



You're in **Sri Lanka**, and a **TSUNAMI** has turned a beautiful day into **UTTER DEVASTATION**. Everywhere there are **ILL PEOPLE**, **injured people**; **distraught people**: you're worried about epidemics of **cholera**, **MEASLES** and the risks of **malnutrition**. You know that some **INTERVENTIONS** will be better than others in this situation, and that some that **SOUND PLAUSIBLE** may actually be **harmful**.

YOU NEED A WAY TO TELL THEM APART - **WHAT DO YOU DO?**

Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent each year on disaster relief and humanitarian aid with the intention of improving the lives of those affected and reducing the impact. Experience in health care has shown us that no matter how good the intentions some interventions are useless or even harmful. Interventions that are not based on evidence can waste vast resources and hinder effective approaches that would speed up recovery and improve health outcomes.



People are dying needlessly after disasters because of a shortage of what should be regarded as a human right: access to knowledge.

Following the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in December 2004, a group of leading individuals in The Cochrane Collaboration, the world's largest producer of systematic reviews, started to bring together information relevant to relief efforts and thus, Evidence Aid was born.

Evidence Aid is a coordinated, international initiative to provide effective and timely access to systematic reviews about interventions and actions of relevance before, during and after natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies.

Evidence Aid's work encompasses three main areas of activity:

1. Providing an urgent response to the evidence needs that arise during and immediately after a natural disaster or humanitarian emergency.
2. Developing context-specific resources for the evidence needs that arise during the subsequent weeks and months following a disaster.
3. Gathering information about the need for evidence and ensuring up-to-date systematic reviews of relevant research take place.

Since Evidence Aid was established, nearly 1.6 billion people have been affected by disasters globally, with the estimated total cost of damages totalling over \$1.3 trillion (USD) for the same period (2005-2013).<sup>1</sup>

## IMPACTING FRONTLINE TREATMENT

Since 2004, Evidence Aid has supported governments and frontline organisations around the world.

- Working with psychiatrists and psychotherapists that responded to the Indian Ocean tsunami informing them, based on the evidence, that counselors should not use 'brief debriefing' (a single-session counselling service designed to prevent psychological trauma) as a means of preventing post-traumatic-stress-disorder (PTSD).
- Within 24 hours of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, Evidence Aid provided the World Health Organization (WHO) with a comprehensive list of effective and efficient interventions for wound management, mental health and infectious diseases. Evidence Aid worked with the WHO again in late 2010 to identify reviews that could assist with the widespread floods in Pakistan.
- On the day of the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami in March 2011, Evidence Aid provided access to its online resources via *The Cochrane Library*, which were subsequently translated into Japanese. Evidence Aid was approached by the WHO to assist with the drafting of new public health guidelines for large-scale radiation emergencies.
- Following Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, Evidence Aid packaged together a new set of relevant resources within 48 hours, providing responders in the Philippines with information on the health problems they might encounter that was promoted to those responding to the typhoon, both on the ground and at policy level, including those coordinating the United Nations and WHO responses.
- Evidence Aid worked with the Belgian Red Cross on its strategic priority to underpin all its activities with evidence, including its use of blood products, delivery of first aid and humanitarian activities.
- Evidence Aid has raised the profile of evidence-based actions in the humanitarian sector through international conferences in Oxford in 2011 with the Centre for Evidence Based Medicine, Brussels in 2012 with the Belgian Red Cross–Flanders, and a priority setting meeting in London in 2013.

Evidence Aid works with the United Nations aid agencies (UNHCR, Unicef and WHO), government organisations (US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, USAID and UK Department for International Development) and International NGOs (Save the Children, International Rescue Committee, the International Committee for the Red Cross, American Red Cross, Australian Red Cross and Belgian Red Cross), amongst others.

Evidence Aid also works with organisations that produce and publish evidence for example The Cochrane Collaboration, University of Columbia, University of Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, Public Library of Science and The Lancet.

