



TO: OCHA-GENEVA, UNCT IN THAILAND

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SUBJECT: **DISASTER, FIELD SITREP 10**

DATE: 4 March 2005

I. SITUATION

While it must be stressed that the overall situation in Thailand remain stable in general, an increased number of violent incidents in the so-called deep South as well as Government's toughened policy towards the region are raising some concerns. A special session of both Houses of the Parliament is expected to be convened in the end of March 2005 to discuss the situation. It remains unclear at this stage as to how and to what extent, if any, the situation has had an effect on the emergency response and recovery efforts in the areas affected by the tsunami disaster of 26 Dec 2004. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has reiterated that the government will renovate the tsunami-stricken areas. He also insisted that Thailand will have a preliminary early warning system by this April – sooner than the anticipated schedule – while a complete system will be established by next year.

The latest figures from the Thai Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Ministry of Interior, Government of Thailand as of 1 March 2005 are: 5,395 dead (1,925 Thai, 1,953 foreigners and 1,517 unidentified) and 2,952 missing (2023 Thai and 929 foreigners). 58,550 persons from 12,480 households have been affected. A total of 6,824 houses have been damaged, of which 3,615 have been completely destroyed and 3,209 partial damaged. 4615 of these damaged houses are in Phang-Nga Province.

A new survey by the Mental Health Department has found that there are more tsunami orphans than originally thought and that these children urgently needed long-term professional psychological support. The survey found that 1,101 children were made orphans – an increase from 800 reported last month – mostly in Takua Pa District of Phang Nga Province where at least 20 communities were destroyed. The latest figure accounts for over 10% of an estimated 8,000 children directly and indirectly affected by the tsunami.

II. NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) is confident that the government will be able to control possible epidemics in the tsunami-hit region where its officials have been constantly monitoring the situation and urging the public to drink clean water. Several areas in the southern province of Phang Nga, however, are reportedly suffering a severe water shortage, just like villages in the drought-plagued Northeast, according to a Bangkok newspaper. Residents are currently relying on bottled drinking water donated after the tsunami. However, as donated water is running out, MoPH plans to set up clean water distribution centers in six areas in the Province, three of which have reportedly been installed already. Separately, the Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Department recently provided five water trucks to help alleviate the water shortage. The Province will soon make artificial rain to prevent severe drought. The Director of Water Resources Office in the southern region confirmed last week that the Budget Bureau had approved his agency's proposal to spend 47 million baht to develop 10 water sources in Phang Nga, Phuket and Krabi.

The Cabinet has reportedly approved a budget of 3.85 billion baht to revive tourism in the tsunami-affected provinces. The funds will be used to stimulate tourism by supporting low-priced fares and room rates, provide incentives for civil servants and state enterprise employees to take vacations in the area, and to establish some duty-free shops. Longer-term plans to be financed by the fund will include rehabilitation of sites at Khao Lak, Patong and Kamala Beach. The Cabinet also approved the establishment of a 1.5-million baht tsunami museum.

The Ministry of Finance has proposed establishing a one billion baht property fund to purchase or lease properties hit by the tsunami. The fund, which would have the goal of accelerating business rehabilitation in the tsunami-hit southern provinces, could eventually be expanded to as much as 10 billion baht according to a Bangkok newspaper. Around 85% of the funds would be used for refinancing. While authorities have approved tens of billions of baht in reconstruction assistance to the tsunami-hit provinces, many businesses have reportedly complained that aid has been relatively slow and that the procedures were complicated.

A reference book on disaster management is being prepared by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), based on experiences in responding to the tsunami catastrophe. About 400 people involved in relief and rescue operations met in Phuket on 23 February 2005 to share their experiences and develop strategies on how to cope with large disasters.

Separately, the Public Health Minister Sudarat Keyuraphan announced last week that counseling services provided to tsunami victims would be extended for one year. Some 14 victims remain hospitalized for trauma, while another 9,174 are in need of counseling and a further 1,000 require prescriptions to overcome depression, according to the Minister.

