



TO: OCHA-GENEVA

FROM: JOANA MERLIN-SCHOLTES  
UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR IN THAILAND

SUBJECT: **DISASTER, FIELD SITREP 7**

DATE: 12 January 2005

**I. SITUATION**

Official search and rescue (SAR) operations have concluded, and most international SAR teams have left, while the Thai Navy continues searching coastal areas. Some of the SAR teams may be replaced with reconstruction teams as the situation in Thailand has rapidly progressed from rescue and relief to recovery and rehabilitation.

Official Royal Thai Government (RTG) casualty estimates now stand at **5,303** dead, **8,457** injured and **3,396** missing. Forensic teams report that there are **5,250** bodies currently held at the Phang-Nga and Krabi mortuary sites. The government has reported that 24 districts, 78 tambons (sub-districts) and 292 villages are considered to have been seriously affected by the disaster. The total number of people estimated to be directly affected by the disaster (suffered loss of a family member or home) is 91,638. This figure comprises an estimated 20,537 households. Estimates for the numbers affected in Phang-Nga (the worst affected province) are 6 districts, 14 tambons, 45 villages, 4,615 families, 18,460 people.

The Department for Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) submitted the following damage estimates to the Thai Cabinet:

**Total damage estimates for all affected provinces (million baht)**  
(Current exchange rate: approximately 39 baht/USD)

Sector:	million baht
Public property	1,028
Businesses (shops, hotels)	7,431
Agriculture	197
Livestock	14
Fisheries	1,607
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,277</b>

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources provided the following environmental damage estimates for each affected province (figures are in Thai rai except where stated otherwise: 625 rai = 1sq km):

Province	Coral Reef	Beaches	Mangroves	Forests	Freshwater Wetlands	Waste Disposal Sites	Salt Affected Soil
<b>Phang-Nga</b>	Under survey	5,000 rai	1,850 rai	500 rai severely damaged	Under survey	Under Survey	Under survey

Province	Coral Reef	Beaches	Mangroves	Forests	Freshwater Wetlands	Waste Disposal Sites	Salt Affected Soil
<b>Krabi</b>	3,125 rai	17km severely damaged & 12km slightly damaged	No damage	No damage	122 rai severely damaged & 50 rai slightly damaged	No damage	23.5 rai slightly damaged
<b>Phuket</b>	Slight damage	Slight damage	No damage	Slight damage	Slight damage	Slight damage	Slightly damaged
<b>Ranong</b>	21 rai	Slight damage	550 rai severely damaged	No damage	No damage	2 rai	400 rai slightly damaged
<b>Trang</b>	Slight damage	No damage	No damage	No damage	No damage	No damage	No damage
<b>Satun</b>	550 rai	1,200 rai	10 rai	No damage	90 rai severely damaged	No damage	No damage

The destruction of tourist resorts, especially on Phi Phi Islands, presents the Thai authorities with an opportunity to re-think development plans and introduce and enforce stricter zoning laws. The Governor of Krabi said in a statement to the press that he wants Phi Phi to become primarily a day-trip destination with only few resorts located on the hillsides. In addition, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment announced on 6 January a radical new approach to zoning and environmentally sound coastal management, especially in Pangnga, Phuket, and Krabi provinces.

## II. NATIONAL RESPONSE

The total Cabinet approved budget for RTG's tsunami response is **5,252 million baht**. This includes funding for the following special assistance programs, which will be overseen by nine RTG sub-committees as listed below. Deputy Prime Minister Suvat Liptaphanlop will coordinate the work of these sub-committees.

