

**OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF  
HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS - OCHA**

**UNITED NATIONS DISASTER ASSESSMENT  
AND COORDINATION - UNDAC**

**MISSION REPORT**

**INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI, THAILAND  
28 DECEMBER 2004 – 12 JANUARY 2005**



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## **1. The UNDAC Team**

The team was composed of the following UNDAC members:

Ms Merete Johansson, Chief, APAC, CRD, OCHA Geneva,

Mr. Terje Skavdal, RDRA, OCHA, Kobe

Dr. Teo Kwang Joo, Singapore

Dr. Jari Vainio, Finland

Ms. Neryl Lewis, Australia

Mr. Robert Goodwin, IHP Support, Norway (1<sup>st</sup> half)

Mr. Anders Laukvik, IHP Support, Norway (2<sup>nd</sup> half)

## **2. Description of the Event**

On 26 December 2004, between 0058 hours GMT and 0738 hours GMT, a series of earthquakes occurred in the area of the western coast of Northern Sumatra, Andaman Islands and Nicobar Islands. The two strongest earthquakes had the magnitude of 8.9 on the Richter Scale (0058 hours GMT, 3.30 North, 95.78East, off western coast of Northern Sumatra) and 7.3 on the Richter Scale (0421 GMT, 6.90 North, 92.95 East, Nicobar Islands). The earthquakes caused tsunamis impacting several countries in the region.

## **3. Impact.**

Parts of the 400km western coastline of Thailand have been devastated by the large tsunami that struck South and South-East Asia the morning of 26 December (approximately 10am in Thailand). The coastal provinces of Ranong, Phang-Nga, Phuket, Krabi, Trang and Satun were severely affected. The combined population of these provinces is 1.9 million, many living in coastal areas. Phang-Nga and Krabi are the worst hit areas. These areas are also prime tourist areas with numerous tourist resorts located in close vicinity of the ocean.

As of 10 January, the Royal Thai Government (RTG) estimates that 5,309 have died (out of 2,463 foreigners 78% died in Phang-Nga Province), 8,457 have been injured and 3,810 are reported missing. However, new bodies are being uncovered daily and the death toll is expected to rise.

The estimated damage to infrastructure is difficult to determine at this stage, as the focus of the RTG has been on the treatment and evacuation of the injured and recovery, identification and repatriation of the dead.

The Thai Ministry of Agriculture estimates 2,435 fishing boats destroyed – the total estimated cost for the fishing industry is 572,74 million baht, 225 hectares of agricultural

land affected and 54,000 livestock killed. 490 fishing villages with an estimated population of 100,000 – 120,000 have been affected. 5 resorts in Phuket had partial damages, and 27 resorts were completely destroyed (an estimated damage of 768,3 million baht). Partially damaged houses (excluding Phi Phi) are 3,689 and totally 3,082. 50 schools are affected, 4 being destroyed in Ranong. 19 governmental buildings destroyed, 8 harbours, 51 roads, 3 bridges and 11 embankments were damaged.

#### 4. United Nations Response

Upon arrival in Bangkok on the eve of 28 December, the UNDAC team met with MFA and the RC to discuss immediate support requirements and it was agreed that the mission would proceed to the affected area the next day. Prior to departure for Phuket, the team attended a meeting of the UN Country Team on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 2004, hosted by the RC where the UNDAC team described its role in supporting the UNCT and Government. It also invited UN agencies with a role in the emergency phase to join the Resident Coordinator and UNDAC team to Phuket. UNICEF, WHO and WFP responded immediately appointing Bangkok-based staff members to join the mission.

UN agencies present confirmed their willingness to coordinate their respective interventions and support RTG efforts. Attending agencies reported:

- **UNDP** is focused on (i) liaison with RTG; (ii) supporting the UNDAC team and the Resident Coordinator; (iii) longer term rehabilitation in the areas of shelter, livelihoods, and environmental rehabilitation; and (iv) have established an Emergency Relief and Coordination Fund with 100,000 from TRAC 1.1.3.
- **WFP** is providing 500,000 US (approved by RTG) for local food procurement and distribution for affected populations (will support an estimated population of 150,000). WFP will launch a 25 million US appeal for a regional response (no food needed in Thailand).
- **UNICEF** will focus their response in 4 provinces - Ranong, Phang-Nga, Trang and Satun. Local UNICEF staff has begun working with provincial authorities to assess the needs of children in regards to: (i) health; (ii) nutrition; (iii) water and sanitation; and (iv) education. UNICEF also has a special focus on HIV/AIDS.
- **WHO** is seeking to mobilise forensic teams and support Ministry of Health (MoH) efforts.
- **UNHCR** is considering a 50,000 US contribution to the Emergency Relief Fund - earmarked for shelter. When shelter needs have been established, regional and local shelter supplies may be sourced and supplied to those in need.
- **FAO** is concerned about the tsunamis impact on coastal communities heavily dependent upon fishing and agriculture for their livelihoods. FAO will mobilise assistance for fishing and agricultural rehabilitation when a needs assessment has been conducted.
- **UNFPA** is focusing on vulnerable women and girls, particularly in their project areas – Ranong and Satun. UNFPA has mobile clinics deployed in these provinces and are assessing whether additional assistance is required.
- **OHCHR** will monitor the situation to ensure assistance reaches the vulnerable.

- **UNESCO** will focus on education and their World Heritage Committee will assess damage to relevant areas.
- **UNOPS** is able to procure and arrange contracts to assist UN agencies with their response efforts.
- **ESCAP** advised that Phase 2 security is in place in Phuket.
- **ILO** will focus on longer-term rehabilitation and employment.
- **ADB** has offered to redirect unused loans to support the rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts of RTG.
- **World Bank** has also offered RTG support for immediate and medium term relief and reconstruction through the redirection of unused loans. The World Bank in London is establishing a Tsunami Trust Fund as a regional response.
- **JIBC** has offered loans for longer-term rehabilitation.

### **Role of the UNDAC team:**

From the moment the UNDAC team arrived in Bangkok on 28 December and then in Phuket the next day, it immediately tried to determine how it could best support the Government and UN Country Team. The Royal Thai Government at Bangkok and Phuket levels, though willing to cooperate with the team, did not want any kind of direct support or participation in the Thai Government's own coordination mechanisms. It soon became clear that the main role for UNDAC was to facilitate UN assessment, coordination and information sharing, and to a limited degree facilitate communication and information sharing on the role of the S & R and forensic teams.

Thai Government officials were unclear at first of the UNDAC team's role – there was an assumption that the team was here to primarily assist foreigners. Once this was overcome, good relations were established with relevant department officials. However, given the effective Thai Government response, there was no need for the UNDAC team to play a strong role in assisting with coordination efforts. Additionally, given the pressure Thai Government officials were under from foreign embassies to deal with body recovery and identification, officials had little time to spend with the UNDAC Team but were nevertheless supportive.

The UNDAC team arrived in Phuket on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December, 2004 together with the UN Resident Coordinator, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) official and one representative from WFP, WHO and UNICEF. The UNDAC team focused its efforts on carrying out rapid assessments of immediate relief and recovery needs, coordination – liaising with Thai authorities, S&R teams, forensic teams (Disaster Victim Identification coordination), embassy representatives and NGOs in Phuket, general information sharing, and “getting the message out” on priorities for international assistance. The international community can reinforce the Thai national response (which is already very strong) with targeted support, especially of vulnerable groups. Initial priorities are shelter, psychosocial support, child protection, social support, education, livelihood recovery, fisheries/agriculture, environmental rehabilitation, and coordination. ESCAP, ADPC and

UNDP have an important role to play in provide technical assistance in disaster preparedness and disaster mitigation.

The UN SG in Jakarta launched the UN Regional appeal on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, however the RTG decided not to appeal for international assistance, although it welcomed assistance – especially technical assistance (forensic teams in particular during the emergency phase).

The chronology of assessments and reporting of the UNDAC team is given below:

<b>Start Date/Time</b>	<b>Activity Type:</b>	<b>Activity:</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Comments</b>
29.12.2004	Daily situation report		UNDAC	
30.12.2004	Daily situation report		UNDAC	
31.12.2004	Field Assessment	Trang Province	Teo, Neryl, Bastiaan	
	Situation update			
31.12.2004	Field Assessment	Ranong Province	Jari, Merete, Coco	Visit to several temporary shelters, damaged fishermen villages.
31.12.2004	Situation update		UNDAC	
01.01.2005	Field Assessment	Krabi Province	Teo, Neryl, Bastiaan	
01.01.2005	Field Assessment	Phang-Nga Province	Jari, Merete, Coco	Meetings with Mo Justice, Mo Environment, forensic teams, visits to Wot Yan Yao, temporary shelters, Khao Lak, Takuo Pa .
01.01.2005	Situation update			
03.01.2005	Field Assessment	Air assessment of Khao Lak, Phi Phi island	Teo	Air assessment of coastal area from Phuket, Phang Nga up to Khao Lak and to Phi Phi Island.
03.01.2005	Situation update		UNDAC	
04.01.2005	Field Assessment	Detailed assessment of Khao Lak Area	Teo, Jari	Visit to Relief Camps, Mortuary sites
04.01.2005	Daily situation report		UNDAC	
05.01.2005	Field Assessment	Detailed Survey	Teo, Jari	Ban Tao, Surin Beach, Kamala Bay, Patong Beach, Karon Beach, Kata Beach, Ra Wai Beach.
05.01.2005	Daily situation report		UNDAC	
06.01.2005	Field Assessment	Air survey in	Terri, Teo, Jari	Flight to Khao Lak, Ko

		Phang Nga area		Kho Khao, Ko Phra Thong, Ko Ra
06.01.2005	Daily situation report		UNDAC	
07.01.2005	Daily situation report		UNDAC	
08.01.2005	Field Assessment	Detailed Survey	Teo, Jari	Siray, Gipsy Village, Makham Bay, Chalong Bay
08.01.2005	Daily situation report		UNDAC	
09.01.2005	Situation update		UNDAC	
10.01.2005	Situation update		UNDAC	
11.01.2005	Situation report		UNDAC	

## 5. Establishment of the UNDAC team

The team met in the UN Resident Co-ordinator's office in Bangkok, and after meeting with different UN agencies and hearing their expectations, the team continued travelling to the disaster area. Terje Skavdal reinforced team on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, and Merete Johansson moved to Bangkok to support overall coordination, inter-agency liaison, at the capital level in the Resident Coordinator's office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 2005.

## 6. Needs Assessment.

The team undertook damage and needs assessment missions to the affected areas several times during the first two weeks upon arrival in country. All the affected Provinces (except Satun, because of internal security problems) were visited and in each place, contact was made with District authorities and the affected population. The initial assessments consisted of general overview of the disaster areas, but the gaps were later filled by more detailed assessments.

## 7. Information Management.

The mission produced 7 Situation Reports. Information on damages and relief efforts was gathered from assessment missions, the National Operation Room established by the government, as well as UN agencies and NGOs. Numerous briefings were given to NGOs and representatives from embassies, media etc. Assessment results were shared with new arriving teams. Briefings were also given at an UNRC meeting for donor representatives and to the EC Counsellors meeting in Bangkok.

The team used the virtual osocc actively and at 11 Jan more than 100 entries on Thailand.

## **8. National Response.**

MFA established an `Ad Hoc Task Force on Tidal Wave Disaster` to coordinate foreign assistance and appointed a Humanitarian Relief Coordinator. The MFA appointed a three-person team to liaise with the UN. The RTG efforts were largely focused on identification of bodies, evacuation of foreign nationals and treating the injured. The Ministry of Health (MoH) mobilized more than 200 doctors who were sent to Phuket immediately after the disaster.

The Director of the Department of Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Prevention issued a statement regarding the establishment of police teams to facilitate the collection of DNA data to help identify missing Thai people. Those with missing (close family) relatives will be able to report to district centres to provide DNA samples. A centre was also established in Bangkok. Included in the statement was an announcement that guidelines are being established to inform Thai Police and Provincial Governors about how bodies of foreigners will be repatriated and the issuing of death certificates. A task force for Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) has been established and chaired by General Nappadol Zomboonsab, Deputy Chief of the Royal Thai Police. Colonel Ponprasere Ganjanarint, Superintendent Foreign Affairs Division at the Royal Thai Police and Federal Agent Karl King from the Australian Federal Police, supports him. The discussions at the meetings have focused on technical issues to ensure a standardized methodology in the forensic work. Key issues were how to sample biological material from the human remains, handling laboratory samples, marking systems, etc. China has pledged to carry out the DNA testing free of costs.

One of the most striking observations has been the extensive effort of national Thai volunteers in helping search and rescue, working in the mortuary, and distributing food, bottled water and clothes. The Thai general public has also contributed generously with donating clothing, blood, bottled water and providing meals at crisis centers.

