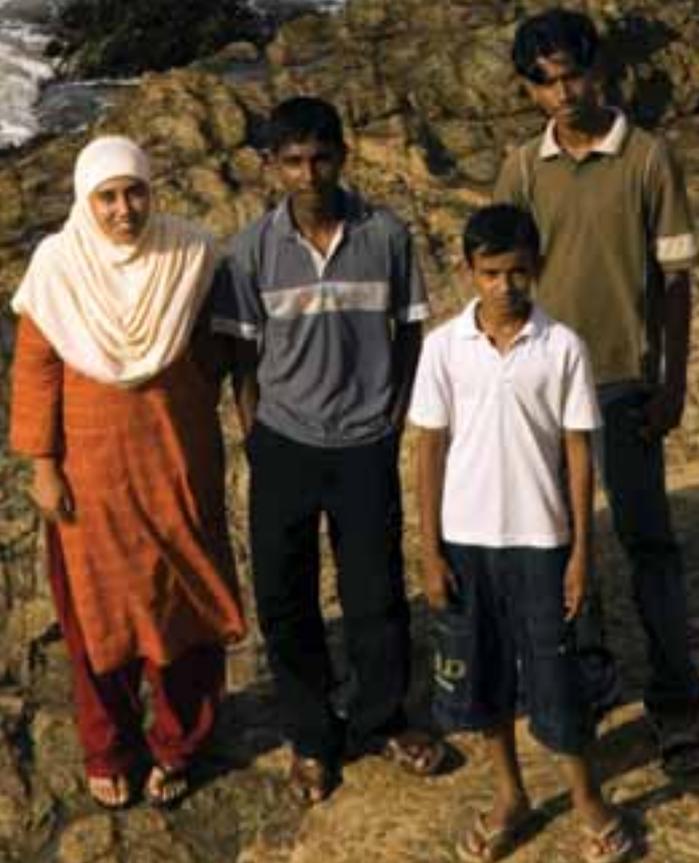


# Tsunami 12 Months After



**Plan**  
Be a part of it.

## **Tsunami – 12 Months After**

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Children are facing the future with courage.

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Childline caravan visits schools in tsunami-affected provinces.

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# Tsunami

## 12 Months After



**Plan**  
Be a part of it.

# Foreword

As development workers and child rights advocates, there are reasons for us to listen to children and young people.

When we begin speaking with children directly, we learn that they often have very different views from adults on issues not only concerning themselves, but also their communities. Their analyses of the situation are often very perceptive and accurate.

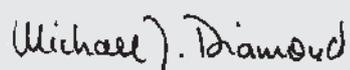
We have been struck by their strength in adverse situations and their willingness to address problems rather than complain about them. In our work, we start from the premise that children and young people know the issues that affect them and how to tackle those issues.

Is there any difference in times of disaster? We believe there is not, and possibly children's views are even more relevant in difficult situations such as the tsunami. Children comprise more than half the population in any given place, and not listening to them means not taking into consideration the opinions of the majority of the people affected.

Disasters are obviously traumatic, life-changing events. No one is more vulnerable to the physical and psychological consequences of a disaster than children. When we talk about disaster response, it is their future homes, future income sources, future educational opportunities and psychological well-being that we are talking about. Since Plan takes a long-term approach to community recovery after disasters, it is essential to place importance on what children and young people have to say.

The correct interventions will help ensure that children recover from a terrible event and go on to lead full, healthy and productive lives as adults.

That is why we listen to children and why this 12-month report focuses on the stories of children. Their stories are the backbone of our post-tsunami operation.



**Michael Diamond**  
Plan Asia Regional Director

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# Plan and the Tsunami:

## Overview of the first 12 months

### From relief to recovery

Immediately after the tsunami in December 2004, Plan started emergency relief efforts in Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia. As Plan was already operational in these countries, it was able to act quickly, utilising its extensive experience and well-established contacts. In Sri Lanka, Plan focused on the devastated district of Hambantota, where it has worked since 1995. In India, Plan chose to work in Tamil Nadu, one of the hardest-hit areas and an area where Plan had operated in the past. Plan had no history of working in Aceh, Indonesia, but after assessing the situation, activities began in four districts surrounding Banda Aceh. In Thailand, Plan did not get involved in emergency relief because the response from the government and the international community was ample. Instead, Plan took a long-term approach that focused on education and children's psychosocial support in six districts around Phuket.

During the past year, Plan has assisted more than 350,000 people living in 500 tsunami-affected communities. More than US\$13 million has been invested in health, psychosocial support, education, habitat, livelihood recovery and child rights. These investments have allowed children to continue their education and to receive proper care and protection. More importantly, our interaction with children has reduced the stress and psychological impact of the tsunami. Our programmes, most of which are long-term in nature, have also prevented major outbreaks of disease, allowed families to plan for their future homes and helped families restore their livelihoods.

Immediately after the tsunami, Plan focused on emergency interventions, such as the provision of medical supplies, drinking water, food and temporary shelter. In the past six months, Plan has moved away from emergency activities to recovery and rehabilitation programmes. Many organisations whose primary focus was emergency relief are gradually leaving. However, Plan is continuing its work by supporting such longer-term projects as school construction, teacher training, birth registration, vocational training, micro-enterprise development, permanent housing and community rehabilitation, potable water, sanitation, health system rehabilitation and health worker training. Innovative work in the area of psychosocial support for children and adults is also underway and has been scaled up to a national level in Sri Lanka. All of these programmes are addressing the long-term development needs of children, their families and communities.

While tackling projects on the ground, Plan is also dealing with issues such as the post-tsunami role of children, inter-agency coordination and accountability.

## Listening to children

At the core of Plan's work is the effort to engage children and young people in all aspects of what we do. We want children to proactively participate in their communities and to be key actors in post-tsunami recovery efforts. Our experience with disasters also has taught us that psychosocial solutions are as important (if not more so) as physical rehabilitation efforts.

In India, consultations with children and young people revealed that their biggest anxiety after the tsunami was being alone. Therefore, everything that we do with children (child care centres, children's clubs or evening classes) is designed to contribute to a sense of togetherness.

The establishment of child care centres immediately after the tsunami allowed children to deal with the ordeal quickly and effectively, take their minds off the disaster and receive health care. Plan and its partners also quickly established children's clubs for the first time in villages of Tamil Nadu. The clubs have organised events such as singing and dancing, debating sessions and discussions on how to contribute to the rehabilitation efforts. Plan staff in India are now busy organising a "children's social audit." It is the next step in children's involvement in the post-tsunami recovery. Children will look at the efficiency of relief activities and related equity issues using photographs, newspaper articles and websites. So far, 36 children from 10 villages of Nagapattinam conducted the first audit between September and October.

In Thailand, Plan learned that children did not want the experience of the tsunami forgotten. Issues around migrant workers and ethnic minorities were highlighted in the post-tsunami period. In addition, older children understood more clearly the importance and impact of tourism on the economy and on their future. Plan will work with schools to build a curriculum that will support future careers in the tourism industry.

Over the past six months, Plan talked to more than 330 children between the ages of 8 and 18 from all four countries to learn about their experiences and get their ideas about the post-tsunami role of children. They had many stories to tell: How they survived. How they helped other people during the tsunami. How they coped with difficult situations in the emergency period. How they saw and continue to see external agencies. Their life in temporary shelters. The situation at their schools. And, most importantly, their aspiration to contribute to the recovery of their community and to be prepared for future disasters.

We also spoke with about 100 staff from international, national and local institutions about how they engaged with children. The result of these exercises is being published in a report called "Children and the Tsunami." The report shows that organisations need to listen to children and engage them in their work.

Children and young people make up more than half of the surviving population in tsunami-hit communities and they can play an important role in rebuilding their communities. Children are more knowledgeable about their own particular needs and abilities. If we do not engage them, we are failing to take advantage of a vital community resource.

## Inter-agency coordination

One of Plan's principles is cooperation with other organisations. In Aceh, Plan made a particular effort to work with other organisations because we did not have the capacity to address the scope of destruction on the ground alone. Initially, Plan sought partnerships with international agencies because we did not have much knowledge about local Acehese organisations, and many local organisations were overwhelmed by the tsunami. One of our initial partners was Helen Keller International (HKI), with whom we worked with to address the incidence of diarrhoea that was threatening displaced populations in Aceh and North Sumatra. The prevalence of severe wasting (losing weight, strength and resistance) increased after the tsunami, and in Plan's project area alone, 5,600 people were diagnosed with severe or moderate wasting. It was essential to assist a large number of people quickly. Only the partnership with HKI enabled Plan to carry out the rapid provision of zinc and other micronutrients to more than 160,000 people. As a result of this cooperation, the prevalence of diarrhoea among 6- to 23-month-old children decreased from 19 per cent to 4 per cent.

