

## Building a safer island community

The Kandholhudhoo people's former island was prone to regular flooding as a result of storms and tidal surges and was too small for the growing population. This resulted in overcrowding and congested living conditions. The 'building back better' concept has been applied in the Maldives reconstruction programmes with the aim of reducing future risk from disaster and improving living conditions.



Data entry by a trained member of the team

The new island funded by the Federation for the Kandholhudhoo people is much bigger and is not prone to flooding. In order to ease overcrowding and provide enough shelter for the population more houses are being built than were on the original island. However, this made beneficiary selection and verification challenging as a fair method for allocating additional houses was required. In order to do this, detailed and accurate information about each household was required in order to determine equitable criteria.

Guidelines outlining seventeen criteria to attribute houses were jointly developed, in consultation with the government, by the British Red Cross, French Red Cross and the Federation. Many Maldivian families are very large, with extended families often living together. However, there is a

limit to the number of people who can live in one new house - this limit (extended family criteria) is to be determined by considering the unique context of each island community, and using information from the database in consultation with the community. If the total number of family members exceeds this limit a second house will be allocated. To determine this limit, to validate beneficiaries, to include cultural gender considerations and to identify vulnerable groups a comprehensive database was developed.

A computer programmer from the Ministry of Planning and National Development was seconded to design a database to manipulate detailed data into information primarily for the attribution of houses. The secondary purpose of this database is to build the capacity of the island administration. Prior to the tsunami the island office registries were limited, which made distribution of relief, transitional shelters and cash grants difficult to fairly administer and monitor. In the future the database designed by the Federation can be used by the island administration as a tool for development planning and will be an important resource in case of disaster.



A man from Kandholhudhoo studies the criteria



Tsunami survivors' houses under construction on their new island home



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies promotes the humanitarian activities of National Societies among vulnerable people.

By coordinating international disaster relief and encouraging development support it seeks to prevent and alleviate human suffering. The International Federation, the National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross together constitute the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

### International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

South Asia Regional Office  
C-79 Anand Niketan  
New Delhi, India  
Tel: +911124111122, +911124111127  
Fax: +91 11 2411 1128  
[www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)



Yoshi Shimizu/International Federation

## Beneficiary communication

### Managing expectations and building trust: A Maldives case study

© 2007 Content and photos / International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



## A new island home

The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is working to assist the Maldives to recover from the destruction caused by the December 2004, Indian Ocean Tsunami. The Maldives is unique in the South Asia region in that prior to the tsunami there was no Red Cross Red Crescent presence in country. The Maldivian Red Crescent Society is currently under formation, therefore the Federation is implementing tsunami recovery programmes without the benefit of working with a national society.

In May 2006, with technical support from the South Asia Regional Office, a programme was designed to consolidate the beneficiary list for the Federation's largest single relocation and construction project in the world. In cooperation with the Government of Maldives, up to six hundred houses plus amenities, as well as a school, health clinic and community centre are currently under construction on a new island home. This new island is being built for the Kandholhudhoo community who were displaced from their small and very congested island after it was ravaged by the tsunami. To ease congestion



the Government of Maldives determined that each three bedroom house would be a standard size of 86 square metres.

The Kandholhudhoo people currently live in transitional shelters scattered on five neighbouring islands in Raa Atoll. This case study illustrates how a beneficiary selection and verification programme was used to strengthen relationships with stakeholders, build local capacity and improve communication and the flow of information with the Kandholhudhoo community.



Transitional Shelters where the Kandholhudhoo people currently live

## Strengthening relationships with beneficiaries

Working in true partnership with all stakeholders is essential and a key factor in the success of this project. All stakeholders, including local government officials and members of the affected community, were involved from the design stage of the project and were active throughout the process. This strengthened relationships between the stakeholders and the affected population. Each member of the team brought different skills and insights to the process. The initial programme design was flexible and changed a number of times to take new information and the expressed needs of the community into account. All members of the team were either based in the field or spent significant time in the field.

A questionnaire was designed to collect information about each household. Designing an appropriate questionnaire involves expertise, wide consultation and testing to ensure that it is culturally appropriate, that there are no ambiguities, and that the results will yield the information required by the community and decision makers. In the Maldives this involved a cycle of testing, seeking feedback, making changes and repeating the process. One of the



Conducting household interviews

given that the Red Cross Red Crescent is relatively unknown in the Maldives. The team was also trained in interview techniques, basic database skills, and was involved in community mapping, focus group discussions and public presentations.

