



To: OCHA Geneva, UNCT in Thailand  
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Subject: **Disaster, Field Sit Rep 18**  
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**I. SITUATION**

The Thai Ministry of Interior Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) is the central body collating tsunami-related data from other Government agencies: its latest summary was released last week, and current figures confirm no changes to the official death toll (**5,395** fatalities: 1,972 Thai nationals and 2,248 foreign nationals from 37 countries), or the **2,817** people who were posted missing. Other key figures:

Category	Latest figure	Source and date	Figure last month <i>[same sources]</i>
<b>Bodies</b> <i>still to be identified and claimed/repatriated</i>	<b>1,526</b>	Tsunami Victim Identification Centre (TTVI), 07.09	<b>1,650</b>
<b>Tsunami orphans</b> <i>minor increases in Bangkok, Phang Nga and Phuket provinces</i>	<b>1,480</b>	Ministry of Education, 01.09	<b>1,449</b>
<b>Unemployed</b> <i>by tsunami in six affected provinces</i>	<b>7,788</b>	Ministry of Labour, 05.09	<b>9,358</b>
<b>Living in shelters</b>  <i>Phang Nga:</i> <i>Krabi:</i> <i>Ranong:</i>	<b>2,900*</b>  2,500 180 190	Ministry of Social Development, DDPM Ranong office, 05.09  *Based on number of households, x average 3 persons	<b>4,000*</b>
<b>Houses completed</b> <i>Overall:</i> <i>Since early August:</i>	<b>1,907</b>  451	DDPM, 01.09	<b>1,456</b>

**II. OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES, RESPONSES**

As of 01 September, the Royal Thai Government has funded tsunami emergency response and recovery in the amount of **1.06 billion USD**: this sum includes funding from the central budget, the Prime Minister's Office and bank credit. This shows an increase in spending of 180 million USD in the last month. In August, over six million of this was spent on general assistance to tsunami victims, and specific compensation to fisherfolk and beachside store vendors.

The Relief Fund for Disaster Victims, consisting of private donations worth 31.75 million USD, has disbursed nearly **15 million USD** as of the end of August 2005.

To speed up the process of rehabilitation in the tsunami-hit provinces and compensation to victims, the Prime Minister announced towards the end of August that he was assigning three of his deputy prime ministers with **specific responsibilities**: Ministers Jarusombat and Liptapanlop are responsible for victim assistance in Krabi, Phang Nga and Phuket provinces, while Minister Krea-ngam will oversee the actual disbursement of compensation funds. Minister Vejajiva, in the Prime Minister's Office, has been assigned overall responsibility for the installation and implementation of the long awaited disaster alert system, including safety drills.

This move came after the recent Cabinet re-shuffle, and was followed this week by the monthly mobile Cabinet meeting taking place in and focusing attention on the worst affected province, Phang

Nga. Representatives of the provincial authorities and private sector have suggested to Cabinet officials that rehabilitation in Phang Nga alone will cost over 160 million USD. Other Government support measures unveiled on 01 September included an Asset Capitalization Bureau (designed to provide access for communities to capital for income generation and rebuilding schemes), and **153 million USD** for development of Phuket as a regional service hub.

### Livelihood restoration

Tourism has suffered severely in the affected provinces, with the latest figures estimating a **40 per cent decrease** in arrivals compared with August 2004. The Government's plan for a duty-free zone in Phuket is now taking shape, with tax exemptions approved for purchases in special stores in the three worst affected provinces along the Andaman coast. The pilot project will be assessed between now and the end of December, with hopes that the incentives will lure back up to 20 per cent more local tourists.

Tourism-related associations are also taking measures to boost their industry, with the launch of a new nationwide tourism council, while financial institutions report approval of more than 85 million USD in loans to hoteliers and other tourism businesses. This is hoped to revive smaller establishments, as many of these have not been able to cope with losses, unlike the large resorts. However, **access to loans** is reportedly uneven: ILO is involved in researching this issue.

Enhancing the **employability** of workers in Phuket and Phang Nga's tourism sectors is being supported by ILO and UNDP project components; key partnerships have been set up with organizations like provincial tourist associations, the Employers Confederation of Thailand and the Thaicraft Association are supporting the need to provide alternative sources of income for tourism workers. Public transport drivers, spa and beauty salon workers have received English language training, while new skills in handicrafts like batik are being learned in the Khao Lak area. Responsible Ecological Social Tours is helping affected communities develop culturally and environmentally appropriate tour programmes. The Ministry of Labour has been providing emergency response **training** in resort workplaces, but it seems that not all employers fully understand yet how this can be used in marketing their hotels or tourism businesses.

Similar activities are being undertaken with vulnerable communities in other areas, such as the Muslims and Sea Gypsies of Koh Lanta. UNDP says that as of the end of August there are nearly 30 **Grassroots Credit** schemes in a number of locations in Phuket, Phang Nga and Ranong provinces. These are helping finance the recovery of lost fisheries assets and even housing in some villages.

The severe damage inflicted on the tourism and fisheries sectors in particular is also reflected in a report on the **economic impact** of the tsunami on the Thai economy, currently being completed by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center. The ADPC report will be further reviewed later this month before final publication. However, the World Bank has suggested that loss of GDP is not expected to be greater than the 0.5-1 per cent forecast by the Thai Ministry of Finance earlier in the year, but likely to be around the 0.8 per cent mark.

