

## **RESPONDING TO THE TSUNAMI CRISIS - A PEOPLE'S HEALTH MOVEMENT STATEMENT.**

At the year-end, on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2004, an earthquake, off the Sumatra coast in Indonesia (measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale) unleashed Tsunami waves that caused one of the biggest human tragedies in recent history in Southern Asia and in few parts of Africa. By 20<sup>th</sup> January 2005, the estimated toll of death was well past 228,000

A massive national and international response to this human disaster and its humanitarian challenges is underway after communities, nations and the international community recovered from the shock of the sheer immensity of the devastation.

The PHM Global Secretariat has been receiving messages of concern and solidarity from all over the world and offers of support. The PHM members in the affected countries supported by local efforts and International solidarity have been actively involved in responding to the disaster.

While encouraging all PHM members to respond in solidarity, and to work at all levels with people's organizations, local governments and state and international aid efforts, the PHM would also like to raise a few important issues and concerns, which might be kept in mind as we respond to this disaster.

- ~ All relief and rehabilitation efforts must be done in close collaboration and partnership with affected communities keeping their needs, ideas, and aspirations in mind.*
- ~ Relief and rehabilitation efforts must not become sub-servient to the political agendas of the state and national governments, nor to the pressures and priorities of aid giving agencies, either from developed countries or International funding agencies.*
- ~ The aid efforts - both relief and rehabilitation, must be sensitive to the social, economic, cultural situation of the affected communities and their human rights.*
- ~ The aid efforts must be gender sensitive and take into consideration the requirements of people with special needs including non-fisher folk, people with disabilities, and socially neglected groups like widows, elderly people and orphans.*
- ~ The programmes have to be holistic, responding to the basic needs, psycho-social, medical, livelihoods, and community organization and capacity building aspects of the challenge, JIn(1t.not be over medicalized or techno-centric or sub-servient to external agendas of any kind.*

- ~ *The greatest challenge is to collaborate with communities, local civil society organizations and governments, to rebuild lives and livelihoods of people, strengthening their access to comprehensive and responsive Primary Health Care, education, social services and economic / livelihood support.*
- ~ *Long-term rehabilitation has to be done, empowering affected communities as active participants and not passive beneficiaries. Care must also be taken to ensure that all those who were marginalized by the societal processes before the disaster, are not further marginalized by it. They must be organized and supported to ensure equity in relief and rehabilitation. The long term efforts must also focus on disaster preparedness in the coastal villages and measures to the potential recurrent disaster.*
- ~ *All relief and rehabilitation work and processes should adhere to internationally agreed codes of conduct as far as possible to ensure equity and dignity to the affected people. Government and other agencies must be supported to attain those standards.*
- ~ *Aid is also being subjected to a series of external factors, which include donor agendas, media exploitation, global security policies, market economy and commodification. As we all respond to the current disaster, it is also time to scrutinize all these practices and the ongoing structural determinants of aid.*

While gearing up collectively in the new year to respond to the Asian tsunami disaster, let us also continue to build a strong solidarity against the ongoing 'tsunamis' of war and occupation; corporate led globalization; the unjust WTO and international agreements like TRIPS, GATS; and unsustainable development. This year needs our collective response in solidarity with all those who are facing these challenges.

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