



Myanmar: ADRA is at work

Teddy Dinh, Country Director of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Myanmar, was busy constructing a jetty for a tsunami rehabilitation project near the village of Piensalu when the recent cyclone pounded the Southeast Asian nation.

He and a few colleagues narrowly escaped with their lives by taking shelter in a flooded rice storage facility from 5 pm until around midnight, when the storm finally began to subside. He was fortunate. The Baptist church where he had hoped to sleep was completely flattened by the cyclone. Worse, the bodies of 25 people, mostly women and children, were found inside.



Now, he and his staff are working tirelessly to help the rest of the survivors in the surrounding villages.

"The staff really feels the need to help the people there, and every day they travel back to Piensalu, helping to clean, distribute food, and transport people back to Labutta, and Myaungmya," he said.

For many people in the devastated delta area of Burma (Myanmar), ADRA staff are familiar faces. They have been working in these communities for the last three years, helping them rebuild their lives after the devastation of the Southeast Asia tsunami. Several hundred people survived this latest disaster by hiding under the

32 bridges constructed by ADRA since the tsunami. The largest, 35 feet long, provided secure shelter for one hundred people. ADRA has been active in Burma since 1993 and in recent years has managed 24 projects ranging from flood relief projects to constructing improved water and sanitation facilities. With 180 local and international staff and immense goodwill among the local population, ADRA is well-placed to be of immediate assistance following Cyclone Nargis.

ADRA-UK signed a contract with DFID (the Department for International Development) on Monday, 2 June that is enabling ADRA to



provide shelter for 30,000 displaced persons. The 'Labutta Cyclone Relief Phase I' Valued at £307,000 from DFID with an additional £50,000 from ADRA-UK, the £357,000 programme will run from 4 June for 2 months. ADRA-UK director, Bert Smit is very positive about the project. "This will make a significant difference in helping people to rebuild their lives in Burma."

Mark Castellino, Programmes Director for ADRA-UK has been heavily involved in helping ADRA Myanmar design the disaster response. Having visited immediately following the disaster for a period of 3 weeks, Mark returned in June to oversee the implementation of, in particular, the DFID funded project.

"This cyclone has affected so many people, so many people displaced, so many people died, our response as a humanitarian community is still not reaching all of those that have been affected," according to Mark. "It is difficult to comprehend the numbers when you're not even able to help all those who are in need."

Over £30,000 has been donated in the UK by ADRA supporters specifically for the Burma appeal. This adds to significant funding from DFID, the World Food Programme and many other organisations.

Somalia

Windmills, solar powered water systems and more than 10,000 cooking stoves are really changing the lives of impoverished people in Somalia. With help from the European Commission, ADRA is running an innovative project that benefits the semi-autonomous states of Puntland and Somaliland in a country still trying to heal from a long civil conflict.

Rita, a longtime worker for ADRA, can't help but smile when she thinks about what the organization has done for the people of Somalia. She has been working with ADRA in this conflict-torn country for many years. Despite the conflict and the human tragedy, Rita has seen how the persistence and perseverance of few can bring positive change to the lives of many. Often at personal risk, ADRA staff venture out in the country and serve as agents of change by providing education, access to clean water, teaching sanitation, helping people in dis-



stress and, more recently, introducing sustainable energy.

What does sustainable energy have to do with humanitarian work? Rita explains that the role of energy in development and poverty reduction cannot be overemphasised.

"We have learnt by experience

that energy is central to sustainable development and our poverty reduction efforts," she said. "Energy affects all aspects of development – the social, the economic, the environment, health and education. We can improve livelihoods through promoting accessible, cost-effec-



tive and environmentally sound energy services."

ADRA now not only provides people with the necessary resources, it also assists the local government in developing energy policies together with local stakeholders.

The project is conducted in line with the global trend of seeking renewable energy as a spur to economic growth. The installation of energy equipment will result in increased access to clean water. Health and education services will create an awareness of the effects of bad natural resource management and promote the use of renewable energy options, such as wind, solar and modern biomass.

Because Rita is a committed Seventh-day Adventist, some might wonder whether the help she gives is conditional. In other words, do people have to start attending Adventist worship services before they are given a cooking stove?

"Not at all!" Rita said. "There are actually very few Adventists

in Somalia. Our humanitarian work is a way in which we can show people that we care – with no strings attached. We do our work. We help people. That's it."

From providing water to giving access to renewable energy, ADRA is at work in Somalia.

Creating just and positive change is what ADRA is all about.

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Food Security in Zambia

On 1 February 2008 ADRA-UK began a two year food security project in Zambia. The project, which is supported by a €539,181 grant from the European Commission, is implemented by ADRA Zambia in Senanga District situated in the Western province of the country. The main objective of the project is to reduce poverty for vulnerable people by improving the food security of 1,000 farming households.

Senanga is an extremely impoverished area of the country. "We developed this project because this part of the country has faced problems for the past few years, droughts or floods, even as we speak, destroying people's livelihood base" says ADRA Zambia country director,

John Kunda. This has resulted in malnutrition rates among children under 5, among the highest in Africa. Families in the project region regularly produce less than half of their yearly food requirement. Coping with the hunger period after the food runs out includes skipping meals and reducing nutritional intake, removing children from school and sending them to work, and marrying off daughters at a young age to reduce the household demand for food.