1. *Tourism* – The Tourism Authority of Thailand will be responsible for facilitating the recovery of Thailand's tourism industry. The Authority reported that they directly assisted 799 foreign tourists to return home immediately after the disaster and also assisted another 1,500 injured foreign tourists. The Authority paid 10,000 baht on average to assist each of these tourists. The RTG will reimburse the Authority **238 million baht** for assistance provided to foreign tourists.
2. *Compensation to families* – The Ministry of Finance reported that **106 million baht** has now been paid in compensation to families that have lost a family member or their home. The Ministry estimates that another **743 million baht** will be required to complete these compensation payments to affected families.
3. *Fisheries* – The Fisheries Department had **1,343 million baht** approved to assist 27,828 fishermen. This includes the repair of 3,426 small fishing boats (under 10 meters) and 544 larger fishing boats.
4. *Employment* – The Ministry of Labour estimates 56,960 people have lost their means of income as a result of the tsunami. An employment program will be established to provide temporary employment for 30,000 people to work in local government agencies for one month at a cost of **116 million baht**; occupational training will be arranged for 10,000 people

at a cost of **45 million baht**; and 28,340 people will receive a daily stipend payment to support them for an indefinite period.

5. Small Business – The Department of Local Administration will be responsible for compensating the estimated 3,000 small businesses directly affected. Small business owners will each receive an initial compensation payment of 20,000 baht. A budget of **60 million baht** has been approved for this compensation scheme.
6. Companies – The Ministry of Finance will assist larger businesses, mainly in the form of low-interest loans. A budget of **54,500 million baht** has been approved for this assistance scheme.
7. Housing – The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security has an approved budget of **506 million baht** to build 3,616 permanent houses, costing approximately 141,000 baht for each house.
8. Orphans – The Ministry of Education has an approved budget of **92.5 million baht** to assist the 446 children registered as orphaned by the disaster. The Department will provide education, educational equipment and clothing for each child.
9. Government Offices – The Ministry of Finance has an approved budget of **1,725 million baht** for the reconstruction and refurbishment of government facilities damaged by the disaster. Each Department will receive the following the following amounts for facility rehabilitation and refurbishment:

- 824 million baht for the Ministry of Defense
- 47 million baht for Ministry of Health
- 280 million baht for Ministry of Natural Resources
- 35 million baht for Ministry of Agriculture
- 445 million baht for Ministry of Education
- 90.7 million baht for National Police Office
- 1.9 million baht for Ministry of Science

The Cabinet announced that the RTG had received **606 million baht** in public donations to assist with the Government's relief efforts. Of this, **322 million baht** will be directed to assist with the recovery efforts listed above. The remainder will be held in trust for affected communities.

To date 1,002 migrant labourers (2 from Ranong and 1,000 from Phang-Nga) have received 20,000 baht each in compensation. Seven registration centers have been established to reissue registration cards for migrant labourers who lost their registration cards. These centers are at Aow Nang and Koh Lanta in Krabi Province; Bang Muang and Nam Kem in Phang-Nga Province; Kamala Beach and Pa Tong in Phuket Province; and Suksamran in Ranong Province.

The Minister for Interior convened a meeting on 7 January for all RTG agencies involved in response and recovery operations. The Minister announced that the RTG is considering closing the National Operation Centre in Phuket in one week's time. The following RTG agencies will be responsible for focusing on recovery work:

1. Provincial governments will be responsible for the cleaning up of affected beaches and streets. All six affected provinces are to submit rehabilitation progress reports and 'beautification' plans to the RTG Cabinet by 10 January for national government funding consideration.
2. The Public Works Department will be responsible for infrastructure repair and maintenance (electricity poles, tap water and main water pipes).
3. Ministry of Natural Resources will continue to clean water sources and monitor water quality and supply.
4. The Ministry of Interior will continue to oversee the establishment of temporary and permanent housing with the Ministry for Social Development and Human Security and the Thai Defence

Force. These Departments are encouraged to use local building materials to stimulate the economy in affected areas. It is now estimated that 2,000 homes were totally destroyed and 2,000 partially damaged.

5. The Ministry of Interior will work with Provincial Governments to re-establish control and regulate street vendors.
6. The Agricultural Ministry will cooperate with the Thai Defence Force to assist fisherman with salvage and repair of fishing boats.
7. The Finance Ministry will assist business owners to obtain loans for business recovery initiatives.
8. The Education Ministry will work to rehabilitate schools and take responsibility for ensuring that all orphans are offered free boarding school education.
9. Deputy Prime Minister Jaturon will oversee natural resource/environmental recovery with the Ministry for Natural Resources.
10. Deputy Prime Minister Pinit will be responsible for vocational training and food for work programs for those who have lost their income. The Labour Ministry will also assist those without an income, including assisting migrant workers to return home if they chose to do so in cooperation with the social welfare organizations.
11. Deputy Prime Minister Somsuk will oversee the establishment of a tsunami early warning system for Thailand.

