

Working paper: Lessons learned from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami

BALLS, BOOKS AND BEAR HUGS

**Psychosocial response through education in
emergency situations: Examples from
Indonesia and Thailand**

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This paper reflects the opinions of the author and not necessarily those of UNICEF.

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Setting the scene: The 2004 tsunami

On 26 December 2004, a thick slab of crust lying below South-East Asia finally gave way to centuries of bumping against another slab of crust below the Indian Ocean. The sudden movement pushed one side up over an area about 1,200 km long and a few hundred kilometres wide. Registering 9.0 on the Richter scale, it is now considered the world's fourth largest earthquake of the century and the longest ever recorded. For eight minutes, residents of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (Aceh) 160 km away huddled as the ground shuddered and buildings tumbled.

But the worst was yet to come. The sudden rise of sea bed unfurled torrents of water raging to the shore at the speed of a jetliner. As the tsunami waves hit the shallows, they reared up to hilly heights, 30 metres at the highest, forming awesome walls of water. Within 15 minutes, it surged over the shoreline up to 6 km of inland and engulfing more than 660 km of coastline of the Indonesian province. It destroyed nearly everything standing in the first 2 km of coastline and flooded up to another 4 km of land. Within two hours it reached several provinces of Thailand with still-violent velocity. It took up to two hours to reach India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and a small portion of Malaysia and then went beyond.

In Aceh, the catastrophe hit a province struggling to cope with 30 years of ethnic conflict between freedom fighters and the Indonesian military. (A second massive earthquake on 28 March 2005 off the island of Nias in Sumatra left a further 70,000 people displaced and nearly 1,000 dead.)

An initial rapid assessment of children in January by three Thai university researchers for UNICEF concluded that nightmares, fear of a new tsunami and symptoms of psychological distress were widespread in the affected areas in Thailand.¹ They noticed the presence of development a symptoms, such as eating problems, disturbed sleep, clinging to a caretaker, irritability and crying and fear of the sea affecting many children.

In a UNICEF survey² of 1,633 children aged 8–17 years, conducted one year after the tsunami, more than two thirds of them thought their situation had improved and they were better off now compared to the weeks immediately following the tsunami. Some 80 per cent of the tsunami-affected children in India, Sri Lanka and Thailand said they were positive about their future, using the words 'hopeful', 'happy', 'confident'. However, in Indonesia, one third of the respondents thought their lives would not improve.

The survey also revealed that many children are still afraid. More than half the children surveyed in India and Sri Lanka fear another earthquake or tsunami, and 76 per cent of the child respondents in Thailand fear the loss of a loved one. More than one third of the surveyed children in Indonesia said they often feel alone.

¹ Srivieng Pairojkul, Wongsala Laohasiriwong, Pulsuk Siripul, *Rapid Assessment of Psychosocial Needs of Thai Children Affected by the Tsunami of December 26, 2004*, UNICEF Thailand. Sample: 128 families, 128 adults and 252 children.

² *UNICEF Tsunami Relief Study: The views of affected children on their lives and the tsunami relief effort*, conducted by TNS, published December 2005.

1 The day the sea ate the land: Dealing with a disaster

Reports recounting the events of 26 December 2004 describe an otherwise ordinary morning. “The sky was clear.” “The beach was quiet.” “I was making tea for my brothers as I usually do...”

“Twenty minutes and 200,000 lives,” repeats one man, remembering the day his whole family (and fellow Indonesians³) disappeared from Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam province.

Disasters typically do that – rise up out of the quiet, cloudless calm to turn a corner of the world upside-down. When the moment becomes still again, nothing ordinary remains. Then begins the long struggle to bring it back.

Crowds of aid workers rush in. Shiploads of money and rice are pledged. There are so many initial emergencies: the injured need stitching and bandaging. The dead must be removed. Orphans need to be identified. Safe lodgings must be assembled. Safe water must be provided. Sanitary conditions must prevail.

It is the clatter and clanging of tending to the physical relief of both place and people. Meanwhile, inside the heads of the survivors there is more clatter and clanging. It varies in volume and intensity. It clamours to make sense of the turbulence, the ripped-apart calm and the loss of the ordinary. It is the mental confusion that remains when life as you knew it disappears in a matter of seconds. It is a constant swirling of the blackest black, roaring and repeating, engulfing the mind. It is weeping. It is a silent rattling.

In the chaos of finding order for the world turned upside-down, emotional relief often is regarded a secondary emergency. But aid workers increasingly now recognize that emotional relief is an integral part of the response. More and more psychologists, therapists, religious leaders, child protection officers and activity volunteers now rush in alongside the physical aid to offer paints, crayons, music, balls and puppets along with their ear, prayers and hugs. These things now are considered as crucial as the rice and water.

It is tempting to think of the ‘physical’ and ‘emotional’ aid as two different issues. But it is a single individual who experiences loss and pain, a single person who needs support to recover from a temporary set-back, to find a ‘place’ from where she or he can move forward on their own. A new house, a new boat, cash for work, skills training, and so on must be accompanied by psychological, social and spiritual support, such as counsellors, medication (extreme cases), meditation, dance groups, art work and one-on-one chats.

These things all aim to strengthen people’s coping mechanisms and thus their resiliency – their ability to bounce back.

It is important to remember that to react with stress, despair and so on is a normal reaction to a ‘disaster’ situation. Most people in such situations regain ‘normal’ functions once their basic survival needs are met, their safety and security have returned and livelihood opportunities restored.

The death of a family member or a best friend rocks us all. Among children, many are too young perhaps to ‘understand’ death; they do not know how or why to express their feelings and most have no idea how to emotionally care for themselves. Children on the Edge, a UK-based NGO working with marginalized and traumatized children that has built a children’s centre in Aceh, notes in its annual review of 2004–2005 that in most emergencies, half the affected population typically consists of children, yet they receive little focused support, particularly in the early stages of a crisis.⁴

This is where psychosocial support, including the role of education, becomes even more important. Education is – and should be treated – as a major stabilizing force, even in the absence of the physical school.

³ According to the UN Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, the total fatalities as of December 2005 were 130,736 with another 37,000 still considered ‘missing’.

⁴ Children on the Edge, *How Marius Found His Wings and other stories*, Annual Review 2004–2005.

The damage done: Indonesia

More than 200,000 children in Indonesia were affected by the tsunami:

15,000 orphaned (who are supported by the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Board; no breakdown in terms of one or both parents)

More than 600,000 people (some 200,000 children) lost a home

2,000, at least, schools were destroyed or damaged

2,500, at least, teachers/school staff dead or missing

38,683 (11%), at least, students dead or missing

An estimated 600,000 adults lost their livelihood.

The damage done: Thailand

About 30,000 children in Thailand were affected by the tsunami; of them:

141 were orphaned

579 lost their father, 705 lost their mother, and 157 lost their guardian

5,231 lost their home

5 schools were destroyed and 15 schools damaged

An estimated 26,500 adults lost their livelihood.

This document provides a brief explanation of what psychosocial means and how it can be used in a formal education setting to help young people find their resiliency or strengthen it. But this is not to say that psychosocial support in education is new. While the term may be recent, good educators have known for a long time that sound educational practice does not occur from 'the neck up'. In dealing with children and adolescents, we are dealing with the whole person and it behoves the educator to nurture all aspects: intellectual, creative, spiritual, physical, psychological, emotional and social.

Much of what can be done in schools to help children cope and carry on overlaps with the objectives of child-friendly education: creating environments that tap children's learning potential and interest in developing intellectually. That is the beauty of psychosocial initiatives. If regular education is done well, according to the principles of child-friendly schools, psychosocial initiatives are an integral part, serving as either preparation or a response to an emergency situation. While serving one urgent need, they become an entry point for helping teachers see the powerful impact of creative play and flexibility in teaching methods.

Examples of activities, approaches and useful singular acts of coping provided here reflect various discussions with teachers and principals in tsunami-affected areas and other relevant individuals. This is not a compendium of 'good practices', as there is not yet a proper assessment to identify them. Rather, it is a collection of examples of how people dealt with the emergency situation that have been selected to help illustrate what psychosocial support means and why it is important to include it in future programming.

In December 2005, UNICEF's Regional Office in Bangkok sponsored a small regional workshop to look at psychosocial support through formal education in emergency situations as a way to keep the issue evolving. The conclusion of participants: Emergencies, from natural disasters to armed conflict situations, create psychosocial problems for people. But much preparation can be done now, before the next disaster, to more ably help future victims bounce back.

Typical reactions of children to extreme events

Pre-school age:

- Not able to rationalize what is happening around them and not able to understand the concept of death, equate it with separation
- Anxious clinging to caregivers
- Temper tantrums
- Regression, e.g. in speech development
- Fear of going to sleep
- Nightmares and night terrors
- Excessive fear of real or imagined things, e.g. thunder, monsters

Primary school age:

- Can recall and rationalize events in a more logical way; often use fantasy to deal with stress; prone to feelings of guilt
- Poor concentration, bad behaviour or restlessness
- Anxiousness, hyperactivity, stuttering, eating problems
- Psychosomatic complaints, e.g. headache, stomach pain
- Behaviour change, aggressive or withdrawn
- Sleeping problems
- Regression – acting younger

Youth:

- Have a good understanding of what has happened and the consequences; dealing with emotional and physical changes as well as crisis
- Self-destructiveness and rebelliousness, e.g. drug taking, stealing, hypersexual behaviour
- Withdrawal – cautious of others and fearful of the future
- Anxiety, nervousness
- Psychosomatic complaints

Source: Chaiwat Moonuan, Save the Children UK, 'Psychosocial Programming', presented during the UNICEF Regional Workshop on Psychosocial Support in Education in Emergencies, 8-9 December 2005 in Phuket, Thailand.

