

THE GAZETTE

Maryland Congressional Delegation Hears Update on Local Organizations' Tsunami Relief Efforts

Washington, D.C. – On February 8, 2005, leaders from eight Maryland-based nongovernmental relief and development organizations, including Hopkins-affiliate JHPIEGO, gathered in the Mansfield Room of the Capitol to testify about their work throughout South Asia. Maryland Senator Paul Sarbanes sponsored the hearing on tsunami relief and other international development efforts on behalf of the Maryland Congressional delegation.

“Your impact is felt not only in the countries in which you work, but also here in Maryland. Hundreds of Marylanders who work in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participate in our communities in innumerable ways – in our schools, in our neighborhood associations, in our political processes,” Sen. Sarbanes said.

Testifying on their activities in tsunami relief were: Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Catholic Relief Services, CHF International, International Orthodox Christian Charities, International Youth Foundation, Hopkins’ JHPIEGO, Lutheran World Relief and World Relief.

JHPIEGO is a 32-year old nonprofit based in Fells Point that works to improve health care for women and families in 38 countries worldwide, was among those to respond quickly to the disaster in Aceh Province, Indonesia. JHPIEGO President and CEO Leslie D. Mancuso had just returned from 21 days in the region to help local staff conduct a health care needs assessment.

“JHPIEGO brings a long-term focus to reconstruction in the health sector,” noted Dr. Mancuso. “We were asked by the Indonesian Ministry of Health to look at the gaps in health care caused by the devastation. I had an opportunity to talk with midwives working in clinics – 90 percent of maternal and child health care is provided by midwives in Indonesia – but 30 percent of the midwives living and working in the tip of the island

of Sumatra were killed. Many other midwives lost their own families, yet still managed to attend to those women giving birth in the wake of the disaster.

“I met a woman who had just given birth, the very day of the tsunami. Her husband and her other children were lost. Her pain was unimaginable. The midwife who attended her had lost her entire family. They are not alone. We are doing whatever it takes to help them rebuild and get equipment. We are working to get schools up and running. We will be working with hospitals doing obstetrics and gynecology and communicating with women and children to get them help in healthcare,” Mancuso, a nurse and educator herself, concluded.

Sen. Barbara Mikulski and Reps. Steny Hoyer, Roscoe Bartlett, Wayne Gilchrest, Chris Van Hollen, and Benjamin Cardin joined Sarbanes in acknowledging the important work of these Maryland organizations and their ripple effect throughout the community and the world; making sure that tsunami relief was not diverting funds from established programs doing important work in other parts of the world. Noted Gilchrest, “You’ve been doing significant work for decades. No race, no religion, no nationality can categorize human beings. Fresh water, a biscuit, warm clothes, a home and healthcare is all we’re talking about to define humanity. You have mounted a stunning effort to relieve the pain.”

To learn more about JHPIEGO’s worldwide development work or to contribute to the organization’s Asia Tsunami Fund, visit www.jhpiego.org.

- Robin Stevens Payes