Following a two-month evaluation after the tsunami disaster, the Mental Health Department has reportedly mapped out a strategic plan focusing on four different types of affected children: those made orphans by the tsunami, those who witnessed the catastrophe, those whose parents lost their jobs and homes as a result, and those who had poor living standards even before the tsunami struck. These children will undergo a two-year mental relief programme. In Takua Pa District, a mental health care center has been established to conduct surveillance on children's mental health and to evaluate their psychological conditions after the tsunami. A team of 500 psychologists are reported to have already arrived in the affected areas to provide advice to teachers and relatives on providing care for the affected children. The Thai Red Cross Society has recently launched its "Learning-for-Healing" project, run jointly with World Childhood Foundation, in Phang Nga Province to help the tsunami-affected children.

Fishermen from the six southern coastal provinces devastated by the tsunami have reportedly started to return to the sea in an effort to reclaim their livelihoods. Eight boat yards have been built since mid-January of this year in Krabi, Satun and Trang. 18 more are planned for Phang Nga, Phuket and Ranong. According to the Save the Andaman Network Survey, 47 fishing villages were badly damaged and 182 partially damaged. Over 5400 families were affected, and over 3,300 of their boats were damaged. To date, about 200 million baht in assistance have been delivered by the Department of Fisheries to compensate fishermen for their registered boats that were destroyed or damaged by the tsunami.

With regard to victims identification, lack of coordination between the many international forensic teams working to identify victims of the tsunami disaster is reportedly delaying work towards repatriation of bodies of people killed by the tsunami. Each country team was using its own DNA methods to process the bodies and overlapping identification efforts by governments were reportedly slowing down DNA testing of bodies. Inadequate laboratory facilities are also said to be delaying the process. Kenyon Disaster Management, a private firm working with forensic teams in Phuket, is calling on international governments to set up a single coordinated identification process in order to speed up the repatriation process. Meanwhile, the Thai Government has reportedly signed a US\$ 1.6

million contract with Gene Code, a forensic DNA matching software company, to facilitate identification of tsunami victims. It is reported that Interpol and at least 20 other national police forces have been part of the forensic operation. 338 bodies have been identified between 13 January and 21 February 2005.

On the security front, the Thai National Security Council (NSC) has proposed the creation of a National Operation Centre to manage national crises with “a new dimension of security”. According to General Vinai Pattiyakul, the NSC Secretary-General, this initiative follows Prime Minister Thaksin’s trip to the South to oversee the tsunami relief operations, after which the Prime Minister mentioned the need for an operation centre to cope with all forms of crises.

III. COUNTRY-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Agriculture and Fisheries: The ‘*Regional Workshop on Rehabilitation of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Coastal Communities of Tsunami Affected Countries in Asia*’ was held from 28 February to 1 March 2005 in Bangkok. The objective of the Workshop was to consult with impacted countries to guide the development of a regional strategy and a programme framework for rehabilitation, based on regional perspectives and country dimensions. The Workshop brought together members of the recently formed *Consortium to Restore Shattered Livelihoods in Tsunami-devastated Nations* (CONSRN), which consists of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO RAP); Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia and the Pacific (NACA); South East Asia Fisheries Development Centres (SEAFDEC); Bay of Bengal Programme – Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO); and the World Fish Centre (WorldFish), as well as representatives from India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and donors including ADB, AUSAID, EC, Japan, SIDA and IBRD. Earlier, three areas requiring immediate consideration were identified by CONSRN: (1) avoiding overcapacity in fishing boats and vessels and the need for a forum of technical assistance for coordinating levels and suitability of fishing fleets in the region; (2) the use of responsible and selective fishing gears; and (3) the rehabilitation of cage aquaculture.

