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On 26 December 2004, a 9.3 magnitude earthquake struck in the Indian Ocean triggering a massive tsunami – one of the most devastating natural disasters on record. Although the earthquake’s epicentre lay just off the coast of Aceh – on the Indonesian island of Sumatra – the subsequent tsunami devastated coastal communities in Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, The Maldives, Myanmar, Malaysia, and even affected parts of Africa. In what the former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, described as “an unprecedented global catastrophe”, the tsunami killed approximately one quarter of a million people and displaced millions more. It destroyed houses, roads, bridges, schools, marketplaces and livelihoods, prompting the largest humanitarian fundraising appeal and emergency response ever recorded.

THE UNPRECEDENTED GLOBAL RESPONSE

The international Caritas confederation\(^1\) was one of the largest non-government agencies to respond to the Asian tsunami humanitarian crisis. Caritas member agencies launched an unprecedented fundraising appeal and emergency response: a total of USD 485 million was raised to fund immediate relief and long-term recovery, and Caritas member organisations mobilised thousands of staff and volunteers in the worst affected countries (Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand). True to its motto: before, during and after the headlines, the Caritas confederation launched its in-country response within hours of the disaster and continues to accompany tsunami affected communities in their long term development today.

\(^1\) Caritas Internationalis is the confederation of 165 Catholic agencies for international aid and development; the confederation operates in over 200 countries and territories.
In response to the Asian tsunami, Caritas Australia conducted the largest fundraising appeal in its history. Of almost AUD 25 million raised (including $1.1 million from the Government of Western Australia, $1.8 million from the Government of Victoria, and $750,000 from AusAID) 94 percent was directed to in-country programs and program management, and approximately six percent was utilised for agency overhead costs.

Following a needs assessment across the affected regions, Caritas Australia allocated 50 percent of appeal funds to devastated communities in Indonesia; 35 percent to the response in Sri Lanka; 15 percent to communities in India; and contributed $100,000 to the Caritas response in Thailand. An additional $1.8 million – provided by the Government of Victoria – was delivered directly to partners in Jaffna with invaluable support from the Tamil Association of Victoria.

In both India and Sri Lanka the Caritas response was primarily managed by the National Caritas Agencies (Caritas India and SEDEC – Caritas Sri Lanka) with some technical assistance provided by European and North American member agencies.

In the absence of a local Caritas body in North Sumatra, Indonesia, a number of Caritas member organisations with existing operations in-country assisted local NGOs and Church-based organisations to lead the relief effort. Staff from Caritas Australia’s offices in Australia and East Timor were deployed to Aceh to assist in the coordinated Caritas response. Caritas Australia was primarily involved in the delivery of emergency shelter programs, community mobilisation, and in the logistics and planning in Nias following a subsequent earthquake in March 2005.

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2 AusAID is the Australian Government’s agency for international aid and development.
3 Projected allocation based on initial needs assessment.
OUR RESPONSE IN NUMBERS

In response to the Asian tsunami, Caritas Australia conducted the largest fundraising appeal in its history. Here’s a brief look at how your generosity helped us respond to communities before, during and after the headlines.

**INCOME**

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**EXPENDITURE**

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* An additional AUD 1.8 million was provided by the Government of Victoria. This contribution was sent directly to project partners and as such is not shown in Caritas Australia’s accounts.
Due to the enormity of the disaster in Aceh and Nias, and given the limited capacity of local Church agencies, Caritas Internationalis coordinated the humanitarian responses of myriad member agencies under an umbrella program management structure: the Special Operations Appeal.

The Special Operations Appeal included six international Caritas agencies4; the Crisis Centre of the Bishops Conference of Indonesia; the International Catholic Migration Commission; Jesuit Refugee Services Indonesia; and the social welfare arms of the ArchDiocese of Medan (Aceh) and the Diocese of Sibolga (Nias) – subsequently formalised as National and Diocesan Caritas agencies.

The following information covers only those initiatives that received funding and/or staffing assistance from Caritas Australia.

4 Catholic Relief Services (USA); Caritas Germany; Cordaid (the Netherlands); Caritas Switzerland; Caritas Czech Republic; Caritas Austria; and Caritas Italy.
A place to call home

In early 2005, Caritas Australia deployed five staff to work with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to develop and implement a transitional shelter strategy in the worst affected area of west Aceh. Three staff travelled from Australia and two from East Timor, where they had worked on a shelter program following the violence of 1999.

In addition to the provision of staffing assistance, Caritas Australia contributed USD 4 million towards CRS’s shelter program. Caritas Australia’s financial support assisted in the construction of 2150 transitional shelters, and specifically funded 297 of 4000 permanent houses constructed by CRS.

