezuelan donations to be used to construct houses
Venezuela donated US$ 6.2 million for the Sri Lanka Tsunami Relief Fund for the construction of 1,000 houses for tsunami-affected people. These houses are to be constructed in a location to be determined by the Government.

INGO Code of Conduct approved
The Inter-agency Group in Batticaloa district has drafted and approved the INGO Code of Conduct for Buying, Renting and Employing Material and Human Resources. It establishes guidelines for INGO’s and offers a grievance process which individuals or organisations can use if they feel they have experienced unhelpful behaviour from an

A return to normalcy can be the best psycho-social medicine
In early July, the NGO Plan Sri Lanka convened a seminar to share the findings of a study that Plan had commissioned on the psycho-social needs in tsunami-affected areas. The Psycho-social and Education Needs Assessment, commissioned by Plan, was conducted by Health Net International-Transcultural Psycho-social Organization (HNI-TPO), Jill Markvorsen, a researcher and HNI-TPO representative, presented a summary of the research findings and discussed the hierarchy of needs, negative and positive coping problems, variances in the north/ east versus the south in response and coping mechanisms. The research was undertaken through extended interviews and focal groups. A central message of the research, according to Ms. Markvorsen, was that in dealing with psycho-social problems related to the tsunami, “You can’t treat the child alone. Families and all spheres of the community were affected”.

Canned fish donated from China fuels WFP food-for-work programme
China donated 270 tonnes of canned fish to WFP for Sri Lankan survivors of last December’s devastating tsunami. The Chinese contribution for WFP’s tsunami relief operation in Sri Lanka is part of a US$20 million donation to UN agencies in the tsunami-affected region as announced by the Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of China Wen Jiabao.

The donation demonstrates China’s commitment to assisting the tsunami-affected people and highlights the Beijing government’s growing commitment to multilateralism as a way of solving the world’s humanitarian and development problems.

The 16 containers of mackerel valued at US$320,000 is the first of two such shipments, worth a total of US$1 million, to support WFP food-for-work schemes helping 36,500 Sri Lankan families (a total of 182,000 beneficiaries) to rebuild roads and other infrastructure damaged by the devastating tsunami. The food for work participants will receive a family ration of rice, lentils, sugar and oil. The canned fish is added to this food basket to enhance the protein component. Canned fish will be distributed at the rate of 50g/person/day for 66 days for 3 months (implementing period for WFP projects) starting from September 2005.

A return to normalcy can be the best psycho-social medicine

Canned fish donated from China fuels WFP food-for-work programme

A label from one of the cans of mackerel donated by China to WFP for its food-for-work programme
IOM transport assistance

IOM currently maintains a vehicle fleet of 83 lorries each with a cargo capacity of 10 tonnes. During the past several weeks IOM lorries transported various building materials and livelihood assistance to IOM construction sites and tsunami-affected areas in the country on 74 occasions. In addition, five prime movers each with a trailer capacity for a 20-foot container were leased by IOM and transported cement boards to Ampara district. IOM provides 20 vans collectively to various district offices for the Transitional Accommodation Project (TAP) and Commissioner General of Essential Services (CGES).

IOM continues to provide transport assistance to government agencies, international organizations, NGOs and other assistance organizations free to the recipients. Transports included: 88 lorry transports of medicines and medical equipment for the Ministry of Health; 12 lorries for UNHCR; six lorries for OXFAM; four lorries for CARE International; two for Central Environment Authority (CEA); two for Mercy Corps; one for the International Civil Protection Department (ICPD).

IOM has been working closely with Oxfam Australia and other agencies involved in shelter construction in relation to a large shipment of timber donated by Oxfam Australia. IOM is providing logistical support and transport assistance to all recipient agencies. Following the clearance of nineteen 40-foot containers at the Colombo Sea Port, IOM leased 19 prime movers and transported 17 timber containers to various IOM construction sites in Trincomalee (1), Batticaloa (5), Ampara (7) and Negombo (4) districts, one container to Ampara district on behalf of Islamic Relief and one container to Batticaloa district on behalf Oxfam Community Aid Abroad (OCAA).

