



TO: OCHA-GENEVA, UNCT IN THAILAND

FROM: JOANA MERLIN-SCHOLTES  
UN HUMANITARIAN/RESIDENT COORDINATOR IN THAILAND

SUBJECT: **DISASTER, FIELD SITREP 11**

DATE: 1 April 2005

## **I. SITUATION**

As of 23 March 2005 the latest figures from the Thai Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Ministry of Interior for fatalities and casualties resulting from the December 26 tsunami are: 5,413 dead (1,957 Thai, 1,953 foreigners and 1,503 unidentified) and 2,932 missing (2,023 Thai and 909 foreigners). 58,550 persons from 12,017 households have been affected. A total of 4,806 houses were damaged, of which 3,302 were completely destroyed and 1,504 partially damaged.

Tremors from the 8.7 force undersea earthquake that struck the Sumatran islands of Nias and Simeulue on 28 March were felt in Thailand, with residents in southern areas like Phuket reported to have fled to higher ground. No casualties were reported, but some buildings in the South developed cracks. Tsunami warnings were issued by governments in neighbouring countries, including Thailand, but these were withdrawn after a few hours.

This latest event has prompted renewed psychological trauma for those communities affected by the tsunami in Thailand as well as directing attention towards the efficacy and speed of relief and reconstruction efforts.

## **II. NATIONAL RESPONSE**

Thailand's own national Disaster Warning Centre will open early next month in Bangkok, as will a centre for the whole Southeast Asia region. Seven countries, including Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, the Philippines and China agreed that upgraded telecommunications systems and hazard mapping are key priorities.

The early warning system already installed in Phuket earlier in March was perceived to have worked well on Monday night. A coastal evacuation plan has been drafted and is expected to be ready in about two weeks.

Steel-reinforced concrete towers provided by Germany will also soon be set up at three points along Patong beach on Phuket Island. The towers will be able to receive radio signals from a command centre in Bangkok and will contain several sirens capable of warning the population in the area. They will be ready for use by mid-April. Similar siren systems will be set up at 27 additional sites in the six tsunami-hit Andaman provinces using government funds.

In Phang Nga Province, which was hardest hit by the tsunami, provincial authorities have announced that distribution of cash compensation to affected fishermen has been completed. Authorities have also helped affected fishermen to repair 60 fishing trawlers to date. A further 400 new trawlers have been built with foreign donations and local contributions.

In Phuket, a Navy task force has finished construction of housing for the tsunami-affected population. They are scheduled to be handed over to beneficiaries in the next week, once electricity and necessary household items have been installed.

According to the latest figures announced by the Director of Suan Saranrom Hospital in Surat Thani, the mental rehabilitation hub for tsunami victims in the six southern provinces, 10,000-12,000 patients have been provided with therapy and counselling since the tsunami struck. 300-400 of those continue to require medication to overcome depression and stress. 400 children who were made orphans (*see below for definition of 'orphan'*) by the tsunami, and who now live alone or with relatives, require continued counselling. Eight patients have been hospitalized.

The Commerce Ministry is working closely with the Asia Development Bank (ADB), in completing a long-term master-plan for the recovery and development of Thailand's six Andaman provinces, focusing especially on Phuket, Phang Nga, and Krabi.

On 5 March 2005, the Deputy Prime Minister, Suwat Liptapanlop, instructed state agencies to complete 33 projects aimed at rebuilding areas hit by the tsunami before October, ahead of the peak tourism season; this includes renovations to Kamala and Patong beaches on Phuket, and work at Khao Lak and Phi Phi Island.

### **III. COUNTRY-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE**

This section represents an overall summary of action to date by UN agencies.

**Rehabilitation and Reconstruction:** High-level representatives from Asian agricultural banks met in Bangkok from 14 to 18 March to discuss and identify strategies to be adopted by rural credit organizations, banks, financial and micro-finance institutions for the long-term rehabilitation of fisheries and aquaculture. The workshop was organized by the Asia Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA) in association with FAO. In the aftermath of the tsunami, Asian agricultural banks agreed to provide direct credit support to strengthen fisheries and fish farmer associations and their involvement in community-based fisheries management and utilization. This includes credit in support of livelihood diversification and micro-enterprise development in fish farming communities.

As well as support to the coordination of international assistance and emergency relief, UNDP has also formulated and is operating a number of projects in support of recovery and rehabilitation assistance, most in two key areas: livelihood and community recovery, and environmental rehabilitation. For example, emergency assistance to tsunami-affected fishing communities and community-managed micro finance aim to provide affected communities with the means to recover self-sufficiency while restoring production and re-establishing their livelihoods. The conservation of coral reef resources is key to the local tourism and fisheries and the clean-up operations supported by UNDP will minimize long-term damage from debris and pollution. As of 15 March, nearly 30% of damaged coral reef has been cleaned and/or rehabilitated. The operation is now being scaled up, since it must be completed before the monsoon season starts in May.

UNEP proposes to launch projects to support the implementation of the action plan to make operational the guiding principles on coastal reconstruction in tsunami-affected countries and to provide technical support for waste management.

UNESCO also plans to implement a three-month project aimed at reintegration and rehabilitation of vulnerable indigenous coastal populations in India, Thailand and Myanmar. The project will principally target the tribes of 'sea gypsies', who occupy the islands of the Andaman Sea and will aim to develop culturally appropriate interventions aimed at livelihood preservation and community

reintegration. These interventions will derive from community inputs gathered during the rapid assessment phase of the project.

