



## **International Disaster Relief Committee**

# **Sathya Sai International Organisation**

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*Dedicated with Love and Reverence at the Divine Lotus Feet of  
Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

# **Disaster Relief Guidelines**

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## **Glossary of Terms**

- SSSWF: Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation
- PC: Prasanthi Council
- IDRC: International Disaster Relief Committee
- SSIO: Sathya Sai International Organization
- IASC: Interagency Standing Committee
- NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations
- DR: Disaster Relief
- CDRC: Country Disaster Relief Coordinator
- ZDRC: Zone Disaster Relief Coordinator

## **Chapter I: Introduction & Disaster Relief Committee Charter**

### **a. Bhagawan's Message on Disaster Relief**

Do not restrict your service. Be alert to the call from everywhere, and at all times; be ready with a smile, a kind word, a useful suggestion or a pleasant reply. Look for opportunities to relieve, rescue or resuscitate. Train yourselves so that you may render help promptly and well. Service is the most rewarding form of spiritual discipline, the most satisfying and the most pleasant. It springs out of love, and it spreads love abundantly.

- Sathya Sai Speaks 09:10, 19 May 1969

### **b. SSIO International Disaster Relief Committee Charter**

In view of major natural calamities occurring frequently all around the world, the Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) formed the International Disaster Relief Committee (IDRC) in order to render aid to communities stricken by natural disasters.

The IDRC's primary objective is to develop a core disaster relief team in each country, who can provide prompt relief in natural disaster situations. Working together in unity is an important aspect of this effort through sharing of information, resources, and experiences. To support this mission, the IDRC developed guidelines and disaster relief training requirements for the Sathya Sai International Organization (SSIO) worldwide.

The IDRC will note natural disasters which occur worldwide and recommend a course of action to the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation (SSSWF) and the Prasanthi Council (PC) of the SSIO. The IDRC will follow directions from SSSWF/PC regarding these efforts.

### **c. Vision for IDRC**

The goal is for the SSIO to implicitly follow the divine directions given by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to serve our brethren in their time of greatest need and render aid in times of natural disasters.

Within the first year of releasing the guidelines, the IDRC will request each SSIO zone to appoint a Zone Disaster Relief Coordinator (ZDRC). The ZDRC, along with the Zone Chairs, will appoint disaster relief coordinators for each country. In turn, these coordinators in collaboration with the local SSIO organization will form national disaster relief teams and initiate training.

By the end of the second year, all countries worldwide should achieve a state of basic readiness in order to assist in most natural disaster scenarios. As experience is gained from relief missions across different parts of the world, these initial guidelines will continue to evolve. The IDRC will receive an annual Disaster Relief Preparedness Report from each Zone.

## **Chapter II: Introduction to Disasters**

### **a. Most Common Types of Disasters**

Some of the most common types of natural disasters are: cyclones (tropical storms, tornadoes, hurricanes, and typhoons), earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and landslides, wild fires, sinkholes and volcanic eruptions.

Magnitude of the damage by natural disaster depends on human resources, infrastructure, weather and natural impacts. These are discussed in further detail in Chapter II of the DR Operations Manual. Additional information about natural disasters can be found at:

<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/natural-disasters/>.

