Within hours after a tsunami devastated more than a dozen countries on December 26, 2004, the American Red Cross launched a comprehensive disaster response plan.

The plan called for the immediate deployment of personnel, financial support and emergency relief supplies to the affected areas, all in coordination with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement).

On January 7, 2005, the American Red Cross released a comprehensive tsunami relief program statement describing its intention to provide immediate assistance through food and safe water distribution, emergency healthcare and disease prevention, immediate family supplies, psychosocial support and disaster preparedness and prevention measures.

Following a tremendous outpouring of public support, the American Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the Federation) announced on January 26, 2005, that they would suspend further fundraising activities for tsunami relief.

Recognizing the extraordinary effort required to provide assistance quickly and efficiently, the American Red Cross was committed to ensuring the coordination of aid efforts from the very beginning. All activities consider the ongoing programs and plans of governments, other Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, United Nations agencies and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The American Red Cross also recognizes the important role of the respective governments, which have overall responsibility for recovery efforts within their borders, and is dedicated to ensuring coordination with governments and their National Societies. Staff members are fully engaged in coordination mechanisms—in the affected areas and at national headquarters—to ensure that important services are not duplicated or omitted.
In the six months after the tsunami struck, more than $100 million was spent addressing critical needs through emergency response activities in tsunami-affected countries. During those six months, individuals and businesses donated more than $556 million to the American Red Cross. This generous support enabled the organization to provide immediate relief assistance, initiate recovery activities and develop long-term support programs.

The chart below shows emergency response expenditures and current projections of allocations in support of tsunami recovery plans.

Money donated to the American Red Cross for the Tsunami Recovery Program will help rebuild communities and restore livelihoods and services to tsunami survivors. It will also help them to be better prepared to mitigate the effects of similar disasters in the future. This integrated approach will—

- Help individuals and communities recover from the disaster and address the chronic needs of the most vulnerable.
- Ensure that communities have effective disaster preparedness plans and skills to reduce the negative effects of future disasters.
- Restore the homes, communities, services and livelihoods of those affected through work with partner organizations that offer complementary expertise.

The American Red Cross has found through its experience with many large-scale disaster relief efforts that there are invariably needs that emerge in the later years of the recovery process. To address those needs, the remaining donations have been reserved for those interventions.
Needs vary from country to country, as do the services offered by the American Red Cross as part of the Movement. In addition to the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies working in the tsunami-affected areas, hundreds of other agencies are active in the region. American Red Cross services are focused on our core areas of expertise, matched with the needs of tsunami survivors and carried out through partnerships with the affected Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, other partners in the Movement and other global humanitarian organizations.

The Tsunami Recovery Program Plan of Action concentrates on three core categories:

1. Community Health and Disease Control
2. Disaster Preparedness
3. Community Restoration and Rebuilding

**Community Health and Disease Control**

Community Health

In the five countries that were most affected by the tsunami, nearly 1.4 million children die each year due to diseases that are easily preventable and treatable. Since children are the most vulnerable, they are a focus of the community health program, which aims to help communities prevent, prepare for and respond to life-threatening health conditions.

The American Red Cross will promote access to and use of primary health services by increasing the knowledge of danger signs and facilitating stronger linkages between those who require health services and those who offer them. Examples of such activities include: supporting greater involvement of community-managed committees to oversee local health services; facilitating the training of community members in key health skills; and promoting and reviewing referral and counter-referral systems among facilities and community health providers, such as traditional birth attendants and midwives.

The American Red Cross strategy builds on its strengths in community mobilization to—

- Increase knowledge about healthy behaviors and nutrition among the caregivers of children and women of reproductive age by promoting key health messages through communication and behavior-change efforts.
- Procure and distribute insecticide-treated bed nets, as well as instructions for their proper use.
- Support vaccination campaigns.
- Integrate hygiene promotion into water/sanitation activities.
Water and Sanitation

The tsunami polluted water sources and severely damaged numerous water and wastewater treatment facilities. Diseases related to inadequate sanitation and water supplies are the largest single cause of illness and death in disaster victims. Clean water and proper sanitation are important components of an integrated health approach that also includes proper nutrition, immunization and disease control. Safe drinking water is a basic human need.

The American Red Cross is implementing a community-based project that links with the Movement’s global network to increase the coverage of sustainable safe water and sanitation among tsunami-affected communities. This integrated approach will focus on reducing disease by improving access to safe, potable water; improving sanitation; and increasing community knowledge about proper health and hygiene practices. It aims to build local communities’ capacities in all phases of operations.

The program will help communities repair and improve existing community water systems. The improvements will consist of the following:

■ Providing ceramic water filters;
■ Promoting community-led well and water system upgrades;
■ Ensuring safe water storage with covered containers;
■ Training community members to be caretakers of water systems;
■ Helping communities reduce standing water (a breeding ground for mosquitoes) to prevent the spread of malaria and ensure the proper drainage of wastewater; and
■ Installing septic tanks, sewage treatment units and latrines.
School-Based Health and Nutrition
The American Red Cross has developed a partnership with the World Food Programme to develop school-based programs that will integrate complementary activities such as health, nutrition and hygiene education; water and sanitation interventions; and livelihoods initiatives. Teams will conduct assessments in the affected communities in each country to determine local needs for specific interventions.