In Sri Lanka, psychosocial support became a flagship project for many organisations after the tsunami. Plan undertook action research with children and had a look at what others were doing in order to identify the best way to address this issue. Plan decided that the most effective approach was to use indigenous resources rather than bringing in experts from other countries. Sri Lanka already had a lot of experience in psychosocial work due to past internal conflicts. In addition, the German aid agency GTZ had already produced many relevant psychosocial materials. Therefore, Plan decided to work with GTZ to translate and mass produce existing books dealing with loss and grief. GTZ and Plan also provided refresher training to teacher-counsellors. The teacher-counsellors are also using a picture book produced by Plan called "Searching for PUNCHI" as a tool for discussing the experience of the tsunami at school settings. It was carefully designed so that it could be used by any religious or ethnic group. So far, one million copies have been distributed to schools in Sri Lanka.

## Accountability

While Plan believes we have a responsibility to our donors to be accountable and transparent, we believe that we also are accountable to the communities in which we work. In Aceh, there is an annual fair to promote local development called "Aceh Arise!" (Aceh Bangkit). This year, the theme was public accountability and partnership. Plan participated in this local event to demonstrate our activities and progress to date. More than 400,000 people came to the fair and Plan's exhibition was visited by over 1,000 children and adults. Children had the opportunity to draw pictures about how they would like their community to look after the recovery and reconstruction process.

Plan also ensures accountability through regular full-time internal auditors who have independent reporting lines to the International Board. For the post-tsunami operation in 2005, we conducted a number of audits. Some looked at the tsunami projects exclusively, while others looked at the entire operation of Plan in the country.

Plan has helped our local partners, especially in India, to improve their financial accountability and transparency. Our local partners in India are well established in the region and have very good reputations. Yet a majority of them are new to Plan and have not handled such large budgets in the past. We assisted them in setting up financially sound procedures and systems to meet established minimum standards. The process was well received by the partners as they saw that improving their own accountability and transparency would be to their advantage when seeking future funding from donors.

## Expenditure to date

As of the end of October 2005, Plan has received donations and firm pledges of US\$37 million for its post-tsunami emergency and longer-term rehabilitation activities. Each country is implementing projects according to two- to four-year programme outlines. At the end of December 2005, Plan will have spent more than US\$13 million in four countries.

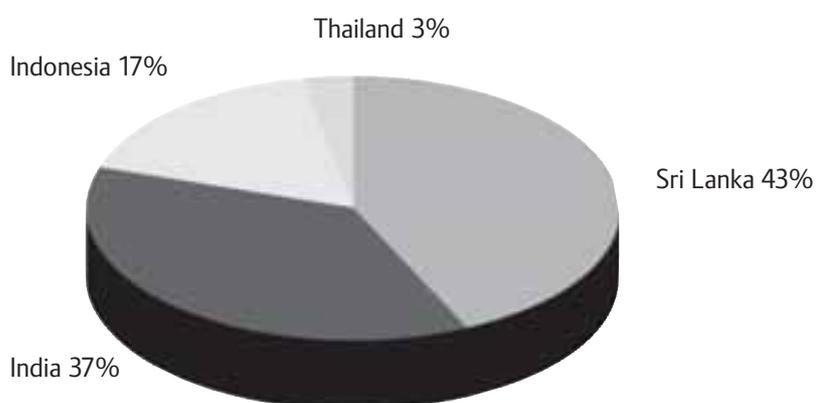
We have plans in place to spend all the money received within the next two years. Indeed, current proposed projects

have identified US\$7 million in addition to those funds raised, which could be well spent on high-priority needs if the funds are available.

As a development agency with a focus on the long term, Plan's objective has never been to spend funds raised quickly; rather, it is to spend the money on projects that are well thought out and best address the long-term needs of the communities in which we work.

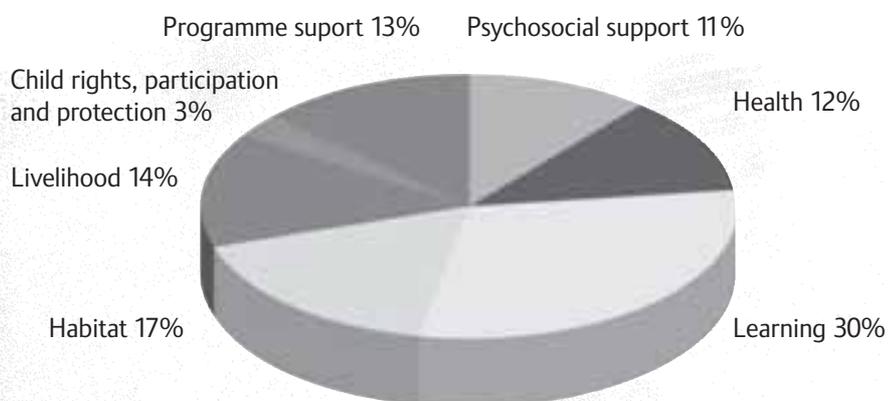
**Table 1: Distribution of expenditure per country of operation**

Total expenditure: US\$13 million by the end of December 2005\*



\* The actual expenditure through the end of October, plus estimates for November and December, based on the contracts and purchase orders made.

**Table 2: Distribution of expenditure per programme domain**



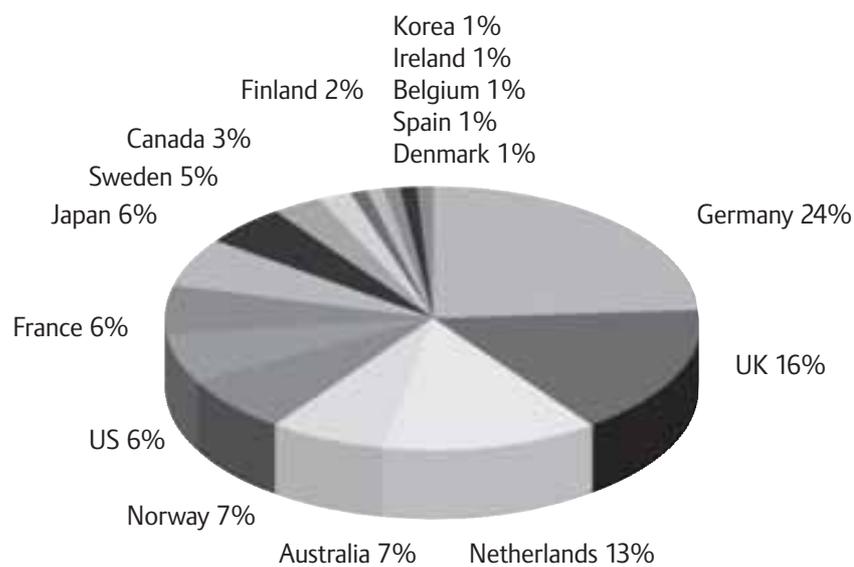
As the construction of permanent houses progresses in India and Sri Lanka, Plan expects to spend between US\$15 million and US\$20 million in the second year of its tsunami operation.

## Funds received

Plan is grateful for the generosity of a multitude of donors. Donors from 16 different countries are supporting our relief and recovery efforts in tsunami-affected communities. Due to

space limitations, we cannot recognise every donor, but we appreciate every donation.

**Table 3: All donations (government and private sector) received, by country**



A total of 72 per cent of Plan's tsunami income has come from individual donors, private companies, groups and foundations. Donors include: TUI, Buerkle, TQ3, LBS Hannover, Eurohypo Bank, Jahr Top Special Publishing House, "Green Week" Exposition Berlin, Association of German Tea Importers, Broadcast Fund (Radiohjälpen), the Swedish Student Organisation, Brossette, PBM, Accor Hotels, Fondation d'Entreprise Air France, Crédit Foncier and Pérexia, Collectif Asie Enfants Isolés, Samenwerkende Hulp Organisaties, Polynorm, Disasters Emergency Committee, the Freemason's Grand Charity, School Aid UK, the Study Group, Capgemini, Dymocks

Booksellers, Intrepid Travel, ING DIRECT Kids Foundation, ING DIRECT, Second Cup Coffee, Ootomo Fukushi Shinko Zaidan, Spirit Foundation, Masonic Foundation of Japan and Dangaard Telecom Norway. In addition, we received in-kind contribution from Accenture Development Partnership.

A total of 28 per cent of Plan's tsunami income has come from the governments of Canada, Finland, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom and the European Union.

## Knowledge management

Unfortunately, the tsunami was not the only natural disaster that Plan and its partners had to face during the past year. October 2005 was a particularly bad month, with several hurricanes hitting Central America and an earthquake devastating northern Pakistan.

In each disaster, Plan's local team reacted to the calamity immediately, always working closely with communities. The lessons that we learned from the tsunami have been incorporated and disseminated throughout the organisation:

- Quick mobilisation of staff;
- Coordination with other organisations;
- Rapid assessment of the situation of children;
- Supporting people's own efforts at recovery;
- Only raising funds we can spend well.

Plan now considers disaster risk management an important part of our work with communities. Plan is assisting communities in their preparation for possible disasters using the existing groups, mechanisms and systems. We have learned that if there are strong community organisations and networks, people cope with disasters much better. It is this coping mechanism that Plan will focus on, but at the same time, Plan will continue to build its organisational capacity to respond to disasters.