### **b. Being Ready**

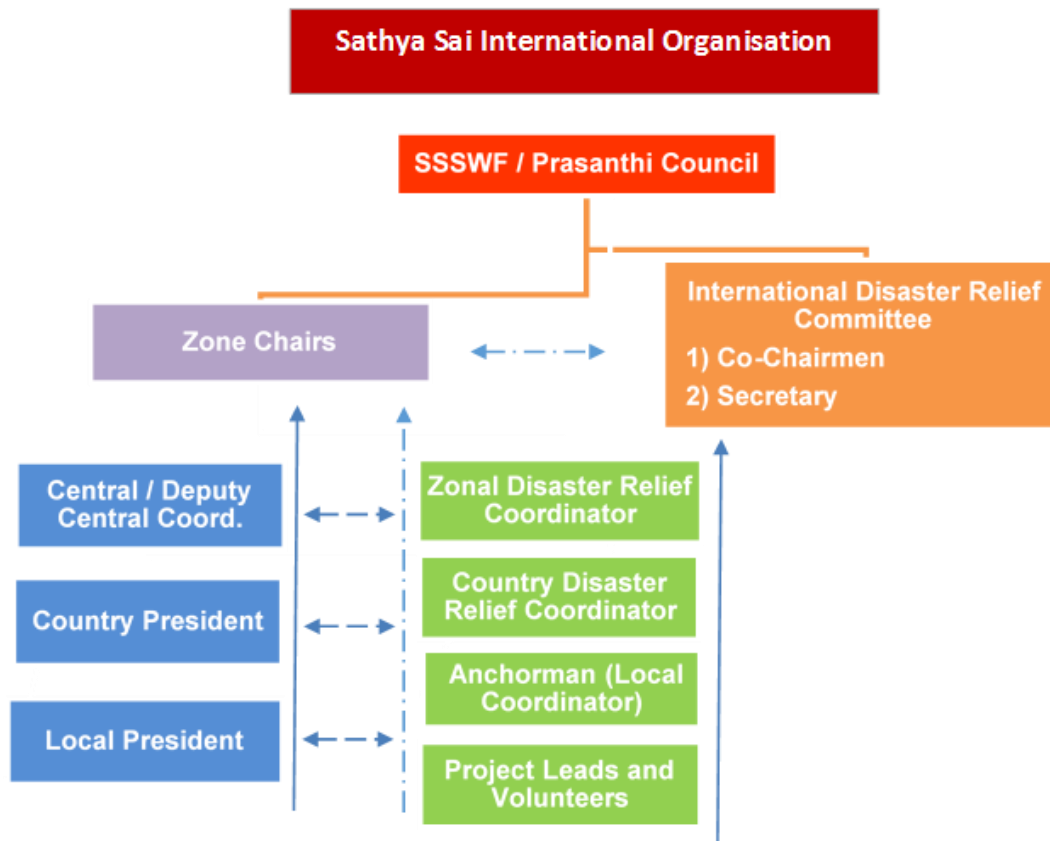
In times of disaster, the level of readiness for offering aid ultimately determines the level of damage, casualties and recovery time after the disaster. Below is a fitting example on the importance of being prepared, as per the guidance of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

After Sri Sathya Sai Baba advised devotees from Tamil Nadu to be prepared for any potential future disasters, they promptly initiated training in first aid and developed essential disaster relief and recovery skills. When the tsunami of 2004 hit Tamil Nadu beaches, they were the first organized responders on the scene, within 24 hours of the disaster. These well-prepared volunteers recovered over 1,000 bodies which were cremated or buried according to their faith-based traditions, set up medical camps and provided food and basic necessities to thousands of impacted people.

## **Chapter III: Guidelines for SSIO Leadership**

### **a. Disaster Relief Team Jurisdiction and Reporting Structure**

The IDRC has jurisdiction to monitor and assist in disaster relief situations across all parts of the world (outside of India) when requested by the Zone Disaster Relief Coordinator, as approved by the SSSWF/PC. The SSIO Disaster Relief organization chart is shown next, followed by a section describing key roles and responsibilities of the leaders.



## b. Role of Coordinators

### i. Local Coordinators

Starting at the disaster site, the local DR coordinator or Anchorman, after receiving instructions from his country DR coordinator (CDRC), is responsible for directing the work of the volunteers on his/her team, making sure they do not take any unnecessary risks. They should be involved in the initial assessment of the disaster site and assessment of the needs in the area, which should be communicated to the country DR coordinator. The local coordinator maintains ongoing discussions with the CDRC. Arranging for food, clean water, transportation and reasonable sleeping quarters, and establishing safety measures for the volunteers are his/her primary responsibilities. The local coordinator will also evaluate the need for and the location of medical camps and other service opportunities, and communicate with local leaders. Additional duties of the Anchorman are listed in Chapter VI.