Houses supported by Caritas Australia and CRS included high-quality sanitation facilities and were designed to withstand significant earthquakes through the use of reinforced structural features such as ring beams. The reconstruction effort in Aceh created enormous demand for building materials, including wood, and it was very difficult to ensure that wood was sourced from sustainably harvested forests in Indonesia. Committed to a model of sustainable development, CRS significantly reduced need for wood in construction through the substitution of steel roof trusses.

Reaching the remote

Prior to December’s destruction, Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) Indonesia had been coordinating programs in Aceh to assist people displaced by the longstanding conflict between separatist rebels (GAM) and the Indonesian army. With their intimate knowledge of the area and its people, JRS worked in the aftermath of the tsunami to reach isolated communities receiving little assistance from larger humanitarian agencies.

One such community resided on the island of Pulo Aceh, located to the north of the capital, Banda Aceh. Grappling with extremely difficult building conditions, JRS worked with the ATMI Technical College in Jogjakarta to develop prefabricated modular housing that could be transported by boat to the island and easily erected.

In addition to funding the project, Caritas Australia provided an engineer to assist in implementation; more than 100 houses were erected in the village of Meulingge on Pulo Aceh by JRS. Another 200 houses were constructed around Banda Aceh and in the remote community of Panga on the west coast of Aceh.

Although the west coast of Aceh was worst affected by the tsunami, the north coast also bore significant destruction of infrastructure and loss of life. In the north, Caritas Australia and CAFOD worked alongside local NGO SKS (Solidaritas Kelompok Sipil – Civil Solidarity Group) to provide housing for those vulnerable households who had “fallen through the cracks” of emergency response. Over five months in 2007, Caritas Australia and CAFOD supported SKS to build 154 houses using local labour and locally sourced material.

5 CRS is the Caritas Internationalis member agency for North America.
6 CAFOD is the Caritas Internationalis member agency for England and Wales.
Schools under construction on Simeulue island in 2007. The steel framed structure and heavy foundations are designed to withstand significant earthquakes.

**Impact at the epicentre**

The island of Simeulue is situated on one of the world’s most tectonically active faultlines and was the closest populated land mass to the epicentre of December’s massive earthquake. Given its proximity to the epicentre, Simeulue was struck by the tsunami within 30 minutes of the earthquake. Fortunately, the people of Simeulue have a strong oral tradition of earthquake preparedness and, understanding the threat a *smong*¹ posed to their communities, everyone fled to high ground.

Although the tsunami claimed very few lives amongst Simeulue communities, a number of people were killed by the earthquake itself and the damage to housing and infrastructure was colossal. Roads and jetties buckled, houses collapsed, and schools, hospitals and clinics crumbled.

Using earthquake resistant design, and construction methods adapted for local conditions, Cordaid set up a program to rebuild 65 schools; Caritas Australia contributed AUD 3 million towards this project. Despite the challenges inherent in working in such a remote environment, Cordaid completed the schools on budget and to a very high standard.

**Building resilience**

Whilst no building is ever designed to be completely earthquake proof, Caritas agencies strive to construct earthquake resistant buildings that will safeguard the lives of those inside and nearby. This principle was put to the test almost immediately following construction in Simeulue, when another significant earthquake struck in February 2008. A number of schools constructed by other development agencies suffered significant structural damage in the 2008 earthquake, and others even collapsed completely; Cordaid-built schools suffered minor damage but were easily repaired by local tradespeople.

The fact that these schools are so resilient to earthquakes is of enormous comfort to students. Prior to December 2004, one school had collapsed three times in six years and a number of children were killed. Thanks to the building project coordinated by Cordaid and supported by Caritas Australia, school children now feel safe in their school buildings and all schools can double as emergency shelters in the event of future disasters.

**Sustainable communities**

Given that the sustainability of these schools is dependent on long-term community involvement, enormous effort and expertise went into ensuring that communities were involved in all steps of the construction process – from design to completion.

By organising three separate community development strategies, local communities are now engaged in committees that focus on disaster readiness and response; operation and maintenance; and health and hygiene.

In a land where earthquakes are common and increasingly volatile weather patterns are evident, the schools are designed to be places where the community can take refuge when disaster strikes. Local committees are established and operate to prepare the people in the local area for quick action. Each school includes water tanks and pumps, ensuring that people will have a reliable water source in the immediate aftermath of disaster.

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¹ ‘*Smong*’ is the word for tsunami in the Simeulue dialect of Acehnese.
Empower a man to fish

One of the larger livelihood projects undertaken by Caritas Australia was the construction of two large fishing boats for a fishermen’s cooperative in Banda Aceh.