## Plan's background

Founded in 1937 to help children orphaned during the Spanish Civil War, Plan now works for and with children, families and communities in 45 countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America. Plan carries out advocacy, development education and fundraising in 15 countries in the industrialised world. Plan has no religious or political aims or affiliations.

Through direct grassroots work, Plan supports the efforts of children, communities and local organisations to make a reality of rights to education, health, a safe environment, clean water and sanitation, secure incomes and participation. Plan works to protect children at special risk – e.g. child labourers – and to ensure all children's rights are recognised – e.g. through major birth registration programmes. By linking people in “the North” and “the South”, Plan strives to build a worldwide community working to defend children's rights and improve their lives.

Plan's work for children is funded mainly (more than 75 per cent) by more than 1 million individual sponsors and supporters worldwide, through regular monthly or annual donations. Plan also receives generous support from the governments of Australia, Canada, France, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States, from multilateral bodies such as the European Union and from private foundations and companies.

Plan is committed to assisting children in developing countries both in the promotion of their rights and addressing their needs. These rights and needs can be threatened in times of disaster, and in such circumstances, Plan responds in the most appropriate manner and in line with its skills and capacities.

Plan is committed to its Child Centred Community Development approach in all its responses to disasters.

Human rights and child rights, child centredness, local knowledge and community coping mechanisms, child and community participation, child protection, relationship building, accountability and transparency are what guide Plan in its disaster response.

Young people struggle  
to make sense of their utterly  
changed world.



# Indonesia

## Battling Back

# Voices from Indonesia

Young people who suffered terrible losses are still fighting to recover. Plan's programme in still-devastated Aceh has focused on health, education and livelihood restoration.

## Where we work:

Plan works in 200 villages and displaced persons camps in Aceh province in the districts of Aceh Besar, Jaya and Barat.

## People we work with:

Plan is working with approximately 50,000 families (250,000 people) on its community-based tsunami recovery programme.

## Plan's tsunami staffing:

Plan's post-tsunami programme is managed by 29 full-time staff (28 local and 1 international) based in Banda Aceh. In addition, there is constant support from Plan's long-standing Indonesia programme. We also have 17 volunteers and support 153 teachers.

## Testing times for young people

Visitors see a bleak and empty landscape – Iswannur and Ina see a community of survivors who need their help.

Set amidst the huddle of makeshift homes arrayed around Lampuuk's towering mosque, their 24-hour medical clinic offers treatment to the sick and a lifeline to the lonely and vulnerable.

Nurse Ina has befriended Jacob, a grief-ridden 65-year-old fisherman who cannot yet find a way to live with the loss of his wife and two daughters.

Iswannur keeps a vigilant eye on the tiny wooden hut adorned with black plastic sheets where 15 boys are staking out an uncertain and improvised existence.

"We take care of ourselves. We cook. We wash our clothes. We get ourselves to school. The roof leaks, but there's not much we can do about that," says orphan Rashid, 17, standing outside the shack, furnished with a broken piece of mirror, a few racks for dishes and clothes, and a transistor radio.

With around half a million Acehnese still surviving in tents and temporary shelters or bunked with relatives and friends, it is unsurprising if some – including many youth – are forced to seek unorthodox solutions to the problems of where and how to live.

Aid agencies arriving shortly after the disaster were relieved that most of Aceh's 6,000 to 10,000 orphans had found homes with extended families or others. Rashid's group, aged from 14 to 18, is a reminder that such cobbled-together arrangements can break down.

Rashid lived for a time with an uncle in a temporary shelter but soon wanted to take his chances back in the ruins of his old village. "Our situation is not ideal. But I prefer to stay here. This is my home."



Dessy Handayani, midwife, at Lamteungoh clinic.

The boys play football, watch TV at night in an open-air village centre and at times help out at the mosque. Sometimes they visit surviving relatives or scavenge for rocks among the debris to sell to contractors. “Once we got 50,000 rupees (US\$5),” says Rashid. On the eve of Ramadan, traditionally a time for families to gather together, the boys were alone with the memories of their lost parents.

Iswannur, a local medic who founded the Plan-funded health centre after losing his own clinic to the tsunami, watched the boys’ plight and took his concerns to Plan, whose staff started investigating livelihood possibilities and other forms of support.

The boys’ precarious situation is just one example of the many challenges still facing thousands of Aceh’s tsunami-affected children and youth.

Teenagers face pressures such as sexual vulnerability as a result of living in cramped conditions in tents and temporary wooden shelters, says Ida of Plan, who guides young people to become “peer educators” on reproductive health issues. Plan also provides teenagers with health and sanitary kits.

“The good side of the camp being crowded is that we have our friends close by. A bad side is the lack of privacy for changing your clothes,” says Irma, 18, of Keude Meuria camp in Masjid Raya subdistrict.

To help solve the privacy issue, some blocks have allocated special sleeping rooms for boys.

Ida’s sessions with the young people are also designed to give them a chance to express their views and participate in decisions that affect them.

Very often in emergency situations, children’s opinions and contributions are ignored. Without deliberate effort, that neglect can continue into the reconstruction phase.

“Most adults don’t really respect children’s opinions,” says Zulfikar, 18, who lost his parents and sisters to the tsunami and now lives with just his younger brother. “They should realise that children have rights,” he adds.

Have teenagers in Keude Meuria camp seen examples of those rights being ignored? Some of them were asked to provide examples. “A boy aged 9 was asked to carry water a long way. It was too heavy for him. It’s not supposed to be like that,” says Kaidir, 16. “Parents who don’t pay attention to a child or yell at him,” is an example given by another teenager. “Parents who make their children stay at home when the child wants to continue school,” another teen says.

Young people struggling to make sense of their utterly changed world sometimes sound wiser than their years.

In a consultation with Plan researchers, teenagers vividly recalled the tsunami and how they helped the community in its chaotic aftermath. Among the many jobs they assisted with were clearing roads, cleaning temporary camps, cutting trees to make fences for cattle and clearing rubble from around mosques.

Now they wrestle to move on. "It's impossible to get back to normal life...but that's too pessimistic. It's useless to live in sadness. We are optimistic that our lives can improve," one young person told the researchers. "We are still in high school. We have a long journey to go. We will rebuild our future," said another.

To boost that kind of survivor spirit, Plan organised a number of special children's events over the year.

A highlight was a visit by former English footballer Warren Barton of Newcastle United, who led energetic coaching sessions with around 200 eager young players in temporary camps. Around 1,000 children participated in a fun activities day in Banda Aceh, and another 1,600 came together for a festival of games and dance in Kreung Raya, Masjid Raya subdistrict. At Aceh Arise!, a special fair in September on the theme of reconstruction, hundreds of children came to play and draw at the Plan booth.

### Children have a say

The young children of Saney village are drawing their ideal school. They would like to replace the one that is now just fragments of rubble on the beach.

The new building, according to their design, will be in all the colours of the rainbow, gloriously proportioned with enormous windows and decorated with spectacular intricate design work.

"Air-con too!" adds Nurazizah (age 11), who lives with her mother after her father died in the tsunami. "I also dream of a toilet, a water system so we can wash our hands, and a garden."

Plan's contractors will just have to do their best. The new school will meet at least a fair share of those requirements, and it can't come too soon for the surviving children of the village east of Banda Aceh.

Thirteen village children were orphaned and 15 young people lost one parent when the village was almost entirely submerged by the sea last December.



A shy smile from an Acehese girl.

Teacher Mariani Arani, 32, casts a benevolent eye over her boisterous small charges in the open-air traditional *balai* (roof-covered deck) that currently hosts many classes all together. "It's hard for the children to concentrate – it's noisy here," she says. Children also find homework a challenge in their cramped temporary shelters, she notes. "But I still give it to them – a little less than before – and tell them they must figure out how to manage their time."

"The crowding at home is tough on the youngsters," says village head man Zahrinur, 37, who lost his wife and three children last December and still manages to look forward. "I feel optimism for our future. I know things will be better for us."

Construction on Plan's new school in Saney was due to start in November. The organisation has secured permission to build 13 schools in the three subdistricts of Aceh Besar; the first is due to be completed in December.

Plan also built and runs five traditional wooden *balai* that house early childhood learning and development centres for children aged 3 to 5.

## Health matters

In devastated Lampuuk village, a few structures point towards better times to come – the magnificent mosque that survived as all around it fell, the model home for a new housing complex, the simple but charming open-air village centre and the new 24-hour health clinic.

Founded by local nurse, Mr. Iswannur, with support from Plan, the centre now caters to the medical needs of 350 villagers and offers a mobile service to 25 other communities. Respiratory infections are the most common complaint due to the weather; skin diseases and construction work injuries are also found.

Prenatal care for pregnant mothers and birth delivery assistance is a special focus of Plan's two health centres.