### ii. Country Disaster Relief Coordinators (CDRCs)

The CDRC will interact with other NGOs and government agencies, either directly or through the local ISAC Committee, in order to determine the areas of highest need. She/he will then relay the information to the local coordinators. The CDRC should be prepared to travel to the affected site as soon as it is safe to do so, to assess and recommend the type and level of assistance needed. Prior to activating an international mission, the CDRC should first have clearance from the SSSWF/PC

via the ZDRC/IDRC and then contact the affected country's Sai Organization President in order to immediately mobilize local aid. She/he should ensure that the local DR coordinator and volunteers are aware of any government regulations and essential requirements prior to deployment.

The local or country volunteer teams should have a mix of medical professionals, social service workers, and other professional health care volunteers, as well as people with other skills. DR team members may also be officers of the Sathya Sai Organization.

### **iii. Zonal Disaster Relief Coordinators (ZDRCs)**

ZDRCs will oversee the activities of their respective CDRCs, and ensure that all directions received from the SSSWF/ PC and the IDRC and the local governmental and other regulations are implicitly followed by the local coordinators and volunteers. They will keep the IDRC informed on a daily basis, during the crisis, and ensure that each country involved (either in providing or receiving aid) is generating the necessary reports and documentation of their activities. They will compile articles, monthly reports for the IDRC, including high resolution pictures and videos. They should also visit the affected area at least once to make sure that the relief effort is being maximized with the resources available, and in accordance with the immediate objectives of the IDRC.

The ZDRC's will provide reports to the IDRC Co-Chairmen, who will in turn communicate any relevant information to the Chairmen of SSSWF/PC. ZDRC's will be the direct supervisors of the distribution of SSSWF/PC aid and the organization of medical camps and other relief efforts. This will be done by setting up an Operations Center in the affected area and selecting an Anchorman and a steady flow of volunteers. ZDRC's will monitor the reporting and expenditure of funds donated by the SSSWF/PC, using the National Sai Foundation or Trust.

### **iv. Volunteers and Disaster Relief Teams**

Chapter VI discusses in detail the skills and experience required and roles of volunteers who may participate in a standing disaster relief team or a specific disaster relief mission. However, the general selection process and training requirements for volunteers at all levels is outlined below.

## **c. Selection of Disaster Relief Team**

### **i. Selection Process**

All individuals interested in serving in a standing disaster relief team or a single disaster relief mission, whether in a leadership or volunteer capacity, must submit the bio-data form and "Waiver of Indemnification" attached in Addendum A of the DR Operations Manual, for review, as outlined below:

- The Country President in consultation with the Zone Chair, Central Coordinator, and Deputy Central Coordinator will appoint the CDRC and select the national team.

- The Zone Chair in consultation with the Central Coordinator, will appoint the ZDRC and the Zone DR team.
- The IDRC will further review and confirm all CDRC and ZDRC appointments.

**ii. Selection Criteria for Disaster Relief Team Leaders and Coordinators**

Eligible disaster relief leaders and coordinators should meet the following criteria:

- Must be an active member of the SSIO, with at least 2 years of experience participating in service activities organized by the SSIO
- Have prior experience aiding in disaster relief operations
- Have administrative experience
- Have good recommendations from their local Sai Organization leadership
- Be able to travel and dedicate the necessary time and resources

Above all, SSIO leaders and coordinators should have the ability, availability and affability to serve according to Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s ethical standards and the SSIO guidelines.