Since the tsunami, IOM has cooperated on relief activities and/or provided transport assistance to a range of international and national agencies, IOs, NGOs and donors including: The Government of Sri Lanka, Government of Japan, Austria, Spain, Ireland, Turkey, Hungary, Russia, ECHO, USAID, DFID, UNHCR, WFP, UNJLC, UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNIFEM, UNFPA, MSF- France, ONGD Bomberos Unidos Sin Fronteras (Spanish NGO), MDM Spain, Salvation Army, Relief International, Merlin, Assistance Pédagogique Internationale (French NGO), CEYNO (Norwegian NGO), HELP (German NGO), IFRC, Sri Lankan Red Cross Society, Oxfam, Save the Children, ZOA, Swiss Red Cross, French Red Cross, CARE, PARC, ACF, SPIR, VOVCOD, Colombo University, TRO and local NGOs Pooncholai, KPNDU, Virutcham, the SewaLanka Foundation, Nawimana South Rural Development Fund, Sarvodaya and the Sunera Foundation. During recent weeks IOM lorries were dispatched to various tsunami-affected areas in the country on behalf of such agencies on 113 occasions.

Fast progress in development of laboratory facilities

Recent months have seen a marked transition at the Ampara General Hospital. Not only has it been awarded two much sought-after 5S awards for its immaculately laid out facilities and excellence of service to the public, but there has also been a successful upgrade of the microbiology facilities available there.

Ampara was one of the worst affected areas in Sri Lanka following the Asian tsunami in December 2004. As such, WHO has been working closely with Oxfam Australia and other agencies involved in shelter construction in relation to a large shipment of timber donated by Oxfam Australia. IOM is providing logistical support and transport assistance to all recipient agencies. Following the clearance of nineteen 40-foot containers at the Colombo Sea Port, IOM leased 19 prime movers and transported 17 timber containers to various IOM construction sites in Trincomalee (1), Batticaloa (5), Ampara (7) and Negombo (4) districts, one container to Ampara district on behalf of Islamic Relief and one container to Batticaloa district on behalf Oxfam Community Aid Abroad (OCAA).

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This activity initially entailed the supply of some basic equipment and supplies, and has evolved to include ongoing hands-on training, technical support and regular supervision. WHO has also conducted a number of training workshops at the Medical Research Institute in Colombo, with the objective of updating and advancing the skills of the MLTs (Medical Laboratory Technologists) throughout the island and a one-day workshop was dedicated to the staff of Ampara.

Accordingly, the range of testing and investigation activities within the laboratory at Ampara Hospital has broadened with the introduction of blood agar media, Kliger’s agar and various other microbiology procedures.
Irrigation renovation projects get underway

World Vision was able to complete a major part of the Palmoni Canal clearing project in Galle district, which is one of the 14 irrigation renovation projects undertaken by World Vision on the 15 irrigation canals affected by the tsunami. The Palmoni Canal, which is one of the major irrigation canals in the area, was the main source of water to nearly 250 acres of paddy cultivation in the nearby fields. The tsunami waters had submerged the canal and the water, which was mixed with saline water, had caused the growth of reeds, which totally covered the canal. As a result, this paddy field which was once one of the most flourishing paddy fields, could not be cultivated.

Using excavators, the reeds were carefully removed so as not to alter the level of the canal. Subsequently the plants, which were still remaining, were removed from the canal using laborers on a cash-for-work basis. As a result of World Vision clearing the passage for the water to flow to the paddy cultivations, the farmers were able to reap their usual harvest. Further the threat of mosquito borne diseases which could have increased had the canal not been cleared, was eliminated.

Foundation laid for 100 houses in a new village in Katankudy

Muslim Aid (Sri Lanka Office) in association with its local partner, Help Lanka Consortium has begun laying the foundations for 100 houses in a housing complex for a new village in Katankudy in Batticaloa. The 100 houses are designed in an eco-friendly setting with additional facilities, including an education centre, a medical centre and community centre. The project is being jointly funded by Oxfam and Muslim Aid and should be fully complete by the end of the year. The acquisition of land has been an issue in many areas of the

In line with this expansion, the Hospital Medical Superintendent has taken the initiative to provide a larger space and facilities which have been renovated and furnished to house the new laboratory activity and equipment. A number of test controls have been put in place alongside a comprehensive system of documentation to record accurate data of tests and investigations performed. Standard operating procedures will be monitored in order to practice bio-safety procedures and heighten and develop the overall quality of the microbiology laboratory.

Originally only able to undertake urine cultures and antibiotic sensitivity testing on a sporadic basis, the laboratory is now fully equipped and operating at optimum. The adoption of these standards, practices and additional activities will enhance the capability and output of the laboratory making it an essential component of the hospital facilities.

Dr Bandula Perera has been delighted with the progress and development of the Ampara Laboratory: “These latest initiatives have ensured that we are able to expand our investigative activities and streamline our methods of operation ensuring that we can contribute much more detailed and accurate data to the health information system, thus supporting the diagnosis procedure as much as possible. We have now strengthened our position and are ready to face challenges such as outbreak investigations and disease surveillance issues thoroughly and independently.”

