



To: OCHA Geneva, UNCT in Thailand
From: Joana Merlin-Scholtes
UN Resident Coordinator in Thailand
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I. SITUATION

The devastating tsunami that struck the Indian Ocean region in late December 2004 had a massive impact on the six Andaman provinces of Thailand. As of 01 August 2005, the Thai Ministry of Interior Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) confirmed that **5,395** people lost their lives in the disaster, 2,248 of which were foreign nationals from 37 other countries, and **2,817** people remain missing. Around **1,650 bodies** have yet to be formally identified, according to the Thailand Tsunami Victim Identification Centre (TTVI) on 11 August.

The Ministry of Social Protection estimates that the numbers of people still living in shelters in Phang Nga and Krabi provinces have fallen from approximately 7,000 people at the beginning of July, to 1,200 and 100 households respectively (therefore an estimated **4,000** people), as of early August.

New figures for children who lost one or both parents in the tsunami have been published by the Ministry of Education. As of 10 August, Thailand has **1,449 tsunami orphans**, living in 54 provinces. These children have been orphaned as a result of their parents working away in the fishing or tourism industries. The highest numbers are found in Bangkok and the worst affected Andaman provinces (587 in Phang Nga, 195 in Phuket, 136 in Krabi, and 100 in Ranong). The Ministry of Social Protection has explained that the rise in number is due to the fact that new research has been carried out by local district administrations (TAOs), which have reported more children claiming loss of parents, as well as women who were pregnant during the tsunami, and lost their husbands; they have subsequently given birth to children who have therefore been termed tsunami orphans.

II. OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES, RESPONSES

As reported last month, Thailand is dealing with challenges in areas such as housing provision and land title, livelihood restoration, child protection and reproductive health, disaster preparedness, victim identification, and donor coordination. The United Nations is supporting the Government's recovery efforts through a number of mid- to long-term recovery projects in several of those sectors, with particular emphasis on marginal and vulnerable groups.

Victim identification

The TTVI confirmed 11 August that just over 1,650 bodies are yet to be identified. Identification is carried out using various procedures: those bodies which can be identified by dental records have mostly been processed, while fingerprinting is still in steady use. Once these simpler procedures have been eliminated, DNA matching is undertaken. The presence of International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) representatives in Thailand facilitates liaison between the TTVI and the profiling and matching work being done in ICMP Sarajevo. Final verification, however, is confirmed by the Thai authorities. Identification of the remaining bodies is predicted to be completed **by the end of 2005**, in time for the planned memorial activities on or around the tsunami anniversary.

The TTVI also reports that a more proactive approach is being taken to the identification of **Myanmar migrant workers**. Official figures for all these workers are not available, but with access to the full database of registered migrant workers, identification by fingerprint matching has produced encouraging results, considering the lack of supporting information from their home country. The TTVI can also confirm that they have established that there were more victims from this group than officially reported missing.

Housing and land title

DDPM reports an increase in the number of houses completed in the affected provinces: **1,456 new houses** have been handed over, i.e. 52 since the end of June. In response to the 3,166 requests for

provision of permanent housing, all have been totally or partially satisfied, either by having received a house, or awaiting delivery of completed housing: 1,710 houses are currently under construction in Phang Nga, Krabi and Phuket. All the 206 requested houses have been completed in Ranong and Trang provinces. However, NGOs have reported continuing dissatisfaction with the quality of housing in some areas, with the rainy season demonstrating leaking roofs and other issues.

Land title disputes are slowing recovery in Phang Nga and other affected provinces, with reports of intimidation in some areas. The World Bank is working with the authorities to ensure access to legal assistance by vulnerable groups.

In Phang Nga and Trang provinces, UNDP and UN Habitat are working with indigenous communities and the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) to ensure **tenure of community land**. So far activity has resulted in allocation by the respective Land Sub-committees, which will positively affect 235 families, while the communities themselves have adopted criteria for the selection of households for the new site, and are also starting to discuss land use and construction plans. In Phang Nga, Sea Gypsy (particularly Moken) families are being supported in establishing **communal land ownership**, as well as strategies for the design, content and management of a heritage centre and community market.

Livelihood restoration

The Government has continued to pay out compensation and relief assistance, as scheduled. DDPM reports that as of 01 August further assistance totalling 1.43 billion baht is still needed in the affected provinces. This sum (almost **35 million USD**) is broken down into construction/repair of 28 schools; construction of 16 hospitals; assistance to over 3,700 fisherfolk; and recovery projects in the agriculture, environment and tourism sectors.