2 What is psychosocial support?

“People who survive natural disasters but reveal psychosocial problems are not abnormal. They are normal people in abnormal circumstances.”

Elizabeth de Castro, psychosocial specialist and UNICEF child protection project officer in a presentation, ‘An Introduction to and a Framework for Psychosocial Responses for Children in Emergencies’

Psychosocial is a term coined relatively recently. It refers to the impact that social factors can have on the mental state, or vice-versa. In children, it is the ongoing connections between feelings, thoughts, perceptions, understanding and general development as a social being in interaction with his/her social environment.⁵ Psychosocial support means stabilizing the psychological state through the social environment.

This document uses the term as one word, which underscores how it is the merging of attention on psychological and social factors. Because it is a new term, there are confusions or differences in opinion as to what it actually refers to in practice. This is reflected in a variety of activities, projects and programmes operating under the label of ‘psychosocial’.

Using the term explicitly helps to better sort the needs of people affected by disasters. Human responses to extreme events vary according to individual characteristics and environmental factors. Not everyone needs a psychiatrist to help them; in fact, very few do. Not everyone needs counselling; in fact, only a small portion does. Most people can bounce back on their own or with a little support from their social environment (community, school, family, etc.).

This document focuses on psychosocial support in emergencies: situations in which the lives and welfare of people are at such a risk that extraordinary action must be mobilized to ensure their survival, protection and well-being.⁶ These situations may be due to natural disasters: volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis and industrial or transportation accidents or to armed conflict or an act of terrorism.

Only a small percentage (5 per cent⁷) of people affected by a traumatic disaster needs professional help from a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist. This will include counselling, therapy and even in extreme cases, the prescription of medication.

Most of the people affected, both adults and children, will be helped through other non-medical aid. Among them, up to 20 per cent may have difficulties adapting to changes in their life and need the help of a counsellor or other individualized aid, including treatment.

The remainder, some 75 per cent of disaster survivors, need psychosocial support to cope with their emotions and restore well-being, to ‘normalize’ their life. This broadly involves:⁸

- Promoting a sense of safety and security
- Giving accurate and timely information
- Normalizing daily life
- Re-establishing relationships
- Encouraging participation
- Restoring trust, confidence and competence
- Enhancing resilience.

⁵ Save the Children UK, ‘Psychosocial Programming’, PowerPoint presentation, 2005.

⁶ UNICEF, *Technical Notes: Special Consideration for Programming in Unstable Situations*, 2001.

⁷ Baigana, Florence, Bannon, I., Thomas, R. *Mental Health and Conflicts: Conceptual Framework and Approaches*, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, World Bank, Washington D.C. 2005

⁸ Psychosocial Well-Being Framework, adapted from UNICEF Sri Lanka ‘Psychosocial Framework, 2005’, in the *Handbook on Psychosocial Assessment of Children and Communities in Emergencies*, UNICEF Bangkok, 2005.

More specifically, promoting the following activities helps achieve the above 'normalizers':

- Return to work or school
- Provide adequate living conditions
- Play and recreation activities
- Pre-school activities
- School-based psychosocial activities
- Child and youth clubs
- Religious and traditional ceremonies
- Community activities
- Parents' groups
- Drama, arts and cultural activities
- Livelihood and micro-credit schemes
- Family support work
- Identify separated children, trace extended family members and identify foster families
- Identify and train community-based professionals and volunteers to provide psychosocial support.

What this means is that most people, both adults and children, have a resiliency in dealing with difficult situations and deprivations. Extreme situations that disasters present may require assistance from outsiders to help people find their resiliency or to re-enforce it, given the context. Different people respond differently to crisis but most reactions are typical and generally healthy reactions to an extraordinary or stressful event – though many, if not all of them, realize that.

Psychosocial support protects children by restoring their normal flow of development. It mitigates the impact of crises and helps families to care for their children and meet their needs.

When a teenager helps bandage injured victims or is given responsibility for clothing distribution during the initial relief work, he/she is included in the community helping itself; the contribution can begin to rebuild self-confidence, a sense of belonging and an interest in seeing that 'tomorrow' is a better day. Giving children crayons and paper and allowing them to draw is normal educational practice. During times of stress, children will often find this a useful outlet for exploring feelings. With teacher support, children can understand that those feelings are typical reactions. This helps release tension and helps in providing explanations and perspective that eventually lets them see how 'normal' is whatever they are feeling. Or it may indicate that a particular child needs extra, or special, attention.

Children's welfare and growth are determined by the interaction of many factors:⁹

- Physical: food, secure shelter, health care
- Psychological: love, care, self-esteem
- Social: family, friends, neighbours, society members
- Spiritual: religious and cultural identity, faith, values.

Psychosocial support is the aid given to promote those factors and guarantee children's recovery and preserve their opportunity to develop. Activities can be community-based, in the homes, in medical facilities and in schools. The objectives¹⁰ of psychosocial support are to:

- Improve children's well-being
- Restore the normal flow of their growth and development
- Protect children from the accumulation of distressful and harmful events
- Enhance the capability of families to care for their children
- Enable children to be active agents in rebuilding their families and communities and hopeful futures.

⁹ UNICEF Aceh, *Facilitator's Guide: Psychosocial Training for Teachers*, 2005.

¹⁰ Chaiwat Moonuan, Child Psychosocial and Protection Officer, Save the Children UK, Thailand

Resilience and coping

“Resilience is the human capacity to face, overcome and be strengthened by or even transformed by the adversities of life. With resilience, children triumph over difficulties, without it the difficulties triumph.”

Helping children and their families find concrete ways to cope and rebuild their lives is more effective than only helping them to process their difficult experiences.

Resiliency is the ability to turn to a positive emotional state after facing a problem, hardship or trauma (Grothenburg and Boyden, Save the Children UK).

Psychosocial needs

What are the basic psychosocial skills or competencies?

- 1) **Feel loved and cared for by caregivers** – Child feels safe and cared for by supportive and responsible adults (usually parents).
- 2) **Meaningful friendships and social skills** – Child can make friends, get along with teachers and other people in the community.
- 3) **Trust in others** – Child believes that he or she can rely on others in the community to help and listen to her/him. She/he feels that others will not hurt her/him or the community.
- 4) **Sense of belonging** – a child feels a part of a community and feels that the community addresses and meets her/his needs.

Seen from this perspective, psychosocial needs are a child protection issue. This is how most major agencies conceive of it in planning their programmes. However, it is also becomes an educational issue when school is the locus for psychosocial interventions. Thus, sound psychosocial interventions may require the expertise and coordinated efforts of personnel traditionally seen as working in different sectors.

Often in disasters, there is focus on problems of children without sufficient attention to how they and their support networks are already coping. Examples from Thailand (as from everywhere in general) indicate there is a split in approaches between emphasis on social and emphasis on psychological.

Trauma vs. psychosocial

When stress becomes too much and turns negative, two approaches are often used in dealing with it:

Trauma:

- Abnormalities in emotions and behaviour, such as post-traumatic stress syndrome and symptom, such as intrusive dreams, flashbacks, etc.
- Useful in extremely limited number of individual cases
- Stresses pathology and illness as model
- Often associated with 'labelling' and 'stigmatizing'

Psychosocial:

- Focuses on holistic development and support: emotional, cognitive, behavioural, social and spiritual to help people feel healthy, both physically and mentally
- Focuses on individual strengths and assets as well current social conditions and environment
- Culturally adaptive and specific

Source: Chaiwat Moonuan, Save the Children UK, 'Psychosocial Programming', presented during the UNICEF Regional Workshop on Psychosocial Support in Education in Emergencies, 8–9 December 2005 in Phuket, Thailand.

3 What is psychosocial support in education?

“I just hugged them as if they were my own children.”

A teacher in Aceh when asked how she coped with affected students in the first week after school re-opened

UNICEF and UNESCO have been collaborating with many education ministries in East Asia and the Pacific for years to implement the child-friendly school concept. In Indonesia, the approach has become known as active, joyful and effective learning. The third of the five dimensions characterizing the UN approach specifies that a child-friendly school is one that is:

Healthy and safe for, and protective of children’s emotional, psychological and physical well-being.

Unfortunately, a recent review conducted by UNICEF in the region demonstrated that “this dimension is reflected most consistently in areas of clean and accessible drinking water, sanitation facilities and hygiene education.” However, there is ample scope for this dimension to reach its full potential and to include a focus on the issues relating more obviously to child protection. Sound educational practice should always include psychosocial activities. Education and learning is not just ‘from the neck up’. Students are complex individuals who are part of a larger social environment and who have intellectual, emotional, spiritual, creative, psychological, physical and social needs. A broad and sound education caters to all these multi-faceted needs. Emergencies simply bring psychosocial needs to the foreground.

Education plays a critical and integral role in the psychosocial protection and well-being of children. Often, schools are the only government service where all children can regularly access psychological support. Even if a school is destroyed and a teacher is gone, education – learning – remains the constant. It is a surviving piece of the previous ordinary life.

Typical reactions among young people to a stressful event are loss of interest in education, classroom behaviour problems and mood changes and school-related phobia. Going to school can be scary, especially if the previous school was destroyed or damaged and students might not feel safe in the same building or a similar one.

This is one reason for focusing on psychosocial activities in schools – to target those issues. In times of emergencies, particularly like what was experienced in the tsunami, parents may need to spend much of their time and attention on restoring their home and livelihood or may be overwhelmed with grief for a lost child. They might not have the time or the mental space to focus on the emotional needs of their surviving children. Teachers, thus, may need to take on some of the caregivers’ duties, and provide extra emotional support.

