

Reliving tsunami, page by page

Red Cross launches book on rehabilitation and reconstruction of disaster-hit areas

Shuli Sudderuddin

Little did Ms Chow Oi Ling know, when she volunteered with the Singapore Red Cross to lead a mercy relief team to Aceh after the 2004 Asian tsunami, that she would end up deeply moved.

Said the 37-year-old project management officer: "Everything was flattened and people were displaced.

"But in the midst of it all, a man in his 40s came up to me and gave me a packet of coffee. It was all he had left, but he wanted to give it to a volunteer as a gesture of thanks."

Similar vignettes are recounted in a book launched yesterday by the Singapore Red Cross and the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre.

Beyond The Tsunami – Rebuild-

ing Communities, Touching Lives, also outlines the use of the \$89 million Tidal Waves Asia Fund – set up by the Singapore Red Cross – which was closed this year.

The money was used for more than 70 reconstruction and rehabilitation projects, including the construction of schools and homes and the provision of potable water, in affected countries.

Yesterday's book launch coincided with International Volunteer Day 2009.

Mr Teo Chee Hean, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, said at the event that volunteerism helps to build a stronger Singapore for the next generation.

He said: "If you have a bowl of rice and everybody just counts how much of that rice they can get, in the end the bowl will be empty.

"If everyone contributes something, puts something in, then we build for the future. The next generation will have more than we have and they will enjoy a better Singapore than we did."

The book is free. Those interested in getting a copy may contact the Singapore Red Cross on 6336-0269.

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Madam Astrid Kartika, who used to work for an Indonesian agency for rehabilitation and construction, checking out the book with Ms Yap Su Yin, programme director of the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation, at the launch yesterday.