**iii. Selection Criteria for Disaster Relief Team Volunteers**

In addition to submitting the bio-data form and “Waiver of Indemnification” stated in section (c)(i) of this Chapter (and provided in Addendum A of the DR Operations Manual), volunteers should meet the following general criteria:

- Be members of SSIO or recommended by officers of the Sathya Sai Center/Group who know them
- Be at least 18 years old, with recommendations from their local Sai Organizational President if they are between the ages of 18 and 21
- Must be a good team member and serve in accordance with SSIO guidelines
- Must be available for service on short notice
- Must be able to bear the cost of travel and other personal expenses
- Be in good physical, mental and emotional health
- If bio-data is not available, volunteers must provide a brief description of their background and what they can help with.
- Additional criteria for local coordinators, such as Anchormen and Team or Project Leaders, and for various volunteer roles are provided in Chapter VI.

All information that is requested for registration purposes is kept confidential and will not be shared with any other organization.



#### **d. Required Training and/or Certification**

##### **i. Identifying Suitable Courses**

Understanding IDRC guidelines is a starting requirement. First aid training is mandatory for all volunteers. Additionally, search, rescue and recovery volunteers must be further certified in basic disaster relief.

CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) for example is a disaster relief training program offered in the USA ([www.citizencorps.fema.gov/cert/about.shtm](http://www.citizencorps.fema.gov/cert/about.shtm)). This program is free of charge and available through most local government agencies. Addendum C of the DR Operations Manual includes a summary outline of the CERT program. However, most countries offer similar training and certificate-based courses, which can be made available to all volunteers by the CDRC.

##### **ii. SSIO Training Component**

DR team leaders and volunteers are “ambassadors” of the SSIO. As such, their attitude and actions will reflect the Sai approach. Furthermore, a number of circumstances can arise when interacting with the local population in a disaster site requires good preparation.

For example, local team leaders and volunteers will have to coordinate relief efforts with local government authorities and other organizations. When meeting with these officials, SSIO members must be cooperative and seek the local authorities’ advice and expertise. If there is a conflict with Sai principles or good judgment, or a political situation arises, the team leaders and volunteers must seek advice from the Co-chairmen of IDRC and Chairmen of SSSWF/PC before proceeding.

Therefore, in order to adequately interact with the community, it is imperative that all volunteers are aware of the essential Sathya Sai principles and code of conduct, the latest SSIO organizational facts, and the IDRC guidelines. Chapter IX provides an initial basic outline for such orientation training.

##### **iii. Refresher Courses - Maintaining Skill Levels**

Local disaster relief leaders must bring their teams and volunteers together at least once a year in order to review their status and introduce any required new protocols. Disaster relief team volunteers are also encouraged to maintain current skills by attending additional training and refresher courses. These courses can be arranged individually for the volunteers or for the group, by the local DR coordinator and/or the CDRC.

#### **e. Managing Disaster Relief Teams**

##### **i. Activation Decision and Procedures**

When a disaster happens, the local and country disaster relief teams will initiate action. The affected country’s CDRC will mobilize teams around the country immediately after having been contacted by the local DR coordinator in the

affected area. No DR team should be sent into areas prohibited by the government, due to danger or other restrictions. Local DR Coordinators can assess needs on the ground so that duplication of effort is avoided. Should international help be required, the ZDRC, with the permission of their SSIO leadership, will formally request support from the IDRC, who will in turn request authorization from the Chairmen of SSSWF/PC.

**ii. Representing the SSIO**

In any service activity, including disaster relief operations, the objective is not publicity. We should just serve with love and compassion without propaganda. When asked who we are, we should identify ourselves as members of the Sathya Sai International Organisation and be prepared to describe the SSIO, the work done by the SSIO, and if requested, talk about Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The volunteers' behavior and demeanor should be consistent with Sathya Sai principles and SSIO guidelines. SSIO banners at relief sites help the public identify and relate to the SSIO organization in an unknown area. Additional guidance about interacting with other organizations and the general public is offered in Chapter VIII.

**iii. Government and Legal Considerations**

Each country has its own procedures and laws for disaster management, and they can vary widely across countries. This will also include local laws pertaining to requirements for doctors to practice medicine during disaster relief. It is the responsibility of the CDRCs to remain intimately familiar with the latest disaster management laws, to prepare a summary of these requirements for the SSIO disaster relief team and to train volunteers on compliance with the law. We must respect the laws of the land and pay customs duties where required.