Mental health in action

In all countries affected by the December tsunami there has been a strong need to incorporate a programme of psycho-social and mental health care into the long term recovery and rehabilitation programmes of the victims of this tragedy.

In Sri Lanka, the plan has taken on much wider coverage. WHO is working with the Ministry of Health, the College of Psychiatrists and numerous other health partners to devise and implement a long-term strategy and plan that will benefit not only the population affected by the tsunami, but also existing patients of mental illness.

It has been estimated that over 384,000 Sri Lankans suffer from serious debilitating mental illnesses, such as bipolar illness, major depression and schizophrenia whilst about 10 per cent of the population is thought to suffer from less acute mental disorders in the form of phobias, obsessional, somatoform, mood and delusional disorders. Following the tsunami, a further 30,000 of tsunami survivors are expected to go on to develop mental illnesses, most notably depression and schizophrenia while 10 per cent of the population is thought to suffer from less acute mental disorders in the form of phobias, obsessional, somatoform, mood and delusional disorders. Following the tsunami, a further 30,000 of tsunami survivors are expected to go on to develop mental illnesses, most notably depression and schizophrenia while 10 per cent of the population is thought to suffer from less acute mental disorders in the form of phobias, obsessional, somatoform, mood and delusional disorders.

The development of community health care systems will be undertaken in smaller, less restricted community based institutions and the introduction of smaller, less restricted community based care systems will be developed. These are just two of the long term- and nationwide activities that are in progress, in the meantime, psycho-social support of the tsunami-affected population is ongoing alongside a strong training and recruitment drive of skilled workers to widen the coverage of these primary health care services immediately.

Tsunami survivors rebuild their lives

On the morning of December 26, Mrs. I. Sinnamuthu was fighting for her life as towering waves crashed into her village, Onthachimadam, on Sri Lanka’s east coast, destroying her home and her business. Seven months later, the 56-year-old is an inspiring example of strength in the face of adversity as she works to rebuild her life and her community.

“I was busy in my small general store when I heard a neighbour scream that a wall of water was heading straight for us,” the shopkeeper recalls. “I tried to run from the tsunami but the waves caught up with me and I was engulfed in water up to my neck. I thought I was going to drown,” she says.

Mrs. Sinnamuthu managed to keep her head above water until the waves subsided, but it was another seven
agonising hours before she learned that her husband and four grown children had also survived. She took refuge in the grounds of a local school, and was one of the first to volunteer to help when IOM arrived to build emergency accommodation.

“I was happy to carry the bricks and timber and weave the cadjan fronds for the shelters,” she says. “It gave me solace, and helped me cope with the tragedy all around me.”

Now Mrs. Sinnamuthu has moved into a transitional house built by IOM with financial support from the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) in the hard hit eastern district of Batticaloa. IOM staff were again impressed with Mrs. Sinnamuthu’s drive and energy as she pitched in to build her transitional home – a sturdy 200 square-foot structure with concrete floors and a corrugated roof.

Helping fishers get back to work

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources distributed 1,000 nets and 100 outboard motors to approximately 330 tsunami-affected fishers in Jaffna district in early July. They were purchased through an FAO project funded by the Government of Japan.

IOM is one of the biggest providers of transitional accommodation in Sri Lanka, having already completed more than 2,400 houses island-wide. Mrs. Sinnamuthu also collected enough wood and metal sheeting to rebuild her small store – the only means of income for her and her disabled husband.

As part of another ECHO funded-project, IOM provided the enterprising woman with new equipment and supplies. Mrs. Sinnamuthu is one of more than 1,000 people whom IOM has helped to rebuild businesses destroyed by the tsunami. Now she’s making enough money to support herself and her husband.

“With help from IOM, I’m back at work and busy,” says Mrs. Sinaumuthu, “Now I really feel that I can put the trauma of the tsunami behind me and begin life anew.”

A practical approach to sanitation

In the wake of the Asian tsunami on 26th December 2004, a key concern within the camps of IDPs has been the issue of environmental health and sanitation. It has been essential to adopt stringent procedures of waste disposal and hygiene in order to minimize risks of illness and infectious disease outbreaks.

Whilst this may sound an obvious exercise, the huge scale of this disaster incurred an aftermath that meant in many areas emergency activities were starting from a very basic level. Accordingly, methods of waste disposal were conducted via crude and basic conditions.

In Jaffna, WHO devised a simple yet effective design for utilization within the displaced camp settings in order to address this situation. Recycling used barrels, each was halved in order to be easily mobile for emptying, and a basic lid was cut into the top and hinges attached in order ensure that all waste disposal would be contained and the presence of flies, insects and rodent infestation minimized.