Putri, 33, a client of Lamteungoh Clinic who lost her 11-year-old daughter, Arlisa Putri, in the tsunami, gave birth a month ago in her temporary shelter to baby Angi.

Another client, Laswarni, is due to have a baby in a few weeks. She lost three children in the tsunami.

Together with partners, Plan also supports the provision of micronutrients to adults and children in temporary camps, to supplement the sometimes inadequate food rations that have resulted in rising malnutrition rates.

“Aceh still hasn't really reached the reconstruction phase. In many ways it's still in the emergency phase here,” says Richard Sandison, of Plan, in October, echoing comments by United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland, among others, calling for the urgent escalation of permanent housing and livelihood restoration programmes in the devastated area.



Mother Putri with her baby at Lamteungoh temporary shelter, Aceh Besar.

## Building back

Sofyan, 20, is a top student at a carpentry training workshop run under a Plan livelihoods programme in Lamgeuneu, outside Banda Aceh. With his small earnings, Sofyan helps support his parents, and with his new skills in door and cupboard making, he hopes to be in demand during Aceh's construction boom.

## Birth registration

Hanny Yulia, 11, got a boost in life when she was among the first to receive a birth registration document as part of a Plan project to register 5,000 children in Aceh, say parents Cut Nilawati and Hamdani Abdullah.

"I think it's important because when she has to go to elementary school and junior school, she'll need to show her identity," says the girl's mother. "And if she takes part in events or contests, or has to go to hospital, it will make things easier then too," adds her father at the family's home at Indra Patra temporary shelter.



Sofyan at work.



New parents Cut Nilawati and Hamdani Abdullah.

# Post-Tsunami Programme Update

## Health

Plan is addressing the immediate and long-term health needs in Aceh by training health providers, supporting reproductive health efforts and revitalising community health posts. We are also working in displaced persons camps, providing mosquito nets, micronutrients and supplementary feeding. So far, we have:

- Distributed 2 million micronutrient packages to more than 50,000 families. This has reduced the impact of diarrhoeal diseases in displaced persons camps;
- Distributed equipment to village health posts;
- Distributed midwife kits in three subdistricts;
- Started the reconstruction of 10 village delivery centres in 2 subdistricts;
- Developed new guidelines for the implementation of village health posts in Aceh. When approved, these guidelines should be a model for other NGOs in Indonesia;
- Provided transport resources to the Ministry of Health to support 38 health posts during the second round of National Immunisation Day;
- Attended basic health needs in 10 displaced persons camps;
- Coordinated training in basic health care, infection prevention and midwifery for more than 200 health staff.

## Psychosocial support

Plan is providing training to adults who interact with children so that children can have access to psychosocial support. So far, we have:

- Conducted training in trauma identification and supported trauma reduction activities in schools, community care centres and local NGOs;
- Provided special boxes for children to write their concerns in 5 schools in Aceh Besar district in order to provide psychosocial support for children in displaced persons camps.

## Education and early childhood care and development (ECCD)

Plan is helping to rebuild Aceh's education system by supporting school construction, education materials, training and orientation and school improvement programmes to 20 displaced persons camps. So far, we have:

- Conducted ECCD activities in 37 camps;
- Supported school feeding for 2,250 children in 37 camps;
- Distributed computers and printers to 9 schools;
- Provided 153 teachers with training on ECCD;
- Started reconstruction and/or repair of 7 schools;
- Constructed 10 traditional *balai* (roof-covered decks) to support ECCD and community activities;
- Started construction and/or repair of 7 kindergartens;
- Distributed uniforms, books and stationery to 31 camps.

## Habitat

Plan is providing potable water, setting up sanitation systems and promoting hygiene in several displaced persons camps. Construction of 500 houses is slated to begin in the near future. So far we have:

- Provided funding for gas and drivers for the operation of 5 water tankers that had been donated by other agencies but were not functional due to the lack of funds for logistics;
- Provided an additional 5 water tankers to local NGOs, serving 60 camps with 55,000 inhabitants;
- Installed 4 latrine units, 3 units of public toilets and bathing places, 2 wells and 15 hand pumps for 630 people;
- Connected latrines poorly installed by an NGO to pipes to make them functional;
- Cleaned and rehabilitated 31 existing wells for 600 people;
- Provided 1,000 jerry cans and semi-permanent housing to displaced persons camps;
- Provided training on water/water quality management to volunteers and leaders in camps;
- Installed water and sanitation systems in 9 villages, benefitting more than 10,000 people.

## Livelihood

Plan is helping fishing and farming communities reclaim their livelihoods. We are also providing vocational training and supporting business skills development. So far, we have:

- Distributed agricultural, fishing and sewing equipment to families;
- Provided training to carpenters through the Aceh Carpenter Association;
- Supported local micro-entrepreneurs;
- Supported economic recovery programmes.

## Child rights, protection and participation

Plan is promoting the rights, protection and participation of children. We have done this by helping children organise themselves and by raising general awareness on the rights of the child. So far, we have:

- Conducted a birth registration campaign. Some 5,000 children are expected to be registered by the end of December 2005;
- Established a child helpline with an effective referral system;
- Set up an exhibition at the annual Aceh Arise! event, focusing on child rights, which drew more than 400,000 people;
- Ensured that all schools, health centres and houses built by Plan are accessible to children and adults with disabilities.

### Plan's Partners in Indonesia

Helen Keller International, Islamic Relief, Indonesian Midwife Association, Ministry of Health, Church World Service, Ekowisata, Walsama, Indonesia Family Planning Association, Ministry of Education, Unsyiah University, Yayasan Hidayatullah, CARE, WHO, World Vision, Indonesian Red Cross, STARH, JHPIEGO, Yayasan Ekowisata Aceh, CARDI, UNFPA, OCHA, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Labour, Zainal Abidin Hospital, Marine Centre, Aceh Carpenters Association, Forum Bangun Aceh, Ratna Sarumpat Crisis Centre, Civil Registration Department, Indonesia Parenthood Association, Handicap International

Children at the  
Happy/Sad Letterbox  
at Teraputta primary  
school in Ambalantota.



# Sri Lanka

## Happy and Sad

# Voices from Sri Lanka

**Encouraging vulnerable children to have a voice is a crucial part of a recovery programme that also focuses on restoring houses, schools and livelihoods.**

## **Where we work:**

Plan works nationally and focuses its post-tsunami operations in 41 divisions in Hambantota district.

## **People we work with:**

Plan is working with about 29,000 families in Hambantota. A radio tuition programme for schoolchildren covers a wide area of the South, and Plan-funded books supporting psychosocial recovery have reached around 1 million children.

## **Plan's tsunami staff:**

The post-tsunami programme is managed by 18 local and 2 international full-time staff based in Hambantota district and the Country Office in Colombo, with constant support from technical advisors.

## **A simple idea with an extraordinary effect**

"I am being mistreated. I want to go and live in a children's home."

If responding to that plaintive cry for help from a 16-year-old girl was the sole result of the Happy/Sad Letterboxes placed in schools around Hambantota a few months ago, the boxes would have served their purpose.

But there have been many such troubling letters.

It is a bittersweet experience for the teachers cum counsellors who empty the boxes about once a week and the Plan staff who oversee the project. It is hard to read stories from distressed children – but intensely satisfying to know that a way has been found to help articulate and address the deepest concerns of some of the most vulnerable in the tsunami-devastated area.

Teacher Vindya Kumari, 30, has worked overtime since June to check the box regularly at Teraputta primary school in Ambalantota. The majority of the letters, requests for items such as musical instruments or books, are no cause for concern. But quite a few have called for complex and delicate responses.

For instance, Vindya helped improve one orphan girl's troubled relationship with her caretakers – her grandmother and an aunt. An upset small boy was persuaded that he didn't actually want to kill the school principal after all.

But the letter that has changed Vindya's daily life was the one that simply read "I want my parents back". Chanturi, 10, was orphaned by the tsunami. She is unhappy living with her grandparents but adamant that they not be contacted. Now she seeks out friendship from her teacher, Vindya, whom she clearly adores. "She just so wants love and affection," says the teacher.



Bitter-sweet: Teacher Vindya Kumari looks at children's messages from the Happy/Sad Letterbox.

The letters turning up in various schools indicate that the effects of the tsunami are far from over, says Kumudu Wethasinghe, of Plan's psychosocial programme. A 16-year-old girl wrote that because she has never seen her father's body, she is still waiting for him to come back to her. A girl of 14 wrote that she was still upset at the death of her infant sister.

Another case involved a boy who was upsetting classmates with aggressive behaviour. The 13-year-old told teachers that he gets intolerable headaches that make him want to hit others when he remembers his stricken older brother pleading for help before drowning in the tsunami.

"Many cases are very delicate. The counsellors/teachers need to be very intelligent and tactful. It's a difficult job. We support them when needed, and we are providing ongoing training in counselling. We're also working to make sure they have all the backup they need from principals, the National Education Institute officials and other child agencies," says Kumudu.