The Ministry for Tourism and Sports announced 01 August that the cabinet has approved 900 million baht for additional **promotion of tourism** to Thailand, especially in key potential markets like China, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. This is a very timely announcement, as the tourism industry has been very hard hit by the tsunami disaster, as well as by reported traveller concerns over the Avian Flu threat and events in the southern provinces. The Thai Hotels Association has recently estimated that **occupancy** will fall by up to 20% overall in 2005. Current Tourism Authority of Thailand figures suggest that Andaman region arrivals are **down by 30%** compared with the same period in 2004.

On his visit to Phuket 02 August, to advocate for tsunami victims, the UN Messenger of Peace, Vijay Amritraj, heard the concerns of local communities, from hoteliers to small business owners. The clear messages delivered were that Phuket is ready for visitors, most affected areas are back to normal (the Governor estimates that 90% of rebuilding and refurbishment has already been completed, the remainder will be done by the start of the high season); Phuket tourism workers clearly **need restored livelihoods** – loss of or under-employment affects all family members, including children. The affected communities need to look to the future rather than dwell on the tragedy; and they want better **promotion of disaster preparedness**, both for the comfort of local communities, and to build confidence for the tourism industry.

The new Minister of Tourism and Sport, sworn in on 02 August, has already announced the Government's intention to ensure that the long-planned **Phuket duty-free zone** is operational by the end of 2005, to help attract more international tourists.

The **fishing and farming communities** of the affected provinces are also receiving more assistance, with a new project launched on 20 July, involving the Thai Ministry of Agriculture, UN agencies (FAO and UNDP) and civil society, aimed at providing support and equipment for fishing and crop production.

This one million US dollar project will boost **sustainable prosperity** in both sectors, for example looking at the level of available fishing resources and identifying the optimum number of boats, to ensure that limited natural resources are not over exploited.

Social protection and health

A major child protection conference was held in Khao Lak, Phang Nga province 14-20 July, organized by the Ministry of Social Development, UNICEF Thailand, and Thammasat and Kon Kaen

Universities. As well as providing a forum for education in and discussion of post-tsunami child protection issues, the event aimed to develop appropriate **child protection** responses for affected children, provide funding guidelines for child protection support and promote networking and professional exchange among organizations supporting orphans and vulnerable children in the southern provinces.

Key recommendations emerged, including the importance of integrating services and shifting towards **long term** planning and capacity building; the need to expand the definition of vulnerable children beyond orphans to include non-Thai children, children in economically affected communities outside the six southern provinces, and children in communities not directly affected by the tsunami was also identified; as per the Child Protection Act (2003), children should be involved in all phases of planning, implementation, and evaluation of the programmes that affect them. Finally, it was emphasized that institutions should be the last resort when family-based care is not an option.

The conference was followed by more extensive skills training for social workers and NGO workers on assessing vulnerability, child-focused interviewing techniques, among others.

Migrant workers

The enforcement of the requirement for **unemployed migrant workers** to leave Thailand by the end of June is hampering efforts to provide health care assistance to all in those communities, reports UNFPA. However, some scope is being negotiated with the authorities and some leeway is expected until the end of September.

New data is expected by the end of August on the effects and related needs caused by the tsunami on migrant workers and **vulnerable Thai communities**, in two baseline surveys. Concerns among these groups include the low level of training in disaster response, which means that some groups are moving back to beachside locations rather than take up poor quality housing; also it is being reported that **trauma in young children** is appearing several months after the disaster, rather than immediately afterwards. Psycho-social counselling measures clearly need to be expanded. Older children in one Phuket school, for example, although adjusting well after the tsunami, are writing stories describing the effects of the **loss of livelihoods** on their families.

Disaster preparedness

The tsunami warning system to be set up for the Indian Ocean region will only be fully operational by the end of 2006, but the network of **marine buoys** should be in place by this December. Following recent earthquakes and tsunami warnings, the Thai Prime Minister wants to speed up the process, to reinforce confidence among would-be tourists ahead of the high season.

Phang Nga is the next province that will install **early warning towers**: 16 locations should be operational by early November, according to the ICT Ministry.

UNDP signed an agreement 29 July with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) to support DDPM in implementing a **community-based, multi-hazard early warning and disaster preparedness system** in Thailand. The USD 500,000 project 'End-to-End Early Warning System and Preparedness for Tsunami and other Natural Hazards in Southern Thailand', seeks to develop an overall culture of safety that starts with a tsunami early-warning system and ends with a heightened awareness of disaster planning and mitigation at all levels of society. Community involvement and awareness are just as important components as the hi-tech aspects, and the project aims to tap into the knowledge base of everyone from villagers up to ministries and international experts.

Coordination

The Donor Assistance Database (DAD), installed with the assistance of UNDP in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to aid tracking of tsunami assistance to Thailand, is now undergoing data input to update UN tsunami programme tracking. This information is scheduled for completion by the end of August, and will be then updated on a monthly basis by a network of focal points.