“Teachers are in a unique position to help children recover through teaching, sharing, playing and listening to them. They can help re-establish children’s trust and create a climate in the classroom that helps children heal.”¹¹ However, as one education official in Aceh points out, referring to many of his fellow educators, “They don’t even know the meaning of psychosocial support, so how can they put it into the curriculum?”

Psychosocial support in education refers to a variety of activities, all of which are designed to calm students, engage them in a social group and restore or even improve their interest in learning. It is more than having them show up to class. When a student studies, contributes in class discussions, appears to be concerned with tests and projects, he/she is showing an interest in moving on.

This chapter refers only to assistance provided to primary schools.

¹¹ Elizabeth de Castro, UNICEF child protection project officer, ‘An Introduction to and a Framework for Psychosocial Responses for Children in Emergencies,’ presented during the UNICEF Regional Workshop on Psychosocial Support in Education in Emergencies, 8–9 December 2005 in Phuket, Thailand.

■ **Just returning young people to school is a normalizing act and a form of psychosocial aid.**

FOR EXAMPLE: In both Indonesia and Thailand, the school authorities moved swiftly and officially re-opened schools by the end of January. UNICEF sent thousands of school tents to all districts in Indonesia for use as makeshift classrooms. In Thailand, students whose school had been destroyed were relocated to other schools or temporary settings, such as in a backyard.

In Indonesia, many schools re-opened as of 26 January in tents and large pieces of concrete rubble were used as desks. Some schools doubled, even tripled up; two former neighbouring schools, SD45 and SD84, had a combined total of 29 teachers and 503 students. Of them, only 18 teachers and 118 students survived, and together they moved into a school one month after the tsunami and then moved again in March to a school closer to their temporary shelter. When the new school year started in July, they moved into their former school yard, at first in tents and then a temporary structure.

Studying in the tents presents challenges to both teachers and students. Often, there are no latrines nearby. Inside gets noisy with a few classes sharing the space and it gets very hot when the sun is shining; on stormy days, dust whirls around. But they still provide comfort. However, tents are a temporary measure, intended only for up to six months. When this period is exceeded and there is still no sign of a new school, principals, teachers and parents often become frustrated and disillusioned.

UNICEF and many private companies, such as Coca-Cola, PT Jasa Marga highway toll company, the Fireman's Fund of Westport (Connecticut, USA) and the Body Shop, built temporary or new schools in Indonesia. The Nigeria Oil Co. donated money for school uniforms. UNICEF, World Vision, Plan International and foreign governments, such as Germany, Japan and Norway, among others sponsored the rebuilding of new structures described as far better facilities than what had previously existed. Plan International helped repair four pre-schools. UNICEF paid for the rehabilitation of 1,573 schools in Indonesia and Thailand and set up five child care centres in Aceh where young children could attend daily classes in regular school subjects and take part in activities designed to help restore a sense of normalcy and vitality to their lives.

Save the Children established 59 child-friendly spaces, reaching 6,500 children with art, games and recreational activities in the region.

"I lost my house and my toys, but I am still going to school, and so should you", an Indonesian child from SDN1 Peukan Bada primary school wrote to American students in a school affected by hurricane Katrina.

The Foundation for Children and Save the Children UK opened three 'learning centres' offering an informal education programme for children of migrant workers from Myanmar, most of whom had never been to school or would not be able to attend Thai public schools because they do not have Thai identity cards.

With outside assistance, the Kura Buri primary school in Phang Nga province, Thailand provided free lunches, uniforms and transport to and from school.

Not all children have returned to school, however, for a variety of reasons. In an independent study (commissioned by UNICEF) of 1,633 children in four tsunami-affected countries, nine out of 10 children identified themselves as back in school. Lack of money and the need to work to help support their families were the top reasons given by those not in school. The percentage of children in each country who said they would like to see more support for education was high: Indonesia (76 per cent), India (66 per cent), Sri Lanka (88 per cent) and Thailand (81 per cent).

Thinking through a variety of needs, UNICEF's water and sanitation officers carried out a Clean Start programme in Indonesia that ensured schools were safe and clean for the start of classes.

- **Individual teachers can play a huge role in getting students back to class:**

FOR EXAMPLE: On the outskirts of Banda Aceh, Indonesia, Nurhayati's home and family were not affected by the earthquake or tsunami. She and her husband set out the day after to check on the condition of the teachers and students in the SD01 Peukan Bada primary school where she is the principal. The school and nearly all the surrounding houses had disappeared. A few corners of buildings remained. On day four of the emergency, the surviving 10 (of 16) teachers who could meet to divide up the temporary shelters among them and search for students. All teachers lost their homes; only one lost family members (his wife and two children). When provisions were made for the school to re-open in other school building, the teachers fanned out again to speak with parents and students and encourage them back. They kept visiting families to coax them. When they learned that some students found the distance too formidable, Nurhayati went to a local bank and explained the situation. The bankers donated 17 million rupiah – 1 million each for 17 students needing extra help. Savings accounts were opened to use the money to help them stay in school. For several students, Nurhayati took them with a tiny portion of the donation to a bike shop to help them buy their own transport to school.

Depending on the local situation, re-opening school provides children with a place where they are more likely to feel 'safe', if only because of its familiarity, the return to its routine, being with their friends and the closeness students might have with the teachers. Being away from parents also can heighten fears as well.

When Aceh continued to be rocked by aftershocks (at least 270) as turbulent as general earthquakes, students in MIN Rukoh Islamic school were allowed to go home immediately if they felt the need to. Elsewhere in Banda Aceh, Rahmayati recalls a particular day with aftershocks, strong wind and rain when everyone started crying; "I hugged them and tried to clam them down. I said, 'Don't run away. It's a natural phenomenon. Listen to me; if I say it's not safe inside, we'll go out together.'"

Children who still had their family wanted to go home early from school to be with their parents. Others who lost their parents wanted to stay longer in school, recalls the SD2 Banda Aceh principal, Nani Irawati, whose school was the first to be rebuilt with donations from a national newspaper. They set up remedial teaching classes in the afternoons to accommodate those who didn't want to leave or who wanted extra help with their studies, she says.

- **It may be necessary to quickly hire new teachers.**

FOR EXAMPLE: Loss of life and relocation of teachers who fear another tsunami meant gross teacher shortages in Aceh. For the first year after the tsunami, UNICEF Indonesia trained and paid the salaries of 1,000 'emergency' primary schoolteachers for 12 districts, most of whom had just finished their degree. After the one-week training, which included psychosocial sensitizing, UNICEF paid their salary for the first six months and provided a settlement package (as incentive to move to the tsunami-affected areas), which included a cooking set and hygiene kits, among other things.

UNICEF also provided funds in Thailand for hiring teachers. In the Ban Nam Khem primary school, new teachers were brought in for sports, music and specific academic subjects, such as math, for six months. "The school was lacking those things before and it is very important having them," says the principal. "In the math for example, it's not the regular teaching but there's a lot of games. They're helping students. We had musical instruments before but we had no one who could teach how to play them. These things are important tools to help with the recovery for children."

UNICEF has been working to strengthen the skills of guidance counsellors. Primary schools in Thailand and Indonesia previously did not have this position; where it does exist, the counsellors tend to focus more on career and educational direction rather than emotional guidance. Having someone with stronger capacity to deal with behaviour problems would help teachers in both emergency and normal times. Dr. Yulizar Usman, head of the primary school and students with disabilities section of the Provincial Education Department had plans to extend counselling units to primary schools before the tsunami but it requires training of thousands of teachers. “We only have a budget to train a couple hundred in each year, so how many years will that take?” UNICEF funding for training counsellors in Indonesia has been cut to an amount that may make hitting its initial target of 150 teachers difficult. ‘Counselling unit’ is not necessarily an ideal term, say some advocates. One UNICEF child protection officer based in Aceh notes he would have preferred the Education Department use ‘support unit’, or ‘value education teacher’ or ‘life skills trainer’.

- **A critical component to restoring the sense of security is putting into place preparedness plans and drilling students on what to do during an emergency. This helps restore students’ confidence in the school as a safe haven.**

For months after the tsunami, on very stormy days with a lot of rain, many students would panic, grab their rucksacks and run home. Nearly a year later, only a third of the students in one particular school show up the morning after a big storm. “They are scared, and we won’t force them to come,” says the principal.

FOR EXAMPLE: Thailand’s Ministry of Education now requires that all schools in the tsunami-affected areas develop disaster preparation plans in the event of another tsunami.

In Indonesia, many though not all students now run through periodic earthquake alarm drills.

- **Books, writing supplies, teaching devices, computers, sports equipment and play areas are critical tools for engaging students. Not having supplies helps sustain the feelings of complete loss.**

FOR EXAMPLE: UNICEF provided school-in-a-box kits containing drawing books, school books, writing books and bags and benefiting more than 561,000 children in the region. Save the Children, Plan International and other agencies also distributed essential supplies.

In many areas in Indonesia, teachers bought materials for their students with their own funds. Within a couple of months, UNICEF provided thousands of student kits in Indonesia that included notebooks, pencils, erasers and crayons.

Many schools in Thailand’s tsunami-affected areas now have computers, thanks to the generosity of private individuals or companies. Students initially used the new computers in the Kura Buri primary school in Phang Nga province to research tsunamis and how to protect themselves. The Ban Nam Khem principal said that, in addition to computers, the school, which has been rebuilt in much bigger and better condition than the old facility, now has TVs and video/CD players but he noted other lapses though: The science classes lacked tables, beakers, microscopes, sinks, etc. one year later. A teacher in the Baan Pak Veep school also in Phang Nga added that the electronic items were attracting students’ attention. “They like to come to school because of the computers,” she said. Not all have been lucky: In SD2 Banda Aceh, they used to have computers and no computer room. Now they have a wonderful computer room but no working computers.