Agreed waste-disposal systems and guidelines have been established at the Phang-Nga and Krabi mortuaries. The Interior Minister also announced that a permanent Psychological Advice Centre will be established in Khao Lak (to operate for at least 2 years). There has been a reported increase in cases of diarrhoea in affected areas, but the Ministry of Health is monitoring the situation closely.

#### Establishment of a tsunami early warning system

An ASEAN Ministerial meeting will be held 28-29 January (venue yet to be decided) to establish the Bangkok-based Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) as the lead agency to facilitate the establishment of a tsunami early warning system for the Indian Ocean. ADPC has been operating in 36 countries in Asia since 1986.

#### Disaster database established

The Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) has commissioned the Software Information Promotion Agency (SIPA) based in Phuket to establish a tsunami damage and rehabilitation information database. SIPA is research organization under the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology. The SIPA/DDPM database will contain information from each of the affected provinces on damage assessments (including loss of life/injury, property, livelihoods, public places and environmental damage), as well as provincial rehabilitation/recovery plans. SIPA and DDPM have dispatched approximately 60,000 questionnaires to affected provinces (distributed to provincial, district and sub-district levels of government) to gather this information. SIPA has apparently already received many completed questionnaire and is seeking volunteers to help key information received into the database. DDPM has deployed staff to work with SIPA to update the database, which is expected to take up to a month to complete.

#### Body recovery and forensics

The RTG Cabinet confirmed that the government will continue to support efforts to recover the estimated 1,000 bodies still missing. It was also reported that forensic teams are now able to conduct DNA tests on 90 – 150 bodies per day, substantially speeding up the identification process. At this rate, the RTG expects the forensic process to be completed within a month. The forensic process is

comprised of (i) autopsy; (2) DNA analysis; and (iii) matching of DNA samples with those provided by close relatives. Relatives of those missing can now have DNA samples taken in their home provinces – they do not need to travel to the mortuary sites. Thai families can also receive compensation payments in their home provinces once a death certificate has been issued.

The Cabinet also announced that the National Operation Centre in Phuket will remain open until 22 February. The Thai Prime Minister also urged foreign embassies to ensure that emergency arrangements are in place to assist with the coordination of any future disasters.

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

The focus of UN agencies and NGOs continues to be one of support for the on-going RTG response and recovery efforts. UNDAC, UN agencies and NGOs assessments all confirm the effectiveness of RTG relief efforts.

A joint UNDP, World Bank, and FAO assessment mission has been conducted, and the assessment report was distributed today. The mission was supported by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. The objective of the mission was to assess the mid- to long-term impact of the tsunami disaster on the local population, focusing on three priority areas: (i) sustainable recovery of livelihoods among the local population in general, (ii) recovery of fisheries in particular, and (iii) environment rehabilitation, sustainable coastal zone planning, and eco-tourism.

UNICEF has 15 staff members currently working in all affected provinces. Three UNICEF centers have been established in Phuket, Krabi and Phang-Nga. As well as providing support for vaccinations, UNICEF is assisting with school rehabilitation (including the provision of essential school supplies) to enable students to return to school as soon as possible. UNICEF is also assisting in the area of child registration and protection. Five UNICEF psycho-social support teams will commence work in affected areas from 8 January. These teams will not only provide support for those directly affected by the disaster, but also provide assistance to those supporting disaster survivors (particularly teachers).

A joint UNDP, UN-Habitat, UNESCO, UNHCR, ILO, IOM and UNEP assessment team is currently conducting an assessment mission on human settlements. The team is assessing needs in affected provinces, and is considering assistance options for their respective agencies to provide support to RTG efforts.