Prototypes were created and local labour from the area was utilized in the production of these self-contained bins which were then distributed to all the temporary shelters and camps in the affected areas. The bins also had hygiene promotion messages imprinted on them.

These garbage containers provided a cost-effective yet simple solution to a potentially burgeoning problem among the IDP population and represents a tiny yet successful step in the wide range of activities WHO is undertaking in its continuing efforts to minimize the risk of disease outbreaks and improve the quality of sanitation throughout the affected areas.

Family packs for tsunami-affected

In early July, UNICEF handed over 40,000 “family packs” to the Ministry of Social Welfare (MOSW) to give to families moving out of tents and into the transitional shelters being built around the country. The family packs, costing nearly US$ 3 million, contain essential supplies including cooking pots, sleeping mats, lanterns, and hygiene kits for both adults and small children. UNICEF provided much of these supplies to families in need immediately after the tsunami hit the country, but seven months on, families need new hygiene kits and extra supplies such as shovels, sleeping mats, and buckets for collecting water, in order to make their new shelters as comfortable as possible while they wait for permanent housing. UNICEF also handed over 40 motorcycles to the MOSW to support the work of Probation and Childcare staff and Child Rights Promotion officers who are assisting children badly affected by the tsunami across the South, North and East.

The Government of Japan contributed US$ 5 million in emergency assistance to FAO for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction work in tsunami-stricken countries, of which US$ 2.671 million was provided to Sri Lanka to be utilized in all adversely affected districts.

Around 5,000 fishers were killed by the tsunami waves in Sri Lanka whilst tens of thousands of others saw their houses destroyed and their means of earning a living - their boats and nets washed away.

Permanent buildings to be completed in Galle in another six months

Construction of permanent buildings in place of damaged buildings in Galle district will take another six months or more to complete. In the meantime, there is a lack of classroom facilities,
and children are finding it extremely difficult to concentrate on their studies as the limited number of available classrooms are overcrowded. It was found essential to provide them with semi-permanent school buildings to conduct classes until permanent buildings are put-up. UNICEF responded to the request made by the provincial department of education to construct ten semi-permanent buildings in five schools in Galle Education zone to facilitate over 1,500 children. Approximately 1,600 students will directly benefit from the semi-permanent buildings. The total estimated cost for these ten schools buildings is Rs 3,000,000. Of the ten school buildings five have already been completed and handed over to the respective schools. Work on the remaining five schools is in progress. The semi-permanent buildings can last more than five years and the buildings can be put to use for various extra curricular activities even after the completion of permanent buildings. In addition, UNICEF has provided school desks and chairs, uniforms, school bags, drink bottles, lunch boxes and teaching and learning aids to these schools. Other organizations involved in building of semi-permanent classrooms are SED Galle/Caritas International, Adopt Sri Lanka, Project Galle 2005, Sewa Lanka, Hikkaduwa Area Relief Fund, with various donor funding from the Italian Civil Protection and Government, JICA, and Rotary International among others.

Infancia Sin Fronteras completes classrooms and supplies daily breakfast to over 1,500 children

Infancia Sin Fronteras (Children without Borders) has been supplying a daily breakfast to over 1,500 children in several schools in Galle District since February, and has helped to reduce absentees in schools. To encourage school attendance, Infancia Sin Fronteras is currently providing over 1,500 children with breakfast and supplies daily.

UNICEF has provided school meals and educational materials to children in over 50 classrooms.

Approximately US$ 26,730 worth of fishing net kits complete with ropes, floats and twine were distributed to beneficiaries in five locations of Jaffna district. These nets, procured with Japanese funds, will be used for fishing sardine and mackerel off the northern coast of Sri Lanka.

“This additional fishing gear will help me catch more fish per outing” said sardine fisher Anapala Singham Kulasingham who lost his boat and nets during the tsunami. The mackerel fishermen received five nets and sardine fishermen received four nets.

“The Ministry required that the minimum amount of nets required be distributed to the beneficiaries to ensure that as many fishers as possible are helped to restart their livelihoods”, said G. Piyasena, Director General of the Department of Fisheries.

There are 19 different organizations in Jaffna district working on fisheries livelihoods. They are involved in boat repair, provide boats and fishing equipment, rehabilitate fisheries infrastructure as well as work directly with fishers to ensure that their livelihoods are restored.

“Additional distributions by other actors in Jaffna will ensure that fishers are provided with the full complement for optimal fishing”, added the FAO Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator, Mona Chaya.

FAO has already ordered more than US$1.3 million of fishing nets and equipment on the international markets to be delivered between now and August and is in the process of ordering US$ 4 million more. “The current overwhelming demand for nets in the region has made it difficult to procure a sufficient amount to replace those lost and destroyed as a result of the tsunami. We’ve had some suppliers balk on their orders and have had to procure the majority of the fishing gear from overseas” said FAO Master Fisherman and Fishing Gear Specialist Cyril Binduwna.