**f. Communications**

The disaster relief communication procedure is given below.

**i. SSIO Leadership**

Immediately after a disaster, the IDRC will communicate with the affected zone's ZDRC and Zone Chair in order to evaluate the immediate situation. Communications between the Zone and the IDRC should take no longer than 24 hours, such that the IDRC may keep the SSSWF/PC promptly informed and decisions can be made in a timely manner. In turn, the ZDRC will maintain continuous communication with its Central/Deputy Central Coordinators and CDRC's counterparts and jointly execute any decisions made by the SSSWF/PC, IDRC and Zone leaders. The coordinators in the DR Chain of Command at all levels will make decisions jointly with their SSIO counterpart.

**ii. Anchorman Reports**

Anchormen must submit an official summary report of activities to the IDRC Chain of Command every two weeks. These reports must be simple in language, provided in bullet or dot form (not paragraph form) and be accompanied by relevant high-

resolution pictures and media. The IDRC will in turn work with the zone media coordinator to submit these reports to the SSIO media team at [MediaTeam@sssio.org](mailto:MediaTeam@sssio.org)

**iii. SSIO Membership**

The website [www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org](http://www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org) will have available all published reports and pictures regarding disaster relief operations. CDRC's and local DR coordinators should provide current information to their counterparts in the SSIO regarding all relief mission(s) developments. The SSIO officers in turn should communicate this information to the members of Sathya Sai Centers and groups and inspire and motivate more participants. Leaders from the SSIO or the DR Chain of Command can also be invited to speak to groups of volunteers, if time and circumstance permit.

**g. Documentation**

**i. Ongoing DR Team Documentation**

DR coordinators at all levels must maintain a current roster with details about (and the bio-data form for) each coordinator and volunteer on their teams. This information should be reviewed and updated at least twice a year and include data such as contact information, skills and specializations, training and certifications, special circumstances and deployment restrictions, among others.

**ii. During Disaster Relief Missions**

Each member of the local disaster relief teams should have an identification badge and vest (or other suitable identifier), along with the volunteer's emergency contact information. A daily roster of the volunteers should be kept by the team leader. It is also important to keep a written inventory of all items used and needed in an operations center for general documentation, medical and other supplies and for reference by future teams.

**h. Finances and Insurance**

**i. Accounting for Donations**

Disaster relief committee should use the national Sathya Sai trust or foundation to establish an effective and accurate accounting process. An accountant must be assigned to issue receipts for donations in materials and money, and also receive invoices for all supplies purchased.

A small cash fund should be available for immediate expenses. The Chairmen, SSSWF/PC must authorize larger purchases, such as home building or extensive restorations, which will require a detailed proposal and budget analysis.

A monthly statement of income and expenses should be prepared by the appointed accountant and sent to the senior SSIO leaders and IDRC.

## **ii. Insurance**

Depending on the disaster conditions, group liability insurance coverage will be obtained by each DR team.

## **Chapter IV: Guidelines for SSIO Medical and Health Professionals**

### **a. What to Expect**

Medical help on a large scale is required across most or all types of natural disasters (which are discussed in Chapter II). A natural disaster will require progressively more emergency medical assistance if it occurs in an area with an already vulnerable population. That vulnerability may be caused by ongoing lack of resources or by the devastation of the disaster site's medical infrastructure.

Medical cases and needs vary greatly depending on countless conditions including: the type and size of the disaster, available resources and medical infrastructure of the area, length of time after disaster event, etc.

### **b. Phases of Disaster Recovery**

Medical needs will change depending on the phase of the disaster recovery in the mission, which are: Emergency Relief (providing basic needs), Early Relief efforts (sustaining basic needs and short-term relief efforts) and Community Development (long-term rehabilitation). Further details for each one of these stages are provided in the DR Operations Manual.