During this process it is important to check information by comparing input from at least three different sources - a process called triangulation. Whilst a custom database was



Community meetings, presentations, posters and focus groups were used to raise awareness, explain, discuss and debate the criteria.



One of five Red Cross Red Crescent notice boards that provide information to Kandholhudhoo people

## Disseminating information and listening to beneficiaries

Communication with beneficiaries should be dynamic and genuinely two-way. Effective communication and information sharing with affected populations decreases fear, manages expectations and builds trust. Tsunami evaluations highlighted the need for improved communication with affected populations and the importance of providing timely and practical information. The process of verifying the beneficiary list was designed to provide a listening post, to respond to information needs and to strengthen relationships with the community.

Although a community committee was already functioning it was quickly realised that this committee was not representative of all groups within the community and had limitations in its ability to widely disseminate information. The team conducting interviews were encouraged to actively listen to the concerns of each household, to gather and answer questions and gauge community feeling as they went from shelter to shelter conducting interviews. Key messages were conveyed through announcements on television and radio. Presentations, focus groups and community notice boards were put in place as supplementary sources of information. A local office was established where the community was welcome to come and ask questions and observe the process

There are many constraints to maintaining regular information updates and dialogue with the Kandholhudhoo people. Among others, the cost and logistics of inter-island transport which makes regular contact on five islands expensive and time-consuming, no national society with whom to work, and limited time and resources. In this context it was important to carefully examine methods of communicating with the affected population.

- Communication must be in the local language. This means questionnaires, training, enumerators' notes, job descriptions, presentations, criteria, posters, focus group discussions and community meetings.
- Communities need adequate time to digest the information being disseminated before giving meaningful feedback or making decisions (In this context two days was appropriate).
- Publications/PR materials produced for donors are generally not appropriate for beneficiaries and can be viewed negatively, therefore publications should be developed specifically for beneficiaries, and when possible, with community consultation and inputs.
- Ensure each community meeting has a clear objective/purpose and give people time to prepare.
- Follow local etiquette and adapt to local context.
- Give and take information – listen and share with communities/beneficiaries.
- Be ready to make changes to your program approach based on community consultation and feedback, otherwise the process is not genuine and trust and support for programs will not be formed.
- Explain concepts in a clear manner without jargon.
- Establish a field presence to ensure accessible communication channels with beneficiaries.

The outcomes of this programme have been the development of community trust, improved communication channels, strengthened community infrastructure via an accurate kinship structured database (useful for regular civil administration and in case of future disaster), and a fair and transparent method of beneficiary selection and verification based on primary information from every affected household. This intensive process has enabled the Red Cross Red Crescent team to accompany beneficiaries on a path to resettlement on their new island home.

## Accurate, accountable, transparent: the making of a beneficiary list

The Maldives reconstruction programme uses a beneficiary list to allocate houses. Checking that this list correctly represents those affected by the disaster and the most vulnerable is an essential process in disaster relief and recovery. This selection and verification process ensures that houses are distributed in a fair and transparent

manner and increases accountability to both the affected people and those who gave generously to the tsunami appeal. However, checking the list and verifying information is a sensitive and challenging task that requires considerable time, effort and expertise.

greatest challenges was perfecting the translation and developing the questionnaire so that it met the expectations of the community and the Government.

To conduct the interviews with each household a team of ten members from the affected community were selected. Top priorities included: the creation of a gender balanced team, using local knowledge and building local capacity. Once a team was selected they were trained in the principles of the movement. This was essential

designed to manage the vast amounts of information, the key to this process was working with local government administrators and community members who were part of the team. They contributed a deep knowledge of the community and a vast array of secondary information including access to documents and records in Arabic.

A success factor in this process was a working environment that encouraged input, discussion and debate from all team members.

## Guiding frameworks

This programme has been guided by the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs, which states that in humanitarian work we shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities and that ways shall be found to involve beneficiaries; that we hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources. It also supports key strategic areas in the *Responding to the Asia Earthquake and Tsunamis – Regional strategy 2*: to communicate in a way that maintains and builds the trust

of beneficiaries, donors and the public and to increase beneficiary and community ownership of programming.

The South Asia Regional Office is committed to supporting national societies in implementing this strategy, and in incorporating lessons learned from the tsunami operation in future programming. One of which is building capacity to more effectively communicate and share information with affected people in future operations.