

Operation Hope -- JCI Networks Serve Tsunami Victims

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Deeply affected by the recent tragedy in Southeast Asia, countless JCI members all over the world have taken upon themselves the task of helping those in need rather than relying on others. They have pointed out that, with young, enthusiastic and entrepreneurial volunteers all over the world, JCI is in a unique position to effectively and directly help tsunami victims. "Our strength lies in our established international network," pointed out Tan Theng Poh, 2004 JCI Singapore President.

To promote and coordinate relief efforts worldwide, JCI President Kevin Cullinane, from Cobh, Ireland, approved JCI Operation Hope, which was officially launched January 1, 2005. "JCI is involved because more than 155,000 of our fellow men, women and children have perished in the disaster and the 5 million people that are now homeless need our hope and support to rebuild their shattered communities," said President Cullinane.

Donations have begun to pour in and will be carefully audited. As expressed by JCI President Cullinane, "JCI is leading a global appeal effort among our Members, Senators, Past Members, companies, foundations, family and friends for money to be pledged to the victims of the Asian tsunami."

Taking advantage of their networks, JCI members began to organize and to provide needed assistance almost right after the tragedy. Many JCI Members, after sacrificing their New Year holidays to assist in relief operations, are now hard at work gathering, organizing and providing aid.

"JCI Operation Hope is our first attempt in years to involve our JCI community towards such a large project and make things happen with our hands rather than through the hands of someone else," said Secretary General Edson A. Kodama. "JCI is thus carrying out its mission 'to contribute to the advancement of the global community by providing the opportunity for young people to develop the leadership skills, social responsibility, entrepreneurship and fellowship necessary to create positive change.'"

What JCI Members are Doing Worldwide

JCI **Singapore** Members, for example, have created a special web page and have already shipped supplies. "There is a 40-foot container fully loaded with fresh water, food, free medical supplies and clothing bound for Sri Lanka on Monday, January 3; with at least two more 40 footers expected in subsequent shipments," they reported. Long time philanthropist and Patron to JCI Singapore JCI Senator Dr. Tan Hian Tsin and Datin Tan pledged RM 1,000,000 (US\$ 263,000) towards relief efforts.

All over **Asia**, JCI Members are organizing internally to assist as effectively as possible. "We offer our unreserved support for JCI Operation Hope, said JCI **Japan** President Kazuaki Takatake. "I look forward to working closely with JCI for as long as it takes to see JCI Operation Hope through to a successful conclusion."

JCI **Austria** will support relief efforts with the proceeds of a special concert to be held January 13. As the result of the efforts of JCI **Sweden**, a ship loaded with supplies is already headed for **Thailand**. Other Nordic and European countries are following suit. JCI **Germany** plans to provide containers for potable water. Local Organizations in the **United States** are enthusiastically joining in, and so are National Organizations in **Latin America** and **Africa**.

In countries hit by the tsunamis, JCI Members have been actively organizing to receive and provide aid and finding the most effective ways to meet the victims' needs. "Our Members have been visiting the affected areas with relief goods and have been providing us with information regarding the changing needs of different regions affected by the waves," said Darshana Senaratna, 2004 JCI **Sri Lanka** President.

"In this horrible hour for our country, we have the consolation that we have friends all over the world in JCI... and we are trying to find how to best help the victims," said 2004 JCI **India** President Rajesh Chandak. "Our 2005 national board of directors is collecting money and supplies to help our brothers in need through the JCI Indonesia Care program," reported Riana Dewi Rais, 2005 JCI **Indonesia** President.

"I was at Pathong Beach in **Phuket** with my family and had to run away from the waves," said 2004 JCI **Thailand** President Ekkapon Yuangnark. "I'm coordinating relief efforts with JCI Phuket in order to assist the victims in the area. We thank God for allowing us to survive to help others in need in the world."

JCI Members also hope to provide assistance to countries in Africa that have been affected, including **Somalia**, with more than 50,000 victims, and **Kenya** and **Tanzania**, where hundreds of fishermen have lost their boats and property.

JCI's Tradition of International Service

JCI members worldwide, inspired by a proud tradition of outstanding and effective international service, have enthusiastically endorsed JCI Operation Hope. Successful international projects conducted by JCI Members in the past include the following:

1953 -- Operation Warmth and the Korean Package Drive

More than 22,000 blankets were collected for the hundreds of homeless victims of a series of disastrous earthquakes in the Ionian Islands off the coast of Greece. Medical and other relief supplies, as well as cash were also provided.

The Korean Package Drive was an excellent test of JCI member nations' ability to cooperate on an international undertaking. Delivery of some hundreds of tons of relief goods gave JCI an outstanding opportunity to tell their story and offer the opportunity to work in the organization to other young people.

1954 -- Operation Brotherhood

With the adoption of this project, JCI proved that "Young Men Can Change the World," which was the theme of the IX World Congress in Mexico in 1954. Operation Brotherhood became a total JCI commitment for two years, as JCI Members from many

member nations provided medical relief to the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees fleeing North Viet Nam following the partitioning of their country. 1954 JCI President Douglas Hoge (U.S.) could not recall such a total involvement of JCI members since the organization's founding.

1966 -- Project Concern

Project Concern was still another undertaking that would eventually involve several JCI member nations, furnishing dental and primary medical care for underprivileged people in Hong Kong, Viet Nam, Mexico, and the Appalachian Mountains in the United States. It began in Hong Kong in 1962, with JCI Members in Australia and New Zealand adopting it first. Then the Canadians became involved.

The Future

As 2004 JCI Singapore President Tan Theng Poh indicated, JCI's strength definitely lies in its established international networks. Recognizing that fact, JCI Members are using those networks all over the world -- in a united, effective, and enthusiastic manner -- to serve their brothers and sisters in need.

"I call on all our stakeholders and Members in every one of the more than 5,000 communities in which we have a local network, in more than 100 countries to respond immediately to this call to action by helping today to offer hope for tomorrow," stated JCI President Cullinane. "Now, more so than at any other hour in our past, the world needs the vision of young women and men to creative positive change. I know JCI will not be found wanting at this, the world's greatest hour of need."

About JCI

JCI (Junior Chamber International) is a worldwide federation of young leaders and entrepreneurs with nearly 200,000 active JCI members and millions of JCI alumni. JCI members contribute to the advancement of the global community by creating positive changes in over 5,000 communities in more than 100 nations worldwide.

JCI members lead projects in the areas of Business, Individual, Community, and International Development. They meet, learn and grow. By participating in various projects, meetings, seminars and events around the globe, JCI members grow personally and professionally, developing the entrepreneurial and leadership skills needed to generate positive changes in their communities, their countries, and the world.

For more information, please visit <http://www.jci.cc>.

Contact:

Gladys S. Gist
JCI Communications Director
ggist@jci.cc
<http://www.jci.cc>
1-954-441-2672