FAO also issued the equivalent of US$114 000 worth of outboard motors in Jaffna with funds received from Japan’s Official Development Assistance. The horse power engines meet the requirements of the lagoon and coastal fisheries of northern province.

“The outboard motor will allow me to go out farther in search of fish. I’ll spend less time sailing and more fishing or taking care of my family”, said Bala Krishnasami who takes care of his five children as well as his parents in his Valveddithurai home. Mr Krishnasami lost many of his possessions as a result of the tsunami.

Many of the fishers have already had their boats repaired by NGOs and the government-owned boat repair company Cey-Nor Foundation. FAO supports Cey-Nor technically and financially using funds received from a number of international donors. The governments of Japan, Italy, Norway, Belgium as well as the Italian Civil Protection, ECHO and GTZ have contributed funds to ensure that boats damaged by the tsunami are expertly repaired and returned to service as soon as possible.
Some high praise from *The New York Times* and *The International Herald Tribune*

On 25 July both *The New York Times* and *The International Herald Tribune* ran a joint editorial on the success governments and relief organizations have had in the tsunami-struck region in averting a deadly outbreak of disease. The editorial stated that good reasons existed for the tsunami relief community to fear such an outbreak. “Normal water supplies had been destroyed; in the capital of Indonesia’s Aceh region, 70 per cent of the water supply system vanished. Much of what remained was contaminated with seawater, debris and the bodies of dead people and animals. But six months later, there has been no spike in diarrheal disease, cholera, giardiasis and dysentery. The affected areas have had no increase in malaria or dengue fever - diseases spread by mosquitoes, which breed in standing water. In many places, tsunami survivors living in camps have suffered less from waterborne diseases than countrymen in comparable areas who were not affected.” The editorial went on to say, that aid officials had not exaggerated the peril of an outbreak of disease in a bid to increase donations. “Instead it is a story of aid done right. Governments, international organizations and charities had a head start in India and Sri Lanka, where they have long had trained workers in place to deal with flooding from monsoons. In Aceh, a war zone all but walled-off by the Indonesian Government, there had been little international presence, yet there was no rise in waterborne diseases. Coordination was the key. Officials quickly established what was needed and who was in charge of providing it. Some areas could chlorinate standing water but others had to bring in tankers of fresh. In Sri Lanka, the Lion Brewery switched to bottling water for emergency distribution. Contaminated wells had to be cleaned. It was a hugely complex job successfully done.”

According to the editorial, aid workers had learned a lot from past emergencies. “Water tankers carried messages in the local language about how to keep clean and about the importance of hand washing. Relief workers trained armies of tsunami survivors to teach others how to assure their water was clean. The safe water campaign was so effective that there are even preliminary indications that it helped to cut down on the annual monsoon death toll this year. Relief workers are now trying to make clean water permanently available in tsunami-affected areas - some of which had no water systems or barely functioning ones before. People worldwide who gave generously to help the tsunami victims can be satisfied their money saved lives, and will go on saving them,” concluded the editorial.

**Tsunami survivors receive free eye care**

A mobile team of IOM eye specialists recently screened 150 tsunami survivors in the hard-hit town of Kirinda in the Hambantota district, and referred almost 100 people for follow up care. IOM’s Dr. Qasim Sufi said the team, consisting of a Sri Lankan eye specialist and four technicians, referred nine people for surgery to remove potentially blinding cataracts. A further 90 people were diagnosed with refractive errors and referred to Hambantota Base Hospital, where they will receive free spectacles.

“During the tsunami, many blind people lost their guides and were displaced into unfamiliar surroundings,” said Dr. Qasim, adding that the patients screened included many people who had lost their homes in the tsunami and are now residing in camps. “Other visually impaired Sri Lankans lost their glasses, which makes it more difficult to do everyday tasks such as caring for young children, sewing, cooking, and studying. For children this can have long term psychological and developmental implications,” he said.

IOM hopes to expand this pilot project to eventually screen 100-thousand people affected by the tsunami. To strengthen the capacity of the health care system, IOM also supported a one day training course in eye care for 40 health workers in Hambantota.

“We supported specialists at Hambantota Base Hospital to train midwives, health inspectors, and volunteers in how to detect and treat basic eye problems to help ensure all people affected by the tsunami receive basic ophthalmologic health care,” said Dr. Qasim. IOM’s mobile eye care team has screened more than 3,000 Sri Lankans so far this year. In May and June more than 2,000 people in conflict affected areas of Mannar and Jaffna districts received treatment and eye glasses, as part of IOM’s ongoing work to support refugees returning from India.

