



Patrick Kandiah, left and tsunami victims.

Money will go a long way, say agencies

When we began the research for this edition featuring 'Our People' we knew we were spoilt for choice. But what we weren't prepared for was the overwhelming number of truly remarkable people we would discover.

We would need a book to capture all our amazing people. Within these pages you will read about some of those that stood out like the resolute dedication of Patrick Kandiah, featured on the cover. Their stories go some way to reflect the passion and diversity of all Telstra people

Rebuilding shattered infrastructure, educating children and bringing traumatised families together are just some of the ways Australia's five leading aid agencies will use money Telstra people donated to the Asian tsunami - appeal.

The agencies - Red Cross, World Vision Australia, Care Australia, Oxfam and Unicef - were speaking at a recent staff function hosted by Telstra CEO Ziggy Switkowski who presented them with a \$1.56 million cheque made of corporate and staff donations.

Chris Roche, program director, Oxfam, said the money contributed by Telstra and its staff would make a huge difference in rebuilding essential infrastructure in ravaged communities.

"We estimate that it costs about \$300 to build a temporary shelter in the devastated regions," he said. "I'm not great at maths but a million dollars buys a lot of houses."

Tom Harley, director, Unicef, said many of the aid agencies focussed their efforts on specialist areas to ensure maximum distribution of resources.

"In the immediate phase of the emergency we focussed our efforts on looking after the many tens of thousands of children who were orphaned and women who were homeless, particularly pregnant women," he said. "Giving traumatised children the simple things, such as a football, makes a huge difference but, in the long term, we have to look at education programs."



Above: (l-r) Michael Legge, Red Cross, Ziggy Switkowski, Telstra, Tom Harley, Unicef, Dr Barry Jones, Care Australia, Rev Tim Costello, World Vison and Chris Roche, Oxfam.

Barry Jones, board member, Care Australia, said the distribution of essentials such as food and water was an immediate priority, but programs would be designed to rebuild shattered families in the longer term. "Women are the epicentre of the family structure in many of these areas so a primary focus for us is recognising the role of women and giving them the tools to help reconstitute their families," he said.

As well as financial contributions, Telstra people organised more than 100 workplace activities to raise extra money or collect essential goods and services, answered calls during telethon appeals and provided telecommunications support to the agencies and victims families.

Unicef's Tom Harley said: "The passion demonstrated by Telstra's people is very important to our people in the field. They are working in some very tough conditions and it does a lot when they know so many people are behind them all the way."

Reverend Tim Costello, chief executive, World Vision, agreed: "It's never easy to give huge amounts of money away but the license to do business in the community is the willingness to give back to the community. We understand the enormously important trust you have placed in us and we thank you for it."

Patrick's mission of mercy

Telstra employee, Patrick Kandiah, applications support, Infrastructure Services, gives us a first hand account of the devastation caused by the Asian tsunami and the need for ongoing relief work.

Arriving in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in the early hours of 28 December, Patrick and four friends - a nurse, teacher, lawyer and pilot - were not prepared for the devastation and despair they were about to face. Having heard the news of the Boxing Day tsunami, Patrick and his friends agreed to continue with their planned trip to Sri Lanka, not for a relaxing holiday though, now they were going to work. Patrick met the Red Cross as soon as he arrived in Colombo advising them that he was there to help in any way possible.

"The Red Cross sent us to the south of Sri Lanka and for three days we moved from camp to camp offering emergency medical services. As I am not medically trained, I translated for the doctors and also counselled the locals. I think the diverse skills and customer focus I have from working at Telstra meant I was able to get along with everyone," said Patrick.

After three days volunteering for the Red Cross, Patrick returned to Colombo. By this stage, he had given away all the clothes he had brought for his trip and was left only with the clothes he had been wearing for the past three days.

Patrick finished volunteering with the Red Cross after his three days in south Sri Lanka and decided, with the help of his friends, to start his own relief work with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). "We opened a bank account in Colombo and called our friends and family back home in Sydney and Melbourne who donated money into our account."

With the money raised, Patrick and his friends hired a van, bought much needed supplies including sleeping mats, milk powder for babies, water, chocolates and tennis balls for children, clothing, cooking utensils, towels, soap, toothpaste and medicine - often spending up to four hours in pharmacies - and headed east to some of the most stricken areas of Sri Lanka.

It was here in the east, that Patrick spent two weeks in devastated villages providing support and relief to the many survivors who had lost everything. Patrick recalls his time in the east as a heartbreaking experience, but is hoping to return to Sri Lanka soon to continue his relief work.