

Irish Red Cross and Palang Merah Indonesia
Case Study: Community Outreach Programme, Aceh
Prepared for CDAC Network Media and Tech Fair, March 2012

Background

The earthquake and subsequent tsunami that struck North Sumatra on 26 December 2004 affected all aspects of life in Aceh Province. The tsunami claimed an estimated 150,000 lives and left 500,000 people displaced in the region. Families were torn apart, and homes, livelihoods and basic infrastructure suffered substantial damage in the urban and rural coastal regions of Aceh province.

Approximately 12 months after the Tsunami, following an extensive consultation by the Irish Red Cross (IRCS) and the Palang Merah Indonesia (PMI) with communities, it became clear that the overall humanitarian response wasn't serving the needs of all of the affected population. As usual, the people who were falling through the gaps were generally the poorest of the poor. In particular, the consultation showed that the needs of the communities were primarily to do with lack of information and as well as assistance to navigate the maze of services being provided by humanitarian actors. The IRCS in collaboration with the PMI launched an innovative community media development project called the Community Outreach Program (COP) in response to these needs.

The (COP) was developed to support and implement outreach and advocacy initiatives and to encourage two-way dialogue between individuals affected by the tsunami, communities, Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) Movement Partners, NGO's, and government entities. The COP worked with communities to identify resources and to negotiate access to aid provided by humanitarian actors but which communities were, for different reasons, not receiving.

The program was executed by two departments: the Media Department (comprised of print, radio and television media programming services) and the Community Advocacy Unit (responsible for case management and face to face interventions). The departments worked in collaboration to ensure that there were platforms available for communities to voice the issues they were facing and for those issues to be heard by humanitarian actors.

Objectives of the COP

The overall goal of the COP in Aceh and Nias was to empower people affected by the tsunami to act on their own behalf. The COP enabled people affected by the crisis to develop the confidence they needed to identify the resources and appropriate solutions to the challenges they encountered, and to take action to solve these challenges. In a post-disaster environment, information that communities ask for is simple, practical and mostly related to what is being done to assist them as well as how they can access available resources. In its advocacy approach, the COP stressed confidentiality when communicating with beneficiaries to ensure transparency and the development of an atmosphere of trust and confidence.

The COP reached its goal of enabling tsunami and earthquake affected communities in Aceh and Nias to work together with stakeholders to access resources and develop solutions for affected people in the reconstruction and rehabilitation process, by producing the following objectives:

1. *Objective 1:* Advocate and facilitate solutions on behalf of tsunami and earthquake affected communities on issues, concerns, and problems regarding the reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes in Aceh and Nias.
2. *Objective 2:* Support an environment of transparency and dialogue between earthquake and tsunami affected communities and stakeholders, through the provision of information, education, and communication services, using community based dialogue and multimedia approaches.

3. *Objective 3:* Create demand for Irish Red Cross Society (IRCS) information and communication services through enhancing existing community structures through organisational and technical assistance relevant to the reconstruction and rehabilitation process.

COP Programme Components

Community Advocacy Unit

The Community Advocacy Unit (CAU) assisted with the facilitation, resolution and advocacy for both individual and community cases in the reconstruction and rehabilitation process for tsunami and earthquake affected population throughout Aceh province. Within the CAU, communication between the IRCS and beneficiaries was facilitated through SMS, telephone, e-mail, office and field visits.

The CAU established a casework information system to track, monitor and evaluate each case on a timely, consistent and results-oriented basis. It utilised an SMS gateway system from November 2006 and a database for accurate case management from March 2007. The standard operating procedure for each eligible case consisted of:

- a) responding to a client within 72 hours;
- b) issue verification by phone within 5 days;
- c) issue verification in the field within 10 days; and
- d) follow up and monitoring activities within 27 days.

From November 2006, the CAU received 16,250 SMS requests, of which 6,000 eligible cases were facilitated by the team. SMS communication from beneficiaries made up approximately 95 per cent of initial contact, with walk-in and email contact making up the remainder.

Community Media

The IRCS media department served to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate media tools and other mechanisms to fill the information gap, and advocate on behalf of tsunami and earthquake affected communities in Aceh. The department carried out three main activities: the production of the Rumoh PMI Newspaper, Rumoh PMI Radio service, and a live TV Programme.