**Fronteras will continue the programme for at least one year. ISF has also completed three new classrooms in Panchaliya Maha Vidyalaya and a new building at Neth Savan Sarana K.V. ISF will be providing vocational training and computer skills to children and teenagers/ young adults in the area, with the criteria being those who are in a difficult position to afford learning skills and to find a job when they finish school. The Yashodara Balika Home is an orphanage for girls, and the girls must leave the orphanage at the age of 18.**

**Psycho-social workers undergo training**

IOM’s counter-trafficking programme funded and supported local NGO, Sewa Lanka, to run a district level training workshop in Trincomalee for 30 field workers and community leaders. To date, IOM has supported over 100 psycho-social workers to undergo Mental Health Training of Trainers courses in both the Tamil and Sinhala languages. IOM has also supported psycho-social workshops at district level for over 100 field workers and community leaders.
Children in Galle take part in dance activities as part of UNICEF’s psychosocial programme

As Deepani Jasinghe walks through the tsunami-affected Medawatte village in the southern district of Galle, an old man comes up, points at a polluted canal and pleads, “Please Miss, can you help clean this stinking drain?”

Deepani, a 28-year-old medical graduate, smiles and promises to inform the local authority. “They come to us with all our problems,” the volunteer in a psycho-social support programme funded by UNICEF, says.

Five months after UNICEF launched a project to help children in the southern region recover from the trauma of deadly waves that took the lives of more than 30,000 people in Sri Lanka, these young medical school graduates have also turned to helping adults in the recovery process.

UNICEF Child Protection Officer Sarah Graham says initially the programme was to guide children through recovery with play activity, dancing, games and singing but the needs are rapidly changing.

“The children have themselves shown a lot of resilience. Now we need to look at the needs of the family so that the family can help create a living home environment that would allow children to be children again,” she added. A new phase of the programme is looking at the needs of the community as a whole instead of only the child.

Graham says the southern university that developed the programme and enlisted newly-graduated doctors as volunteers is doing a needs assessment of the project. The next phase will be based on the outcome of this survey.

The six-month programme has shown success. Vishara Madushan is no more afraid of the sea. The 12-year-old fled his home as the surging waters swallowed everything in its path but like many other families he has returned with his family to their former home. Most are staying in temporary houses before permanent homes are constructed by the government or private donors.

“These ‘akkis’ (elder sisters) have helped us to forget and move on in life. The play activity is fun and I can sing well,” he says enthusiastically, adding: “I bathe in the sea at least once a week now. I’m getting used to it.” Earlier he used to frolic with his friends almost daily in the sea, a stone’s throw from his home.

Esha Mahindadasa, like a few other volunteers, grabbed the chance to help people in her village after she spotted an appeal on the notice board of her university, many miles away in Sri Lanka’s Central region. “There was a call for volunteers to help in this programme and this fitted my need to help my village people,” said the newly-qualified doctor, who has an eight-month-old boy and a husband who works for Sri Lanka’s air force.

“The bigger issue here is that the victims need permanent homes. They are very unstable without proper houses. Alcohol and drug abuse is rampant and we are trying to deal with these issues too,” she said. On 1 June, Esha and Deepani began work at the southern university as assistant lecturers in the Department of Surgery – their gain being a loss to the community judging from how they bonded with the kids and the excitement and giddy chattering that occurs whenever the volunteers are around.

However Deepani was surprised to find a group of affected villagers and their children outside her doorstep in a nearby town during the traditional Sinhala and Tamil New Year celebrations in April. They had brought sweetmeats and other food as a token of their appreciation. She is now determined to forgo her weekends to continue working with the community. “I will work during weekends. We are very close and I just can’t let them down,” she said. Says UNICEF's Graham: “We are very happy over the progress of the programme. We have people from the community who are able to recognize the issues and solve problems the best way they can. These volunteers are not counselors – they are there to recognize the issues and in that sense we have been quite successful.”

Medical volunteers conduct play activities with children to help bring smiles to their faces while they deal with the distress of the tsunami.
Solid progress in meeting shelter and water and sanitation targets

Eighty per cent of the 55,000 transitional shelters that are required have been constructed as of 25 July, while a complete and accurate beneficiary list is still being assembled by the government. The Transitional Accommodation Project (TAP) reports 47,484 completed transitional shelters with 4,433 currently under construction. UNHCR on 2 August, reported 45,676 completed, plus 4,928 in progress. Even using UNHCR’s slightly lower estimate, at a production rate of around 7,000 units per month, the 55,000 target should be reached by October.