From 2005, Caritas Germany worked with fishermen and fish traders in Banda Aceh to support the re-establishment of the fishing industry and ensure that fishermen and small traders gained greater control of the industry.

Prior to the tsunami in 2004, approximately 200 large fishing boats operated out of Banda Aceh, nearly all of these were destroyed or damaged beyond repair. In 2005, Caritas Germany facilitated the establishment of a fishermen's cooperative and Caritas Australia funded the construction of two, 22 metre fishing boats. Of the four vessels constructed locally by Acehnese builders, two were launched in early 2007, the remaining two boats on 16 October 2008.

The Caritas fishing program was unique in the tsunami response as many donor agencies were wary of undertaking the replacement of large boats. Prior to the tsunami, large vessels were predominantly owned by wealthy business people and as such, most boat replacement programs tended to prioritise smaller fishing vessels (under 9 metres) with the allocation of one family per boat. The result was an oversupply of smaller boats and thus the overfishing of inshore waters due to the small boats’ restricted capacity. Conversely, the Caritas initiative sought to overcome this challenge by enabling fishermen to cooperatively operate and benefit from large fishing boats.

The fishing cooperative has also formed a social fund to assist fishing community widows and provide scholarships to tsunami orphans.

LIVELIHOODS

Wherever possible, the Caritas network endeavoured to integrate livelihood initiatives across shelter programs; however Caritas Australia also funded a number of specific livelihood projects.

Peaceful recovery

Caritas Australia also contributed funding to a large livelihood project implemented by Caritas Czech Republic in both the tsunami-affected areas and the conflict-affected areas of Aceh Jaya district. With training and the supply farming materials, the program, supported by Caritas Australia, saw improved agricultural practices in affected communities and increased participation of women.

The project also facilitated the establishment of farmer cooperatives to improve marketing opportunities.

Photo above: Kangurru Laut (“Sea Kangaroo”) – one of the fishing boats funded by Caritas Australia heads out from Banda Aceh harbour.

Photo below: A fishing boat swept on top of a house in Banda Aceh by the tsunami.
Forums for the future

Although the Helsinki Agreement of 2005 ended 30 years of conflict and laid the framework for limited self-government, the enduring conflict had a deleterious effect on the development of civil society and non-violent political activity in the island’s communities.

Yet in the wake of widespread destruction and given the scale of the post-tsunami reconstruction program, it was essential that the mechanisms for advocacy and civil society engagement become a priority in development. Throughout the relief effort in Indonesia, the Caritas network was determined to ensure that local community views remained central to the reconstruction process.

Prior to the tsunami, the Aceh Civil Society Task Force (ACSTF) – based in Banda Aceh – was active in civil society development and advocacy. The ACSTF contributed to ensuring that grassroots civil society organisations had a voice in the political development of Aceh and the implementation of Law on the Governing of Aceh (LOGA). With a emphasis on developing civil society engagement post-tsunami, Caritas Australia contributed funding to ACSTF from 2006 to 2009.

To amplify local voices in the broader reconstruction process, the ACSTF civil society strengthening program established civil society forums in most of Aceh’s districts, enabling communities to take a coordinated and strategic approach to advocacy with the district administration. The forums also contributed to the formation and networking of small civil society groups such as women’s groups, rickshaw drivers, fishermen’s associations, and legal aid foundations.

In addition to district forums, ACSTF also established a parliament watch program to monitor and record the daily parliamentary process. The organisation maintains an active website (www.acstf.org, Bahasa Indonesia only) and – together with several Acehnese NGOs – ACSTF produced the newspaper, ACEH KITA.

With Caritas Australia’s support, ACSTF is continuing to ensure that the voices of ordinary people are heard in Aceh’s political and legislative processes.

Harnessing local strengths

In the wake of the tsunami, Caritas Australia also contributed funding to develop the institutional capacity of the Caritas network in Indonesia. Formed in 2006, the National Caritas office, based in Jakarta, has come to play an increasingly central role in the coordination of disaster preparedness across the Church network in Indonesia.

Karina’s resources and capacity to coordinate projects nationally, has enabled the Church network in Indonesia to better deal with emergencies, as evidenced in their responses to the Yogyakarta earthquake in 2006 and the West Sumatra earthquake in 2009.

Caritas Australia continues to play a central role in supporting the development of the national Caritas network in Indonesia to ensure that Caritas is able to provide support before, during and after emergencies in this disaster prone country.

