



FOCUS HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

An Affiliate of the Aga Khan Development Network

## FOCUS in North America

Newsletter May 2008

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*From left to right; a post-Tsunami disaster simulation exercise helps train communities in India; a newly certified Community Emergency Response Team member in the USA and the German Ambassador in Tajikistan speaks with FOCUS staff and local community members at a relief distribution*

***FOCUS HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE SINCERELY THANKS  
DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS FOR THEIR UNTIRING SUPPORT***

Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS) is an international disaster risk management and emergency relief agency established in Europe, North America, South and Central Asia. It helps to build disaster resilient communities and supports people in need to reduce their dependence on humanitarian aid by facilitating their transition to sustainable, self-reliant, long-term development. FOCUS is affiliated with the Aga Khan Development Network, a group of institutions working to improve opportunities and living conditions, for people of all faiths and origins, in specific regions of the developing world. For further information, please visit [www.akdn.org/focus](http://www.akdn.org/focus)

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***CIDA AND FOCUS WORK TOGETHER TO BRING BACK HOPE  
BY BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES IN TSUNAMI-HIT AREAS***

No doubt, we all remember that fateful Boxing Day in 2004, when the earthquake and resulting tidal waves hit the international headlines. In the days that followed, countless lives, livelihoods and property were lost to the Indian Ocean Tsunami. Local communities feared they would never regain their dignity, livelihoods or hope for the future.



The eastern coastline of India was tremendously affected. The district of Krishna was one of the worst affected areas in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), through Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS), immediately mobilized manpower and emergency humanitarian relief items for delivery to the communities in need.

*On the southern coast of Andhra Pradesh, 301 villages along the 1,030 km coastline suffered partial or total destruction*



Since the 2005 AKDN facilitated relief effort, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and FOCUS have initiated a longer term programme entitled *"The Andhra Pradesh Post-Tsunami Relief to Development Project"* (APR2D). This programme is being implemented in the Nagayalanka *mandal* (sub-district) of the Krishna district, benefiting approximately 14,784 individuals. The three-year CIDA-FOCUS project seeks to enhance the state of disaster resilience and preparedness among coastal communities; ensuring that lives, property and livelihoods are better protected against potential natural disasters.



Currently in its second year, APR2D is supported by several AKDN agencies in India, including Aga Khan Foundation and Aga Khan Planning and Building Services, as well as FOCUS India. To date, 1,500 community members have received disaster awareness education, emergency stockpiles have been created, 2,000 people have attended health camps and a further 240 Community Emergency Response Team members have been trained. In the endeavor to reduce community health vulnerabilities, especially during a disaster, APR2D is also improving the sanitation infrastructure in villages where only 27% of households have sanitation units. Initially targeting the most vulnerable families, APR2D will construct 330 sanitation units this year, with a total 361 sanitation units to be completed by the end of the project.

While FOCUS continues to work towards fully engaging communities in disaster preparedness education and provide the technical support for this programme, hundreds of families in the Nagayalanka *mandal* are able to rebuild their lives with significantly more hope for a safer, better protected future. Through the ongoing generosity of our donors and supporters, FOCUS is able to work with impacting partners such as CIDA, and provide awareness and protection programs for communities living in much more vulnerable circumstances than our own.

## TRAINING EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS ACROSS USA

FOCUS' Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program trains community volunteers to be better prepared to respond to crisis situations in their communities. When emergencies occur, CERT members can effectively provide critical support to first responders, immediately assist disaster victims and mobilize volunteer manpower at a disaster site as well as facilitate a community's access to state services when required.

In collaboration with His Highness Prince Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismaili Local Councils, FOCUS has trained Crisis Managers across the USA, who have facilitated local CERT training. The training ensures the community has skilled, response capacity and has the ability to serve itself, as well as its neighbors, during and after an emergency. Working with emergency management organizations, such as first aid and fire fighting teams, also enables a CERT to forge strong partnerships with field experts. The specialized CERT course includes modules on disaster preparedness, fire suppression, basic medical skills and light search and rescue operations.



