



TO: OCHA-GENEVA

FROM: JOANA MERLIN-SCHOLTES  
UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR IN THAILAND

SUBJECT: **DISASTER, UNDAC/UNRC FIELD SITREP 3**

DATE: 29 December 2004

### **I. Situation**

Most of the 400km western coastline (including numerous islands in the Andaman Sea) has 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 have been severely affected. The combined population of these provinces is 1.9 million, many living in coastal areas. Phuket has been declared an emergency area, but indications are now that Phang-Nga is the worst affected province.

The Government of Thailand (GoT) estimates that 1,681 have died, 8,951 have been injured and 4,265 are reported missing (these figures include both Thai and foreign tourists). These figures are likely conservative.

### **II. In-Country Response**

Whilst not appealing for international assistance at this stage, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has released a preliminary list of priority items: (i) body bags and formalin; (ii) forensic experts; (iii) freezer containers for storing bodies; (iv) dried or canned food and rice; (v) clothes, shoes, sandals and sanitary napkins; (vi) medicines (especially anti-diarrhoea, antibiotics and antiseptics); (vii) first aid kits, gauze and bandages; (viii) power generators; (ix) communications equipment; and (x) water purifiers. However, initial meetings with provincial MFA representatives suggest that items (i) and (ii) are no longer needed.

MFA has established an `Ad Hoc Task Force on Tidal Wave Disaster` to coordinate foreign assistance and appointed a Humanitarian Relief Coordinator. The MFA has appointed a three-person team to liaise with the UN. The GoT efforts have been 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 UNDAC team has not been able to obtain any information on GoT assessment and coordination support requirements. The team hopes to gain a clearer picture of what is needed tomorrow.

### **III. International Response**

The UNDAC team arrived in Phuket this evening together with the UN Resident Coordinator, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) official and one representative from WFP, WHO and UNICEF. The Team will meet with the Phuket Provincial

Administration at 9am tomorrow. Earlier today in Bangkok the UNDAC team attended a meeting of the UN Country Team, hosted by UNDP. UN agencies present confirmed their willingness to coordinate their respective interventions and support GoT efforts. Attending agencies reported:

- **UNDP** is focused on (i) liaison with GoT; (ii) supporting the UNDAC team and the Resident Coordinator; (iii) longer term rehabilitation; and (4) have established an Emergency Relief Fund. The Fund is for UN contributions to support the GoT's response. UNDP has put 100,000 US into this account and are welcoming other UN agencies to also contribute. Following MFA's request, OCHA provided the UNDP office with 50 000 US to purchase body bags and formalin. UNDP has found a local supplier and will send 1000 body bags and 2000 kg of formalin to Phuket by Thai military aircraft.
- **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.
- **UNICEF** will focus their response in 4 provinces - Ranong, Phang-Nga, Trang and Satun. Local UNICEF staff have 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. UNICEF will deploy a team of 20 paediatricians next week and are looking to deploy additional local staff to their target provinces.
- **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.
- **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 GoT's rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.
- **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.

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 with 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.

Weekly UN DMT meetings are being held and sectoral coordination meetings will commence shortly. At today`s UN Country team meeting it was proposed that the lead agencies for the following sectors be:

- Food – WFP
- Education – UNICEF
- Protection of children - UNICEF
- Water/sanitation - UNICEF
- HIV/AIDs – UNICEF and UNFP
- Health – UNICEF and WHO
- Rehabilitation - UNDP

These roles will be confirmed at the next UN Country Team meeting (proposed to be held 4 January).

The US, the Netherlands and Sweden are sending forensic teams and several search and rescue teams have arrived in Phuket. These teams have been largely focused on identifying foreign nationals. The Government of Singapore has offered 2 helicopters.

#### **IV. Assistance**

The UN agencies have yet to establish an `on-the-ground` presence in the affected provinces and have been unable to commence needs assessments. It has been difficult to mobilise assessment teams given the transport difficulties to the affected region and within the region. It is unclear what NGOs have conducted/are conducting needs assessments. There does not appear to be a clear understanding of disease potential and the quality of water supply in affected areas, nor clear estimates of the number of local people displaced and without shelter.

#### **V. Means of Delivery of International Assistance**

Seat availability on flights to Phuket is reported to be difficult as planes are being used to transport the injured and move supplies to the province. However all airports are reported to be open. WHO reports that local transport is difficult to access within the affected provinces.

## **VI. Other Information**

Agencies have expressed concern that there has been a focus on Phuket, particularly the needs of foreign tourists. More information is needed on the extent and impact of the disaster on coastal provinces to the north and south of Phuket.

UNDAC Team Leader held a productive meeting with Executive Secretary of ESCAP. The Executive Secretary welcomed the arrival of UNDAC team and expressed his strong support for the work of the mission. He also stressed the need to work closely in strengthening preparedness and response capacity in the region.

All UN nationally-based staff have been accounted for, however, 3 UN staff members on holiday in Thailand are missing. UNDAC will seek information from the Phuket Crisis Centre to see if there have been any further developments regarding their whereabouts.

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