



TO: OCHA-GENEVA

FROM: JOANA MERLIN-SCHOLTES
UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR THAILAND
DISASTER, FIELD SITREP 6

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I. Situation

Official Royal Thai Government (RTG) casualty estimates now stand at **5,291** dead, **8,457** injured and **3,716** missing. Reconstruction and recovery work is underway in all affected provinces, including clearing debris and rebuilding houses. Search and rescue operations have now officially ended.

The environment in and around the National Operation Centre in Phuket is now changing, with the focus shifting from body recovery to reconstruction. Many of the 27 embassies represented in the operation centre are planning to move out or have already done so, returning to Bangkok or setting up individual offices to deal with future requests from relatives visiting Phuket. The free distribution of food at the Operation Centre outside Phuket City Hall has also ended.

A number of resorts have started to operate again; however, most travel to the area has been cancelled for the time being.

The situation is quickly returning to normal and provincial governors are taking a positive coordination role. The removal of debris is picking up rapidly and an aerial assessment earlier today showed an increasing activity in removal of destroyed buildings in most places affected by the tsunami. The fishing fleet was again seen active. Schools are active in all provinces; however, repair work is still going on in damaged schools. Almost all children are back in school, but some parents would prefer them to stay at home. Clearly, a lot of the families are still traumatized.

The Phang-Nga Naval Base, the main base for the Royal Thai Navy on the Andaman Sea, was severely damaged. Its primary mission is to take care of territorial waters from Ranong southward to Satun. One of its frigates and three patrol boats were damaged. Damage at the base itself included more than 480 sailors' homes and part of the Air and Coastal Defence Command. Four officers were missing and 14 others were injured. About 480 sailors' families were affected. Overall damage exceeds 600 million baht.

The Royal Thai government will not revise its economic growth projection for this year. Losses caused to sectors impacted by the tsunamis should be made up for by income from other industries.

II. National Response

The Royal Thai Navy, responsible for the search and rescue activities, announced yesterday that operations have now ended. Immediately after the tsunami disaster, the Third Fleet stationed in Phuket, the Phang-Nga Naval Base and the Air and Coastal Defence Command sent ships for search and rescue missions on and off Surin and Phra Thong islands. More than 2,900 survivors were saved and over 100 dead bodies were recovered from the sea during this time. Navy personnel were also deployed on foot to search for survivors in the Khao Lak beach area, Phang-Nga.

The Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) is working to identify new areas for housing of people displaced by the disaster in Phang-Nga and Ranong. In Ta Kua Pa (Phang-Nga Province), DDPM is supervising the installation of temporary houses provided by the Peung-Bha

Foundation of Thailand (supported by a daughter of Thailand's Crown Princess). The Foundation has provided 106 temporary houses that can accommodate 2 families each. In Phuket, DDPM will supervise the construction of 205 permanent houses on Si Reh island provided by ITB Tsunami Foundation (established by a Thai television company). Another 115 houses will be built in Kra Tao district. The budget for each house will be 100,000 baht maximum each.

To date the RTG has paid 79 million baht in compensation to 8,500 people who lost/had their homes seriously damaged and to the 838 families who have lost the 'head of their household'. This assistance has been paid through the Finance Ministry, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Department of Social Development and Human Welfare.

The Royal Thailand Government (RTG) has proposed that the Asia Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) in Bangkok be the key regional organisation to increase disaster preparedness in the region, including the establishment of an early warning system.

The enormous task of victim identification is unprecedented, and The Royal Thai government is continuing to adjust its strategy as needs require. The foremost forensic specialist in Thailand, Khunying (An honorific title similar to Lady in the UK) Pornthip, is now heading a corpse clearing centre at Wat Yanyao in Takua Pa district of Phang-Nga, where most of the casualties were reported. The temple has been transformed into a makeshift morgue and is overflowing with bodies, roughly half of them foreign nationals. Khunying Pornthip has persuaded the government to open a national centre, staffed with forensic specialists, to facilitate the systematic identification of the dead.

The Royal Thai Government continues to mount an effective response operation; relief supplies appear to be reaching affected communities all along the Thai coast. The Thai general public has also contributed generously through an outpouring of volunteer support for all aspects of this immense disaster relief effort. In addition, the Thai have donated clothing, blood, bottled water and provided meals at crisis centers. The Thai Red Cross continues to play a vital role in coordinating the delivery of public donations to affected communities.