### **c. Qualifications and Eligibility**

In addition to the various requirements outlined for all volunteers in Chapters III and VI, all medical and dental professionals volunteering for medical camps must have:

- i. State or Provincial License to practice medicine in their specialty area
- ii. Appropriate malpractice insurance

Further, all medical and health-professional volunteers interested in being part of any disaster relief medical mission must register at [www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org](http://www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org).

### **d. Deployment Requirements**

SSIO doctors, dentists, and other medical volunteers will be traveling at their own expense. Whenever feasible, the SSIO will try to provide transportation in the local area affected by the disaster. The SSIO may also provide meals during medical camps or other relief missions, but volunteers are encouraged to plan for their own meals.

The IDRC will provide information about dates, duration, location, and other necessary details for any medical camps or mission being planned. Prior to traveling to a disaster site, the Disaster Relief Committee will provide additional relevant information, including hosting orientation meetings, as needed. Further, specific conditions and requirements of each disaster mission will be published at [www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org](http://www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org).

All volunteers must have valid Passport and Visa (if required). Copies of Medical License and Malpractice Insurance may be necessary for doctor volunteers to carry with them.

Medical volunteers must comply with the Guidelines of the Sathya Sai International Medical Committee for the International Medical Camps (Appendix K of the DR Operations Manual).

## **Chapter V: Disaster Psychology**

### **a. Disaster Trauma and Sensitivities**

The National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder acknowledges that in the aftermath of a disaster, many survivors show signs of acute anxiety and stress. Therefore, the SSIO will, if possible, include Mental Health Professionals to work alongside Medical and Dental Professionals in all disaster relief medical camps.

### **b. Psychological First Aid**

Traditional psychological therapy is not feasible in traditional medical camps of short duration. Still, medical and mental health volunteers will encounter disaster survivors who need some form of immediate psychological first aid. This first aid includes basic observation and information-gathering approaches to help the medical and mental health volunteers make rapid assessments of the survivors' immediate concerns and needs, and to implement supportive recovery activities in a flexible manner. More details about the basic objectives of psychological first aid can be found in Chapter V of the DR Operations Manual.

### **c. Working with Survivors: S.A.I. Protocol**

Survivors of traumatic events, including natural disasters, who are stable enough not to require psychological first aid frequently need psychological and mental health assistance to help them continue to cope effectively. They often have strong reactions to the life-threatening situations of the disasters that, in many cases, last long beyond the threat itself. They form a psycho-physiological response that can be crippling to the individual. This is called either acute stress disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depending on when the symptoms appear.

Traditional treatment for PTSD and other stress related conditions due to traumatizing and life threatening events are all based on relieving the mind and body of the stress created by the initial event, and empowering the individual to continue to release stress due to this event and other similar events that may occur in the future. A method to teach survivors traditional exercises to reduce stress is the Stress Alleviation Intervention (S.A.I.) Protocol, outlined in Addendum B of the DR Operations Manual. Any assistance to be provided will take into consideration the local customs and sensitivities after adequate communication with the local people both within the SSIO and local officials as applicable.

**d. Disaster Relief Team Well-Being**

Disaster relief volunteers providing relief services to survivors of disasters may experience direct or secondary “Volunteer Trauma” from the stressful work and environment. Therefore, volunteers’ mental health must also be periodically assessed and maintained. Addendum D of the DR Operations Manual lists a set of basic steps that can be followed by disaster relief teams in order to maintain the well-being of volunteers.

**Chapter VI: Guidelines for SSIO Disaster Relief Volunteers & Teams**

**a. What to Expect: Typical Disaster Scenarios and Volunteer Needs**

The support provided by volunteers is often the only lifeline available to badly affected communities, especially during the initial hours and days after a disaster. In such cases, volunteers are needed for a wide spectrum of roles and tasks as indicated below.