**Disaster Preparedness:** UNESCO has submitted a project proposal for Japanese Funds in Trust in response to the longer-term challenges posed by the tsunami.<sup>1</sup> The goal of this project is to develop the preparedness of local stakeholder groups in disaster reduction and post-disaster management. UNESCO Bangkok aims to employ Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as a framework to facilitate holistic and critical thinking as well as problem-solving in local communities threatened or affected by disasters.

**Food Assistance:** In cooperation with the Royal Thai Government authorities, other UN agencies including UNICEF, and local NGOs, WFP has adopted a two-pronged approach to its assistance in Thailand, focusing on support to the school food programmes and assistance to vulnerable families in the six worst tsunami-affected provinces. An estimated 8,000 students were either directly or indirectly affected in these provinces. WFP is currently using food commodities to complement the government's existing school lunch programme. At present, WFP is reaching approximately 11,255 students in 767 schools in these provinces. Assistance will continue for the full school year. WFP food assistance to vulnerable families provides a basic ration for over three months to more than 3,000 affected families (15,000 people). A higher number of beneficiaries than originally expected have been reached; it is anticipated that there will be a further increase over the coming two months.

**Education:** The national response in the education sector was both strong and swift and most schools were able to re-open on 4 January 2005, after the cool-season break. All schools re-opened by the end of the following week. Although children's attendance was initially low, attendance now appears to have returned to pre-tsunami levels in most schools. Temporary disruptions to schooling, particularly in the worst-hit Phang Nga Province, have also largely been overcome.

The psychological effects of the tsunami have however, had a major negative impact on children's learning. UNICEF's immediate priorities include helping to return all children to school, to expand and increase psychosocial recovery programmes and to ensure that education costs are covered for the most vulnerable children. Regarding the medium term, assessments indicate that the quality of education in the affected districts lags behind when compared to the national standard. Tracking of key education indicators over the coming year will be especially important to follow the impact of the tsunami on learning, especially for girls.

**Child Protection:** The tsunami 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 temporary shelters, as well as other children living in districts hardest affected by the tsunami, where normal community lives and routines have been disrupted. This has resulted in a weakening or breakdown of normal child protective mechanisms and increased vulnerability of children - including to trafficking and exploitation, although no cases have been confirmed to date.

The immediate national response to ensure adequate protection for these children was effective. Further strengthening of the family and community protective mechanisms is, however, needed. This includes the early restoration of family livelihoods since inadequate family income significantly increases the risks of child abuse, sexual and labour exploitation and trafficking. The priority is to accelerate the return to normalcy for these children. In the short term, there is a need for special measures to ensure adequate protection for the most vulnerable – those without parents – including psychological support through a broad community-based psychosocial recovery programme.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Education for Natural Disaster Preparedness in Asia-Pacific within the context of Education for Sustainable Development.'

UNICEF's priorities include helping to ensure the psychological recovery of children and to ensure care and support for orphaned children. To ensure the rights to protection for all children in the tsunami-affected communities there is a need to already begin building a stronger community, district and provincial child protective environment in line with the Child Protection Act of 2004.

**HIV/AIDS:** The tsunami can be expected to affect the HIV/AIDS situation in several ways, including disruption to normal prevention and care services by the displacement of populations, service providers and resources (e.g. supplies of formula intended for the PMTCT programme were used to supply mothers in temporary shelters). This impact is, however, expected to be short-term in duration, being addressed as regular services are re-established as part of the rehabilitation effort. In addition to disruption to existing services, the tsunami will create new contexts. These include the possibility of opportunities for transmission among residents of temporary shelters, in particular young people, and also among the expected influx of migrant workers, both domestic and foreign, related to the reconstruction effort. Also, while no specific reports have been received, it is likely that some people and families affected by HIV/AIDS have lost livelihoods due to the tsunami, so it will be important to ensure that they are included in welfare assistance programmes.

Most of the issues described above will be included in the Ministry of Public Health's response, through the Departments of Disease Control and the Department of Health, and through the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. Many HIV/AIDS network organisations are now working in the affected areas. These include the Raks Thai Foundation, World Vision Thailand, Mirror Group (Krajok Ngaw), MAP and Empower. The National People Living with HIV/AIDS Network has a branch in the south and there are other small HIV/AIDS NGOs in the area such as the Life Home in Phuket, which may have potential for development of HIV/AIDS prevention and care activities with young people, women and children in the affected provinces.

Immediate priorities are to ensure availability of condoms and information in temporary camps/shelters and to include people living with HIV/AIDS and their families among recipients of welfare assistance - until their livelihoods can be re-established. Prevention activities among incoming migrant workers involved in reconstruction will need to be scaled up.

#### **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. A mid-term review of the Flash Appeal is currently being compiled, which will help provide a clearer picture of programming in response to the tsunami.

#### **V. CHANNELS FOR DELIVERY OF INTERNATIONAL AID**

The contact point within the Royal Thai Government for 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.

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#### Clarification to Disaster, Field SitRep 10 (04 March 2005):

*The Office of the UN Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator would like to further clarify the statement regarding tsunami orphans in Section I. The figure released by the Mental Health Department of 1,101 children who have been made **orphans** refers to children who have lost either or both parents or immediate guardian. According to a February 5 report from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the number of children who lost both parents in the tsunami is lower than 100.*