It was vital that a project of this nature take place within the existing school system, says Kumudu, who adds that buy-in from counsellors/teachers and support for them was also crucial to success.

Unlike "one-off" programmes, the Happy/Sad box is designed to provide long-term support to seriously troubled children who would normally avoid sharing their worries with strangers, says a Plan staffer. She also explains that the programme complemented other Plan initiatives, such as building and restoring homes and schools and restoring livelihoods. Early research has indicated that people's psychological recovery is highly dependent on their having houses, schools and jobs – the building blocks of normal life – back again.

Teacher Vindya loves the Happy/Sad box but acknowledges that the responsibility and challenge of the work can be a strain. There needs to be a balance of the happy with the sad, she adds.

"I want us to hold a 'Positive Day' soon! We'll celebrate, have balloons, games, theatre, make it a really exceptional occasion," she says.

## Children are brave

“What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” goes a well-known aphorism.

Perhaps. But what do children in Hambantota think?

Nishak Jayaweera, 16, is a cameraman on a Plan-supported video documentary that 11 children are making about their experiences of the tsunami and its aftermath. Nishak lost his mother in the disaster.

“The tsunami was so shocking. But we want to focus on how children are facing their lives with courage,” says Danushka, the film’s scriptwriter. “We’re looking at where children have been brave.”

Brave in what ways?

“Children face such challenges. They lost their schools, their belongings, facilities, teachers ... but they have realised that this is how life is,” says Nishak.

The children give some more personal examples.

“In my family, we lost my mother. Now it’s just my father, my sister and me. We have had to learn how to do everything, like the shopping, going to the bank, the gardening. We have to learn to be more systematic and organised,” says Nishak.

Sanafna, 15, explains, “I used to go everywhere with my father. I was always waiting for him or going places with him.”

Sanafna’s father was swept away while shopping in Hambantota’s market. “Now that he is gone, I have to go alone. I must get used to it.”

The children also have been looking out for others, they point out. “A good friend of mine lost her two sisters. She was in great shock. She refused to talk in class. We began to help her by never leaving her alone, staying close to her all the time. Gradually, she recovered, and now she is nearly normal,” says Danushka.



Sanafna: “Now that my father has gone, I must learn to be alone.”

“My friend Sampa’s mother was in the Middle East when his father died in the tsunami. He was crying a lot in class. We helped him. We helped clean his house and stayed with him. Then his mother came back and now he is normal,” says Isurusiri, 14, who plays the main character in the video.

Relationships are stronger after the tsunami, the children note. “Before the wave, my mother didn’t spend much time with me. Now we are together more,” says Sanafna. “My father, sister and I always discuss everything together. My father really listens to me,” adds Nishak.

Are there any lessons from the tsunami?

“People realised that the old barriers between them don’t matter, that they should get closer. It made people better. But there is still room for improvement,” Nishak says.

## Counting the days (and nights) to a new home

Of all the losses suffered by tsunami survivors, one is often overlooked – sleep.

Instead of restoration and replenishment, night time for many brings discomfort, insomnia and bad dreams.

And absurdity. As if sleeping four to a bed at times is not enough, Renuka, 39, and her family of six have recently found themselves playing nightly games of chase with the leaks in their roof.

“We have to keep moving around the bed to avoid them,” says the mother of four, in the family’s two-room wooden temporary shelter near Tangalle.

Fortunately, Renuka’s sense of humour is in better shape than her ceiling. That is perhaps partly because the end of her family’s shoebox shelter sentence is in sight.

The family is one of 150 receiving funding from Plan to self-build new homes on their own land. Their new hillside home adds extra features to the standard design to suit the location. The house should be finished in December.

The family received the funding in five separate instalments. “It’s a good system. We’re only human. Otherwise, we might have been tempted to use the money for other necessities,” smiles Renuka.

“The self-build scheme has proven to be the most popular housing programme. People are happiest with this one – they have more ownership,” says Milton Batagoda of Plan’s Hambantota office.



Renuka (second from left) and her family in their tiny temporary shelter.



Young men line up to apply for a carpentry training course in Ambalantota.

## Looking for a livelihood

Tharika, 16, is unsure of his chances after interviewing for a carpentry training course at Ambalantota on an early October morning.

“I may be too young,” says the boy, who left school last year and who would like to follow his father into the carpentry trade.

With all the post-tsunami reconstruction in the area, carpenters and masons are in high demand.

In this Plan-funded course, which combines three weeks in the workshop and five months of on-the-job training, priority is being given to 18- to 30-year-old family breadwinners.

Eighty men applied for the 20 places available. Tharika can only cross his itching-to-work fingers.

For some interviewees who toured the woodwork workshop area, there was a surprise. Among the trainees in a different course were three bright young women wearing the standard dark blue dungaree uniform.

“We’re a first!” says Pradeepa, 18, who plans to set up a small business when she graduates.

The Youth Enterprise Information Centre began accepting aspiring female carpenters recently for the first time. Despite doubts on the part of a minority of parents and employers, it is likely to work out well, says Centre president G.L. Kanayaka. “People are still getting used to the idea. The girls aren’t going to be hired straight off to work on a roof. We’re starting them out on the smaller pieces. As people see what they can do, they’ll give them a chance.”

“I think the girls will go okay. If they’ve got the talent, they’ll get the jobs,” says a young male trainee.

# Post-Tsunami Programme Update

## Health

In Hambantota, Plan worked to address the immediate health needs of the population following the tsunami. So far we:

- Provided medical supplies and water tankers during the emergency relief phase;
- Provided medicines and supplies to the Ministry of Health;
- Provided essential equipment to hospitals and health centres, including ECG machines, x-ray machines, scales and other vital equipment;
- Trained health personnel in communications skills;
- Developed a joint plan of action with the Ministry of Health to improve child care and nutrition. Particular emphasis was put on identifying and addressing the causes of child malnutrition.

## Psychosocial support

Plan is establishing a school-based psychosocial support system in 10,000 schools across the country in collaboration with the German aid agency GTZ, the National Institute of Education and the Ministry of Education. So far, we have:

- Distributed 50,000 copies each of a Child Mental Health Book, a manual on stress reduction, and a “Joyful Living” book. These books are used by teachers who also receive training;
- Produced an educational video called “After the Big Wave”;
- Produced and distributed 1 million copies of “Searching for Punchi”, a children’s story book about the tsunami;
- Installed “Happy/Sad Letterboxes” in 64 schools in Hambantota. We are also providing training to counsellors and teachers;
- Supported a nationwide tour of the play “Children of the Sea”, performed by children and young people affected by the tsunami;
- Jointly sponsored a national drawing competition targeting tsunami-affected children.

## Education and early childhood care and development (ECCD)

Plan is helping children get back into a normal school environment as soon as possible. We are constructing, repairing and equipping schools as well as setting up an ECCD centre in one settlement. So far, we have:

- Started construction of a primary and a secondary school complex;
- Completed the design of 9 additional schools after extensive consultation with children and communities;
- Launched a radio programme in the southern region, providing free classes for students affected by the tsunami;
- Provided education materials to 75,000 children in a coastal district of the South;
- Provided 8,000 children with school uniforms and shoes;
- Trained caregivers in settlements on how to properly care for children under 5.

## Habitat

Plan is building one new child-friendly settlement, including community facilities such as an ECCD centre, a community centre and playground. In addition, we are helping families rebuild their houses. Plan is also playing a critical role in introducing a disaster preparedness system in Hambantota at the district, division and school levels. So far, we have:

- Provided 100 tanks for temporary shelters and house construction sites;
- Begun construction of the Yayawatta housing settlement after a long consultation with affected children and adults. This settlement will consist of 200 child-friendly houses;
- Worked with 150 families to rebuild their homes. To date, 112 families have started construction with assistance from Plan.

## Livelihood

Plan is supporting young people, women and families affected by the tsunami to restore their livelihoods through the provision of tools, skills training, job placement and microfinance. So far, we have:

- Provided 1,000 tool kits to carpenters and masons;
- Provided 1,000 young people with training and tools for masonry, carpentry, electrical wiring and plumbing;
- Provided US\$250,000 in loans and grants to Plan's microfinance partners to allow the deferment of old loans and the extension of new loans to women affected by the tsunami;
- Supported training courses in carpentry and masonry for youth.

## Child rights, protection and participation

Plan is supporting young people who are producing a video called "One Year After the Tsunami." Most activities are conducted together with Plan's regular programme in non-tsunami affected areas. So far, we have provided 50 young people across the district with basic film training. Out of this group, 12 youth are going on to make a video about the tsunami from a children's perspective.

### Plan's Partners in Sri Lanka

Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Urban Development and Water Supply, National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Academy, National Institute of Education, Radio SLBC Matara, National Child Protection Authority, Southern Provincial Authority, District Secretariat of Hambantota, Divisional Secretariats of Tangalle, Hambantota, Ambalantota and Tissamaharama, Register General Department, Registration of Persons Department, Helping Hambantota Office of the Prime Minister, Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation, Task Force for Relief, Tsunami Education Reconstruction Monitor, Tsunami Housing Reconstruction Unit, Fund for Relief and Development, Intermediate Technology Development Group, Cap Teen, Local Fishing Cooperatives, SEEDS, Hambantota Women's Development Federation, UNICEF, Young Asia Television, Theatrum Botanicum

Children talk to Childline  
staff at a school in  
Phang-Nga province.