The Royal Thai Government has mounted an effective response operation; relief supplies appear to be reaching affected communities all along the Thai coast. The Thai Red Cross has played a vital role in coordinating the delivery of public donations to affected communities.

For the health sector, Ministry of Public Health has set up a Command Center for the South in Phuket. The Center is led by a Deputy Permanent Secretary and is responsible for coordinating health services and epidemic surveillance and response for the six affected provinces. No outbreaks of epidemics have been reported. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Human Security is offering psychosocial support to children in some areas of temporary shelter.

Temporary shelters have been built on vacant pieces of land, schoolyards or areas of other public buildings. The shelters are built with corrugated iron sheets or plywood. The authorities believe people have to live in these shelters for about 6 months. The military has begun reconstruction of homes, and already over 100 have been completed.

The removal of debris and some restoring e.g. of electricity is on-going.

In general, relief supplies and medical care are more than adequate in Thailand. One constraint has been the enormous pressure on the RTG in coping with the largest ever forensic operation. The assessment of needs in the most severely affected areas is underway. There are a significant number of migrant workers in the affected provinces--many of them unregistered, who may not qualify for the national compensation package, and will require assistance. IFRC also reported that the TRC have been inundated with in-kind donations and are now encouraging cash only donations. TRC were quick to establish 4 relief centres within 24-48 hours of the disaster and have deployed 20 nurses. TRC has free access to Thai Air Force transport for supplies and personnel and are reportedly coordinating their efforts well with provincial authorities.

## 9. UN RESPONSE:

- **UNDP** is focused on (i) liaison with GoT; (ii) supporting the UNDAC team and the Resident Coordinator; (iii) longer term rehabilitation in the areas of shelter, livelihoods, and environmental rehabilitation; and (iv) have established an Emergency Relief and Coordination Fund with 100,000 from TRAC 1.1.3.
- **WFP** is providing 500,000 US (approved by GoT) for local food procurement and distribution for affected populations (will support an estimated population of 150,000). WFP will launch a 25 million US appeal for a regional response.
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- **WHO** is seeking to mobilise forensic teams and support Ministry of Health (MoH) efforts.
- **UNHCR** is considering a 50,000 US contribution to the Emergency Relief Fund - earmarked for shelter. When shelter needs have been established, regional and local shelter supplies may be sourced and supplied to those in need.
- **FAO** is very concerned about the tsunamis impact on coastal communities heavily dependent upon fishing and agriculture for their livelihoods. FAO will mobilise assistance for fishing and agricultural rehabilitation when a needs assessment has been conducted.
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- **World Bank** has also offered GoT support for immediate and medium term relief and reconstruction through the redirection of unused loans. The World Bank in London is establishing a Tsunami Trust Fund as a regional response.
- **JIBC** has offered loans for longer-term rehabilitation.
- **IFRC** has announced a 100,000 US regional response and will launch a regional flash appeal for CH50 million. There has not been a specific appeal for Thailand. IFRC is working closely with Thai Red Cross (TRC) and have water/sanitation and health experts ready to be deployed if requested by GoT. IFRC is also proposing to procure health kits from Geneva to re-equip health clinics in affected areas.
- **OCHA's** initial response has involved deploying UNDAC teams to each of the affected countries and in Thailand to make available a contribution of US\$50,000 from its emergency response fund.

## **10. Coordination.**

Initially, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was coordinating the relief efforts in the disaster area, thus focusing on the diplomatic relationships with foreign Embassies and dead/missing foreign tourists. Tens of international teams arrived to Phuket focusing their search, rescue or body recovery operations on their own nationals. But the message is: everybody should help each other.

At the time of the UNDAC team's departure, the Minister of Interior chaired a daily coordination meeting by the RTG. The participants are representatives from all the governmental agencies involved with the response work. Following the coordination meeting the MoI gives a briefing to the press, representatives from embassies and others on the latest development.

The following RTG agencies will be responsible for focusing on recovery work:

- Provincial governments will be responsible for the cleaning up of affected beaches and streets. All six affected provinces are to submit rehabilitation progress reports and 'beautification' plans to the RTG Cabinet by 10 January for national government funding consideration.
- The Public Works Department will be responsible for infrastructure repair and maintenance (electricity poles, tap water and main water pipes).

