



# UNITED NATIONS WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME RESPONSE TO THE INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI OF DECEMBER 2004

## OVERVIEW OF OPERATION





# WFP TSUNAMI EMERGENCY OPERATION OVERVIEW

## THE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE: SAVING THE SURVIVORS

In the early hours of the 26th of December, 2004, reports began to emerge of an earthquake off the coast of Indonesia and giant waves that had crashed onto shorelines across the Indian Ocean. By that morning, key staff had gathered at United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) offices in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand to begin planning what would become one of the most complex and wide-reaching emergency operations ever mounted by the agency.

WFP launched an immediate and massive response to the crisis – diverting cargo ships, airlifting tons of food to the region, and using any means necessary to get food to those who desperately needed it. New supply routes had to be opened where roads had been washed away by using helicopters, “floating warehouses” and landing craft. New field offices were set up in the worst-affected areas. While 328 WFP staff members were brought in from WFP offices around the world, over 250 additional staff were recruited in the affected countries.

The logistical challenges of mounting an emergency operation over such a broad and varied region were immense. In Aceh, Indonesia, where whole communities had been literally wiped out, aftershocks from the earthquake constantly hampered relief efforts. Meanwhile, a trucking shortage in Sri Lanka had to be overcome through help from WFP’s private sector partners, such as TNT and Unilever, and by moving trucks in from as far away as Cambodia. In Somalia, a remote airstrip that had not been used for ten years was reactivated to provide a staging point for drinking water and initial provisions to the hard-hit Hafun peninsula. All the logistical muscle-power within the organization was mustered to surmount these obstacles.

## ONE YEAR LATER – AIDING RECONSTRUCTION, PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

By June 2005, the WFP tsunami operation was shifting from emergency relief assistance to longer-term recovery. While assistance to Thailand and Myanmar was wrapped up by the middle of 2005, recovery operations in Somalia and the Maldives were extended until the end of 2005. Large-scale operations targeting vulnerable groups continue in the worst-affected countries – Sri Lanka and Indonesia – and are scheduled to run until the end of 2007.

WFP’s aim is to provide the most vulnerable populations – children, pregnant women, nursing mothers, the elderly and the disabled – with food security so that they need not worry about their daily sustenance and can focus on rebuilding their homes and livelihoods.

In **Indonesia**, WFP has dispatched over 116,000 tons of food, reaching 1.2 million people at the height of operations in May. As of late 2005, the full-ration General Food Distribution was reaching 582,000 mostly displaced people living in tsunami-affected

During the early days of January, food was moved to the crisis zone as quickly as possible. In Sri Lanka, an average of 30 trucks a day carrying 10-15 tons of rice, lentils and sugar were dispatched to the most affected districts. By 7 January, WFP had supplied food for 750,000 people across Sri Lanka’s tsunami-affected areas. In Indonesia, WFP continuously delivered food to the worst-hit areas along Sumatra’s western coast, first by helicopter, then by sea via landing craft. To reach all the populations in need of help, WFP set up operations at ports and airfields across Aceh – from Sabang off the northern tip of the island to Singkil in the south.

In the Maldives, WFP rapidly dispatched 112 tons of high-protein biscuits and distributed them to almost 50,000 people to meet emergency food needs. Food was also distributed to over 30,000 people in remote areas of Somalia by early February. When another major earthquake struck the island of Nias off the coast of Indonesia on 28 March, 2005, WFP was ready. Teams landed on the island within 12 hours, and the ensuing relief operation provided emergency food supplies to over half a million people.

As of May, WFP had dispatched 110,000 metric tons of food, enough to feed two and a quarter million people across the tsunami zone – seven countries and two continents. This achievement would have been impossible without the close support of WFP’s partners – host governments, other UN agencies, NGOs, militaries, and the private sector. The result was a successful relief phase – supply routes were opened up, food reached the populations that needed it, and starvation was averted.

areas. An on-going School Feeding programme provides school lunches to over 330,000 school children, and a Maternal and Child Nutrition programme, which started in May, has expanded to provide nutrient fortified foods to 38,000 new mothers and pregnant women.

In **Sri Lanka**, WFP has dispatched almost 84,000 tons of food, enough to reach almost one million people at the height of operations. The operation is now focused on rehabilitation and protection of vulnerable groups. General Food Distribution ended in September 2005, and was replaced by distribution to vulnerable groups, currently reaching 350,000 people. In addition, School Feeding programmes provide lunches to 106,000 primary school students and Maternal and Child Nutrition supplements the nourishment of nearly 100,000 mothers and infants. Over 36,600 workers participate in Food-for-Work projects, rebuilding homes and critical infrastructure such as coastal roads, and receiving food for their families – 183,000 people in total.



