ADRA Canada Sends Assessment Team to Sri Lanka

Hardly anyone anticipated the magnitude of the tsunami disaster of December 26, 2004. With the death toll rising hourly, it was difficult for us to comprehend that the astronomical figures being reported actually referred to human beings who only a little while previously were working, eating, sleeping, without the slightest suspicion that their lives

Witnessing the Devastation First-Hand

James Astleford
Assistant to the Executive Director, ADRA Canada

Many people didn’t know how to spell “tsunami” before December 26, 2004. And thousands in Asia did not even know what a tsunami was before the huge wave crashed across the shore. The devastation and loss of life caused is hard to grasp. A three-person team from ADRA Canada got some idea of it last month when they visited Sri Lanka to help and to coordinate a Canadian response.

As one who had lived in Sri Lanka before, I found the smashed houses, torn clothing in trees, and long lines of internally displaced people very disturbing. Dr. Valerie Kym, a member of the ADRA Canada Board of Directors, made valuable contacts for the ADRA response. She also joined Dr. David Randich, a volunteer physician from Vancouver, BC, in treating patients at clinics set up in refugee camps. Dr. Randich has stayed on for a five-month stint and is part of the Canadian-funded response focusing on health, infectious disease, sanitation, as well as livelihood issues.

We heard stories of sorrow and cour-

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Sri Lanka survivors trying to move on with their lives with hope

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The Tragedy of Numbers

As of February 3, 2005 the confirmed number of total deaths was 226,000; and while multitudes are mourning the loss of their loved ones, still others have no idea if their friends and family are even alive. Not to mention, many are severely injured and are not able to get the treatment they need, and a great many are homeless or displaced. The Red Cross maintains its estimates of 525,000 injured, 1.6 million displaced, and more than 1 million homeless. These figures are expected to increase. No disease outbreaks have been reported.

The Sudden Killer

Tsunami is Japanese for “Harbour Waves”, and in reality it is not just a single wave, but a series of waves. These waves are directly caused by geological events such as earthquakes, marine slides, or volcanic eruptions.

Southeast Asia Tsunami Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>A submarine earthquake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>The Sunda Trench, off the coast of Sumatra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnitude</td>
<td>9.0 on the Richter Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>about 3,000 times that of an atom bomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect</td>
<td>set off a series of tsunami waves around equator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height of Waves</td>
<td>ranged between 8 and 40 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Time</td>
<td>3 to 4 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>Tsunami can reach speeds of up to 600 km/hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction</td>
<td>westward, gradually losing strength as it reached the Horn of Africa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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would soon come to a tragic end. It all seemed like a terrible nightmare. Difficult as it was to fathom this tragedy, we must now deal with the horrifying reality.

ADRA Canada, in partnership with the ADRA network offices around the world, has committed to relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Relief, the first stage, normally lasts for just a few weeks or months. Rehabilitation, the second stage, can take many months. Reconstruction, the final stage, can take years. ADRA Canada is partnering with ADRA Sri Lanka in the east coast, especially in remote rural areas where aid has been slow to reach, as well as in the south.

James Astleford, Assistant to the Director at ADRA Canada, Dr. Valerie Krym, specialist in International Medicine and Public Health, and Dr. Daisane Panderich, a physician experienced in tropical medicine, comprised the three-person team that departed for Sri Lanka on January 10, 2005. Based on their assessment, ADRA Canada is now formulating specific projects based on the needs of the area. Astleford and Krym returned at the end of January, while Panderich remained in Sri Lanka for a few more months to care for the disaster victims.
Little People Can Make a Big Impact in Asia

Five-year-old Tyja Kostynuk and her 3-year-old sister Sam Kostynuk of Rocky Mountain House, a little town in Central Alberta, decided to contribute their savings towards ADRA’s relief effort in Asia. Along with their twenty dollars, they mailed a letter stating their intent to help children who had lost their homes to the Tsunami. “We are sending this money for you to help them build a new house,” they wrote. But that’s not all. Also enclosed in the envelope was a piece of white paper creatively designed and cut to resemble a snowflake. The Kostynuk children had made it so that the children in Asia could “hang it in their new house.”

