



IOM International Organization for Migration
 OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
 OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

FINAL REPORT TO THE MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF NORWAY ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES OF TSUNAMI VICTIMS

Executing agency:	International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Project partner agencies (or national counterparts):	Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (KRD), Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), Tamil Resource and Counselling centre
Geographical coverage:	Norway and Tsunami affected areas
Project management site:	IOM Oslo
Target group(s):	Immigrants living in Norway who lost members of their families as a result of the Tsunami catastrophe
Project period and duration:	07 February 2005 – 15 June 2005
Reporting period:	February 2005 – June 2005
Total confirmed funding:	NOK 1,000,000
Funds contributed by Norway:	NOK 750 000
Cumulative expenditure during reporting period:	NOK 940,608

SUMMARY

This project complemented the overall Tsunami disaster relief efforts of the Norwegian government. The assistance provided through this project enabled 138 immigrants living in Norway, who lost family members as a result of the Tsunami, to return temporarily to their country of origin and participate in memorial ceremonies for deceased family members and fulfil other 'closure' obligations. The targeted number of beneficiaries was 135, thus the project exceeded its target. Project activities included also information dissemination to the immigrant communities in Norway and international and domestic transportation assistance or alternatively reimbursement of travel expenses for those who had already organized their travel themselves. The co-operation with Norwegian authorities and relevant immigrant NGO's in the framework of the project was close and excellent, and contributed to the success of the project.

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1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project was implemented to complement the overall Tsunami disaster relief efforts of the Norwegian Government. It was expected to assist up to 135 immigrants of any nationality, living in Norway, who lost close family members as a result of Tsunami in Asia on 26 December 2005. The project enabled these individuals to return temporarily to their countries of origin, be reunited with surviving relatives, participate in memorial ceremonies for deceased family members, take care of family matters and fulfil “closure” obligations resulting from the loss.

The following are the criteria for beneficiaries to have been eligible under the project:

- . Persons who are either Norwegian citizens, individuals with permanent residency, or those who had been living in Norway for over three years and who meet the requirements for permanent residency;
- . Parents, spouses, children and siblings of the above individuals qualify as close family members. (Note: there was room for flexibility in applying this criteria); and
- . A maximum of two persons per affected family are eligible for assistance under the project.

For the sake of treating all cases equally, especially for those who were hardest hit and had already travelled spontaneously, travel costs from Gardermoen airport to the home country was reimbursable in an amount that corresponded to the lowest available fare. This offer did not apply to those whose travel costs had been covered by the social offices of their local municipalities.

2. RESULTS

A total of 170 applications were received during the reporting period:

- 67 received air tickets booked by IOM;
- 71 received cash reimbursements;
- 18 applications were not eligible for the project;
- 14 applicants withdrew their applications since they were not able to travel during the project’s duration.

3. ACTIVITIES

Information Dissemination

Upon initiation of the project, IOM created an application form for the potential beneficiaries and an information sheet about the project and assistance available.

Information dissemination about the project was undertaken through the following means:

- Information was posted on IOM Oslo's website;
- Information materials and application forms were posted at the Embassies of India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand and at a variety of organizations of the countries affected and through individuals who acted as information multipliers and assisted in further distribution to the target group;
- Two information meetings were held with representatives of registered Sri Lankan groups in Norway to help with information dissemination; and
- IOM personnel in Oslo were on hand to respond to personal inquiries either through personal visits or telephonically.

Verification of the applications

An application for the project had to have been sent to IOM by 15 March 2005. All applications received were verified for eligibility and processed on an ongoing basis. Rejected applicants received an IOM letter with information regarding their application. All approved cases were immediately contacted by phone in order to coordinate travel arrangements. There were a number of incomplete applications that needed follow-up.

Assistance with travel documents and entry visa

A group of Indonesian citizens living in Norway requested approval to visit their family members; victims of the Tsunami who sought shelter in Malaysia. The request was approved by KRD and IOM. Malaysian authorities from the Malaysian Embassy in Stockholm requested a six-month valid passport in order to issue entry visas for these Indonesian citizens. IOM, in coordination with Norwegian Police, assisted the applicants with the process of obtaining travel documents and the necessary entry visas.