In the **Maldives**, WFP successfully concluded a School Feeding programme which provided food to 24,000 school children for a seven-week semester beginning at the end of January. At the request of the government, WFP has extended its recovery operation until the end of 2005 to provide food supplies for 14,000 people displaced by the tsunami. In **Somalia**, WFP is meeting the food needs of more than 28,000 tsunami-affected people in villages and settlements along the remote and hard-to-reach northeastern coastline of the Puntland region.

In **Thailand**, WFP mapped out a limited but vital two-pronged assistance plan in consultation with the Thai government. Especially vulnerable people such as widows, orphans and tribal groups

were provided with food supplies for three months, while an existing government school-lunch programme was supplemented in almost all the schools in the six tsunami-affected provinces. In **Myanmar**, some 15,000 people in two provinces participated in Food for Work activities which helped to rebuild houses, roads, bridges and jetties, as well as fresh-water ponds and wells.

WFP has extended its operations in Sri Lanka and Indonesia through 2007 to continue to help people rebuild their lives and protect those most vulnerable. In Indonesia, almost 1.2 million people in tsunami-affected areas will be covered by the extended operation, while in affected areas of Sri Lanka, 347,000 people will be covered.

## FROM THE FIELD: SCHOOL FEEDING IN BANDA ACEH

*Diana Novita Sari's dark eyes widen as she slowly begins to count. "Only twelve survived," the 11-year-old murmurs. "All the rest are gone; almost everybody who went to my school."*

*Before the tsunami destroyed much of Banda Aceh's seafront last December, there were 140 students, aged six to twelve, attending classes at Diana's school, situated not far from the piers where passengers would catch ferries to outlying islands. The school itself was closed on the day the tsunami struck. But most of the students lived in the area and most were at home with their parents on that fateful Sunday morning.*

*All of them died, except for Diana and 11 of her equally fortunate classmates. Her old school is gone too, swept away by the waves. Four other primary schools in the same seafront districts of Banda Aceh suffered a similar fate.*

*Since then, many of the survivors have been gathered at Primary School 93, situated further inland.*

*To help keep children from tsunami-hit families in the classroom, the United Nations World Food Programme launched a School Feeding operation in March. It currently reaches 338,000 primary school children in more than 700 schools in tsunami-afflicted school districts in Aceh and North Sumatra.*

*Under the programme, primary school children receive a mid-morning snack of 12 biscuits that have been fortified with 13 essential vitamins and minerals. At the same time, they are given lessons including the importance of nutrition in their daily lives. The programme is focused on getting the children back to school and making sure they have some semblance of a normal school life.*

*Judging from the results at School 93, it appears to be working. "The children look forward to it every morning," says principal, Zaimal Abidin. "It seems to give them a lift."*



