



TO: OCHA-GENEVA

FROM: JOANA MERLIN-SCHOLTES
UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR IN THAILAND

SUBJECT: **DISASTER, FIELD SITREP 5**

DATE: 5 January 2005

I. Situation

Most of the 400km western coastline of Thailand 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. Phang-Nga and Krabi are the first hit areas.

Official Royal Thai Government (RTG) casualty estimates now stand at **5,265** dead, **8,457** injured and **4,499** missing. However, new bodies are being uncovered daily and the death toll is expected to rise. An additional estimated 38,500 people have been directly affected.

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 by losing the head of the family (the fisherman), boat, fishing net or house. 5 resorts in Phuket had partial damages, and 27 resorts were completely destroyed. There were 3,689 partially damaged houses in the area (excluding Phi Phi), and 3,082 totally destroyed houses. Fifty schools were affected, 4 were destroyed in Ranong. Nineteen governmental buildings were destroyed, along with 8 harbors, 51 roads, 3 bridges and 11 embankments that were damaged.

II. National Response

The Director of the Department of Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Prevention issued a statement (in Thai) today 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 centers to provide DNA samples. A

center will also be established in Bangkok. DNA samples will be sent to forensic teams working to identify the dead. 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.

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 also needs to be improved. 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.

III. Country-level International Response

An expanded UN Country Team meeting was held at UNDP office on 4 January. Members of the UNDAC team, UNICEF, WHO, and WFP representatives who had joined the mission in the affected area, as well as IFRC, presented their initial findings.

Priority areas for international support include child protection, psycho-social support, social needs, education, shelter, livelihood recovery, fisheries/agriculture, environmental rehabilitation, and coordination. Given the effectiveness of RTG relief operations, the focus of UN agencies will be to play a supportive role to the on-going national efforts.

Next steps will be to reinforce UN capacities, carry out further in-depth, sectoral assessments on needs as well as delivery capacities; and support national and regional coordination mechanisms.

IFRC convened a meeting on 4/1/05 for NGOs involved in response efforts (both regionally and in Thailand). NGOs currently responding to the situation in Thailand include IFRC (in support of Thai Red Cross), World Vision, ADRA, Save the Children and others. **World Vision** (WV) is working in Ranong, Phang-Nga, Phuket and Krabi provinces providing emergency relief assistance and working with the Thai Army to construct emergency shelters in severely affected areas. In Ranong, WV has a special focus on migrant workers from Myanmar. **Save the Children** is supporting a local NGO (MAG) to work with forensic teams to build up a database for family-tracing. Save the Children is also assessing whether the organization can provide assistance in the area of child protection. **IFRC** is facilitating the establishment NGO sector groups on psycho-social support, migrant workers and databases for missing persons given the number of NGOs offering assistance in these areas. UNDAC and UNDP representatives at the NGO meeting passed on that UNICEF and WHO were also working on psych-social support issues.

Search and Rescue/Recovery

Five international search and rescue teams are still actively supporting the efforts of the RTG in Phang-Nga on search of victims and in establishing temporary shelter for the affected population.

Disaster Victim Identification Teams

International DVI coordination team is now set, consisting of some 30 international forensic teams (representing over 300 staff) working at 3 central locations to identify recovered bodies. The protocol is being established by the International DVI Commanders at the International DVI Center in Phuket. The teams are working together to help the RTG in the identification of the dead.

Coordination Support:

The UNDAC team continues to provide support to the Government and UNCT in the areas of assessment, information sharing, and general coordination, and is expected to remain in Phuket until 17 January. The team leader will be in Bangkok throughout this week to facilitate coordination and information sharing at the capital level.

IV. Requirements for International Assistance

There is no specific Government request for international assistance, apart from the request for expert forensic support. The Government does, however, welcome international assistance. International agencies, in support of Government, have been conducting assessments and have identified areas where international assistance may complement ongoing national efforts. The sectors, where needs have been identified thus

far include rebuilding homes and restoring livelihoods, as well as psychosocial support for the vulnerable, especially children. In order to strengthen UN agency capacities to respond, they are seeking support from the international community.

As a follow-up to the initial missions conducted in the affected areas last week by UNDAC, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, IFRC, and a number of INGOs, a joint UNDP/World Bank/FAO assessment mission commenced today. The ongoing mission is assessing agricultural, fisheries, environmental and economic recovery needs in the affected areas.

Channels for delivery of international aid:

The contact point within 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.

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