# Thailand

## Listening to Children

# Voices from Thailand

**Hidden fears and troubles reach sympathetic ears in long-term programmes designed to reach the most vulnerable.**

## **Where we work:**

Plan works in 16 villages in Phuket and Phang-Nga provinces and operates a Childline caravan in Krabi province.

## **People we work with:**

Plan is working with approximately 2,020 families on its community-based tsunami disaster response project. This project area covers 11 affected schools, involving approximately 5,014 schoolchildren.

## **Plan's tsunami staffing:**

Plan's post-tsunami programme is managed by 4 full-time local staff based in Phuket and Phang-Nga, supported by the country office in Khon Kaen.

## **A mobile van brings fun – and psychological support – to children**

On the winding tree-lined roads of coastal Phang-Nga province, a curious new spectacle is hard to ignore. Like some exotic species of the forest, the zany decorated Childline van snakes through the deep green landscape, raising eyebrows – and grins – as it goes.

Since starting its new mobile caravan service in August, Childline Thailand has made scores of visits to some 20 schools in tsunami-affected areas of Phang-Nga, Phuket and Krabi. Staff clad in bright red play gear have provided fun for hundreds of children – and opened a lifeline for others who are suffering.

At the Tha Din Daeng school on a rainy day in October, Ratri Yungyong, 8, is more interested in getting back to her modelling clay than discussing where she is from or what she wants to be when she grows up. “A doctor, so I can take care of people,” she manages to reply before escaping back to the goodies box.

“It’s a very useful service for us – it gives the children confidence in speaking, playing, singing. And they like getting the chance to express themselves,” says Rakkiat Kawpongpaiboon, a teacher at the 1950s-built school, which served for two weeks as a temporary shelter for tsunami victims last January. Schools are Plan’s primary partners in its post-tsunami operations in Thailand.

The teachers also are enthusiastic about the Childline service’s underlying serious side – to open a door to needy, traumatised or vulnerable children in an area where many lost their lives and thousands suffered bereavement and other losses. “Hard aid” to restore houses, buildings and villages has helped many children regain a sense of normalcy, but many also need more subtle forms of help.



Children at play with Childline staff.

Recognition of children's special psychological burdens is what prompted Plan and Childline to extend the regular Childline phone service to include a mobile van service component. The three new vans visiting schools in the tsunami area provide on-the-spot fun activities and psychosocial care to groups of children. Along the way, the tsunami-affected youngsters also learn that extra one-on-one help is available through the staff counsellors and the phone service.

"It's the first time we've operated a school van service – it's something of a pioneering operation," says Ilya Smirnov, of the Childline Thailand head office in Bangkok.

Teacher Rakkiat says a number of needy pupils in his school had called the conventional Childline number, mainly to seek scholarships to avoid having to drop out of school. Hundreds of young people from the tsunami area have called the number, according to Childline staff.

While most children called to simply have a chat, others were worried about family finances and other problems at home. A few such children have since taken up the option of attending local boarding schools.

Childline staff have noted a wide range of experiences among the youngsters they meet through the van and the phone service. "There are the normal post-traumatic stress syndrome issues – children who are either hyperactive or under-active, sleeping too much or too little. Some remain uncommunicative. Some are still afraid of the sea," reports a staff member.

Almost a year after the tragedy, one little girl refuses to allow her mother to wash the pillow or blankets belonging to her dead father. "She is still quite defensive and aggressive in her behaviour. But there is hope that she will recover relatively soon because she speaks her mind quite openly," Mr. Smirnov explains. One child is being assisted after reporting serious sexual abuse.

"Since the mobile van service is new, it is constantly evolving to suit the various needs and conditions of schools and pupils," says Mr. Smirnov. "We're learning as we go."

## Helping schools

The loss of belongings, boats and livelihoods in the tsunami was a blow to the already impoverished Moken or “Sea Gypsies” of Ban Tha Chatchai in Phuket province. Once seafaring nomads, the Moken now live more or less settled lives in the ramshackle fishing village.

Though it is difficult for Moken elders to settle into mainstream Thai life, the toddlers and young children of Ban Tha Chatchai are doing well in the village’s government-run child care centre. The centre started off in 1995 with around 20 children; today, it has 75 and not enough space. Plan expects to help provide a new extension to improve conditions for the children as part of its programme to bolster local schools.

It is also providing extra child-centred development training to the staff. Wangpen Thongpen, who says she owes her life to

a foreigner at the nearby tsunami-hit hotel where she used to work, looks forward to the specialist training. Haithaiwan Boonsri hopes to learn up-to-date child-care techniques. “It’s good to share experiences with other teachers and learn new ways of doing things,” she says.

As well as providing early childhood care and development (ECCD) training for childcare workers from around 11 centres in the two affected provinces, Plan is running computer classes for teachers of regular schools. Plan is also providing training for school board members to foster stronger community involvement in school management. Around 111 teachers from 27 schools received training in child rights and protection, monitoring children and preventing stressed children from committing suicide or taking other desperate actions.



Young Moken girls take a rest.

## One girl's brave fight

Nong May, 13, is a few feet and a world away.

May talks quietly and slowly, recalling her old self, the cheeky joker and prize-winning dancer, the girl whose occasional epileptic-like fits didn't stop her from writing great essays and having lots of friends. But that was before the tsunami.

Being forced to swallow volumes of water while trapped under the roof of her home was just the beginning of a terrifying journey from which May is still trying to return.

Doctors who performed two operations on May's brain since her close brush with death in December have urged her to be patient on the road to recovery. But it is hard when you are still full of paralysing fear and when nothing about yourself feels right.

The old fits are gone, but everything else is utterly strange. May's mind won't cooperate. "I like to read comic books, but I forget the stories immediately afterwards. Sometimes I repeat myself because I forget what I am saying. I am tired all the time. It's hard to walk, because I feel like I'm falling," she says.

Locked away inside, her old personality sometimes breaks out. "Don't be like me, or I'll feel sorry for you," she smiles.

The "new" May's life is consumed by two passions – terror of the sea and a huge love for her mother, father and older brother.

She talks incessantly of the tsunami, says her devoted mother, Sawanee, 41, a former market vendor who takes care of the girl in their tiny temporary shelter near Ban Nam Khem. The family's old home by the shoreline is rebuilt, but May's horror of the water means that they cannot return home yet.

"I can't sleep well, dreaming about the tsunami. It makes me cry and when I wake up, my muscles are all stressed," says May, before attempting another joke. "I think the tsunami maybe misses me, because it keeps coming back to me in my dreams."

May's obvious adoration of her parents is tinged with worry that they are tired and stressed. "I try to help them. I wash dishes and clean."

There were times when she said she no longer wanted to live, but now she talks of carrying on to support her mother and father. "I want to go back to school next year so I can graduate and earn money for them."



Nong May with her father, "DJ Case."

A while back, she stopped listening at night when her beloved father, "DJ Case" was on the radio, playing country songs on a local radio station. "She used to love hearing him, but then she began to refuse to let me turn the radio on," her mother explains. "She was upset that he left her."

Sawanee worries constantly about May and the family's future, but takes comfort in the bond that has grown between them all. The old Ban Nam Khem community has fallen apart, she says, but her family has grown stronger. "My son thanked me for saving his life. He said he hopes I will be his mother in the next life too," she says, her voice breaking.

May's brother, Thirasan, 18, is about to perform with his Thai country music band for the first time at a local wedding. He wrote one song called "Puen" (friend) for his friend Amonrat, who died in the disaster.

"My children are good children. That's one good thing about the tsunami – it brought us all together," says Sawanee.

# Post-Tsunami Programme Update

## Education and early childhood care and development (ECCD)

Plan is working with schools and communities to strengthen school boards, establish education funds, develop local curriculum, support ECCD programmes and rehabilitate damaged learning centres. So far, we have:

- Started construction and/or repair of 4 preschools in Phang-Nga;
- Conducted ECCD training for 35 teachers;
- Conducted training of trainers on school board development for 79 teachers and board members;
- Conducted a teacher training workshop on strategies to improve child psychosocial support for educators from 27 schools;
- Conducted a workshop on participatory action research and local curriculum development for teachers and staff from Phuket and Phang-Nga;
- Conducted two training courses in computer technology for teachers;
- Hosted a three-day camp on natural resource conservation and disaster response for 40 youth from Phuket.