**b. Volunteer Roles**

**i. The Anchorman and Team/Project Leads**

The Anchorman is the lead coordinator for all relief activities on the ground and for communicating the status, needs and requirements to the SSIO chain of command. The anchorman oversees the day to day activities, represents the SSIO on the ground, and guides the work of the volunteers. Team/Project Leads are assigned a specific initiative within the overall SSIO relief efforts, reporting to the Anchorman and/or CDRC.

**ii. Rescue Volunteers**

Rescue volunteers are volunteers with experience and/or training in disaster relief operations, including health, and public and social service professionals. The SSIO Disaster Relief Chain of Command will activate these volunteers when it is safe to do so and only if risks are minimized.

### **iii. General Volunteers**

General volunteers support all other relief activities that go beyond immediate rescue needs. General volunteers are mostly needed for long-term community rebuilding support after the disaster. A wide variety of skills are usually needed, ranging from cooks, construction workers, project managers, teachers, social workers, infrastructure experts, people with technical skills or general manpower. Several other volunteer roles exist that can be performed remotely and that will be announced by the IDRC after each disaster. These are also discussed further in the DR Operations Manual.

### **c. Training and Certification Requirements**

As discussed in Chapter III, first aid training is required for all volunteers and specific disaster relief training is required for search, rescue and recovery volunteers. These training courses can be arranged locally in most countries. Disaster Relief training must include understanding the science of disasters, their causes, and results. Psychological first aid is also useful, in order to help our own team members as well as survivors who are not able to cope with the situation. This is described in Chapter V.

As a sample training program, Addendum C of the DR Operations Manual includes a summary outline of the CERT (Community Emergency Response Team, [www.citizencorps.fema.gov/cert/about.shtm](http://www.citizencorps.fema.gov/cert/about.shtm)) disaster relief training program offered in the USA. This program is free of charge and available through most local government agencies. We expect similar programs to exist in different countries.

### **d. Deployment Requirements**

#### **i. Approval and Mission Registration**

In addition to the application form attached in Addendum A of the DR Operations Manual, volunteers must register online prior to each mission, by submitting basic personal information, desired volunteer role and their requested dates of service on: [www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org](http://www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org).

Volunteers must be in good health and should consult their medical professionals prior to traveling to any disaster zone. The vaccinations required for volunteers will vary by geographical area, type of disaster and local conditions at the time of the disaster. For a complete current list of vaccinations and medical recommendations by area of the world, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: <http://www.cdc.gov/az/p.html>.

#### **ii. General Supply Checklist - What to Bring**

Volunteers and other travelers will need to be self-sufficient. Generally, volunteers should pack basic supplies, including some of the items listed in Addendum E of the DR Operations Manual. However, volunteers should assess the specific needs of each mission prior to finalizing their traveling supplies and check any postings on [www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org](http://www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org).

### **iii. Compliance with SSIO Guidelines and Local Laws**

Volunteers must read, understand and comply in entirety with the DR Guidelines and DR Operations Manual, in addition to any other SSIO guidelines and local regulations that may be applicable. Failure to comply with these guidelines and regulations may result in revocation of permission to serve in SSIO disaster relief missions.

### **iv. Expenses**

All volunteers must be able to meet their travel and personal expenses for the duration of their deployment. These expenses include but are not limited to food and water, accommodations, transportation, clothing, medications, personal supplies, personal first aid supplies and equipment, among other personal needs. Volunteers should check the specific circumstances prior to each relief mission, through their DR Chain of Command. Additional information will also be posted at [www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org](http://www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org).

## **Chapter VII: Field Operations**

### **a. Decision-Making**

Operational decisions follow the Disaster Relief Chain of Command stated in Chapter III.

### **b. Essential Items**

A suggested list of potential supplies and equipment is listed in Addendum F of the DR Operations Manual. Please note that this is a comprehensive list and that not all such supplies and equipment will be needed for all missions. Volunteers must check the essential recommendations for the latest mission posted on [www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org](http://www.sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org).