8 Signed on 15 August 2005, the Helsinki Agreement ended armed conflict between the government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM).
Teaching preparedness

With the completion of the 65 schools on Simeulue island by Cordaid in 2008, the community of Simeulue not only had high quality schools for their children to attend but also had a significant number of earthquake resistant shelters to use in the event of future disasters. In order to ensure that the community was effectively prepared, with sustainable community structures for disaster preparedness, a two year disaster risk reduction (DRR) program was implemented.

The program, funded by Caritas Australia, included facilitating community based disaster risk assessment and mitigation as well as developing disaster risk reduction materials for use in the school curriculum.

Securing livelihoods

On the nearby island of Nias, Caritas Australia’s funding also enabled Caritas Sibolga (from the local Diocese) to implement a community managed disaster risk reduction program from 2008-2010.

The DRR program facilitated the formation of self-help groups and provided training in risk assessment, emergency preparedness, improved natural resource management and livelihood security. Community groups were assisted in processes to identify risks and formulate solutions or mitigation strategies.

The Caritas confederation member agency of The Netherlands
When the tsunami struck Sri Lanka on 26 December 2004, it caused devastation along 80 percent of the coastline.

Sri Lanka was a country divided by enduring conflict between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Government of Sri Lanka, a challenge that rendered emergency relief considerably difficult.

Caritas was one of the few civil society organisations that had deep roots in both sides of the divided country and was quickly able to respond to the communities’ enormous need. Drawing on its existing relief and development operations throughout the affected area, Caritas responded immediately from North to South; within months, more than 200,000 people received assistance in the form of food relief, psychosocial counselling and emergency shelter.

In response to the tsunami, Caritas Sri Lanka received funding from myriad agencies within the international Caritas network. These funds were consolidated into one operating fund, overseen by Caritas Internationalis (CI) in Rome. With one exception\(^\text{10}\), Caritas Australia contributed all funds to the CI managed appeal for Sri Lanka.

The international Caritas network also assisted in the provision of technical support: more than 60 expatriate specialists in the fields of project management, logistics, livelihoods, architecture, and monitoring and evaluation were engaged by Caritas in the tsunami response. Committed to support communities before, during and after the headlines, Caritas coordinated an acute emergency response concurrent with the design of a four year rehabilitation program.

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\(^\text{10}\) Caritas Jaffna – Jaffna Fish Net Factory.

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**TOTAL CARITAS RESPONSE:**

USD 115 million approx including AUD 1.8 million from the Government of Victoria

**CARITAS AUSTRALIA CONTRIBUTION:**

AUD 7,627,999

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This household near Batticaloa, in the East of Sri Lanka, moved from emergency shelter to a permanent house funded by Caritas in 2006.
SHELTER

Following the tsunami in Sri Lanka, the national Caritas was one of the largest providers of emergency and transitional shelters, delivering more than 6000 transitional shelters throughout the affected areas. In 2005, Caritas Sri Lanka was presented with a Presidential award of appreciation for swiftly supplying 6,540 shelters in tsunami-affected regions. Caritas Sri Lanka was one of nine organisations recognised for the construction of high quality transitional shelters. The fast and effective distribution of temporary shelters was subsequently followed by a permanent shelter program in the most vulnerable communities; Caritas Sri Lanka oversaw the construction of more than 10,000 homes.

Inherent in the implementation of Caritas’ shelter program, beneficiaries were granted a high degree of control over the shelter design and construction process. Where possible, a ‘self-build’ approach was employed, enabling beneficiaries to contract builders and to oversee the construction of their own homes – drawing on the technical and coordination support from Caritas staff. By directly engaging communities in the recovery, Caritas ensured beneficiaries gained a strong sense of ownership of the process whilst also supporting the local economy.

In areas where a shortage of skilled labour limited the communities’ capacity to self-build, Caritas Sri Lanka outsourced construction using an open tender process, and retained responsibility for monitoring and quality control.

LIVELIHOODS

Myriad livelihood initiatives were included in the overall Caritas tsunami rehabilitation program including emergency cash for work programs, livelihood asset replacement and vocational training. Around 25,000 households received some form of assistance in livelihood recovery and/or vocational training. The largest livelihood program funded by Caritas Australia in Sri Lanka was conducted as a unique project, as distinct from the primary Caritas Sri Lanka tsunami program.

The project, restoring a fishnet manufacturing plant in Jaffna, received AUD 430,500 from Caritas Australia, in addition to support from Caritas France and a further AUD 1.8 million from the Government of Victoria. The plant can now produce 16,000 kilograms of fishnet per month and will provide a reliable source of quality nets for Jaffna’s large fishing industry. It also provides direct employment for 120 workers (mainly women) making it one of the largest employers in Jaffna.