<sup>1</sup> The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), which maintains The EM-DAT (Emergency Events Database). <http://www.cred.be/>

## GET INVOLVED

There are a number of other ways you can get involved with the Evidence Aid team:

- Advocate for Evidence Aid wherever you are able to in person and on social networking platforms.
- Donate your time and skill set to the organisation's day-to-day activities.
- Help establish partnerships with Evidence Aid. [www.evidenceaid.org/who-we-work-with/](http://www.evidenceaid.org/who-we-work-with/)
- Help identify gaps in the knowledge and prioritising the uncertainties that should be addressed by Evidence Aid.
- Help implement our multi-lingual policy by translating our resources.
- Identify funding opportunities to ensure the stability and development of Evidence Aid.
- Identify systematic reviews and other knowledge sources for Evidence Aid.
- Invite the Evidence Aid team to speak to your organisation.
- Ask to be added to our mailing list.
- Pilot Evidence Aid resources [www.evidenceaid.org/resources](http://www.evidenceaid.org/resources)
- Prepare and maintain systematic reviews of relevance to Evidence Aid.
- Join an Evidence Aid Technical Group (for example on health in fragile states, mental health, infectious diseases, disability, shelter, water and sanitation, maternity care or oral health etc.).
- Provide lists of research priorities and encourage others to share their operational research priorities.
- Give us your opinion about Evidence Aid. Constructive comments are always welcome. [www.evidenceaid.org/contact-us](http://www.evidenceaid.org/contact-us)

We welcome professional volunteers of all disciplines and backgrounds with an interest in evidence-based practice in humanitarian response. Email us with your contact details and how you think you can help at [info@evidenceaid.org](mailto:info@evidenceaid.org)

For more information visit [www.evidenceaid.org](http://www.evidenceaid.org)

Shona Lang volunteered to work with Evidence Aid after hearing a compelling presentation in 2012

Having worked for two decades as a cell biologist researching the spread of cancer and tissue development, I had recently changed careers to systematic reviewing in clinical research. Systematic reviewing aims to answer a question by identifying all evidence relating to a specific question, evaluating how good that evidence is and summarising the results. It is a useful tool for decision-making processes. At the time I was looking for ways to diversify my skills and to answer important questions. Volunteering with Evidence Aid has enabled me to do just this.

I have worked on a range of projects: looking for funding opportunities, writing grant applications, contributing to systematic reviews, summarising existing evidence for the Evidence Aid website, mobile phone technology and email design.

I enjoy working with the Evidence Aid team, they are an enthusiastic and positive bunch, who make lots happen. Funding is a major issue for Evidence Aid. Coming from a cancer research background it is surprising to me how little funding is available for Evidence Aid, a project which stands to benefit thousands of people worldwide, in a climate of increasing natural disasters.

Volunteering can be hard. However it is not difficult to be motivated to contribute to such a worthwhile project, especially one that appears so financially precarious.

“Evidence Aid has provided governments, agencies, NGOs and individuals with the most reliable information, in order to take the right choices in difficult circumstances... the work you are doing is important for mankind.”

**Herman van Rompuy**

President of the European Council at the 2012 Evidence Aid Conference in Brussels

“A time-limited, targeted, and cost-effective intervention could have a big and sustained positive impact on the world's most disadvantaged people, mitigating the lasting impacts of disasters, which are disproportionately felt by the poor.”

Unorthodox Prize



### MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information on Evidence Aid, or to get involved, please contact us:

Through our website: [www.evidenceaid.org](http://www.evidenceaid.org)

By email: [info@evidenceaid.org](mailto:info@evidenceaid.org)

On Twitter: [@EvidenceAid](https://twitter.com/EvidenceAid)

On Facebook: [Evidence Aid](https://www.facebook.com/EvidenceAid)

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Donate to Evidence Aid at [www.evidenceaid.org](http://www.evidenceaid.org)

or email [info@evidenceaid.org](mailto:info@evidenceaid.org).



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