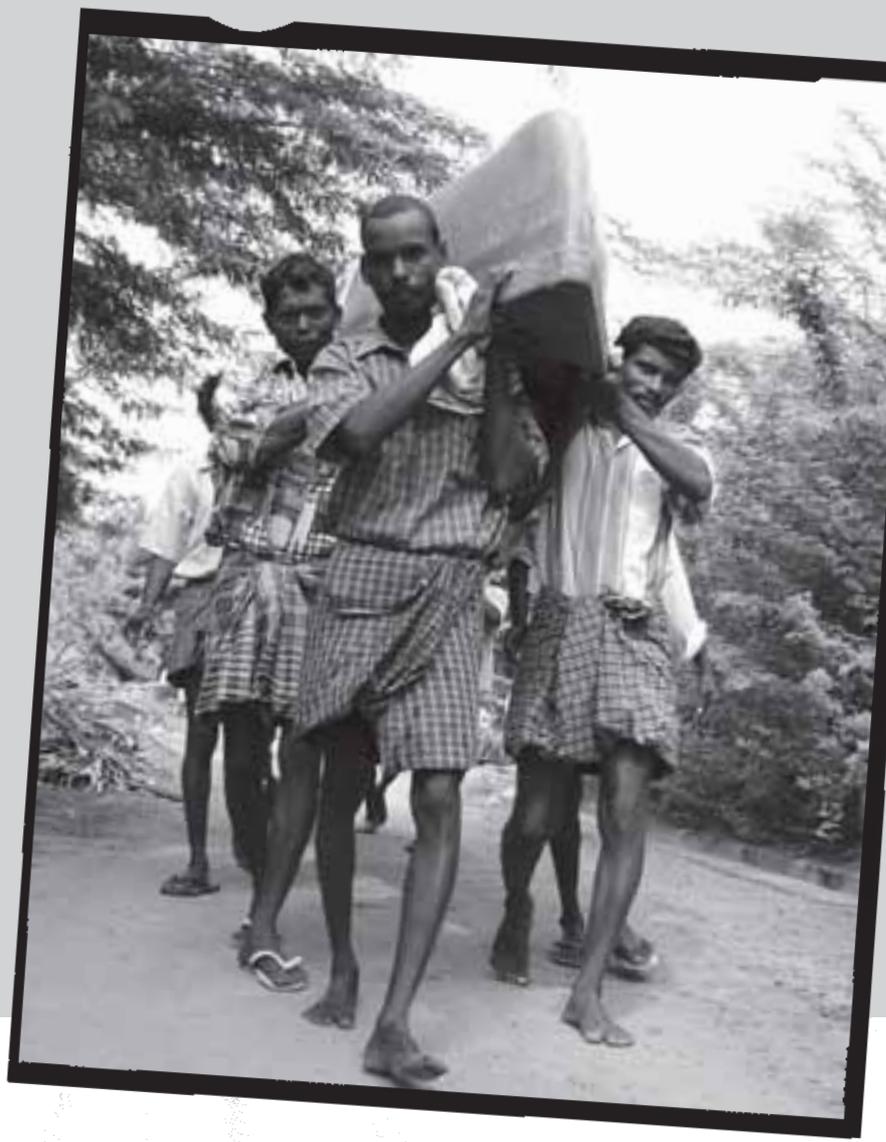
## Child protection, rights and participation

Plan is providing access to long-term psychosocial support for children, teachers and families. At the same time, we are promoting children's involvement in the recovery and development of their own communities. So far, we have:

- Launched a mobile psychosocial support unit called Saidek Caravan that reaches more than 1,300 children in 14 schools;
- Launched a Youth Centre at Ban Nam Khem that provides vocational training for youth affected by the tsunami;
- Trained 50 children in media skills;
- Planned vocational training courses for women and youth in both Phuket and Phang-Nga during the months of November and December.

## Plan's Partners in Thailand

Ministry of Education; Provincial Education Service Area Offices, Puenkaew Association (Childline Thailand), Empower Foundation, Khon Kaen University, Prince of Songkla Narakin University, Phuket Rajabhat University, Thai Fund Foundation



Men from Agaram village  
carry a new boat to  
the nearby river.

# India

## Heroes and Helpers

# Voices from India

**The tsunami made victims of thousands of children – but amidst the tragedy, there has also been inspiration, not least in the form of child bravery and courage.**

## Where we work:

Plan's operations in India are centred in these areas:

Tamil Nadu: 107 villages in 6 districts; Nagapattinam; Cuddalore; Villupuram; Kanchipuram; Tharangambadi and Chennai.

Pondicherry: 15 villages in Karaikal district.

Andhra Pradesh, 150 villages in 6 districts: Nellore; Prakasam; East Godavari; West Godavari; Guntur; Krishna.

## People we work with:

We are working with more than 80,000 people.

## Plan's tsunami staffing:

The post-tsunami programme is managed by 8 full-time staff based in New Delhi (India Country Office) and Chennai, where an ad hoc office has been set up. All of them are local Indians. The regular staff from the country office provide them with constant technical support and other back-up support. Plan implements all programmes in India through local partners.

## Children's hidden contributions

Children made up about a third of all those who died in the tsunami and a huge portion of those robbed of family, friends and homes. They are seen as the disaster's most poignant victims – a perception that may not do them full justice.

Many children were brave. Some were heroic.

Chandrun, 7, of Kallar village, clung to a coconut tree for hours, saving his own life.

Navin Kumar, 9, of Puddupettai, rode on his mother's shoulders through deep water until they located his siblings on a roof. He discovered his older brother was a hero – he had saved their young sister after she began "eating water" inside their home.

Manusanny, 14, a "happy-go-lucky" boy, ran back into the wave to try to save a beloved aunt. She survived, but Manusanny died. A shrine in his honour sits in the centre of his home in Ingara Nagar village. The family can scarcely withstand their grief.

The courage of children during the terrifying calamity may loom large in the minds of family and friends, but it is still only barely documented.

Young people's resilience and contributions in the tsunami's aftermath is slightly better known as child-centred organisations like Plan, together with its local partners, help them to find a voice.

Many tsunami-affected children were encouraged to express their feelings through art, song and stories in almost 80 specially established child centres. In some 60 centres, children were invited to set up child clubs to help them form new friendships and enjoy life again.

When rumours of an impending new tsunami struck a village late one evening in March, children from the Kallar Nethilis (Kallar Shrimps) club put on a cultural show through the night to divert villagers and calm their fears. The youngsters were reported to have been "elated" after the experience. "This



A group of children are producing a short film, *Tsunami: Before and After*, to voice their opinions about the tsunami.

shows in a particularly vivid way how children can really contribute to community recovery,” explains a Plan staffer.

A handful of children from Nagapattinam district made a film of their experiences titled *Tsunami: Before and After*, with leading director Govind Nihalani. Around 30 children are being trained in photography skills to equip them to do a “social audit” of the post-tsunami recovery effort.

Nine months after the disaster, the feelings of terror stirred up by the tsunami are beginning to recede among some (although certainly not all) children and local caregivers.

“They are not so frightened now,” says child carer S. Rathika of her young charges at an airy, thatch-roofed Plan early child care centre in Shanmuganagar village, Cuddalore district, where three children died last December.

Children aged 3 to 5 receive nutritious food and regularly partake in such activities as singing, drawing and hygiene lessons at the centre, one of 25 school centres run in conjunction with local NGO partner Bless.

The daily care and routines have helped stabilise the lives of the youngsters from the impoverished Irula tribe of inland fishermen who work the backwaters of the Cuddalore coastline. The child care centres also free up adults desperate to re-establish family financial survival.

One smartly dressed “playful and naughty” 3-year-old girl with a gloriously elaborate hairstyle appears to be thriving in the crowded but warm atmosphere of a makeshift child centre in Samiarpettai fishing village.

That’s a relief to her single mother, Alli, 38, who with the free time, thanks to daycare, and a self-help group loan, has been able to set up the bare bones of a shop.

The tiny thatch lean-to on South Street that doubles as her home is a busy spot on a particular Sunday in September. Neighbours call in a constant procession to conduct tiny transactions. Handfuls of marbles and sweets, some cooking oil and a few forlorn vegetables exchange hands for a few rupees. It’s the barest of livings. Alli is philosophical. “At least I have plenty of friends here – everyone is in the same boat.”

For older children in Cuddalore district, Bless and Plan have organised evening classes. The extra tuition may mean some young people in the area, which is prone to high drop-out rates, will have a better chance of staying in school. Other Plan programmes, including a back-to-school campaign in Chennai, also target potential drop-outs.



Children helping the family – a boy chops a tree for firewood at Agaram village.

In nearby Agaram village, Irula inland fishermen are just beginning to re-establish their old lives with the help of donated boats.

Village children have been far from unaffected by their families' worsened economic circumstances. Here, like almost everywhere else, their daily contributions to family and community often go unnoticed. The children do much work that adults have habitually done and are often taken for granted.

A group of around eight young people is happy to elaborate on their typical duties: "collecting firewood, collecting water, washing dishes, washing clothes, sweeping the floor, going shopping."