The government is very concerned with the fate of children orphaned by the tsunami disaster and is in the process of collating information on orphans. The total number of orphans has yet to be finalised. The number of orphans now reaches the hundreds, but officials say they expect more to be rescued in the coming days. The orphans will be put under the care of state-run orphanages or put up at boarding schools where they will receive free meals and free education until they are transferred to two special boarding schools which are to be built for children orphaned by the tsunami disaster. The schools will be built with 30 million baht (767,000 \$U.S.) donated by His Majesty the King.

Authorities were also watching out for human traffickers possibly kidnapping child victims of the tragedy, as well as gangs that may have gone around morgues stealing corpses and submitting false claims for compensation.

The government is considering a suggestion to erect a memorial and museum to the tsunami and the people who perished.

III. International Response

Five remaining international SAR teams will most likely close down their activities on SAR, however, some of the teams have voiced an intention of providing technical support in construction of emergency shelters. The SAR teams mentioned that there still might be human remains in some of the ponds that were created by the tsunami. Most likely these ponds need to be drained by pumps. Diving in the ponds for search is not recommended without bacterial testing. An estimated 130 national teams and machineries were mobilized for SAR and removal of debris in search of bodies.

UN Agencies

The UNDAC Team held a meeting on the evening of 5 January at the Phuket National Operation Centre for NGOs, search and rescue teams and international military units active in disaster affected

areas to share assessments, discuss coordination issues and, if any, constraints in carrying out their work. UNDAC Team will provide NGOs with relevant UN agencies contact details to help with sector coordination. The team strongly recommended an information sharing mechanism be established to share assessment information, to reduce the pressure on the provincial governments and to avoid duplication of work. The issue of continued coordination throughout the recovery phase will be discussed with relevant UN agencies.

UNICEF is on the ground in all the affected areas with 50 staff members and 3 temporary offices. They are providing immediate support to local governments, and assessments of health; water and sanitation; education; and health protection are almost complete. UNICEF has provided vitamin A and the Health ministry has vaccinated everyone in the shelters. No major health or water and sanitation issues have been observed, apart from a few minor issues with shelters, which are being addressed. There are 2 shelters in Krabi and many in Phang-Nga.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has provided \$50,000 to the Royal Thai Government and \$50,000 to the UN Emergency fund to be used for the tsunami affected people in Southern Thailand, with a special focus on the vulnerability of women and girls. Other contributions to the UN Emergency Fund include \$50,000 from the UNHCR and \$20,000 from FAO.

A Joint UNDP-World Bank-FAO mission is currently assessing fisheries, shelter, and environmental damage. They are accompanied by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. A Joint UNDP, UN-HABITAT, UNESCO, UNHCR, and ILO Assessment Mission on Human Settlements is scheduled to take place next week.

NGOs

- World Vision are working in Ranong, Phang-Nga, Phuket and Krabi provinces, focused on migrant workers in Ranong, child trafficking issues and community rehabilitation.
- CARE are working with Rak Thai and are currently carrying out assessments to see how/if the organisation can further assist, particularly migrant workers and fishing communities. Rak Thai has been working with World Vision to distribute non-food items and medical supplies.
- Plan Thailand is conducting assessments in Phang-Nga and Ranong to see if their organisation can assist with child protection and support.
- Oxfam is conducting assessments in Ranong to see if there is any assistance they can provide for migrant workers.
- 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. Save the Children (Sweden) has offered to send a psycho-social support expert.
- 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. IFRC is supporting the Thai Red Cross and has also established a website to help people search for missing family members – www.familylinks.org.
- Thai Red Cross have doctors providing medical care, volunteers assisting with food preparation (feeding several thousand people a day) and also providing psycho-social care.
- ADRA having been providing support to the Phuket Adventist Hospital. ADRA supported the hospital to provide free medical care for injured by tsunami and provided the hospital with medical supplies, including masks and gloves. ADRA also has an assessment team currently in the affected provinces looking at how else ADRA can assist.
- World Concern has also been distributing medical supplies and a medical team to north of Phuket. World Concern also provided children's clothing and are assessing how to provide longer-term assistance.

Forensic Teams

Forensic teams have been working at 3 centralised locations – 2 in Phang-Nga province (Wat Yan Yao and Bang Huang in Takuo Pa district) and 1 in Krabi. However, the two sites in Phang-Nga have now been merged into one site. There are an estimated 1,500 bodies of foreigners at the Phang-Nga site. Forensic teams there are working 24 hours (3 shifts at 8 hours per shift). At this rate, the forensic teams in Phang-Nga are identifying 24 bodies per shift on average. There are currently an estimated 400 bodies of foreigners held at the Krabi site. It is expected that the forensic teams will be working for at least another 20 days to identify all bodies. The slow initial speed in the forensic work has been creating some tension among the more than 30 international teams presently involved in this work.

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