- Ministry of Natural Resources will continue to clean water sources and monitor water quality and supply.
- The Ministry of Interior will continue to oversee the establishment of temporary and permanent housing with the Ministry for Social Development and Human Security and the Thai Defence Force. These Departments are encouraged to use local building materials to stimulate the economy in affected areas. It is now estimated that 2,000 homes were totally destroyed and 2,000 partially damaged.
- The Ministry of Interior will work with Provincial Governments to re-establish control and regulate street vendors.
- The Agricultural Ministry will cooperate with the Thai Defence Force to assist fisherman salvage and repair fishing boats.
- The Finance Ministry will assist business owners obtain loans for business recovery initiatives.
- The Education Ministry will work to rehabilitate schools and take responsibility for ensuring that all orphans are offered free boarding school education.
- Deputy Prime Minister Jaturon will oversee natural resource/environmental recovery with the Ministry for Natural Resources.
- Deputy Prime Minister Pinit will be responsible for vocational training and food for work programs for those who have lost their income. The Labour Ministry will also assist those without an income, including assisting migrant workers to return home if they chose to do so in cooperation with the social welfare organizations.
- Deputy Prime Minister Somsuk will oversee the establishment of a tsunami early warning system for Thailand.

In Phuket, the international DVI teams are coordinated by joint command of the Thai and Australian Police under the Interpol guidelines. UNDAC was an observer in this coordination effort. It was clear that a more focussed coordination and established guidelines are needed – e.g. using the system of INSARAG: establishing reception centre, using established protocols, and established administration and logistics guidelines. Also, it was recognised that a neutral coordination body is needed (UN?).

## **10. UNDAC Team results**

In accordance with the tasks given by the UN Resident Co-ordinator at the beginning of the mission, the UNDAC team produced the following results:

- a. Assisted the UN in establishing a systematic coordination framework including briefings and sectoral meetings in Phuket. At the Bangkok level this included coordination of assessments and response by the UN system and IFRC as well as information sharing with Government and other international organizations including ESCAP and ADPC.
- b. Facilitated internal coordination within different UN and NGO entities
- c. Supported RGT in initial emergency and rehabilitation needs assessments.
- d. Kept the UN Resident Co-ordinator and Country Team informed by briefing and inputs to situation reports

- e. 2 UNCT meetings and 3 donor information meetings in 14 days (including a Government hosted meeting in Phuket, one hosted by the UNRC in Bangkok and one hosted by ECHO in Bangkok with EU member states).
- f. Support given to EC Civil Defence representative (co-located with UNDAC team)
- g. Support given on daily basis to representatives from various embassies represented at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs operation centre
- h. Advocacy through media interviews and sharing of assessment reports
- i. Advice given to NGOs planning assessments in the affected area
- j. Kept contact with SAR teams and information on the coordination facilitated by RTN

## **11. Follow up actions.**

From the very beginning, the UNDAC team actively promoted the engagement of humanitarian and development agencies alike, as well as the IFIs, in a coordinated manner, so as to ensure a smooth transition and continuity after its departure. This has been achieved and the response has now shifted to the recovery stage.

Meetings with the UNCT held at regular intervals, including before the UNDAC team's departure, helped to establish consensus on next steps, which can broadly be defined as follows:

- Continuation of inter-agency assessments (UNCT);
- Development of Thailand specific agency projects within the regional flash appeal (agencies);
- Set up systems for more systematic web-based information sharing with support from OCHA (OCHA and UNDP/Thailand);
- Continue and enhance as required RC-led coordination mechanisms during the recovery phase (I-A, NGO, donor), with support from UNDP and OCHA as required (OCHA to deploy one additional information officer and one I-A coordination officer for up to 6 months, in consultation with UNDP);
- Develop and/or identify existing mechanisms for channeling bilateral contributions beyond the UN appeal (UNDP)
- Give special attention to the needs of economic migrants from Myanmar and other vulnerable populations who may not qualify for compensation packages (UNCT in dialogue with UNRC Myanmar and Internal Displacement Division/OCHA Geneva);
- Continue to advocate on behalf of the needs in Thailand both in terms of assistance and support to the UNCT and Government (UNRC/OCHA and UNDP);
- Assess any coordination support required for Government (UNRC/UNDP in dialogue with OCHA Geneva)

## Closing remarks:

The team would like to acknowledge the excellent support of the Royal Thai Government, the UN Resident Coordinator and her office, and the UN Country Team.

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