School kids in many countries collected money to buy notepads, pens and pencils to donate to send to the affected region.

New uniforms were distributed to all children in tsunami-affected areas in Thailand. All children in affected areas in Indonesia who returned to school received a new uniform.

Artistic activities help children express painful experiences and feelings and bring relief. Mostly, children feel more comfortable doing this around someone familiar to them, such as a teacher, than with an outside organization.

FOR EXAMPLE: The Kamala school re-opened on 5 January (one of the first schools in the affected areas despite its considerable damage) in a hotel. For two weeks the teachers concentrated only on activities: storytelling, meditating, art and even swimming in the pool. Then the students were moved into the only classrooms remaining of their former building complex, but they refused to sit on the ground floor out of fear and so the children were stuffed into the second-floor rooms. “The games, singing and drawing have reduced the stress and encourage more interest in studying,” says Pudsadee Soontharak, a grade 4 teacher. After watching the many outsiders doing psychosocial activities, she says the teachers started to adapt them for use in their classes. “They saw it as a good idea and are trying to adopt them,” says Pudsadee.

Physical activity lets children release pent-up energy and stress and also is another great distracter.

FOR EXAMPLE: UNICEF provided sports/recreational equipment kits to schools, though many are still waiting for theirs more than a year later. In Thailand and Indonesia, many students commented on how having a soccer ball, basketball, volleyball net, table tennis or musical instruments gave them something to do and took their mind off their problems and worries. In Indonesia, recreation kits for some 21,600 children, contained several types of balls, Frisbees, skipping ropes, coloured tunics for different teams, chalk and a measuring tape for marking play areas, a whistle and scoring slate.

Competitions throughout 2005 seem also to have tremendously helped students regain their self-confidence and self-esteem. Many schools lost the horde of trophies they keep as testament to achievement and as inspiration.

FOR EXAMPLE: In SD2 Banda Aceh school, five battered trophies were found in the debris and returned to the school. But the addition of two new shiny trophies sends a message that achievement can be restored.

■ **Having a ‘space’ within a school where students can express themselves helps restore a sense of safety as well. This can be a physical space or a moment.**

FOR EXAMPLE: In Phang Nga province, Thailand, the Thai Muang primary school has for the past 10 years conducted a five-minute meditation period after lunch, followed by a 15-minute discussion on some relevant topic, such as health or a news event. Having this moment in place provided a natural time and outlet for discussing the children’s emotions after the tsunami. “It made a difference after the tsunami,” explains one of the teachers, Primrudee Natnakorn. “They talked a lot about their fears. They weren’t crying but sharing stories.”

Having a space and outlets for teachers is something often overlooked. Most teachers have been through the same experience as their students. They lost family members or their home. But their job is a role they are committed to and many rise above their own burdens and focus on their students somehow. In the tsunami-affected areas in Thailand, teachers had to take on the responsibility for the government payments to children who lost parents or houses. They then had to struggle with difficulties when the payments didn’t come or when they created jealousies among students who didn’t lose any family member. They have also often been struggling to deal with the behaviour issues, unable to impose ‘normal’ discipline on a child dealing with a loss.

FOR EXAMPLE: In Indonesia, teachers in one school informally set up a teachers’ support group. Many of those teachers cried while participating in psychosocial support training that UNICEF later provided.

The UNICEF psychosocial training in Thailand turned into more of a group support session, with teachers able to talk with one another about problems and their own struggles.

In SDN2 Banda Aceh, Nani Irawati, the principal, has kept a log of each teacher's personal situation and notated whether and how she could help. "The teachers were crying in the school in the beginning and unable to do their job. One of my daughters was missing so I could talk with them to be strong. The Education Department policy was that if someone was unable to work, they did not need to teach. They could come to school for support though. It was really important to have a psychological assessment of the teachers in the beginning. Sometimes we didn't understand how affected we were and we asked someone to do a job – maybe we gave them too much responsibility. With the aftershocks, many students would scream and cry. The teacher would have to calm them down and help protect them. Some teachers could not – they also were really scared."

■ **Flexible curricula and teaching styles that emphasize caring and nurturing of students are vital.**

FOR EXAMPLE: In SD01 Peukan Bada in Indonesia, the school spent the first two weeks outside of the classroom and taught nothing. Instead, the teachers took each student one by one to talk about what had happened to them. "Where do you live now? Do you have a good shelter? Is your family still alive? What do you need?", explains Nurhayati, the principal, who said they had no psychosocial training until August. They focused on storytelling and singing. For several weeks after that they spent more time with games and playing. "We didn't force the students to study. We understood it's impossible. We got a little creative; we picked up new text books and looked for interesting lessons and using flexible ways. We let the students talk more. We asked them to write poems related to their experiences. They were really interested to tell their stories, what happened to their mother and father."

We spent the first three months calming the students, recalls the principal of SD2 Banda Aceh. "Most of them had no attention to study. They were really interested to draw and when given pencils and paper they drew their experiences."

In the Ban Bang Muang school, math teacher Nattee explains how she dealt with one troubled student: "He didn't want to study and was bothering other students by making noises and taking away my attention. I let him do what he wants, told him just don't make noise. I left him alone for a month. He finally came to me and said he would start doing the work if I would accept him. I said ok, but let's talk first. He told me he doesn't like math. Then I said, 'You're behaving this way in other classes.' He finally said he just didn't want to do anything. His house had been destroyed. Before the tsunami he wasn't doing so well but not as bad as now. Yesterday we had an exam and he asked to be excused. 'Even if I do it, I can't do it,' he said. 'I won't do well.' He doesn't have the knowledge now and he's lost his confidence. He's not in the risky group for counselling. He never misses class but he just doesn't want to study."

"We decided to change the teaching away from the curriculum and focus on how to help children," For me, it highlights a key point of emergency education: that emergencies often create the opportunity for "doing things better", explains Bussaba Tansakul, who has been a teacher for 25 years in the Kura Buri school in Phang Nga province, which took in 29 surviving students from a nearby island. "With those misbehaving, I'm trying to have more group activity, such as drawing and making flowers and let them know they are safe in school and to give them more attention. If students do something wrong, we now discuss why it's wrong and say, 'Next time I'm sure you can do better'. Some organizations provided music and a mobile library. Most teachers were treating students like their own child and making regular conversation with them: Did you eat today? What you been doing today? Do you have fun in the shelter? And hugging them a lot. That, I think, has been really important. Sometimes we say to a child, 'You're affected but when you watch TV you see others worse than you. And other people are providing you help and we're here for you.' What worked best in restoring self-confidence and safety has been the love teachers were giving and the attention. It has been the most important for recovery. We have been talking with them and letting them see they are important to us."

To rebuild trust and confidence, Pudsadee Soontharak from the Kamala primary school, which has been renamed as the Rajaprajanugroh 36 School says, "I think of children as my own..." I have more of a mother relationship with the students now. Children are reinforced with nice words and reminders such as, 'You have someone to talk to'. I find children come to me more and talk more openly than before. We have much more closeness now."

- **Creative teaching and use of tools to make topics come alive help win over the attention of students and inspire them to participate more in class. This and flexibility with the curriculum are the two areas of heaviest emphasis in terms of psychosocial support, once students have been returned to the classroom. Teachers find they also have a better time teaching.**

FOR EXAMPLE: "After the psychosocial training, in August, I taught more differently," says Suartinoni, from SD2 Banda Aceh who has been a teacher for 28 years. Only four of her previous 64 students survived. Suartinoni lost one of her daughters as well. "Before, I can't teach by playing; I could only tell a story. Now I have other ways of playing – I use a big map in geography and a lot of singing. We play a game with chairs. Whoever loses by not getting a chair has to sing or read a poem in Indonesian studies class. The point is to make them happy. After the training, I see the students are more brave, Now they will speak up about what they want, such as to write or to sing. I have to think of things that are cheap because I have to buy the materials myself. Students like to play with me. There's so much laughing now and I'm enjoying the class so much more."

Somsak Thonkleepan, who has taught for more than 20 years, the past eight of them in the Ban Nam Khem school in Phang Nga province in Thailand, is trying to make learning more fun. "I make jokes to make them laugh and be more relaxed. It's not only teaching them but it's helping somewhat. Sometimes before class I get them to meditate 10–15 minutes. I think it helps them calm down. I saw monks doing it somewhere else and saw it help get the students' concentration back."

Baan Pak Veep school in Khao Lak district Somsri: Activities include games and songs, which helped to decrease their stress and make school more interesting. Many of them are more interested in coming to school now and it has helped to build trust and make a better relationship with the teachers. We're trying not to punish them any more either and talk with them instead. To build trust we've been talking with them one on one, talking with parents to learn more about the child, and we have a lot more physical contact with them. Hugging them a lot more. I think of them as my own child. Because it's a small school, everyone knows the students and parents well.

- **Listening and trying to understand students' behaviours, especially the naughty or attention-seeking tantrums, is crucial in the recovery process.**

FOR EXAMPLE: Disciplining children in schools in the first few months was extremely difficult for many teachers. "Most of our students were hit by the tsunami and in the water. They're alive now because of a miracle. It will take time to recover from that," says Nani Irawati, a school principal in Banda Aceh. However, broomsticks and rulers are still commonly used to impose discipline on some students in several schools. Others have learned ways of coping from their various trainings. Says Nurhayati, principal at SD01 Peukan Bada, "We had one case of a very naughty student hurting others. I kept talking with him and asked him why. He said, 'I don't know. I just want to kick and hit, I get angry easy.' So I said, 'When you feel that way, go clean your body in the Islamic way, as if preparing to pray.' After a couple weeks there was some change and the kicking started to decrease."