Approximately 90,000 houses were fully or partially damaged by the tsunami. 50,000 of those were within the buffer zone and 40,000 outside of the buffer zone. All 50,000 from within the buffer zone need to be relocated outside of the buffer zone.

Of the transitional shelters already built it is reported that about 20 per cent or some 8,000 are in need of upgrading to meet current standards. Quality assessments are currently being undertaken by the government TAP office staff and by NGOs. World Vision, Islamic Relief, and ZOA have already begun upgrading. To comply with standards, many of the 8,000 units to be upgraded will need to be increased in size to 200 to 250 square feet.

Of the families displaced by the tsunami, 2,000 remain in either camps or tents as of 2 August according to TAP. This group is a priority for receiving transitional shelters. Determining the exact number of transitional shelters constructed or in the process of being built has been a challenge. With an extraordinarily large number of actors – including initially more than 90 agencies including UN, international and Sri Lankan NGOs, religious groups, and private and political organizations working in 11 districts and 58 divisions, coordination and data collection proved difficult and the numbers of transitional shelters must be considered approximate. Currently some 40 organizations are involved in the construction of transitional shelters with some involved in upgrading substandard units. A large number of international NGOs who responded in the aftermath of the tsunami have now left the country.

In the early months after the tsunami, there were instances in which some shelters were built without adequate consideration of water and sanitation facilities that needed to accompany the shelters. Coordination is now much improved with new shelters being provided with adequate water and sanitation facilities, and those with substandard or no water and sanitation standards have been upgraded. All agencies involved in transitional shelter construction and upgrading, in fact, must regularly to address the water and sanitation needs for such units. TAP is a leadership role in coordinating water and sanitation provisions for all transitional accommodations being constructed or upgraded.

Federal Republic of Germany provides Euro 49 million for post-tsunami reconstruction

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany has agreed to provide a grant of Euro 49 million (Approximately Rs.5.9 billion) for post-tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in Sri Lanka. The grant is provided by the KfW, the German Reconstruction Bank, on behalf of the German Government. The proceeds of the grant will be used for housing, water supply and sanitation and infrastructure related to new settlements. The funds allocated for the housing sector will be utilized for the reconstruction of damaged houses in Batticaloa and Ampara districts under the owner-constructed housing programme. In addition, infrastructure for new
settlements in Batticaloa district will be reconstructed including construction of a new water supply system in Valaichchenai. The funds will also be used for rehabilitation and reconstruction of water supply projects in Galle district. Funds have also been allocated for consultancy and technical assistance required for the implementation of these programmes. The German Government has also offered a one year deferral of Euro 13 million (Approximately Rs.1.6 billion) -- debts due to be paid by Sri Lanka this year.

Training and Awareness Raising
The ILO/TAFREN team ran an Orientation workshop for the staff deployed to the three pilot districts--all TAFREN staff as well as for some of the 60 Ministry of Labour Relations and Foreign Employment Livelihoods officers seconded to work with TAFREN on livelihoods at district level. The Proceedings of this workshop will be available as Livelihoods orientation resources on one CD and another CD will be produced with the basic training resources and supplementary materials. The CDs will be available next week when TAFREN intends to hold a press conference regarding their work on the Livelihoods portfolio. The new CDs will add to the existing CD available on technical and labour standards and guidelines on Cash for Work, the latest version of which is dated 29 July. The TAFREN Livelihoods Unit will start the training of 60 Livelihoods Officers from 15 August using a TOT approach and the team is intending that a core group of trainers will be established to run training and awareness programmes on demand each month if necessary.

(Twelve short booklets by ILO on Livelihood and Employment Creation which were published in English, is now available in Sinhalese and Tamil together with the full report of the ILO Needs Assessment Survey for Income Recovery (NASIR) in English.)

Update from the Humanitarian Information Centre
A HIC District Support Unit (DSU) opened in early July on the ground floor of the Government Agent’s office and within the OCHA office there. The HIC DSU is providing support and technical backstopping for district partners including, but not limited to, the Government of Sri Lanka, UN district offices and NGO’s both local and international. The DSU is providing the following services to its partners:

- Support in information/data collection through processing of data and producing district-specific information products (reports, maps, etc.);
- A platform for data exchange and interoperability;
- Support for existing venues for dissemination of data;
- Support for primary data collection undertaken by sector lead agencies, local government, and other stakeholders;
- Information management technical assistance and capacity building to partners; and,
- Custom mapping and database services upon request.

The HIC “Who, What, Where” (3W) database has moved to the web and is at the following address:


In addition, a live mapping component will be added in the next few weeks. The dynamic 3W report is a new addition to the range of dynamic products (live data) available on the HIC website. They including the searchable Contact Directory and Survey of Assessments.