Child Protection: UNICEF estimates that the tsunami disaster has resulted in temporary erosion of the protective environment for an estimated 50,000 children. This includes children who have lost parents, children living in shelters, as well as other children living in the hardest tsunami-affected districts where normal community lives and routines have been severely disrupted. This has resulted in a weakening or breakdown of the normal child protective mechanisms and increased vulnerability of children. While the immediate national response to ensure adequate protection for these children was swift, according to UNICEF, further strengthening of the family and community protective mechanisms is needed. Immediate priorities are to ensure the psychological recovery of children and to ensure care and support for orphaned children. Tracking of key protection indicators, including education attendance, over the coming year will be especially important in order to follow the impact of tsunami-induced economic changes on protection.

Civil-Military Relations: The Royal Thai Supreme Command, United States Pacific Command (PACOM) and the armed forces of Japan and Singapore have gathered in Bangkok this week to organise and plan a staff-exercise called Cobra Gold 2005 to be held in Chiang-Mai in May this year. Representatives of the United Nations, the Red Cross Movement and NGOs will be invited to participate in this joint exercise. The exercise will focus on lessons learned from the Tsunami response and how the various partners can work together to improve coordination and response efficiency. The staff exercises will look at the standard operational procedures of multinational forces in order to examine what improvements might be needed.

Civil Society: Over 70 civil societies from across the tsunami affected areas in Asia, representing local, national, regional and international organizations came together in Bangkok to attend the *Asian Civil Society Consultation on Post-Tsunami Challenges* from 13 to 14 February 2005. The newly formed civil society group issued a statement expressing solidarity with the survivors and victims of

the tsunami disaster and stressed that a speedy revival of normal life, through a democratic process must obtain utmost priority. The Consultation was jointly hosted by Actionaid and FORUM-ASIA.

Early Warning: The Executive Director of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) announced on 28 February 2005 that the ADPC had completed its design of a US\$50 million early tsunami warning system for the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and South China seas. The announcement was made at the signing ceremony of the ADPC Charter, which paved way for the ADPC transformation from a foundation into a regional organization. A week earlier, the ADPC gave a presentation to the UN system and Governments on their current and planned activities in establishing a multi-hazard regional early warning system. From the UN side, it was suggested that ADPC should concentrate their efforts on areas where they have a clear comparative strength. Concerns has been expressed by ADPC that regional differences could delay the establishment of an Indian Ocean Early Warning System, beyond the mid-2006 date the United Nations had envisioned.

Separately, in Paris, the '*International Coordination Meeting for the Development of a Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System for the Indian Ocean within a Global Framework*' opened on 3 March 2005 to discuss the establishment of a Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System for the Indian Ocean within a global tsunami warning and mitigation system framework. The meeting is expected to come up with a draft work plan and timetable for Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System for the Indian Ocean as well as a draft design plan for tsunami warning systems including global, regional and national levels. The meeting, organised by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, will continue until 8 March 2005.

Ecosystems: The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific is convening a regional coordination workshop from 7 to 8 March 2005 to bring together interested parties involved in post-tsunami forestry assessment and rehabilitation work. The goals of the workshop are: to exchange information and knowledge related to effective rehabilitation of forest ecosystems in tsunami-affected areas; strengthen coordination and collaboration of national, regional and international agencies involved in forest rehabilitation and management of tsunami-affected areas; and develop a regional strategic framework for directing future activities relating to rehabilitation of tsunami-affected forest ecosystems. The Workshop is expected to come up with a regional framework as a basis for discussion and formulation of future plan of action.

Environment: UNEP issued a report last week entitled "*After the Tsunami – Rapid Environmental Assessment*". The report suggests that countries hit by last year's tsunami should erect natural buffer zones along their coasts and rebuild in less exposed areas to protect against future calamities. The report also says that planting of trees, primarily mangroves, around denuded shorelines would lessen the impact of disasters such as the tsunami. The report warned of negative consequences of ripping out mangrove swamps and the destruction of coral reefs that protect coastlines.