When preparing a training for teachers in Aceh, two specialists from Medecins Sans Frontières sat in grade 5 classrooms in two schools. They then developed a two-day workshop to discuss disaster-related issues in school and how to solve them, using role playing of problems and brainstorming for solutions. In one discussion on how to deal with a naughty child, one teacher said she would use sweet talking to force the child to do what she wanted. An older woman said she would try teaching with singing a song. And a man said he would use a ruler on the child. The MSF specialists suggested a warning system: 1) call the child's name, 2) writing assignment, 3) send to the headmaster, and 4) call the parents.

UNICEF established 17 centres in IDP camps in the six most-affected Indonesian districts to register and trace unaccompanied children. In addition to family tracing, the centres also provided recreational activities for children and structured counselling for parents and children. More than 11,000 children used these centres in the first ten weeks of operation.

■ **New activities to the school day have been taken up in many schools to strengthen the community spirit and support.**

FOR EXAMPLE: The Kura Buri primary school in Thailand's Phang Nga province now has a Friend for Friend programme – students previously in the school have been encouraged to help the new ones adapt to the new surroundings. Teachers participate by persuading the former students to talk more with the new ones, include them in their playing, act like a mentor and help with studying. The school also now reserves the final hour of the week for a school meeting to discuss issues and what's going on and allow for opinion exchanges – something never done before the tsunami.

The Baan Pak Veep school in Khao Lak district now has students meditate every Friday afternoon. "We meditated before but we never saw the importance and how it can help students cope," explains Somsook Pinpradap, the sports and agriculture teacher of more than 25 years. "Before the tsunami we had meetings on Fridays and have changed that to meditation. Since having a psychosocial training, we see how important it is and even do it throughout the week whenever it's needed or possible." Adds another teacher, Boonlet Tewsakul, "It has been good with getting the children to concentrate more. Sometimes a few express themselves in an aggressive way and the meditation helps calm them down."

One teacher in SD56 Banda Aceh has her students sing 'My Dear Aceh' each morning and before going home. "I want them to love their village and Aceh area, even if they lost their house and the community looks bad now. I want them to keep loving their own place," she says.

How one affected school not located in an affected area helped its teachers and students cope

Bangkok Patana International School in Bangkok

Seven children from the 2,400 student body and one teacher died in the tsunami and several were injured. Other students and teachers lost relatives. One parent lost 43 members of her extended family in Sri Lanka. None of the school's counsellors had ever dealt with a tragedy on this scale. At first they were overwhelmed with confusing information. The key people who would typically take control in this type of situation were on holiday out of the country. Three people took responsibility and devised the following plan by 27 December:

- Monitoring of reports and gathering information
- Contact with embassies for clarification on deaths
- Registering of children and staff.

By 28 December the school counsellor was part of the team. One of the key objectives was to assess the impact on the school. The team contacted all people known to be affected and then others who might be. The counsellors developed a script 'to do away with anyone's fear of what to say to people'. Using the script, the team initiated all contacts with parents in the classes affected and asked them to talk to their children prior to returning to school. All teachers were then contacted and asked if they would like to talk to the parents in their classes prior to the children returning (excluding the parents of children who had died). Some did so, others felt they could not; no pressure was put on the teachers either way. Support was offered to everyone in the form of contact with teachers and a school counsellor.

Initially as well, the school staff began organizing people to collect tents and other things that were needed in the affected area. An appeal was put on the school website and the telephone tree was used to encourage staff and parents to contact the school.

(continued)

How one affected school not located in an affected area helped its teachers and students cope (continued)

Preparation for staff returning

- Counsellors prepared a fact sheet for teachers to use with their classes on their return and to keep the teachers fully informed as to the actual state of affairs, rather than the misinformation that was heavily around.
- Key staff returned early from their holidays to assist in the preparation for the school's re-opening.
- Other staff in non-affected classes were encouraged, but not forced, to ring all the parents of the children.
- A staff meeting was scheduled for a day earlier than the opening to enable counsellors to give help and advice and to answer questions, for example, what to do with the 'empty chair'. They were told what signs of emotional distress to watch for in students. Many staff members were in shock.
- A meeting for parents was also called to assist them with their needs.
- A counsellor was always available to offer support throughout all of this time and a list of people who may need extra support was drawn up: children, staff and parents.
- A room was set aside for staff to use if they needed a time out. The counsellor was available for support.

Preparation for children returning

- Arrangements for 'circle time' in the elementary school with the counsellor available. Children sit in a circle and share their thoughts and fears. 'We encouraged children to talk about it. We didn't want it to be discussed on the buses coming in.'
- Tutor time in secondary school with the counsellor available.
- Room set aside for students to use if they needed time out, with the counsellor available.
- Children were encouraged to build a memory wall within each class; children were encouraged to write whatever they wanted.
- Assemblies in both parts of the school were conducted immediately. A thorough explanation of a tsunami was given.
- Garden of remembrance was set up with a discrete service of dedication and memories.
- Ongoing counselling available for staff, children and parents.

Through the ensuing year

- Monitoring of all staff, parents and children
- Funds set up to help tsunami victims. Students started fundraising on their own.
- Older students took the money to Kao Lak and, working with the community, helped build houses, playgrounds, bought boats and put fishing stuff in the boats.
- The students chose Pak Weep School in Kao Lak as a 'sister school to support. They gave textbooks, pens, paper and anything else useful.
- A garden of remembrance was created at the Bangkok school and the students made a time capsule in which they wrote all their memories of their lost friends.
- A book was written by students at the school about the children in Kao Lak.
- The school website has been revised so that emergency information can be prominently displayed and accessed. A system has been incorporated into the website in which teachers are encouraged to leave contact details during school holidays.

'You must focus on the teachers and staff first as they are the foundation of the response. Giving them counselling and a script of what to say to others helped a lot. You have to make sure they are functional. Counsellors went to the house of a teacher who lost relatives. They sat for an hour in silence. Parents who came to school said it was a very much a listening point at first. Listening was big thing. It got them to explore how they felt and how they could move their lives forward.'

Source: 'Crisis Response in an International School', presented by Ms. Christine Sumter, elementary division counsellor, Bangkok Patana International School, during the UNICEF Regional Workshop on Psychosocial Support in Education in Emergencies.

4 Training of educators

“There’s so much laughing now and I’m enjoying the class so much more.”

A teacher of 28 years in Indonesia after having psychosocial training

The key point to make about teacher training is that offering psychosocial support in schools during emergencies should not be an added burden, something requiring *special* psychosocial training. Rather, it should be about making better teachers doing their normal work better.

Some of the activities previously highlighted primarily require financial input. A couple require policy change. Some of them need special skills in listening and understanding while some others involve new ways of thinking. Many of them derive from common sense, as in what would make a child feel safe? What would make a child *want* to go to school? What would help bring a child out of a shell? However, thinking as such does not occur naturally to all people.

Schools and peer groups play an essential role in the psychological recovery of children who have survived a traumatic event. But many teachers lack knowledge and experience on how to respond to the needs of such children.

FOR EXAMPLE: In one school in Aceh, Indonesia, a girl student returned to class but refused to let her mother or father leave her. Every day for the past year, her mother has sat in class with her for the first two hours and then her father comes to be with her until it is time to go home.

What does this mean? What does a teacher do in such circumstances? The teacher, who has never had any type of psychosocial training, believes it is the parents’ responsibility to get help from outside.

If we were to adopt a holistic view of educating children and particularly if we were to implement education according to the precepts of Child Friendly Schools (CFS), the promotion of children’s resilience would not be a case for adapting curriculum for emergency situations nor would teachers require special training. Adequate preservice and inservice training should be an integral part of preparedness for emergencies. What psychosocial training can achieve post-emergency is the provision of an outlet for teachers to break down and to receive support for their needs.

As previously pointed out, much of what psychosocial support aims to do echoes what child-centred or active, joyful and effective learning (as it’s called in Indonesia) seeks to do with making the classroom more student friendly to enhance the performance and interest of students. Psychosocial and child-friendly approaches can easily be intertwined. In some schools, such as in Iran (*see box on the Bam Emergency Programme, page 23*), psychosocial support has been integrated into the curriculum, although it is called life skills.

There is no doubt that the long-term solution consists of integrating psychosocial support into teacher education curricula. However, this takes time and in the wake of the tsunami, government and organizations had to cope as best they could. The major strategy was to:

- **Train a few key teachers in the emergency situation who can serve the school as focal points and teachers can go to them for help in dealing with specific students. The drawback to this is the number of teachers who might be reached in the necessary period of time.**

Only 600 teachers from 300 primary schools and 100 kindergartens were trained in Indonesia, 50 at a time during six-day workshops. In Thailand, the training typically took place over two days. Also, according to several teachers, the training one teacher receives is never or not well passed on to the rest of the staff.

FOR EXAMPLE: UNICEF and DEPDIKNAS NGO in Indonesia created new modules in February, just after the earthquake/tsunami, piloted it with 50 teachers and then launched it in August, reaching 600 teachers. The modules include the following activities: Identifying roles and self potential, the aspects, stages and influencing factors of/on children's development, the impact of conflict and disaster on children, managing feelings and emotions, teachers' role in helping children's development, developing resiliency, psychosocial support overview and principals and work ethics, building self-esteem, creativity and decision making, communicating with children and active listening, handling children in the classroom, building cooperation with parents and society members, safe and comfortable learning atmosphere and designing a psychosocial programme.¹²

In September 2005, UNICEF with the Thailand's Ministry of Education conducted two workshops on Child Protection in Schools in Disaster and Post-Disaster Situations (in Phuket and Krabi provinces) to provide knowledge for school administrators and teachers – two from schools in the six affected provinces. The workshops focused on how to help children in schools cope with the psychological stress caused by the devastation, as well as providing practical guidance to participants on how to work with children going through tremendous grief or psychological trauma.