Travel arrangements

IOM Oslo made international travel arrangements for the beneficiaries on commercial flights. All flights were booked from Oslo and the beneficiaries were responsible for the cost of their domestic travel.

- Travel dates could be chosen by the individual beneficiaries, within the limits of the project period, and depending on flight and seat availability.
- All beneficiaries were required to travel by the end of April 2005. Exceptionally, approval was received for individuals who had to postpone travel due to problems with travel documents.
- The maximum length of stay in the country of origin was limited to four weeks.
- Only two members from each bereaved family were eligible to receive the travel benefit.

IOM Oslo's airport assistant provided the beneficiaries with departure assistance at Oslo's Gardermoen airport as needed. IOM Oslo mailed air tickets to the applicant's home address.

Persons who fulfilled the eligibility criteria and self-organized travel prior to the establishment of the programme were eligible to apply for reimbursement of their international flight costs. Reimbursement was made to correspond with the cost of the lowest air fare available at the time of the project. All requests for reimbursement of air travel costs were processed and reimbursements were made on an ongoing basis.

IOM reported continuously to the donor on the project's progress and results, and consulted the donor on some specific cases.

4. CONSTRAINTS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

Period and duration of the project: The limited dates for travel (i.e., early spring, during Easter and school spring holidays) posed a significant challenge for the project. As most of the beneficiaries are very well-integrated in Norway (i.e., they speak the Norwegian language, they are employed, their children attend school, etc.), a number of the beneficiaries felt that the time allotted for travel was too limited as many were unable to get time off from work and/or school. Most could travel only during the Easter and spring school holidays.

The limited number of flights available to certain destinations, as well as the increased cost associated with high season fares, affected budgetary limits. In order to assist as many as possible and meet the target group of 135 beneficiaries many of whom were wishing to travel in the high season, IOM reviewed project priorities and acted accordingly. IOM respected the wishes of the beneficiaries regarding time of travel whenever possible although sometimes it was necessary to change bookings several times in order to meet the requirements of beneficiaries, the donor and the airlines. As IOM's goal was to assist as many as possible with the most "expensive" and complicated project component (international transportation), it was decided that domestic ground transportation would be easier and less costly for beneficiaries to handle in countries of destination. This decision enabled IOM to stay within budgetary limits and assist the target group of 135 beneficiaries.

Entry visa to Malaysia: A group of Indonesian citizens living in Norway requested approval to visit their family members, victims of the Tsunami, who had sought shelter in Malaysia. The request was approved by KRD and IOM. IOM assisted the beneficiaries in the long process of obtaining entry visa to Malaysia. Unfortunately, some of the beneficiaries were forced to wait longer for their visas than expected. It was decided that exceptionally they could travel during May and the beginning of June 2005. Some of the beneficiaries, meanwhile, had Norwegian citizenship and passports and decided to travel to Indonesia after all.

Family members: Most of the beneficiaries had young children who could not be left behind. These individuals were responsible for covering the costs for their children to travel with them. This led to reservation problem as IOM was only able to make reservations for the two family members approved for travel under the project. The problem was solved as IOM booked all family members and asked the parents to make payments for their children directly to the travel agents, or coordinated bookings with air companies and travel agents.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The project was well received and appreciated by all of the beneficiaries. Cooperation between the donor and implementing partners proved to be extensive and beneficial.

6. FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Please see attached financial report.

7. ANNEX

ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES OF TSUNAMI VICTIMS

February-June 2005

Statistics

Total number of applications received	170
Total number assisted by IOM	138
Excluded / Withdrawn*	32 (18/14)
Travelled under IOM auspices	
Travelled to Sri Lanka	44
Travelled to Malaysia	16
Travelled to Indonesia	4
Received ticket but did not travel**	3
Received reimbursement for cost of the ticket	71

*The most withdrawals were mainly due to the fact that applicants had children they could not leave behind. The most of applications were excluded due to the fact that applicants did not meet criteria set up by the project.

**Beneficiaries received air tickets from IOM but did not travel due to illness.