Construction of the plant commenced in 2006, originally scheduled for completion in 2008. Due to the escalation of the conflict between the LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka, work was significantly delayed and not completed till 2010. With the cessation of conflict in the north, this initiative should make a significant contribution to economic recovery in the region.
The 2004 tsunami devastated thousands of kilometres of the Indian coastline, from Andhra Pradesh in the central east to Kerala in the south west. The wave claimed over 10,000 lives and hundreds of thousands were displaced in the chaos. In a joint action with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Caritas India supported 21 diocesan partners to organise and manage more than 100 relief camps sheltering more than 125,000 people along the coastlines of the worst affected states – Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

In the camps, displaced families received cooked food up to three times a day, clothing, clean water, and medical assistance as required. In remote areas, where there were significant gaps in the provision of emergency relief, Caritas distributed dry food rations, medicine, oral rehydration solution (ORS), and water purification tablets. Three thousand and thirty-eight temporary shelters were constructed for the most vulnerable families and cash for work programs were developed to inject much-needed cash into local economies, whilst also ensuring the disposal of dangerous debris. In total, approximately 500,000 people received emergency assistance from Caritas in the aftermath of the Asian tsunami in India.

**LIVELIHOODS**

With destruction widespread across the Indian coastline, fishing communities were particularly affected by the 2004 tsunami. In an effort to ensure food security in the affected areas and enable local fishermen to generate much-needed income, Caritas India initiated a fishing program in the most vulnerable communities. With the support of Caritas Australia, the national Caritas facilitated the construction of more than 3000 fishing boats and catamarans, the repair of another 1626, as well as providing 2234 engines and more than 20,000 nets. In many cases, the boats and engines replaced by Caritas Australia were of better quality than those lost in the tsunami.
Following the successful completion of most tsunami rehabilitation programs by the first quarter of 2007, Caritas India commenced a community development program to ensure that vulnerable communities in the affected coastal areas of Tamilnadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh can be self-determining, self-reliant and resilient. This follow-up program consisted of community development and disaster risk reduction activities such as the strengthening of community based organisations through training in facilitation, organisational development, situation analysis and leadership. Through targeted leadership training, Caritas India worked to establish the role of women as equal and central actors in the community development process.

Caritas Australia also worked to establish ties between community-based organisations in the Panchayat (village) with district and state authorities. These structures enabled communities to advocate for their local interests including coastal development issues that were potentially detrimental to local communities.

Communities were trained in assessing and mitigating the risks posed by unclean water, poor sanitation practices and marine and coastal hazards. As a case in point, a disproportionate number of women and girls lost their lives to the tsunami – a deadly reality of their inability to swim. In order to address this risk, Caritas Australia helped communities to organise swimming lessons for women and girls.

Disaster preparedness and environmental protection trainings were also implemented; a total of 1225 villages from three states (Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala) were involved in the program.

**SHELTER**

The primary focus of Caritas India’s tsunami rehabilitation program was the provision of safe and secure permanent housing. Government processes – which allocated housing to beneficiaries by ballot only after construction was completed – made it impossible to include householders in the rebuilding process. However, Caritas India facilitated community consultation processes to allow beneficiary input into the design of permanent housing.

In most cases, the houses provided by Caritas exceeded the standard of housing available prior to the tsunami. In particular, sanitation was greatly improved throughout affected communities.

One housing relocation site in Colachel, Tamil Nadu, is located near a sensitive wetland. Caritas India developed a simple but effective wastewater treatment facility that collects all wastewater from 329 houses and treats it through an oxidation pond and a maturation pond. The treated water is then fit for discharge into the surrounding watercourse without a negative impact on the environment. Caritas India is promoting this as a model form of village sanitation.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

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BUILDING BACK BETTER

Caritas was present in many of the affected locations before the tsunami struck, and continues to accompany many communities in their sustainable development.

Today thousands of children go to school in Aceh in seismic resistant schools, hundreds of thousands live in improved housing in Aceh, Sri Lanka and India. Women in Jaffna have permanent jobs in a large fishnet factory, farmers in Aceh have improved rice yields, and fishermen in India are better organised and receive a better price for their catch. Across the affected area communities are taking action to identify their vulnerability to disaster hazards and implement measures to reduce their risk. Caritas Australia has strived to not only assist communities to rebuild their homes, schools and livelihoods but to build back better.

On behalf of our staff, volunteers, partners and the communities we serve, Caritas Australia wishes to thank the Governments of Australia, Victoria and Western Australia; the Tamil Association of Victoria; and all those Australian schools, parishes, businesses, individuals and families who so generously supported our long-term response to the Asian tsunami.