The American Red Cross works with the Federation and other National Societies to improve technical capacity in food programs. During the emergency relief phase after the tsunami struck, these programs were recognized as interventions that successfully encouraged children to return to school and reestablish normal interaction with peers. For the longer-term response, an integrated school-based health and nutrition program not only encourages school attendance and better performance, but offers a vehicle through which complementary interventions associated with health, water and sanitation, psychosocial support and livelihood development can reach those in need.

The integrated program also provides access to larger health initiatives. Activities will create awareness among school authorities, parents and communities about the importance of high-quality education and good health and nutrition for school children. Longer-term impacts include the positive effects that higher levels of education will have on these children, such as:

- Improved health and nutrition levels of family members,
- Decreased child mortality and
- Increased income-earning potential and productivity.

Psychosocial Support
The American Red Cross recognizes that timely psychosocial support will help survivors cope with the enormous distress caused by the loss of life, property, economic livelihoods and community structure.

The current American Red Cross program trains local personnel to conduct psychosocial support programs. The objective is to prepare a cadre of knowledgeable and trained volunteers and staff in each country’s Red Cross or Red Crescent Society, as well as among teachers and community volunteers, to help tsunami survivors regain the emotional strength to resume their normal lives and rebuild their homes and communities. Much of the work is done at schools, with trained teachers providing sessions focused on restoring the well-being of children and their families. Staff members provide technical assistance in the local development of psychosocial service delivery.
This program is expected to—

- Promote post-tsunami adaptive adjustment building on community resiliency.
- Reduce tsunami-related psychological, behavioral and developmental problems in children and youth.
- Create a cadre of volunteers, teachers and community members who can provide effective psychosocial support post-tsunami and in future disasters.

Disease Control

After a disaster, disruptions to the health systems, environment and social structures can lead to disease outbreaks and exacerbate the severe impact of existing diseases. The poor in developing countries who may already have a compromised health status and who have little access to health services are particularly at risk. Following the tsunami, measles, malaria and polio are the diseases of concern.

Measles can be a leading cause of child mortality during humanitarian crises. Nationwide vaccination programs are the best way to prevent measles outbreaks. In countries where such campaigns were in place before the tsunami, such as in Sri Lanka, outbreaks have not occurred. To ensure that tsunami-affected areas remain measles-free, the American Red Cross is working with its partners to support measles vaccination campaigns in Indonesia and Somalia, and is considering campaigns in other tsunami-affected countries.

Malaria is a particular post-tsunami concern, in part because ecological disruptions can enhance mosquito breeding. In addition, tsunami-affected populations have reduced access to prevention and treatment and may have increased exposure to mosquitoes as a result of inadequate shelter. The best approach to malaria prevention is to provide insecticide-treated nets to all people. The American Red Cross will support the distribution of insecticide-treated nets and the stockpiling of malaria diagnostic tools and drugs.

Polio has reemerged in Indonesia after a ten-year hiatus. The American Red Cross is supporting mass polio vaccinations in all the affected areas of Indonesia.

Disease control efforts will leverage the American Red Cross infectious disease partnership distribution channels and community health education/mobilization interventions to—

- Prevent and contain outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Improve nutrition through the distribution of vitamin A and mebendazol.
- Prevent the incidence of malaria and limit the duration of the disease among tsunami-affected communities.
Disaster Preparedness

The American Red Cross is well known for its proficiency in disaster preparedness and response, and has shared its expertise with many Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world. As part of the Tsunami Recovery Program, the American Red Cross will undertake major disaster preparedness activities to promote safer communities that are better prepared for future disasters. Many tsunami-affected countries are in some of the most disaster-prone and underdeveloped parts of the world. People in these countries suffer repeatedly from earthquakes, floods, cyclones, volcanoes and infrequent—but deadly—tsunamis.

By working with governments and other partners to better equip communities to respond when disasters strike, the American Red Cross is helping to mitigate the effects of future disasters. These efforts will help build the capacity of other Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies so they may help their communities prepare for and respond to emergencies, plan for future disasters, recruit and train volunteers and implement disaster response plans and practices.

Disaster preparedness programs will—

- Teach schoolchildren how to prepare for and respond to future disasters.
- Customize training materials for local risks.
- Extend preparedness information to entire communities through public service announcements and advertising.
- Encourage families to build disaster supplies and first aid kits and create a family disaster plan so that family members know evacuation routes and how to reconnect in the event of another disaster.

The importance of disaster preparedness education was evident when a powerful 8.7-magnitude earthquake occurred off the coast of Indonesia’s Sumatra island on March 27, 2005. Tsunami warnings were issued and, although no tsunami made landfall, thousands of people moved to higher ground in Indonesia and nearby countries.