Rumoh PMI Newspaper

The Rumoh PMI Newspaper was initially published as an eight-page newsletter. Starting in June 2007, Rumoh PMI switched to producing a sixteen page newspaper and was published as a tabloid and issued in 12, one-monthly editions.

During the life of the project the newspaper peaked at a distribution of 52,000 copies distributed per month. The tabloid was distributed in Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar, Sabang, Aceh Jaya, Aceh Barat, Pulo Aceh, Lhokseumawe/Aceh Utara, Simeleu, Nias, Sigli, Pidie, Bireun. Newspapers were distributed to beneficiaries' homes, PMI branches (rural, semi rural and urban), community radio stations which broadcast Rumoh PMI Radio programmes and public places such as hospitals, supermarkets, coffee-shops etc.

Rumoh PMI Radio Programming

The Rumoh PMI Radio Programme was initiated in July 2006. Rumoh PMI programmes were broadcast in Aceh Besar, Aceh Utara, Aceh Jeumpa, Aceh Jaya, Aceh Sigkil, Aceh Pidie, Aceh Barat, Sabang, Lhokseumawe, Langsa, Abdaya, and Nias. Initially the service was run for one hour per week.

In February 2009, the Radio Department started broadcasting information through an extensive satellite network for a period of eight hours per day. The eight hour programming was then looped for another 2 times per day to provide a 24 hour service. Radio Rumoh PMI broadcast information to 38 stations and hundreds of communities throughout Aceh and Nias. The radio service continues to operate today under the management of PMI Aceh.

Warung Kupu Rumoh PMI (Television Programming)

The television section of the COP was developed in April 2009 following the results of the mid-term evaluation. The weekly variety show was run live for one hour a week, and was received by approximately 90 per cent of Acehnese homes as well as other areas outside of Aceh in Indonesia.

The show delivered information on a weekly topic based on the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase of the Tsunami operations. The service also had segments that included talent shows and quizzes. In total the project aired 18 episodes. It was a very significant development for the National Red Cross Society to run, operate and produce its own live TV show on a weekly basis with a local commercial TV channel. The 18 episodes generated interest and engagement amongst the NGO community and within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in Aceh and Nias.

What Worked – and Why

Putting advocacy at the core of the programme allowed the COP to measure outputs that related directly to people's needs by actively having in place a system of case management and recording all information on a database. The mix of media used also allowed communication loops to be developed across the programme, so feedback was constantly being updated and utilised. One of the main benefits in managing the programme was the flexibility of all participants both in country and from the head office to let the programme evolve as it tested and found new ways to deliver services.

Staff development: As the program hadn't been tested by the Red Cross previously there were not any precedents on what skills staff would need to effectively execute the program. As mentioned below in the Lessons Learned section, allowing people to develop skills relevant to the needs of the program is an important component of this kind of work and should not be overlooked.

Utilising expert external staff can blow budgets and reduce the amount of deliverables. All staff had specific tasks but also worked across the different departments enabling them to further develop their skills (responsibilities were team-based as opposed to individual). Staff were able to try their skills at a range of different activities; this was highlighted when a senior programme officer became the presenter of a TV programme along with an IT officer from a different National Society.

Both individuals had extrovert personalities and were comfortable being in front of the camera and a crowd. This allowed the program to evolve using local staff who understood the program's needs without having to source experts who had less understanding of the objectives of the program. Different staff members took on the role of announcing information on the radio about the respective aspects of the project. The mentorship programme allowed other volunteers and staff to participate in the programme and learn while working on the job.

Challenges

Relationships: One of the biggest challenges of the program was that some of the service providers took offence at being held accountable to the tsunami affected population and the IRCS was perceived to have taken the role of auditor. This happened with a number of NGOs and donors who were delivering services with the best of intention, but in reality these services were considered sub-standard. This became relevant in a case where the team received 40 individual requests for help relating to houses being built by one particular NGO. The roofs of the houses were not stable and a number fell into ill-repair within months of being built. The team followed this up with the NGO and showed it the information it had gathered.