The UNDAC Team was informed 10 January that the United States is supporting a health assessment mission to Phang-Nga and Krabi. This team will be comprised of scientific specialists from the US and staff from the Bangkok-based Centre for Disease Control (CDC). The team is particularly interested in environmental health issues at the two mortuary sites. Janet McNicol is coordinating the mission and can be contacted on 09 969 1939. The UNDAC Team suggested that the US assessment team contact WHO if they have not already been in contact.

#### Forensic operations

As of 10 January, there are 30 forensic teams working at two sites (one in Krabi and the other in Phang-Nga) in what is probably the largest forensic operation in history. As of 1 January, a joint command of Thai Police (under Ministry of Interior) and the Australian Federal Police took over the coordination of forensic operations. Protocols have been established and team coordination meetings are held twice a day.

The protocol is for DNA samples to be taken from each body for analysis in Thailand. Forensics teams from each country will then try to match this DNA with samples taken from close family

relatives of those listed as missing. Computer programs will be utilized to establish positive matches. After a match is made, the results are sent to forensic teams to do the final identification (teeth, scars, tattoos, etc). Death certificates require two signatures: one from a Thai authority and the other from the International Disaster Victim Identification team. The Identification Committee then gives permission for the body to be released, and preparations for the transportation/repatriation of the body can be made.

The initial coordination problems experienced by forensic teams responding to this disaster in Thailand, has raised the issue of whether internationally agreed protocols should be established for forensic teams working in similar situations. These guidelines could cover administrative issues for teams (such as reception and orientation protocols upon arrival in country) to operational protocols - similar to the guidelines established for international search and rescue teams under INSARAG.

#### Coordination

A meeting with donors for information sharing was held at the UNDP conference room in Bangkok on 10 January 2005, with very good attendance, and a strong show of support for further such meetings to take place.

#### **IV. REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE**

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has stated that the government has decided not to accept cash donations from abroad as it believed Thailand would be put on an inferior footing to other countries when holding trade talks that could bring it much better long term benefits, such as tax privileges, which could provide as much as 1.5 billion dollars per year from increased export earnings. However, his government would not reject other countries' technical assistance such as equipment, tools, training and offers to build schools or hospitals for the poor, as long as these were for the benefit of the people. The Royal Thai Government plans to share half of the material donations for Thai tsunami victims with Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

The joint UNDP/World Bank/FAO Livelihood Recovery & Environment Rehabilitation assessment identified assistance needs related to sustainable recovery of livelihoods among the local population in general; recovery of fisheries, in particular; environment rehabilitation, sustainable coastal zone planning, and eco-tourism. Some examples of the needs identified in the assessment report include:

- A need for generating alternative livelihoods mechanisms while the main driving economic sectors (tourism and fishing) are being restored.
- A need to identify and support existing coping and self-help mechanisms.
- A need for technical assistance in the area of eco-tourism planning, zoning, area management for national parks and beyond, including Phi Phi.
- A special need for emergency support to coral reef clean up operations through helping to mobilize volunteer divers and through procurement of urgently needed equipment.
- There is also a need to provide technical support to the government for the assessment of coastal erosion.

A number of individuals have contacted the UNDAC team in Phuket for assistance to distribute second hand clothing. According to the Phuket Red Cross, there is currently no need for clothes and any shipments of clothes from abroad should be discouraged.

The Thai Minister for Foreign Affairs said specialist assistance to urgently help repair coral reefs would be appreciated. The Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) also announced that international assistance to help build the department's capacity to respond to disasters (through training or educational assistance) would also be appreciated.

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

The contact point within the RTG 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/UNOPS has established a "Rapid Relief and Recovery" (RRR) Fund to provide flexible, rapid and responsive support to the Thai authorities in procuring urgently needed goods and services for the Tsunami relief and recovery efforts in Southern Thailand. Some government departments have had difficulty in procuring urgently needed items because they are not able to quickly identify appropriate suppliers or because government procurement procedures may not yet be geared up for rapid response. The RRR Fund has already been used to procure 4 large generators for hospitals, as well as large quantities of formalin and body bags for the forensic operations, and additional requests for rapid procurement assistance have been made.

As the UNDAC team is wrapping up operations in Phuket this week, it is anticipated that the UNRC's office will send future situation reports on a weekly basis.

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