

Spotlight on current projects for Malteser International, the Order's worldwide relief service

A brief look at actions on three continents in three months

Cologne, 2 February 2009.

AMERICAS

Peru: Part of the emergency relief measures begun in 2007 by Malteser International and Malteser Peru in the aftermath of the terrible earthquake in the region meant reconstructing basic sanitation. Just completed: 125m sewer for Canete village by Peruvian Malteser.

AFRICA

Democratic Republic of Congo: extension of relief measures in the East, to assist internally displaced persons (IDPs) – currently estimated at 850,000.

Psycho-social support for severe trauma sufferers - are often victims of or witnesses to rape, massacres and executions. Food supplies (cereals, vegetables, oil, salt) to 30,000 in in Minova in November, 48,000 more in December. Emergency medical supplies have been rushed to the wounded after rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army destroyed large parts of the district of Faradje and burned down the Faradje City Hospital.

Dennis Müller, Congo expert, Malteser International explains: "The people had to flee the heavy fighting between the Congolese army and the rebels. Although there is a ceasefire now, most of them do not dare to go back to their villages and many have also lost all their belongings and are urgently dependent on food aid."

To build on the relief efforts for the growing number of internally displaced persons, Malteser International is in urgent need of donations: <http://www.maltarelief.org>

Sudan: Training and awareness

November - Malteser International provided training on safe childbirth; 185 local midwives participated. It is hoped that through closer cooperation between the midwives and local health centres, more women will be encouraged to give birth in a safe environment.

December - World AIDS Day. Malteser International organised awareness campaigns for HIV and AIDS in all its project sites in Darfur. Main topics: education on HIV transmission and combating the stigma still surrounding those affected with the virus. Locations: the market places so that people from neighbouring villages could attend.

Zimbabwe: Cholera epidemic

Cholera epidemic: Malteser International, with a partner organisation, HELP, has funded over 5,000 patients, providing essential intravenous fluids, needles, tubes.

The cholera epidemic spread rapidly in December, and was made worse by the lack of access to clean water, and even use of sewage water in some cases.

Statistics up till mid January: Over 2,000 have already died of cholera; 40,000 infections have been registered.

ASIA

Cambodia – Mother and child health

In Cambodia many women still give birth in their homes, with the help of a traditional birth attendant and so mother and child mortality is still comparatively high. Juliana Helmerich, project assistant, recounts: "A 41 year old mother came to one of our health centres to deliver her sixth child. She has had ten pregnancies with four stillborn babies, all home deliveries, in a village about six kms from the health centre.

Soon after, another woman came to a nearby health centre for the first time. She was 40 and it was her sixth delivery. In the health centre, the midwife diagnosed a high risk delivery and decided that the woman needed to be transferred to the better equipped Hospital in Along Venh. Problem: the family is very poor and couldn't afford an ambulance. Only those officially registered as poor can claim health expenses from the Health Equity Fund (HEF), and this woman was not yet registered. Maia McFadden, Project Manager, Malteser International, contacted the HEF. A happy result: the safe arrival of a 5.5kg baby girl. Under other circumstances, it is unlikely the baby would have survived the night."

In both these cases, the extended outreach programmes run by Malteser International have had good results. Why don't more pregnant women visit the health facilities? The roads are bad, there is no public transportation - formidable obstacles - but even more is the lack of understanding. And presenting for the first time takes trust - in a person or an institution. So the ongoing promotion, training and education work in the field of mother and child healthcare in rural Cambodia is of vital importance.

India: Housing programme completed

Seven years after the devastating earthquake in Gujarat, Malteser International has completed and closed its long-term housing rehabilitation programme. In total, the organisation helped over 1,600 families with safe housing. End 2008: last 156 houses were handed over. Innovations included mud blocks to construct, ecological and disaster-proof design, sanitation, residents' own decoration. Malteser International and Indian partner Unnati demonstrated a successful low cost housing approach: 1500 Euro per house plus low 350 Euro monitoring and implementation cost.

Myanmar: Orphan aid

December: provision of blankets, mattresses, mosquito nets, clothes, shoes and toys to the 82 children in an orphanage at Sittwe, Northern Rakhine. The intervention is supported by UNESCO and now the orphanage will be renovated, training provided for volunteers, and measures taken to ensure future self-financing.

A second orphanage in Pang Kham, Wa Special Region will be renovated and enlarged by Malteser International with support of Caritas Traunkirchen.

Sri Lanka: Rebuilding a village

Seenaveli on the east coast of Sri Lanka, destroyed by the tsunami in December 2004 and then in 2006 the inhabitants had been forced to seek refuge due to heavy fighting in the region. Now the area is safe once again and Malteser International is assisting a local partner organisation in the building of houses for 63 families. "We had planned to rebuild the village after the tsunami, but then the fighting made it impossible," says Tyche Hofman, Programme Coordinator, eastern Sri Lanka. 15 houses are completed, others will be shortly and the remaining families can leave their temporary shelter or nearby IDP camps.

About Malteser International

The Order of Malta has programmes in over 200 countries around the globe. Malteser International is its emergency arm. It seeks to work with local partners wherever practicable, as this ensures working with people who have local knowledge, language, understanding, whilst it provides welcome employment to many

For more information about Malteser International and its work, please see:

www.malteser-international.org