Like anywhere, the nature of these contributions to family life is subject to considerable variation. Sometimes it is nice to help, on other occasions definitely not. Says Sirthar, 11, "I don't like washing vessels (dishes and pots) – it's very hard." Another boy says walking many kilometres away to chop firewood and then carrying it back home is "very difficult". One child of a construction worker noted that he helps his mother at her job site for a few hours on Sundays. "My pay is 20 rupees. But she gives me back only 5 or 10!"

Children's often keen sense of justice and injustice is not slow to emerge when they are asked their opinions of the general tsunami aftermath and response. There were the good stories – so many people helped and comforted each other. Outsiders came with aid and a listening ear. And then there were the bad – some children were unable to continue in school due to their family's poverty, many children reported in a general conversation on their tsunami experiences with researchers hired by Plan.

Rich people sometimes got more aid than the poor, some pointed out. Dalits, the lowest caste, were often ignored, children said. In the village of Kovalam, pupils were being "crushed" in overcrowded school buses, others reported.

Children's opportunities for real participation in the tsunami relief and reconstruction effort could have been stronger in India, the Plan researchers noted. Plan and its partners focused mainly on helping children get involved through activities in child centres. Children's views gathered during a July research project were being studied with a view to increasing child opportunities for participation in the ongoing reconstruction efforts.

Anyone needing a reminder of why children should be listened to as a matter of course might note a recent narrow escape in Shanmuganagar village:

Youngsters shown draft plans for the reconstruction of their hamlet noted the inclusion of a spacious new play area. Swings, slides and see-saws sat among trees in front of the village temple. A charming picture – unless you are a child.

"Don't put it there! The old people will be angry if we make noise near the temple. They'll chase us away. No!" came the verdict of small residents facing years of nagging.

So the adults shuffled back to the drawing board. Swings and slides were removed to a safe area, far from pious elders. Good sense was restored – children can play, adults can pray.

"It was interesting. You start to get the point of child participation!" says one local aid worker more used to community development from the adult viewpoint. "You have to be humble for this child-centred work – and have a sense of humour," he adds.

## Grief and grit

Nearly a year later, many tsunami survivors express resignation and acceptance in the face of fate.

It is easy to be deceived by the kindness; it is often a mask. Thousands still without homes and jobs live in abject economic desperation. Others quietly fight off psychological darkness.

In a brightly decorated, carefully ordered home on the edge of Ingara Patra village, family life revolves around two children, one living and one dead.

A small shrine in the centre of the home honours Manusanny, 14, a “beautiful boy” who lost his life running back into the wave to try to save an aunt.

The family’s hopes and worries now centre on Malathai, 12, the only remaining child.

At the Plan child centre, the slender Malathai is one of a blur of playing, laughing children. When she talks, her words are quiet and delicate. “I want to be a teacher – in fact, I am already teaching some younger children in my home,” she says.

But it has not been easy to keep Malathai in good shape. “Before, if you even mentioned water, she was frightened. Now she keeps her feelings to herself. I know she still misses her brother, but she never expresses it. The activities at the child centre have diverted her. I think if she had not had this, she would have gone mad. She is a very emotional and sensitive girl,” says Malathai’s aunt.

A. Aarvallai, a jobless widow in her mid-40s, is shouldering the role of head of the fragile household. Malathai’s mother “doesn’t speak to people; indeed, she hasn’t for years, she is not well,” though she brings in the family’s sole current income doing odd jobs. The girl’s father is being treated for a heart condition in Chennai.

She survives with a little outside help. “The doctor gave me anti-depressants seven months ago when my emotions were overwhelming me. They’re the only reason I can talk to you now.”



Malathai, 12, and her family beside their little shrine to Manusanny, 14, who died trying to save a relative’s life.

## Boy brains

Agaram village is 5 km from the sea; close enough for the tsunami to destroy its simple traditional wooden fishing boats.

On a cloudy day in September, village men hauled scores of donated new paddle boats to the edge of the slow river that has sustained families here for generations. Children dodged around the men's feet, inserting themselves into the sweaty, jovial spectacle.

Except for one. J. Rajkamal, 13, sat alone near his home, gazing upon his inelegant but ingenious little invention. Out of Styrofoam, sticks and a tiny motor from an old tape recorder, the boy was making something new for Agaram – a tiny, model motorboat.



J. Rajkamal, 13, from Agaram village, carries his model of a motor boat.



Navin's lined and thin, yet smiling, face.

## Food for thought

Navin is back at school and one of the lucky few to have moved into a new house, built by an Indian religious organisation. He attends classes a few yards up his street. His family are all safe.

But it is not over yet.

"When I'm hungry I eat. When I'm not hungry, I don't," says the thin boy.

"It started after the tsunami – back then, he wouldn't touch anything except tea and coffee. He still won't take enough food. It's a worry," says his mother Roja, 35.

Navin refuses to go near the sea and constantly nags his mother not to venture close either. "He tells me I'll drown," says Roja. She encourages Navin to join in activities at the child care centre with the hope that his fears will diminish.

# Post-Tsunami Programme Update

## Health

Plan is supporting more than 250 communities with their health care needs, focusing on children and the vulnerable. So far, we have:

- Provided around 6,000 people with health care. Particular emphasis has been placed on immunisation and antenatal/postnatal care;
- Provided more than 2,500 children with hygiene kits that include soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, etc;
- Provided health and nutrition training for field staff, mothers and other community members.

## Livelihood

Plan is supporting fishing and farming communities, self-help groups and vulnerable groups, such as the Dalits, reclaim their livelihoods and address their longer-term economic needs. So far, we have:

- Provided families with 180 boats, 80 boat engines and 140 fish storage units;
- Completed the reclamation of 357 acres of land;
- Rehabilitated 60 ponds by removing saline water and applying organic manure for cultivation;
- Supported the formation of self-help groups to assist vulnerable women in acquiring skills and loans for income generation. Training and other support has enabled about 100 small entrepreneurs set up micro-enterprises;
- Provided 50 adolescents with training in computer technology, electrical wiring, refrigeration, tailoring and nursing.

## Psychosocial support

Plan is providing immediate and long-term psychosocial support to people in about 60 villages. So far, we have:

- Trained counsellors, who have helped 2,100 children and adults deal with psychosocial issues;
- Provided counselling to more than 33,000 children who have called the Child Helpline;
- Trained 120 community-based “barefoot” counsellors, who will work with tsunami-affected children over the long run.

## Education and early childhood care and development (ECCD)

Plan is addressing the educational needs of children affected by the tsunami, especially those who are vulnerable and at the risk of dropping out of school. ECCD activities are providing nutritional, educational, recreational and hygiene support to children younger than 5. So far, we have:

- Set up 24 child care centres to support 2,400 children younger than 5;
- Provided 2,100 children between the ages of 5 and 15 with evening classes;
- Provided children with school bags, educational and recreational materials;
- Provided 550 children with educational scholarships;
- Launched a back-to-school drive, targeting school drop-outs and provided them with non-formal education;
- Supported 200 destitute and vulnerable children with food and cash;
- Started the renovation of 4 schools and construction of 2 schools;
- Equipped 44 child care centres with potable water and child-friendly toilets;
- Provided toilets to elementary, middle and high schools.

## Habitat

Initially, Plan built temporary shelters, but we are now starting the construction of permanent houses for those affected by the tsunami. We are also addressing the issues of potable water, sanitation, community development planning and disaster preparedness. So far, we have:

- Provided immediate relief items, such as food, clothing and medicine, in about 140 villages in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in the emergency phase, covering 3,700 families;
- Built 865 temporary shelters and improved more than 1,000 temporary shelters;
- Conducted community consultations regarding the construction of about 800 permanent houses in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry;
- Upgraded 41 tanks, 20 bore wells and 2 drinking water systems in affected communities;
- Conducted community awareness campaigns on hygiene, sanitation and disaster preparedness;
- Upgraded water facilities in affected communities;
- Provided affected communities with 12 sanitary units, 22 toilets, 4 bathrooms, 4 washing stones and 1 septic tank;
- Conducted hygiene training in affected communities;
- Supported youth in the formation of taskforces for disaster preparedness.

## Child rights, protection, participation

Plan is raising awareness on the rights of the child, particularly, the right of children to participate in important decisions that affect them. So far, we have:

- Formed 60 children's clubs with 1,500 children, organised several children's fairs and initiated child summer camps;
- Supported the production of a video about the tsunami and its aftermath from a children's point of view;
- Organised summer camps for 80 children;
- Included children in community-rebuilding decisions;
- Conducted regular training for community and field staff on child rights, participation, nutrition, etc;
- Provided care to 35 vulnerable children, such as orphans and differently abled children, at specially designed care centres;
- Supported 30 child photographers in their efforts to do a "social audit" of the recovery process.

### Plan's Partners in India

**Tamil Nadu:** TRaART (REAL, CREATE, CARE), BLESS, REAL, Don Bosco, RIM, RDS, CHILDLINE, GOS, AICOP, CCRD, TLAC

**Pondicherry:** ResTACK (CEDA, VRDP, POPE)

**Andhra Pradesh:** TDC, AGS

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