

Preparedness the Key to Effective Disaster Relief

By Carolyn Oei for CHARIS



On 18 February, CHARIS organised a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) training session at a ST Logistics' facility. ST Logistics is an independent contractor that stocks and ships relief supplies for CHARIS, namely mosquito nets, water filtration systems, blankets, human sanitation equipment and tents.

The full-day session provided an excellent opportunity for participants to understand the elements of preparing for a mission trip and to learn basic skills that would be required on the ground.

Accompanied by a team of enthusiastic ST Logistics staff members, the participants were given a comprehensive tour of the storage facilities and explanations on the supplies that CHARIS stockpiles. For a taste of what to expect when on the ground, participants rolled up their sleeves and were guided through the rudiments of assembling mobile toilets, pitching a six-man tent and taught how to prepare a meal using combat rations and a mess tin.



Participants attended an informative presentation on lessons gained from the 2004 tsunami disaster and humanitarian aid efforts, roles that volunteers play and the importance of being sensitive to cultural differences, working only in a team, conducting a thorough needs assessment before embarking on any relief mission and always being prepared outside of a disaster.

The quality and speed of any emergency response is a product of preparedness.

Participants included volunteers from CHARIS' affiliates Acts29, the Catholic Nurses Guild and Project Kyrie.

Susan Loh, a nurse, said of the training, ***"It was an eye-opener. Getting involved in the hands-on sessions was really useful."*** A fairly seasoned mission trip volunteer herself, Susan had this piece of advice for those of us who might be considering joining a mission trip, ***"Do so with an open mind; always work in a team and as a team. Accept (inconveniences) like a lack of toilets, sleeping quarters..."***

CHARIS will be organising two more training sessions this year in July and October. Details will be made available in due course.

For more information or if you have any questions, please contact CHARIS at 6338 0182 or info@charis-singapore.org

Caritas Humanitarian Aid & Relief Initiatives, Singapore (CHARIS) is the umbrella body for overseas humanitarian aid by the Archdiocese of Singapore. Humanitarian situations cover natural disasters and other adverse circumstances faced by the poor and needy, especially in developing countries in the region.