The project aims to reduce these food shortages and safeguard the households' nutritional status. To achieve this, ADRA will train the households in improved farming techniques aimed at increasing their production of maize, the main staple food in the district. The project will also introduce new crops to the households food basket like sorghum and cassava which are drought resistance crops and suitable for a district like Senanga. ADRA will provide agricultural inputs to these households and basic farming equipment necessary for the farmers to practise their newly acquired knowledge. Also, working through community volunteers, ADRA will train people in basic nutrition on topics such as child feeding practices, food preservation and storage methods. Mr. Kunda explains "this project means a lot to the people of the region, helping them to recover from natural disasters and build stronger livelihoods."

Carrots and cabbages

by Pansi Katenga, ADRA-UK

He sat on the floor, pen and note book in his hand and kept on writing as I talked to him. His appearance did not look any different from the other farmers I had met before and yet this farmer had demanded so much respect from his community. Mr. Rabemiafara broke the record producing 14 tonnes of rice per hectare, the highest ever reported yield in Fandriana.

He is one of the beneficiaries of the 'Alleviating Poverty through improved livelihood and health' project that the European Commission and ADRA-UK are funding in Madagascar.

Rabemiafara had heard about the improved rice techniques about 6 years ago from a newspaper article. Although he had wanted to apply them, lack of inputs and equipment prevented him from adopting the techniques. When ADRA went to talk to people in his community about the project, he remem-



bered the newspaper article and he did not hesitate to join an association.

After training and receiving tools and seeds he adopted the techniques to plant all his land. His relatives were very angry because he had taken such a risk and warned that if his harvest failed they would not lend him any money. Rabemiafara knew that life is also about taking risks. When harvest time came, he surprised everyone by harvesting 4 tonnes of rice – enough to feed his household for the whole year with a lot of surplus for sell.

He sold part of his crop and when I asked him what he had done with the money from his sales he sighed, smiled, and said "for the first time, I have paid school fees for my 2 children who are studying at a univer-

sity without having to borrow money from anyone. I am a proud man. I have never gone beyond class 5 but look at me, I have 2 children who will be so educated. I can not afford to buy myself shoes, pointing at the cracks on his heels, but that is a sacrifice worth making. My children will never have to toil like me they will have good jobs and drive cars. Poverty is a thing of the past".

From my visit to Fandriana. it was clear that ADRA has contributed to amazing changes in the

lives of the beneficiaries. Most of them have reported reduction in the number of months that they have to buy food. Some reported that their overall health especially that of children has improved from including vegetables to their diets.

I met so many people who before the project had never eaten carrots and cabbage and in addition to my project monitoring work I had to share recipes on how to cook with carrots and cabbage. People were so excited they are able to provide for other basic needs to their families like health and education materials and once in a while biscuits and sweets for the children. It was humbling to hear these positive results and I was grateful to be part of the team of ADRA-UK that is able to make a positive changes in ordinary people's lives.

Adult Life Skills Training

How do you turn coconut cream into washing detergent, kerosene and cooking oil? These were some of the skills taught as part of ADRA Papua New Guinea's the "Partnerships for Civil Society Adult Education Initiatives" project which is jointly funded by the Government of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and ADRA-UK.

ADRA PNG conducted a week long life skills training on how to



make washing detergents, kerosene and cooking oil from coconut cream, part of the income generation component of the project. Participants were also shown how to make fish, pig and poultry feeds from cassava roots and leaves mixed with fishmeal.

With the ever-increasing price of goods and services, this course will enable people to produce and meet some of their own needs and not always go to shops in town for supplies. Participants expressed gratitude to ADRA and said this skills training will help them to produce things in their own homes and will save them a lot of money.

Participants of this training who belong to ADRA's Literacy Schools will then conduct a simi-

lar training along side the literacy training when they return to these schools. This training is part of the Literacy Program's goal to empower people with knowledge and skills to advocate change themselves and break the cycle of poverty.

ADRA, a mark of quality

Milamaina, one of ADRA/Madagascar SMarT areas of intervention, symbolizes the success of the partnership between ADRA/Madagascar and its beneficiaries. They are very proud of their

project, and the Mayor of the area has given his full support to accelerate the development of the commune. To prove their commitment, ADRA/Madagascar's representative has been given an office in the Commune's building.

The people enjoy naming many of their manufactured items after ADRA. Some items named to

commemorate their high esteem for ADRA are hats, rice, and fish.

Lately, the "Free ADRA" appeared these are farmers who like this name because they copy the techniques applied by those trained by ADRA, although they have chosen not to enroll in the ADRA/Madagascar associations. There are also the "Ravintsara ADRA" or ADRA camphor trees, which sell more than any Ravintsara, just because they are planted by ADRA partners.

What a tremendous impact the word ADRA has made in this area of Madagascar.

Latest news

Myanmar

DFID approved an additional budget of £65,291 for ADRA-UK's work in Myanmar.

The funding will immediately restore access to clean water by desalinating 106 existing water reservoirs for rainwater collection. The project in the Labutta Township will give 65,000 people access to clean water.

Shoebox Appeal 2008

The gift boxes will this year benefit orphans and disadvantaged children in Guyana.

We are coordinating the distribution with our local partner, ADRA Guyana.

We will soon release the final dates for the collection and shipping of the shoeboxes at the moment.

Thank you for your support!

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