Information Management: An assessment of the existing structure and future needs for information management was conducted this week by OCHA staff members on mission. The mission interviewed representatives of ADPC, ESCAP, IFRC, ILO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIS, WFP and several NGOs. A report outlining recommendations is expected in the near future.

Migrant workers: The UN Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator and Heads of ILO and IOM met with representatives of Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 25 February 2005 to present the UN Country Team's "Strategy on Assistance to Migrant Workers in Tsunami-Affected Areas" for consideration by the Thai Government. The "Strategy" was finalized last week by the UNCT after a series of meetings held on the issue, following two inter-agency assessment missions to the affected areas. The Paper was presented to the authorities as framework of potential assistance to Thailand on this matter, to be follow-up upon request. The Thai MoFA agreed to review the Paper and respond to the UN in the near future.

Rehabilitation and Reconstruction: *The High-Level Coordination Meeting on Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Assistance to Tsunami-Affected Countries*, sponsored by the Asian Development Bank, is expected to be held on 18 March 2005 to discuss regional coordination and information sharing for effective recovery efforts over the short and medium term. The objective of the meeting is, *inter alia*, to take stock of the status of recovery efforts and pledges of support to date; exchange information on priorities; explore areas of joint work; identify ways to integrate post-tsunami rehabilitation to respective countries' medium-longer term development etc.

Reproductive Health: UNFPA is expanding its support for maternal and child health and family planning services and HIV prevention. Working with Thai health authorities and NGO partners, UNFPA will offer training, research, supplies and equipment to ensure that newly built communities in Thailand's four hard-hit provinces have adequate reproductive health information, counseling and other services.

Women's Rights: UNIFEM reports that on 8 March 2005, UN Agencies will join together to celebrate the International Women's Day events with a theme on women's human rights in the context of the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami disaster. The event, which will take place at the UNCC Building of UNESCAP, will focus on sharing women's experiences and ideas on the rebuilding of women's lives in the aftermaths of disasters. A panel discussion and an exhibition is expected to highlight examples of how UN and other humanitarian agencies can integrate women's human rights and gender responsiveness into post-disaster rebuilding activities.

Human Rights Implications: The Eighth Practitioners' Forum on Human Rights and Development will take place in Bangkok 4 March. Dr. Walter Kalin, Some 80 representatives from NGOs and Human Rights institutions will be participating. The discussion will be focused on legal issues, access to aid, child trafficking and sexual abuse of women and children and the right to housing. Representative of the Secretary General of internally displaced persons have recently been visiting tsunami-affected countries to meet with National Human Right Commissions.

IV. REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

The Royal Thai Government has decided not to appeal for international financial assistance; however, the government will accept foreign technical assistance such as equipment, tools, training, as well as offers to build schools or hospitals for the poor. To this end, UN agencies in Thailand have participated in the Regional Programme of the UN Flash Appeal to facilitate technical assistance activities.

V. CHANNELS FOR DELIVERY OF INTERNATIONAL AID

The contact point within the Royal Thai Government for offering pledges of international assistance is the Humanitarian Relief Coordinator, Mr. Nopadol Gunavibool, Director-General, Department of East Asian Affairs. He can be reached at +66-2-6435191.

UNDP has established a Tsunami Recovery Open Fund to mobilize resources in support of the medium- to longer-term recovery and rehabilitation efforts in the six provinces of Southern Thailand seriously affected by the Tsunami. The Open Fund will finance projects that will provide flexible and responsive support to the Thai Government, local NGOs, and communities in the priority areas of sustainable livelihoods recovery and the rehabilitation of the environment.

Please note that past Situation Reports and additional information are available on the Thailand Tsunami Response Website: <http://www.un.or.th/tsunami/index.html>

Correction to Disaster, Field SitRep 9 (18 February 2005):

The Office of the UN Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator regrets that it had unintentionally missed highlighting the generous contribution from the Government of France to the revival the tourism sector in the tsunami-affected areas in the above Situation Report. We wish to express our sincere apologies for this omission, as well as our appreciation to the Government of France for their assistance in this area.