While the tsunami disaster has caused much heartache and grief this year, the selfless responses of children and youth across Canada have been very heartwarming. The generosity and compassion shown by little people nationwide is enough to soothe anyone’s sorrow.

Shannon Taylor, who is nine years old, listened to the tsunami news intensively and decided to donate towards the cause when she learned that her father, a part-time fire department volunteer in Langley, B.C., was collecting money with other township halls to fund the medical supplies. Dr. Fandrich was going to take to Sri Lanka. Shannon gladly gave up her entire savings of $84. Her brother, not wanting to be left out, decided to donate his $6 as well. Their father then matched their combined $50, turning it into a $100 donation.

The family had the privilege of meeting Dr. Fandrich and view one of her presentations about ADRA missions abroad. At the end, Shannon’s friend Jessica Bridge (age 8) eagerly wanted to contribute her savings also. She opened up her purse and handed over all the change she was carrying. She proudly looked up at the doctor and with a huge grin leaped, “It’s twenty-three buckheit!”

College Heights Christian School (Lacombe, AB) has put on a fundraiser for the tsunami victims, and as of January, the school has raised a total of $3225. Jonathan Mallard, a grade five student, turned in a total of $204 earned from his paper route, and a girl emptied her entire piggy bank in class. Jonathan says it makes him happy knowing that he can help another child in Asia.

Another $60 came from Pleasant Valley Christian Academy (PVCA), consisting of children’s piggy bank savings as well. Although the mentioned sums may not seem much, it is a great amount in reality, because these children gave absolutely all the money they possessed; money that took a great deal of diligence to collect.

And so adults continue to learn from the unselfish, giving hearts of children—children whose generosity doesn’t think twice and doesn’t hold back.
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age. Typical is the story of Sean, one of ADRA Sri Lanka’s staff members. He had gone home for the holidays and was in his village when the wave struck the east coast. He grabbed his mother, carrying her over his shoulder while running through the rising water. He noticed his niece caught in barbed wire and stopped long enough to release her before continuing his flight. As his mother stared in horror over Sean’s shoulders, she could see a bigger wave advancing towards them. “I’ve lived for 76 years,” she told her son, “We should not both die. Leave me behind. I’ve had a good life. But you must live so you can care for the next generation.” But somehow Sean found the strength to keep running for over a kilometre and a half, and he carried his mother to safety.

But not all were so fortunate. In the village of Komari I stood talking with Beatrice, in what had once been her front room. Nothing remained of her home except some overturned bricks. Beatrice was grateful—the and her children all survived. But all she could find of her home was a few old pictures of her children and strangely, some Sandi money that her husband had sent her from his work overseas. But of the 150 residents of the village, one hundred died in the tsunami. The village was eerily quiet, except for the cawing of the crows and the rustling of the wind in the coconut trees.

ADRA Canada is responding with assistance to the ADRA partner offices in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, and Thailand. This is possible because of the wonderful outpouring of support from donors and well-wishers. Some gave a little, some gave a lot—but the spirit of generosity was evident with every donation. And the Canadian government, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), has promised grant funding. ADRA Canada is on the list of organizations for which the Government of Canada is matching the eligible contributions made by Canadians between December 26, 2004 and January 11, 2005. Over $575,000 has been received that is eligible for this match. And other donations that don’t qualify for the match but can still help in the response, have also been received.

We are grateful for the support given for the tsunami victims. But ADRA’s work doesn’t stop with this one disaster. There are thousands of victims of poverty, disease, and disaster across the developing world, all our programs must continue and increase. We want to achieve our vision of a world without poverty.

Dr. Fassil is not only helps her patients but cheers them up as well.

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