### **c. Essentials of Search, Rescue & Recovery Operations**

Recommendations for basic search and rescue operations are provided in Addendum H of the DR Operations Manual. These are based on the USA CERT Basic Training Manual, Chapter 5, pp185-230, published in January 2011. Several other such procedural manuals may exist in different countries, however the basics outlined here will be applicable in most common disaster scenarios. The full manual can be downloaded at: [http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1839-25045-8729/pm\\_combined.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1839-25045-8729/pm_combined.pdf).

### **d. Preventing, Identifying and Managing Hazards**

Volunteers must be prepared to handle a variety of potentially hazardous situations while serving in devastated and contaminated disaster areas, including: food and drink, insects and animals, injuries, human remains, heat and psychological issues, among others. Addendum I of the DR Operations Manual provides a detailed list on how to cope with many of these potential hazards.



## Chapter VIII: Guidelines for Interaction with Other Groups and Cultures

### a. Approval Procedures for non-SSIO (“Guest”) Volunteers

Volunteers who are not members of the SSIO may be considered to join the SSIO disaster relief effort, depending on need and upon recommendation by senior officers of the SSIO, after obtaining adequate information to assess their eligibility to serve.

### b. Awareness/Sensitivity of Local Cultural and Societal Norms

Cultures and societal norms vary widely from community to community, even within the same country. All volunteers must research and gain a basic understanding of the culture and type of societal norms in the country in which they will serve. In addition to any individual research, volunteers may visit the following site as starter guides: [www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html](http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html), [www.pbs.org/ampu/crosscult.html](http://www.pbs.org/ampu/crosscult.html). Volunteers are also encouraged to obtain information and safety communications about a particular area of the world.

### c. Interaction with Other Organizations

The SSIO must remain a unifying force and collaborate with others in order to secure the larger benefit of the community. Volunteers are ambassadors of the SSIO and must exemplify at all times the qualities and values taught by Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Volunteers must exude love, joy, compassion and the spirit of sacrifice through every thought, word, and action. The SSIO should not form partnerships or formal alliances with other organizations. Its activities must be executed independently from other organizations, while abiding by the laws of the land.

In this regard, Sri Sathya Sai Baba has said:

**It is best that Seva activities of our Organization are kept free from contact or involvement with other Seva Organizations in the country. For, other Organizations do not have the same strict rules and regulations regarding many matters. The environment which makes their service programs and the atmosphere created thereby may not be congenial to the Seva of this Organization.**

**-Sanathana Sarathi, January 1978**

### d. Understanding SSIO Outreach

As followers of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, most volunteers may feel comfortable and adequately prepared to talk about Him, His message and the SSIO. However, when interacting with the general public under stressful circumstances and/or cross-cultural barriers, delivering a concise and precise message may require some preparation. Addendum G of the DR Operations Manual offers some answers to frequently asked questions which all leaders and volunteers must read and use for guidance.

## **Chapter IX: SSIO Membership – General Disaster Preparedness**

Sathya Sai volunteers and members of the SSIO can begin to prepare themselves and their immediate community today, by following the recommendations below.

### **a. Home and Family Preparedness**

The “Home and Workplace Preparedness” recommendations stated in Addendum J of the DR Operations Manual come from the CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) training manual, published by the Government of the United States. Various other such programs exist that can help families prepare for disasters and each country will certainly have plenty of government resources available. We recommend all members of the SSIO to read and implement these basic guidelines and subsequently increase disaster preparedness awareness in their immediate communities.

### **b. Disaster Preparedness of Sathya Sai Centers**

The CDRC must inform all SSIO members, whether active volunteers or not, of the available disaster relief/preparedness training courses in their local communities. All SSIO members are highly encouraged to undertake such professional training, not only for their own readiness, but in order to better serve their local communities in times of need. Additionally, the local disaster relief laws are encouraged to provide all SSIO members with a basic disaster preparedness module to be reviewed across local Sathya Sai Centers.