Recognizing that teachers need psychological support and that school management needs to protect students from further harm, the Ministry of Public Health conducted teacher training in Phuket and Phang Nga in January. The training modules centred on: disaster and psychological reactions, plan for school-based psychological care, first-aid and long-term psychological support activities and stress management and self-care for teachers. Some 307 teachers joined the training and developed a psychosocial plan and network with health personnel and other community teams.

In Ranong province, Thailand, Dr. Srivieng Pairojkul, Faculty of Medicine, Khon Kaen University organized a project called 'Psychosocial Care and Protection System for Children Affected by Tsunami', with support from Enfants Development, which focused on 14 schools and 200 children (though 4,088 children were included in the activities) in 13 villages. The 200 children covered four tsunami-related orphans and 136 children in difficult situations. The focus was to help teachers learn to recognize severe cases and refer them to appropriate services.

The Ministry of Public Health in Thailand conducted teacher training for psychosocial support and collaborated with universities to create psychosocial group activities for children outside the schools in the first three months while teachers were being trained and then activities, such as games, began in schools. Teachers were found to be under considerable stress and so support systems were put into place for them.

FOR EXAMPLE: The Ministry of Education in Thailand, in cooperation with local communities and international organizations, developed several psychosocial support initiatives to help school children and teachers cope with stress-related problems and psychological traumas. The programmes focus on helping suffering children to experience love, protection and support while building a sense of self-worth and faith in the future. Ongoing activities include counselling in the schools, home visits, arts and drama, games and plays.

However, in order for all teachers to be adequately prepared for dealing with the psychosocial aspects of emergencies, the major strategy must be:

- **Add psychosocial support and skills into teacher education curricula.**

This can be done as part of a wider initiative to promote child-friendly teaching, which overlaps considerably with psychosocial techniques and shares the same goals – to engage students to improve their learning in an active and joyful way.

¹² UNICEF and DEPDIKNAS, *Psychosocial Training for Teachers*, Facilitator's Guide, 2005.

FOR EXAMPLE: As part of its education reforms, Thailand's Ministry of Education initiated several years ago an approach to identify special needs and help students. This includes making home visits each semester and discussing student's progress with their parents. Some schools took the training and practice more to heart than others so that in the tsunami disaster they had a supportive environment already established and good rapport with their students. Administrators at Ban Bang Muang school made the system a priority; this created strong bonds and an atmosphere of trust with teachers so that students felt more comfortable sharing their emotions and problems with the teachers.

Before the tsunami, the Department of Education in Aceh, Indonesia started training sessions for teachers on 'active, joyful and effective learning' (AJEL) to complement the new curriculum. Teachers learned to make lessons more lively and fun, techniques some remembered to use in the first weeks after the earthquake/tsunami. During their first weeks back in school, teachers in one school in Banda Aceh remembered the songs and games they picked up from the AJEL instruction, which also had made them comfortable sprinkling jokes among their lessons and helped them deal with the overwhelming grief that filled their small school from the loss of more than 250 students. In math, for example, explains Rahmayati, one of the teachers, "I use funny pictures and ask students to count them and then I hide them. If a student makes a mistake, he or she has to sing as punishment." In August, some of the teachers attended the UNICEF psychosocial training and while Rahmayati noticed many overlaps, she found one major difference in the approaches: "The psychosocial training spent more time discussing how children grow, what they need in terms of psychosocial support and how to approach children with it."

Following up with teachers who have been trained in Indonesia has been difficult due to few available personnel. However, when it has taken place teachers have noted that they see increases in the performance of students initially very naughty after the tsunami as they struggle to deal with their loss. As Aziz Muslim, UNICEF psychosocial officer recalls, "They tell me that having more creative teaching – more fun – really helped heal students."

For this approach to be sustainable, it is crucial that such approaches are integrated into preservice teacher education. UNICEF has already begun discussions in both Thailand and Aceh to launch such an initiative.

FOR EXAMPLE: The Ministry of Education in Thailand with UNICEF initiated a project called 'Strategies for Responding to Needs and Crises as a Result of Natural Disasters'. One outcome is the production of the three textbooks designed specifically for school administrators, teachers and students to help educate them on how to cope with natural disasters.¹³

¹³ From Dr. Pojana Wongtrakool's opening remarks at the Regional Workshop on Psychosocial Support in Education in Emergencies

The Bam Emergency Programme in Psychosocial Support

From UNICEF Iran

25 December 2003: An earthquake erupts, with its epicentre in the historic city of Bam, registering 6.4 on the Richter scale: more than 30,000 deaths and more than 10,000 injured; more than 800 teachers dead; more than 27,000 children affected; complete destruction of schools. Three organizations played a role in providing psychosocial support: Ministries of Health and Education and the State Welfare Organization and some local NGOs such as Terre des Hommes and Mother and Child Institute who were contracted by the health ministry to provide additional service with UNICEF support.

'Psychosocial support should not be looked at as a post-disaster thing: it's an ongoing need, a prerequisite for normal development. It's only in the post-disaster context that we put so much emphasis on it because we want to build resiliency and that's the key word. Children have taught us (through their non-responsiveness to traditional 'talk therapy') that we need to learn and speak their language (the language of 'play'). Psychosocial support helps establish relationships with kids and helps build resiliency.' Psychosocial support has been integrated into the curriculum (as an elective course) but is called life skills.

'The approach is normalization – which means if a child is crying, anxious after a disaster, that's normal.'

The psychosocial programme was huge, with 60–80 people recruited from around the country, including psychiatrists adopting a non-psychiatric approach. We did not use the word trauma. The ministries outsourced a lot of activities to NGOs, although more need to be done by the ministries.

(Activities with the health ministry were 'outreach' services and included tent-to-tent screening of up to 60,000 people; group and individual sessions for around 10,000 people; a large media and information campaign through radio/TV; and public mourning sessions. Also 47 rural and urban kindergartens (called Early Child Care Centres) and ten recreational care centres for children aged 7 and older were set up under the Child-Friendly Spaces sector in UNICEF but is psychosocial in approach and aim.

Iran has a network of health volunteers stationed in every village. They have high school diplomas and have received some psychosocial training and had a checklist of who to refer to in the villages (though this was not part of the Bam post-disaster programme).

Ministry of Education outreach in schools:

- Extensive training of Bam counsellors, including disaster preparedness.
- Bam counsellors conduct weekly sessions in schools for children, parents and teachers: one school hour per week per student.
- Referral to two State Welfare Organization counselling centres where counselling was integrated with recreation, even into the name: Community Counselling and Recreation Centre. (The MOE already had one counselling centre, which schools mostly refer to and which was made more psychosocial and expanded the services to cover morning hours so parents could use it as well.)

Training of Bam counsellors (30) and those from neighbouring provinces (10), training of all Bam-area principals and pedagogic aids (240); training of one counsellor per province in emergency psychosocial protocol against future disasters (62). The MOE recruited the same counsellors in the subsequent March 2006 earthquake in Lorestan and used the same module.

Some 34 schools and more than 4,000 students were covered by six-week cycles; 200 teachers were regularly trained/debriefed as part of the programme and more than 5,000 parents participated.

Ministry of Education cultural adaptation: Religious elements interjected, such as clergy-parent sessions to address the need for explanations. 'Without an explanation on why a disaster occurred, some people get depressed because their personal life-story narrative isn't making sense. Or they believe that the earthquake is a punishment from God for not having been good Muslims!'

(continued)

The Bam Emergency Programme in Psychosocial Support (continued)

Lessons learned:

- Taboo against counselling weaker than thought.
- Trauma counselling is inappropriate if only for a few weeks; it has to be long term, such as a year or two.
- Group/art/sports activities very well received by children.
- Important to set up child-friendly spaces as soon as possible.
- The first two to three weeks is a shock period when no one wants to talk. There should be no interventions, just a simple presence. Gradually integrate outreach into community centres.

Emergency protocol:

- First 2–3 weeks** → Shock – No direct intervention
- First 2–3 weeks** → Intense preparation, refresher training for roster, debriefing of teachers/counsellors
- First 2–3 weeks** → Supply tents, connex and toys to create child-friendly safe spaces for children younger than 6
- First 2–3 weeks** → Sign pre-drafted template for letter of understanding with partner (agreed upon during a disaster preparation period that is then ready when needed to use a third party to implement projects)
- First 6 months** → Outreach
- Beyond 6 months** → School-based outreach and counselling centre
- Beyond 1 year** → Counselling centre and community-based programme

Source: Maziar Taleshi, UNICEF child protection officer, Iran, 'Post Disaster Psychosocial Support Programmes in Iran', presented during the UNICEF Regional Workshop on Psychosocial Support in Education in Emergencies, 8–9 December 2005 in Phuket, Thailand.

5 Finding room for others to support psychosocial activities in schools

“We’re not training teachers to be health workers or even therapists. What we are doing is setting up an entire system for support in which teachers and the community can refer children with psychological problems to appropriate services.”

Elizabeth de Castro, psychosocial specialist and UNICEF child protection project officer in a presentation, ‘An Introduction to and a Framework for Psychosocial Responses for Children in Emergencies’

There are problems with some students after a traumatic event that teachers should not attempt to touch – other than to find someone else who should. Knowing what problems can stay in the classroom and which need professional medical help is what psychosocial training cultivates. Stories from the tsunami-affected areas highlight other roles within schools that non-teachers carried out – some with clear positive effect and others still being debated. In Thailand, for instance, many small organizations swarmed on schools to offer activities; they were not required to follow any protocol or standards. Some principals were overwhelmed with offers of help and found it impossible to turn them away, although the number of visitors and activities seemed disruptive.