### Migrant communities

As mentioned previously, in May 2005 migrant workers who registered with the Ministry of Interior in 2004 were given the opportunity to apply for work permits and health coverage valid up to 30 June 2006. The original deadline of 31 July was extended officially till the end of this August. As this process has only just finished, it is difficult at this time to assess the **number of migrants** who renewed their work permits. However, unofficially it seems as though the number will be lower than it was in 2004 when the Thai government carried out a similar registration.

According to IOM, 2004 figures show that 1.2 million migrants registered with the Ministry of Interior and of those, some 850,000 applied for work permits with the Ministry of Labour. Companies or individuals employing migrant workers (eighty per cent are from Myanmar) are required to pay a **registration fee** of 3,800 baht (92 USD) per worker, which includes a medical check-up. However, many employers prefer not to register the workers, either because of the costs involved, or because they have more control over their employees when un-registered. IOM and ILO have provided grants to migrants and their employers to cover the **medical fee** associated with the application or renewal of work permits. The grants targeted the hardest hit businesses in the tsunami affected areas.

The health care needs of the migrant workers in tsunami areas are also becoming clearer, due to a survey commissioned by UNFPA Healthcare. Apart from the registration issue, the migrant communities' responses confirm the need for more visits by **mobile health clinics** for women and children and prevention activities for HIV and other STDs (UNFPA is already operating nine such clinics in Phang Nga, Phuket and Ranong provinces, three in each). Many of the male migrants are working in construction and fisheries, but their wives and families are more isolated. The registration issue prevents them from seeking immunization and other care for their children, as without a work permit they are **ineligible** for Government health care.

IOM, the Ministry of Public Health and TTVI established mechanisms to facilitate the disaster victim identification process for deceased migrants. On July 3, IOM in coordination with the Law Society of Thailand organized a one-day event in Phang Nga province to inform migrants about this process. Over 100 migrant workers attended, and more than 70 were interviewed and provided DNA samples.

### **Social protection**

TTVI representatives confirmed 07 September that **identification** of bodies is proceeding well, with stable progress in all ID methods. This includes the collection of DNA samples for both Thai and foreign migrant workers. The handover of equipment by the Australian Government to the Royal Thai Police has reduced some of the funding issues earlier facing the Centre. Once processed, the bodies can be claimed for burial by their families here, or repatriated to their respective home countries.

Many groups in tsunami affected communities remain vulnerable: UNICEF suggests that children are actually becoming more vulnerable as their families struggle to restore livelihoods. Apart from direct compensation and assistance, the agency is supporting the **strengthening of capacity** in local authorities and communities to care for their children. More social workers and health professionals are being trained in modern child care, for example, at provincial and district level. The emphasis is on vulnerability assessment rather than welfare.

Eight million USD has already been committed by UNICEF for Thailand tsunami-related programming in 2005, covering education, child protection, health, water/sanitation and monitoring. Ten new staff in three new **UNICEF field offices** are well placed to work with the local authorities and communities in Krabi, Phang Nga and Phuket.

Getting children back to school is a key priority, among vulnerable groups. A census is being conducted on **school attendance**, and limited support being provided in the form of additional teaching and ancillary staff in affected provinces.

The **elderly** are another vulnerable group which may require specific tsunami-related assistance: the HelpAge NGO survey on Thailand, India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia finds that many elderly people have been forced to work in order to help care for grandchildren or other survivors from their extended families.

### **Disaster preparedness**

The Government has reacted to urgent calls from various groups for speedier installation of the tsunami warning system, especially in terms of reinforcing confidence among tourists ahead of the high season. Commemoration events and projects, such as tsunami memorials and museums should also attract tourists, as well as providing educational resources for local communities. The Ministry of Culture has unveiled plans to build **Tsunami Memorial Parks** in Phuket, Khao Lak and Koh Phi Phi, to be completed by the anniversary in December.

UNESCO is working on community level preparedness materials, and has just held a workshop for stakeholders on the formats and users of such materials. It was suggested that the **Civil Volunteer Force** of Thailand could play an effective role in dissemination and training through their nationwide network. The workshop emphasized the need for a **multi-hazard approach**, rather than tsunami preparedness only.

In August a UNDP-UNESCAP-OCHA-ISDR working group was set up in Bangkok, with the aim of establishing arrangements for cooperation and information exchange on disaster management issues. The focus for the next six months will include **tsunami follow-up** activities, support to UNESCAP in its **inter-governmental work** on disaster management and preparation for the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction in Beijing at the end of September.

The ISDR Bangkok office is facilitating the implementation of the Flash Appeal project on Strengthening Early Warning Systems in the Indian Ocean: a workshop is currently underway on the **public awareness** and education component. Expected outcomes include the identification of gaps and successful tools in public awareness, and specific goals for the workplan till mid 2006.

#### **Environmental rehabilitation**

Recent achievements in the environmental rehabilitation after the tsunami include a new project signed by FAO, UNDP, and the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MoNRE) on 26 August. By carrying out an in-depth assessment of mangroves and other coastal forests affected by the tsunami, the project will assist the Government in rehabilitating tsunami-affected coastal forests and economic tree plantations as well as establishing **effective buffer zones** along coastal areas for longer-term livelihood security of local communities.

### **III. CHALLENGES**

With the recovery process well underway in many sectors, progress is clearly being made on some of the challenges faced by Thailand after the tsunami. However, despite this, there are still concerns.

The impact on Thailand's tourism industry is perhaps the single most important factor affecting vulnerable children, women, and whole communities. Loss of income coupled with psychological trauma means that communities are vulnerable to other threats such as exploitation and sexually transmitted disease. The Government's latest measures to speed up recovery, boost budgets and install confidence building warning systems will be effective only if they **benefit local communities**.

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