Following discussions with the NGO, the NGO mentioned that it was aware of the issue and was working on a solution to rectify the problem. One of the suggestions the IRCS team made was that the NGO do a campaign on radio so that people were aware the NGO was keen to deal with the complaints. The NGO delivered a campaign on radio with talk-back, and subsequently repaired the defective houses.

Information and case management: With a large amount of requests coming in the team had to look at the most effective way of maintaining the expectations and dealing with a vast array of issues. It found that categorizing issues based on what could be dealt with over the phone by providing information, and what needed face-to-face interventions made the operation more efficient. The team also worked out that pooling community issues allowed it to manage larger amounts of cases. Managing a large community issue that dealt with the needs of a 100 people was more effective than managing 100 individual cases.

Lessons Learned

When delivering an information / communication related programme that uses media and technology solutions, the following can be summarised:

- The COP did not empower communities by giving them information, it was the communities who empowered themselves by providing the COP and aid actors with information that could be turned into outcomes. Communities are the only ones who can empower themselves.
Recommendation: When setting up media based development programs, understand that community empowerment is a process and that information is only part of the equation.
- Turning data into knowledge and wisdom requires exchanging and analyzing information. This can be achieved through dialogue and utilizing multiple channels of communication. The COP model was particularly effective in doing this because it used a mix of both media and face-to-face interventions involving all stakeholders in this process.
Recommendation: NGOs, governments and international aid organisations should all participate in the exchange of information process to allow them a clear understanding of what the needs of communities are, and then act on that information to provide outcomes.
- Using a mix of communication channels will provide you with large amounts of data. Information management can take up a lot time and resources.
Recommendation: The development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) early on in the programme on how to manage cases and information is useful. More thought in the programme development stage is crucial.
- Affected populations do not always have access to multiple mediums of communication. Some mediums were more effective in certain areas than others, this was also evident with demographics, more mature (in terms of age) people read newspapers and the younger liked radio and TV
Recommendation: when planning your media development or Advocacy program utilise multiple channels don't rely on one communication medium.
- Carrying out extensive consultation with communities during the design process helped to develop a programme that was able to deliver on specific community needs. Participatory development models in the initial consultation process allowed the programme to be tailored to specific needs.
Recommendation: Include community members and affected people in the process of planning.
- By building capacity in National staff the COP was able to utilise existing skills as well as develop skills that were relevant to the program and keep the number of staff who work on the program low. This kept the cost of the program low.
Recommendation: Understanding that people have a broad range of skills and supporting them to deliver outside of their usual boundaries can make for stronger programme outputs, especially if an intentional staff capacity building approach is adopted.

Snap shot of Findings from COP Final Evaluation

(carried out for the IRCS by Risang Rimbatmaja, Evaluation Consultant)

The information below was taken from the final evaluation of the Community Outreach Program. The objectives of the evaluation were to: assess the effectiveness of the program; efficiency of delivery of the program; impacts; access; and the relevance and appropriateness of the program for communities.

The tables below present information on the mediums used, the appropriateness of the Advocacy component of the program, access to the mediums by communities and some key performance indicators associated with the COP.

Community Media and effectiveness of communication with communities	Overall COP %	Radio %	Tabloid %	TV %
Relevant/ very relevant Information	74.6	70.2	72.5	64.3
Mediocre Information	18.1	19.3	23.8	27.8
Less relevant Information	2.2	7.0	2.2	0
Appropriateness of Advocacy- CAU department	Appropriate	inappropriate	Don't know	
Programs appropriateness	85.0	12.0	3.0	
	Overall COP %	Radio %	Tabloid %	TV %
Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	85 % - 244,451 beneficiaries have access to Multimedia	85% listener satisfaction	85% satisfaction with publication	85% viewer satisfaction
KPI achieved	73.0	75.2	82.5	75.2
Advocacy- CAU- KPI	85 % cases facilitated	85 % cases facilitated to schedule	70 % of community members participated in resolution	
KPI achieved	75	80	80	

Access to media by targeted populations	At least one media %	Tabloid %	Radio %	TV %
Accessed	73	40	37	32
Audience reached	Overall	Radio	Tabloid	TV
	178,449	90,447	98,392	78,835