FOR EXAMPLE: According to the school principal in Phang Nga, Thailand, “Sometimes, an organization came and asked only for orphans or a specific grade and sometimes the whole school. In the whole picture, it was all good. It made time here fun and helped students forget. Some came and did things in a hurry and then left. Some religious organizations were coming and only one we had an issue with; they wanted to teach English but when we observed them they were talking about their religion. I allowed them to finish their session but told them they were not doing what they had said.”

Schools can be a place for non-educators to help with psychosocial support. This is due to lack of training or experience for teachers, the number of burdens teachers assume or are heaped upon them, or the nature of the emergency situation.

FOR EXAMPLE: The ‘Psychological First Aid for Children Affected by Tsunami’ project in Thailand involving some 220 volunteer paediatricians, psychiatrists, nurses and social workers from Khon Kaen University, Prince of Songkla University, Walailak University and the Centre for the Protection of Children’s Rights focused on 96 schools in four major-affected provinces of Thailand, covering 1,018 students. The project aimed to help children cope and help teachers closely observe children and how to arrange psychological support for those who need it. Children were brought into a three-day workshop during a school holiday to engage in activities to promote their resilience and so the volunteers could identify those at risk. The discussions centred on disaster-related events, problem solving and strengthening their resilience and building a sense of hope, all while using peer support.

Volunteers from the Prince of Songkla University’s psychology department visited many schools in the first few months after the tsunami. In February, several of them organized a 10-day camp of games and drawing activities with the students at Ban Pak Veep primary school in Phang Nga province, Thailand. They returned again in June. Recalls one of the teachers, Somsri Petchra, “The first time was for the children but we had been working so hard so the second time they also focused on the teachers. They taught us how to meditate and do yoga and we did it together with the children. They also gave us training on how to help children and give more support. Having students and teachers do the activities together really helped build up the bonds between us. It helped both sides psychologically. We were having fun but they were training us to later apply activities, such as, cooking, games, meditation, singing, exercise, dancing and letting children make up their own games and playing those together.”

A mobile psychosocial service pulls up at one school or another each day in the tsunami-affected areas of Phang Nga, Thailand. Prior to the tsunami, Childline operated in Thailand as a hotline service to children needing help in abusive situations. With World Vision funding it set up the three caravans outfitted as a kind of mobile nursery centre, each with a team of three 'counsellors'. A British clinical psychiatrist initially trained them to work with primary school-aged children to do play therapy assessments, aimed at social recovery. "People look a lot at the psychology problem and there is not much of that, but the psychosocial status is far from ideal. For deep psychological problems, I tell the teams don't go there – you can mess up a child. But for psychosocial, the teams provide a social network and counselling to help a child find a way out," explains Ilya Smirnoff, who set up the service. Each Wednesday, a Swedish neurosurgeon who has some counselling experience and who works in north-east Thailand flies down to Phang Nga to debrief the counsellors and discuss their work with the children. When they find a child needing more serious attention, they refer to the local government social development department.

"NGOs did not come in to the school. It would have helped to have NGOs – the students would be happy to know other people. The teachers didn't know what to do. A lot of NGOs helped in the beginning but not for psychosocial. But it's an important thing; we need psychosocial activities and to know how to deal with stress," comments a teacher in SD56 Banda Aceh, which was not affected but took in 120 students initially from a school that had been flattened by the tsunami.

Using religious leaders in schools can help bring in spiritual reinforcement. However, this should come from the local culture and community, not from outside missionaries. Researchers in both countries heard of various explanations for the earthquake/tsunami being espoused by religious leaders in affected communities and noted that schools needed to be aware of their significance.

FOR EXAMPLE: The university researchers for a rapid assessment in one Thailand province noted in their report that Muslim communities believe that the tsunami was sent by Allah as punishment to humankind for not being good to each other and not following the Koran. They found Muslims who felt a renewed need to adhere to religious rules, to pray and to build new mosques. For Buddhists, the researchers explained the tsunami was a natural event, not a divine punishment – a belief that seemed to give many people comfort. Monks visit the affected communities to lead people in meditation and teach about life and death, which also brought comfort.

Some schools went so far as to bring religious leaders into their staff.

FOR EXAMPLE: Monks in Ban Bang Muang and Ban Nam Khem have taken over teaching the religion class, which is a standard part of the curriculum. "I see kids lacking a sense of goodness within themselves, says Sanquan, a young monk who moved to Phang Nga province from Bangkok after the tsunami." "I see problems, especially with orphans getting lots of money. Each gets about 300,000 baht but a lot of them are using it in the wrong way – buying alcohol, for instance. ... I want to make this better. I teach three days in a week, three to four hours a day. In Thai education curriculum it is a Buddhism class but I want to adapt the original course to this context and address the psychological needs of children. I'm using karma and basic Buddhism; for instance, I asked for a homework report on the topic of 'karma'. Some expressed that they didn't understand why good people have to die. Most understand why."

"This was an idea from the monks, not the school," says Tanit, a teacher at Ban Bang Muang school in Thailand. "Children have lost their concentration. The preaching from Buddhism is helping them gain their concentration and get back on track. They're teaching children to know themselves and to identify their problems."

The Rajaprajanugroh 36 primary school (formerly Kamala school) in Phuket province, Thailand, has outsiders teaching its religion classes. As it is a mixed school, a Muslim leader comes every Friday morning to work with the Muslim students and a Buddhist teacher works in a classroom for the Buddhist students. Pudsadee Soontharak, one of the teachers, believes the religious input has had a calming effect: "Students have more respect toward teachers and their friends. They're caring for each other more. This is obvious in the drills – they're not running on their own but line up and work together orderly. Sometimes I see them holding hands and take friends' hands. They aren't thinking only of themselves but worrying about their friends."

Many medical personnel in Thailand volunteered to help conduct psychosocial activities in classes in the early weeks.

FOR EXAMPLE: A Tai Mung hospital nurse in Phang Nga province took three students from the Ta Pang who lost a parent and their friends to the hospital during a school vacation to do psychosocial activities.

There are a variety of ways to assist in psychosocial recovery in schools without using outsiders or intrusive visits.

FOR EXAMPLE: Siam Care in Thailand first provided scholarships to students to help them stay in school and then developed a book for teachers to use. The story is of 9-year-old Chai whose father is a fisherman; the narrator is a bee. The tsunami destroys his house but Chai, his sister and mother find shelter in a camp. They cannot find his father. Chai wants to cry but he can't. In the camp when he plays he's okay, but when he's alone he thinks about his father. Before the tsunami, he would look out to sea and think the horizon was the edge, but his father told him it goes on. So now he thinks that his father is still way out there. Another 9-year-old girl who lost everyone in her family moves in with Chai's family. The point is to let young readers see a contrast or degrees of loss. Chai blames himself for his father's death and thinks often of his father, which gives him a stomach ache and he can't sleep. When he goes back to school, there are empty chairs in the classroom. He can't concentrate on his studies and starts falling behind. An NGO builds Chai's family a new house, though at first he has more nightmares. The bee wants to help Chai get better and to look forward to the future. The book includes nine activities for use in schools that aim for them to: reveal their feelings/ to know themselves, to express what they love and what they hate and why, to reveal secrets – to say something they would never say again, to communicate between themselves and with adults and to ask for help. The activities involve a group session and a worksheet.

In the first three months after the tsunami disaster, particularly in Thailand, countless organizations descended upon the damaged areas to volunteer, to help, to provide comfort. Although the larger international agencies had formed a coordinating network in both countries, unfortunately in the case of Thailand it did not include smaller organizations, which also did not collaborate or communicate with each other. Thus there was no monitoring of who was doing what and where and if it was ultimately helpful or harmful. As the relief period transitioned into the rehabilitation stage, many groups disappeared. To some this was a welcome relief. To others who found new psychosocial issues cropping up among children as the months wore on, the exodus left many needs unattended.

FOR EXAMPLE: The organizer of the Psychological First Aid project, Dr. Srivieng Pairojkul, observed four major problems while doing the preparatory work:

- Children received little psychological support from caregivers.
- Families and teachers lacked knowledge on psychological reactions of children and how to help them.
- A huge amount of psychological programmes were launched without any coordination and created an even more chaotic situation.
- There were inappropriate approaches using psychological tests and medications.

She also noted several school-related issues affecting psychosocial support:

- Numerous visitors created confusion in the schools.
- Children were too easily accessed by outside organizations.
- Teachers lack knowledge on psychological reactions of children and how to screen organizations offering their own programmes.
- The quality of education in affected areas now lags behind the national standard.
- Most schools lack a preparedness programme.

One member of an NGO concentrating on psychosocial activities admits she is not sure what she is doing or if it's helping children during the first ever meeting of local organizations working in Thailand's tsunami-affected areas nearly one year after the disaster. "We're doing activities and the children seem okay. How can we tell who needs help?" Someone else in her discussion group then reads from a list of indicators that the Department of Mental Health has provided.

Having no standards or guidelines in schools regarding psychosocial activities, programming or coordination can ultimately work against the goals.

FOR EXAMPLE: According to the psychosocial programme officer at Save the Children UK, children in tsunami-affected communities in Thailand have been saying (paraphrased):

- We are absolutely fed up with people asking us about the tsunami.
- We are absolutely fed up with endless different sets of people turning up and asking the same questions over and over.
- We do not want to draw any more pictures of the tsunami.
- We do not want to describe how we felt/now feel.
- We do not want to be made to relive the experience of December 26.
- We do not want to feel used by people who take our time to gather information and then leave and we never see the photographs they take or the stories they write.

