



International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD)

The Asian Tsunami: What about the Long Term Affects on Children?

It is heart warming to see the response of Canadians response to the recent disaster that has struck the shores of South Asia. Many have been affected both personally and through the images and reports that flood the news. We ourselves have visited and worked in many of the regions affected and had several of our international interns and friends narrowly escape with their lives. We are unsure of the impact on specific children, families and communities with whom we have worked, but know that the Tsunami was devastating, and that the impact will be felt for many years to come.

Much is being done now to relieve the immediate needs of the people. Aid is pouring in, but it is the long term affects on the children that most concern us.

Already communities are speaking out about the aid, saying that they had no warning about the wave and that now they do not know about the future as everyone is coming in to do things to and for them. Just the other day on the BBC, a community from Sri Lanka was telling the international community that they needed funds and assistance, but not at the expense of control of their lives. The message we are getting is that while communities have been hard hit, they are ultimately in the best position to decide how reconstruction support should be targeted, especially in regards to the care and well being of their children.

So how then are communities being supported to allow them to better support their children and to help them deal with the long term psychological affects of this disaster?

In response, *The International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD)*, a not for profit organization is partnering with Save the Children, MSF, UNICEF and local community leaders to address the long term psychosocial needs of the children and their communities.

With 15 years of experience in the field, and a commitment to making a difference in children's day to day lives by drawing on and facilitating local child, family, community and cultural strengths, IICRD will be providing direct support and training for the Save the Children community/school based relief effort in Southern India. Specifically, IICRD will be involved in providing:

1. Psychosocial Support for Children

1.1. General Psychosocial Training

General training to teachers and other local professionals on childhood grief, trauma and recovery.

1.2. Nature Based Interventions

Given the centrality of the natural world in causing the trauma, we will examine opportunities for nature based play and recreations programs, particularly those drawing on local ritual, custom and beliefs, in helping children rebuild their sense of trust and

positive relationships with the natural world. (These may include art, music, gardening, and nature based youth leadership.)

2. Community Capacity Building for Vulnerable Children

Helping NGO's, community leaders and local government reps, identify the most vulnerable children and allocate resources effectively and efficiently in ways that draw on local strengths

3. Research and Evaluation

Participatory research activities addressing issues of: assessing culturally grounded psychosocial well being, child centred assessment and evaluation, nature based participatory research tools, culturally grounded research methods
Philip Cook is traveling to India, Thailand and Indonesia on January 29th for 4 weeks with a group of Save the Children Canada colleagues to meet with local community leaders, children and their families to discuss how schools can be the focus of long - term support for vulnerable children. With CIDA agreeing to match public funding already gathered by Save the Children, this 5 year project is being scheduled to begin this March. In addition, it is hoped that the IICRD team will be able to draw on the local Pender Islands School and community to become involved or perhaps partner with some of the communities we will be working with. While this is just one of the many efforts to help address the long term effects on the children that draw on local culture strengths, we trust that it will make a difference in the children's lives not only in India, but here on the Island.

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