

*Professor Robinson, a passionate volunteer who has made trips over nine years working in rural Indonesian medical clinics, says his personal philosophy is to turn compassion into action.*

*After the tsunami Professor Robinson, who has a diploma in tropical medicine, tried to volunteer to join an Australian medical team in Indonesia but was stymied by red tape.*

*He turned to his good friend Professor Michael Henderson, a corporate citizen and Adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, and Michael made the necessary arrangements for him to become part of an Indonesian team.*

*"There was this one tall white guy working with 120 Indonesians. This meant two things: No.1 we were absolutely at the coal face of the disaster and No.2 I had to learn Indonesian really fast," he said. We worked very hard together, often slept in the same tents and many of those Indonesian team members remain good friends of mine to this day.*

*"On the first visit, the people up in Aceh were in a huge state of shock - it was like there was a black cloud of grief everywhere, not surprisingly – over 200,000 people died. But also, they did not want to talk about it - that's not in their culture. So we began to talk to them when we realised they were not talking to each other.*

*"We heard the most awful stories... Kids who survived by swimming hard and hanging on to trees but then when they finally got back to where their home had been, they found that everybody in their family was dead.*

*"It was pretty hard on the whole team. I certainly found myself weeping a number of times.*

*"But after a few months, on later visits, I began to see colour appearing in the streets, the markets and faces of the people as they gradually came out of that.*

*"Michael then suggested that we set up ISTIH (the International Skills and Training Institute in Health) and went about drawing on his entrepreneurial networks to achieve this. ISTIH was created to facilitate training programs for health staff in the region to become prepared to quickly respond to disasters instead of needing outside help.*

*"It's the stone in the pond effect where we train people to train other people.*

*"So instead of them struggling when there is a disaster or other major emergency, they can immediately and effectively respond themselves.*

*"Michael has always been a one unit input, two million output type of person, so I am grateful to Michael for this suggestion because it changed the way I function in Indonesia – instead of just volunteering as a doctor, I also volunteer as a trainer and thus amplify the effectiveness of what I do."*