



Asian American Federation
of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 23, 2005

CONTACT: Parag Khandhar, (212) 344-5878, x13 or parag@aafny.org
Julie Chan, (212) 344-5878, x31 or julie@aafny.org

**ASIAN AMERICAN FEDERATION ANNOUNCES INITIATIVE TO REACH, INFORM
AND ASSESS NEEDS OF ASIAN AMERICANS IN NEW YORK CITY AFFECTED BY TSUNAMIS**

Nonprofit Group Establishes Toll-Free Helpline at (800) 356-4892

NEW YORK – The Asian American Federation of New York, a nonprofit leadership organization, today announced it is launching a Tsunami Response Initiative to reach, inform and determine needs of Asian Americans living in New York City who may have been affected by the Indian Ocean tsunamis in December.

In a major element of the three-month program, a team of outreach workers will focus on gathering and distributing information in communities with ties to Indonesia, Sri Lanka, South India and Thailand – the areas hit hardest by the major earthquake and ensuing tsunamis that devastated South and Southeast Asia on Dec. 26. Familiar with these communities, the principal languages spoken at home, and neighborhoods where they are concentrated, the workers will visit and disseminate fliers on available resources in community centers, places of worship and social institutions, as well as such informal meeting places as grocery stores and restaurants.

One resource is a new toll-free Federation helpline, at (800) 356-4892, to receive information and answer questions from any Asian American New York City residents who were affected by the tsunamis directly or indirectly, or anyone aware of such individuals. The targeted community members include Asian Americans affected directly, whether their family members or friends are dead or missing, they lost homes or property, or they were otherwise touched by the tsunamis. They also include people who were in Asian countries when disaster struck or went there to assist with relief efforts. The helpline will offer voice prompts in the principal languages spoken in the most affected nations: Bahasa Indonesia, Sinhalese, Tamil, Thai, and English. The Federation will connect people who report unmet needs with appropriate service providers, including its member agencies, which offer counseling, legal aid, immigration assistance and many other services.

“While the impact of the tsunamis overseas is being assessed, their effect on Asian Americans in the New York metropolitan area is virtually unknown, apart from scattered anecdotes,” said Cao K. O, executive director of the Asian American Federation. “We are undertaking the Tsunami Response Initiative to shine a light on the local impact; and, if needs are found, make referrals and recommendations to respond to them.”

“We want to reach as many Asian American New Yorkers touched by the tsunamis as we can,” said Parag Khandhar, the Federation’s assistant director of programs and planning, who is managing the initiative. “If you or someone you know has been affected directly or indirectly, we would like to hear from you.”

In addition to providing referrals as needed, the Federation will use information it obtains to evaluate and document the disaster’s effects on the city’s Asian American residents and gauge possible remaining needs. If applicable, the Federation also will recommend steps to remedy service and access gaps. The Federation will release its findings in a joint report with the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers (NYRAG).

The tsunami initiative builds on the Federation’s involvement in other coordinated disaster responses. In February, the Federation was among several Asian American community organizations that co-sponsored a fund-raising dinner for tsunami relief abroad. Shortly after the September 11th tragedy, the Federation organized a joint multilingual relief and recovery initiative that served more than 5,000 Asian Americans.

The Asian American Federation of New York is a nonprofit leadership organization that works collaboratively to improve human services and the quality of life for Asian Americans in the New York metropolitan area. Established in 1990, the Federation supports 35 member agencies and other community-based Asian American service and advocacy organizations; promotes strategic philanthropy within the Asian American community; and conducts research and advocacy concerning critical community issues.

#