WFP fortified biscuits being distributed at School 93

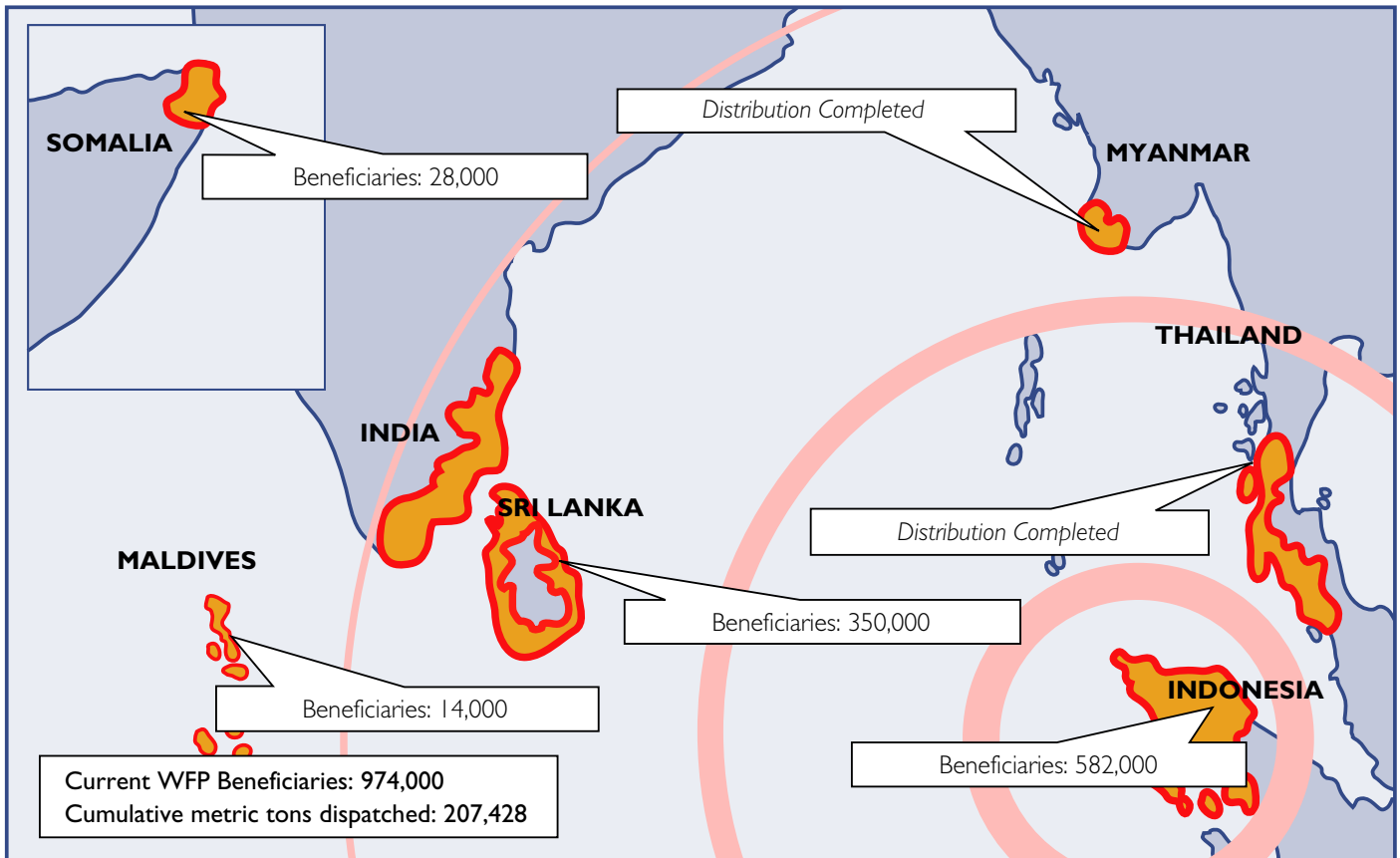
*"It's both a nutritional and an educational tool," adds teacher Cut Lismar as she hands out bright red cellophane-wrapped packages of fortified biscuits to a classroom of well-behaved 11-year-olds. "The children learn how important vitamins and minerals are in keeping them healthy and preventing sickness."*

*For some, especially among the less affluent, it also helps them forget empty bellies and concentrate on their studies. "A few of these kids are hungry because many families here are struggling to recover from what the tsunami did to their lives," says Principal Abidin.*

*Diana Novita Sari also likes the fortified biscuits, but for entirely different reasons. "They keep me healthy," she says. "I used to get sick a lot before. But I haven't been sick since they started handing out the biscuits at school every day."*

## AREAS OF WFP TSUNAMI ASSISTANCE

18 NOVEMBER 2005



## WFP TSUNAMI OPERATION IN NUMBERS

- Beneficiaries at height of operation: 2.24 million (May 2005)
  - Total Food dispatched: 207,500 metric tons (as of 18 November 2005)
  - Countries with WFP tsunami operations: Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Somalia
  - At the height of the operation WFP made use of the following resources:
    - Helicopters: 4
    - Planes: 3
    - Landing Craft: 4
    - Floating Warehouses: 2
    - Ships: 4 diverted, 1 dedicated
    - Temporary Warehouses: 67
    - Trucks: 300-350 trucks on the road at any one time
    - Staff: 700+
  - Total amount sought for WFP Tsunami Operation (Jan-Dec 2005): \$274 million
  - Total received from donors for WFP Tsunami Operation: \$273 million
- Beneficiaries as of 18 November 2005:
    - Indonesia:
      - General Distribution: 582,000
      - School Feeding: 338,000
      - Maternal and Child Nutrition: 38,000
    - Sri Lanka:
      - Vulnerable Group Feeding: 350,000
      - School Feeding: 106,000
      - Maternal and Child Nutrition: 100,000
      - Food-For-Work: 183,000
    - The Maldives:
      - Vulnerable Group Feeding: 14,000
    - Somalia:
      - General Distribution: 28,000