Restoring Family Links

The American Red Cross is planning a project to build the capacity of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society to provide family reunification services following a disaster. These services restore family links when family members are separated by armed conflict or natural disasters. During the emergency relief phase, the American Red Cross worked with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society and the International Committee of the Red Cross to help surviving family members contact relatives within and outside the affected areas.
Community Restoration and Rebuilding

Tsunami community recovery efforts aim to restore homes, communities, services and livelihoods to those affected. The American Red Cross will work with its partners to provide temporary shelter, rebuild homes, reestablish basic social services and help people recover their livelihoods. These partners have been identified as organizations that offer additional expertise in these areas to complement existing American Red Cross core strengths in the areas of health and disaster preparedness.

TEAM Rebuilding Strategy

The American Red Cross created the Tsunami Expansive Assistance Mechanism (TEAM) to provide a comprehensive community rebuilding strategy by forming a consortium with key U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations. These organizations have a presence in the tsunami-affected area, are committed to community-based and sustainable development, hold a strong reputation in the development community and, most importantly, implement activities that allow for a holistic approach to community development. Partners will provide assistance and expertise complementary to and coordinated with American Red Cross efforts to restore schools, water and sanitation systems, health systems and livelihoods.

Other Partnerships to Restore Communities and Livelihoods

The American Red Cross plans to work with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the construction of transitional shelters in communities along the western coast of Aceh province. The shelters will benefit thousands of disaster survivors. The structures were designed in collaboration with the Indonesian government and the affected communities to provide a measure of earthquake resistance and can be disassembled and moved if necessary. They are intended to provide durable housing for an interim period of two years while the Indonesian government and its partners rebuild the permanent infrastructure.

The American Red Cross will also partner with the Indonesian Red Cross Society to install and rehabilitate water and sanitation systems and to promote sound hygiene practices in the transitional communities. In Sri Lanka, the American Red Cross and IOM are exploring opportunities to assist the displaced people who are in critical need of transitional shelter.
Livelihood Recovery

In Sri Lanka, the tsunami hit 12 of the 14 coastal districts, affecting approximately 71,000 fishing households that suffered the death or injury of family members and damage to their homes, boats and fishing gear. The entire fishing infrastructure (harbors, ice plants, fuel tanks and pumps) has been severely damaged or destroyed.

In Indonesia, the tsunami claimed 126,000 lives (with many more still missing), displaced more than 420,000 people and destroyed both assets and property. The agricultural and fishing livelihoods of 123,000 households (about 600,000 people) were affected.

In conjunction with other National Societies, the American Red Cross is exploring ways to assist thousands of fishing families in Sri Lanka and Indonesia to resume their livelihoods by working with partners to—

- Rehabilitate small-scale fish landing sites, anchorages, harbors and ice plant infrastructure.
- Replace fishing gear, vessels and fish-processing facilities in a way that enables people to build back livelihoods and better address basic resource management principles.
CONCLUSION
The American Red Cross achieved much success during the initial response to the tsunami, including the timely deployment of personnel, financial support and emergency relief supplies. We provided critical technical assistance to support Movement and nongovernmental organization (NGO) partner activities. We will support the rehabilitation and enhancement of community health and nutrition programs, water and sanitation systems, disaster preparedness and psychosocial support systems. The American Red Cross carefully developed this comprehensive recovery and rehabilitation plan to leverage the organization’s strengths to meet needs in a responsible and transparent manner. Through this plan, much more will be accomplished in the months and years ahead, and together with its partners, the American Red Cross will achieve its fundamental goal to prevent and relieve suffering and assist the survivors of this disaster as they face the many challenges that lie ahead.

Using donated funds appropriately and honoring donor intent are among the highest priorities of the American Red Cross. Our senior leadership has developed the Tsunami Recovery Program oversight structure to ensure that all planned activities and expenditures remain faithful to donor intent. The American Red Cross Board of Governors, the Management Oversight Committee and internal and external audit services have all worked hard to develop mechanisms to ensure that all processes and controls are adequate and well functioning. The American Red Cross will continue to provide periodic Tsunami Recovery Plan updates, which will be available on our Web site, www.redcross.org.

For almost 125 years, the American Red Cross has been giving people who can help others a means to reach those in need, and, in the process, preventing and relieving human suffering and saving lives. Founded in 1881 and chartered by Congress in 1905 as the only voluntary agency “to carry out a system of national and international relief in time of peace,” this humanitarian, volunteer-led organization is part of the Movement. The activities of the Movement are guided by the seven Fundamental Principles: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality.

The American Red Cross abides by the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, which has been adopted by more than 300 international disaster response agencies to establish standards of independence, effectiveness and impact to which disaster response nongovernmental organizations and the Movement aspire. The American Red Cross also adheres to the accountability standards of The Sphere Project Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, which were launched in 1997 by the Movement and a group of humanitarian NGOs. These standards and industry-accepted principles form the foundation of the American Red Cross disaster response and development interventions that are based on careful assessments of the needs of the disaster-affected individuals and communities.