*Since 2006, CERT membership has grown to over 700 trained volunteers across the USA*

In 2008, crisis managers are seeking to build and maintain emergency response capacity in their teams. They are also striving to include an increased number of women in these teams across the region. Women are working alongside their male counterparts to ensure the safety of the community and are making significant contributions in the emergency management and volunteer mobilization process in wider society. If you are interested in joining your local CERT, please contact your local Jamati Crisis Representative or [focuscanada@focushumanitarian.org](mailto:focuscanada@focushumanitarian.org) or [focususa@focushumanitarian.org](mailto:focususa@focushumanitarian.org)



*"[The training] helps [to facilitate] outreach and partnerships with fire departments and other state organizations to help the community [during a disaster]."*  
**Nurbegum Walji, Safety Lead, Southwest Crisis Response Team, USA**

*"As a woman, it gives me strength to reach out to other women and create awareness to help secure community assets and minimize loss during a disaster."*  
**Mehrun Vellani, Resource Manager, Southwest Crisis Response Team, USA**

*"I've been a volunteer for most of my life. This training gives me an increased sense of volunteerism from a broader perspective; it helps me encourage other women to do the same and gives me a great sense of self-achievement."*  
**Sabiha Kapadia, Facilitator, Southwest Crisis Response Team, USA**

*CERT has helped "create the groundwork for the long-term security of our neighborhoods, our communities and our nation. It helps us to proactively be prepared for disasters. It's even more important for women, so we can assist our families to be better prepared. [Also] it gives me satisfaction to know that as a team, we are able to help spread awareness."*  
**Rozmin Velani, Crisis Response Program Coordinator, Southwest Crisis Response Team, USA**

### *RESPONDING TO EMERGENCY WINTER NEEDS IN TAJIKISTAN*



Severe winter conditions in early 2008 resulted in many communities across Tajikistan losing their electricity supply. FOCUS, with the support of the German Embassy in Tajikistan and in collaboration with the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence, provided relief to families in Qumsangir in the province of Khatlon, southern Tajikistan in March 2008. Stocks of heating materials and high nutrition food items were provided to more than one hundred households, many of whom are still in a process of rehabilitation since the devastating earthquakes of winter 2006. Almost a thousand homes were completely destroyed and 1,440 were partially damaged. A large number of these homes have not yet been reconstructed, consequently, many families are living in conditions of extreme cold with limited food.

This relief effort was coordinated by a wider relief operation implemented throughout Tajikistan, by several aid agencies to support communities affected by the winter crisis.

A further collaborative effort between the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and FOCUS also enabled the provision of relief to over 40 Afghan families living in the suburbs of Dushanbe, Vahdat and Kurgan-teppa, who were affected by the severe winter and ongoing electricity shortages.

### *Special Announcement-FOCUS in North America*

As of January 2008, Focus Humanitarian Assistance streamlined the operations of FOCUS Canada and FOCUS USA. The merging of functions and operations brings the new title of FOCUS in North America.

The two entities of FOCUS Canada and FOCUS USA remain as Institutions of their respective National Councils and continue to exist in accordance with their respective Statutes in the countries of establishment. Current governance structures also remain, through a Board for each country. An additional regional steering committee, comprising both Chairs, Vice-Chairs and a Regional Executive Officer has been formed and will maintain overall operational responsibility.

This exciting opportunity allows FOCUS to effectively maximize existing skills, capacities and expertise of individuals at each unit, including board members, staff and volunteers. Synergies are already vibrant across the North American region in respect of programs, outputs and management.

As with any time of transition, there will be opportunities for improvement and during this time, FOCUS values the patience and understanding of its supporters and donors.

Board Members for FOCUS in North America are:

**Canada:** *Dr. Kabir Jivraj, Zulfikar Jiwani, Dilshad Gillani, Sheny Jaffer, Samir Manji, Allaudin Merali, Zubeida Ramji, Atiya Dharamsi, Natasha Alimohamed, Zahra Hirji, Shakila Hasanyar*

**USA:** *Moez Virani, Dr. Fatima Mawji, Rubina Ali, Aly Dossa, Amir Kanji, Ahmad Patel, Bilal Pissaris, Dr. Nizar Ramzan, Celina Shariff*

For further information, please contact your local FOCUS office whose details can be found on the front page