Perhaps the strongest message that has come from the tsunami is: Tap into local resources where possible. Using outside help is a last resort, but in situations like the tsunami where teachers and others were inadequately prepared for a disaster on such a scale, it is almost certainly essential to use outside help. It is important to remember that most children will be fine as long as adults find ways to support and build their natural resilience. It is only a small proportion who will require specialized interventions. Teachers should be trained in pre-service and in-service programmes to do two important things:

1. How to provide psychosocial support to children in the course of everyday classroom activities and
2. When and to whom to refer children who require specialized attention.

6 Using psychosocial support in schools effectively

“An area education officer was saying that school and education administrators didn’t handle the psychosocial situation well and there is a need for a much better plan in place. They didn’t know how to respond or how to screen agencies/NGOs wanting to help. Thus many psychosocial activities were disruptive and weren’t normalizing the situation.”

An international agency programme officer in Thailand

Disasters and emergencies add to previously existing problems and concerns of the people. This is particularly the case in Aceh where the earthquake and tsunami came on top of a 30-year conflict. This combination makes many psychological, physical or social problems more complicated. Addressing child protection issues, such as preventing child abuse in the context of new environments resulting from the disaster (violence in the family, living with relatives, in evacuation centres, increased vulnerability, etc.) presents another challenge. Psychosocial support can help children overcome both disaster-related issues as well as compounded problems, although it does not always provide a quick or easy fix.

FOR EXAMPLE: During the UNICEF regional workshop, a teacher from a school severely affected in Thailand described the difficult situation in her school since the disaster. She talked about poverty, how children are not getting attention from parents and how this is increasing the burdens on teachers. Students come regularly to school but don’t go to class. She noted they are getting help to observe symptoms and monitor behaviours, but they don’t know how to get them back into the classroom. The school can’t handle the situation and parents/caregivers don’t seem inclined or able to help.

Plan International regards children’s education as an essential intervention in the disaster-recovery process. The April-September 2005¹⁴ Regional Emergency Psychosocial Support Network quarterly newsletter (www.psychosocialnetwork.org) refers to Plan International identifying one major challenge for agencies engaged in education renewal: the development of curricula that are attuned to the current realities of children who have been victimized by conflict or who could become caught up in situations of violent conflict.

Challenges

Based on experiences of teachers and principals and other relevant observers,¹⁵ there are many challenges to providing psychosocial support:

- Many educators are unclear on how to provide psychosocial support. Psychosocial support is a very dynamic concept and approach in which there are no pre-cut rules.
 - There is a lack of psychosocial capability-building for teachers.
 - The absence of a school guidance counsellor or one who provides emotional guidance makes it more difficult.
 - Educators prioritize academics over needed psychosocial help. (In the UK, there is much focus on academic results of students; school league tasks do not help teachers think of psychosocial issues.)

¹⁴ Volume 4, No. 2

¹⁵ Also drawn from the working session during the UNICEF Regional Workshop on Psychosocial Support in Education in Emergencies.

- Teachers are unable to recognize and read the behaviour of students as an index of their psychosocial needs. It is easy if the child discloses psychosocial needs verbally; otherwise, it is very difficult for a teacher to recognize.
- High teacher-to-students ratio following emergencies; one teacher ends up with more students in a class.
- Teachers are overburdened due to the influx of activities and increased workload.
- The scheduling of trainings affects teachers' personal time and teaching activities.
- There are unequal training opportunities among schools; some are given more trainings than others.
- There is a tendency to use teachers for research/data-gathering/needs-assessment without properly training them to do that type of work.
- Shortage of trainers and facilitators for the school for 'echo trainings' and follow-ups.
- Come-and-go psychosocial programmes provide no feedback, no follow-up, no monitoring or evaluation.
- Package (interventionist) programmes from the outside are not appropriate.
- Helping villagers, children and teachers gain more information about organizations that intend to work in their communities so they themselves can screen, accept or reject them;
- Empowering schools to exercise their right to say 'NO' to incoming groups and programmes.

What is psychosocial programming?

Psychosocial programming, including agreement on its definition, is needed to address the challenges in helping children. Structured psychosocial activities include:¹⁶

- Recreational and expressional activities for children
- Child-to-child or mentoring programmes
- Parents/community meetings to address their own and their children's psychosocial well-being
- Psychosocial information material for parents and teachers
- Training and support of psychosocial para-professionals, including teachers, youth volunteers and health workers
- Supporting community structures and cultural activities/traditions
- Education on safety procedures in disasters
- Community rituals, including grieving rituals.

Goals of psychosocial programming:¹⁷

- Ensure children are with their parents or caregivers who have skills to support a stressed child
- Support children in expressive and recreational activities
- Facilitate strategies for children to develop meaningful peer attachments, friendships and social ties
- Support children to have access to services, such as health care and education
- Facilitate a sense of belonging, trust in others and control of their environment.

¹⁶ From UNICEF Indonesia, from regional workshop

¹⁷ Save the Children UK

To help build better programmes and better policies for people enduring the trauma of human tragedy, UNICEF Bangkok organized a Regional Psychosocial Workshop in Thailand with key agencies and government representatives from Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia and Thailand. During the working sessions, participants noted the following strengths for integrating psychosocial programming in schools:

- Schools are a strategic centre for psychosocial support because:
 - Children are already there;
 - There is available space (classroom, school compound);
 - Teachers have many months to be with children on a daily basis;
 - Teachers are able to build strong trusting relationships with students;
 - There are many activities in and out of the classroom already prime to integrate psychosocial components; and
 - Some schools have a guidance counsellor. (In the UK, for instance, a child and adolescent mental health staff person works directly in a high school and its family of primary schools within the locality, closely identifying and helping provide the needed support to a child before she/he enters high school and then for the duration in secondary education.)
- Educators have a positive attitude, good intentions and concern in giving psychosocial support.
- There is respect for religious beliefs, rituals and practices (e.g. praying together) as spiritual component of education.
- The developmental approach, such as having a programme at each stage of child development and providing age-appropriate activities, is being done already in early childhood care and development (day care, etc.) and in primary and secondary schools.
- Some schools have close links with families and the community.
- Schools may have safe spaces, such as child-friendly schools that are physically safe places and provide a sense of security, safety and protection to children.
- In some areas, government agencies and NGOs are working together already.
- Schools provide an easy environment for developing peer support, such as students helping other students.

Recommendations

In her presentation during the UNICEF regional workshop, Dr. Srivieng Pairojkul recommended involving schools in disaster management, developing a school preparedness programme, building teacher psychosocial capabilities, establishing a school curriculum that promotes resiliency among children and setting up a child protection system in schools.

Participants in the UNICEF regional workshop in emergencies made the following recommendations for using psychosocial support effectively in education:

1. Identify existing psychosocial programmes and strengthen them and links with the community; promote psychosocial awareness for families to reinforce the goals at home.
2. Promote programmes for families through parent-teacher associations.
3. Strengthen guidance of teachers; increase the number of them and shift the role from teachers to an actual counsellor who does more than career guidance.
4. Develop a referral system for psychosocial programmes in schools.
5. Integrate the psychosocial approach and trainings of guidance counsellor association throughout a country, especially in relation to emergencies.
6. Conduct school campaigns, peer support, brother/sister programmes to boost 'mutual care' and include teachers working with students.

7. Recognize limitations of teachers' capacities.
8. Coordinate better among agencies – the education ministry has to be lead in coordination and set guidelines and the approach that each organization that wants to do psychosocial programme must follow; organizations need a certificate from the education ministry to work in a school.
9. The education ministry should create policies and link with other agencies and relevant parties.
10. The child-centred education and psychosocial approaches practised before the tsunami need reinforcing; use media advocacy to circulate best practices.
11. Create teacher support groups.
12. Create e-mail discussion groups for psychosocial support, but with responsible administration of the dialogue.
13. Develop school-to-school networking for support.
14. Develop a short mandatory course on psychosocial support, such as a teacher refresher course or one that is integrated into the university curriculum.
15. Create a network of local resource people as a psychosocial support team in schools for both emergencies and non-emergencies.
16. Integrate school preparedness plans in the provincial disaster preparation plans.
17. UNICEF and other organizations are in a better position to communicate to government heads regarding the value of psychosocial support; they can lobby and advocate for the mainstreaming of support from a 'top-to-top' perspective; there is a perception of equal seniority in organizations that prohibits lower-ranking education officials from pursuing goals with higher-ranking officials.
18. UNICEF and other organizes need to conduct public awareness campaigns in local language.
19. Invest in psychosocial training of teachers while in universities and in the continuous education of teachers.
20. [International agencies] and the education ministry can assist in recruiting counsellors by providing certain incentives, such as income.

Disasters present an opportunity to reach for programmes that might not have been possible previously. There is an influx of resources (funds and people/organizations) to help affected communities and heightened social concerns. As in both Thailand and Indonesia with the earthquake and tsunami, outside help and ideas can move into previously closed-off communities (very few local NGOs and no international agency worked in affected areas of Thailand prior to the tsunami, while armed conflict in Aceh and military intervention had limited the number of organizations operating there).

This increases the opportunities for affected children to learn from various activities provided them, which ordinarily are not available, such as in new awareness of child rights and new ways of learning such as from creative play in teaching. The misfortunes that disasters impose ultimately, inadvertently, create chances to better protect children and to better help them develop. Well-aimed thinking and commitment by people determines whether those chances are exploited or wasted.