The HIC has also expanded it’s range of maps. In July, almost 200 maps were produced on a variety of thematic areas and administrative topics. Please visit the HIC map centre at: www.humanitarianinfo.org/srilanka/mapcentre/catalogue/index.asp.

The HIC has also introduced web-hosting services. These services are targeted at local NGO’s and community-based organizations (CBOs) in Sri Lanka who wish to establish a web presence. Through the HIC web site and it’s myriad distribution channels organizations can increase their web visibility and enjoy the benefits of being hosted on the HIC website. This service is free of charge. For further details please contact the HIC office at hicsrilanka@gmail.com.

The HIC website continues to gain popularity. The month of July was a record month in terms of visits with a peak number of 5,000 pages being down-loaded per day. Most visits, 56 per cent originated from Sri Lanka. Popular areas include: vacancies, meeting schedules, the map centre, 3W maps and reports, the searchable assessment database, the searchable contact directory and many more pages.

The HIC is moving locations in August to the UN compound to better service our clients. The new HIC location will feature a walk-in information centre along with it’s traditional products and services.

**What are the functions of a Humanitarian Information centre?**

It is a space where the humanitarian community can share and access information resources in order to improve the planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance. A HIC also provides information products and services that enable the humanitarian community to deliver assistance more effectively, following principles of good practice in information management. A HIC also acts as a focal point for data collection, analysis and dissemination in support of the provision of humanitarian assistance, developing and supporting data standards. It is a facilitator for initiatives and activities related to information management in the field, particularly in collaboration between other
humanitarian actors in support of existing coordination structures; and, a HIC is an advocate for a culture of information-sharing in the humanitarian community, generating awareness of good practice and making it possible for agencies to develop common standards and practices in the field. Some of the characteristics of the HIC are that it acts as a common resource for the humanitarian community and plays an integral role in overall coordination, helping to avoid duplicating existing initiatives and maximizing resources. The HIC works in partnership with specialized agencies to support, if required, sector-specific work. It is demand-driven and must serve operational and strategic needs and seek feedback from users to ensure that products and services meet the needs of customers, and adapt those outputs accordingly. A HIC is service-oriented with open-access projects that create a link between technical staff and non-technical users. It encourages the participation of local, national and international actors.
### Some informative websites on Sri Lanka and relief and recovery efforts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website/Contact</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Humanitarian Information Center (HIC) | Tel: 2591118  
website: www.humanitarianinfo.org/srilanka |
| HIC-CHA W3 |  
www.humanitarianinfo.org/srilanka/coordination/www/index.asp |
| HIC-CHA W3 Form |  
www.humanitarianinfo.org/srilanka/docs/HIC_Forms.xls |
| Relief Web |  
www.reliefweb.int |
| Sri Lankan Department of Census and Statistics |  
www.statistics.gov.lk/Tsunami/index.htm |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website/Contact</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government of Sri Lanka</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
www.priu.gov.lk |
| Recoverlanka |  
www.recoverlanka.net |
| Geolanka |  
www.geolanka.net |
| Sir Lankan Taskforce for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN) |  
www.taforen.gov.lk |
| For access to additional informative web links: |  
www.humanitarianinfo.org/srilanka/infocentre/links/links.asp |

### UN agency/international organization contact list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency/Organization</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) | Tel: 2580691  
website: www.lk.undp.org |
| World Health Organisation (WHO) | Tel: 2502841  
website: www.whoesea.org |
| United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) | Tel: 2555270  
website: www.unicef.org |
| United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) | Tel: 2683968  
website: www.unhcr.lk |
| United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) | Tel: 2580840  
web site not currently operational |
| Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) | Tel: 2689363/4  
website: www.fao.org |
| International Labour Organisation (ILO) | Tel: 2592525  
website: www.ilo.org/colombo |
| World Food Programme (WFP) | Tel: 2586244  
website: www.wfp.org |
| World Bank | Tel: 2448070  
website: www.worldbank.org |
| Asian Development Bank (ADB) | Tel: 5331111  
website: www.adb.org |
| UN Center for Human Settlements (UN-HABITAT) | Tel: 2580691-7 #342  
www.unhabitat.org |
| United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) | Tel: 2580691-7 #344  
Contact person: Sriyani Perera  
www.unifem.org |
| International Organisation for Migration (IOM) | Tel: 5361942  
website: www.iom.int |
| Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) | Tel: 2555270  
website: www.unaids.org |
| United Nations Information Center (UNIC) | Tel: 2580691 |
| United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) | Tel: 2582798  
www.unops.org |