



TO: OCHA-GENEVA, UNCT IN THAILAND

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SUBJECT: **DISASTER, FIELD SITREP 9**

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I. SITUATION

Nearly 50 days after the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, the focus of operations in Thailand has rapidly progressed from rescue and relief to clean-up, recovery and reconstruction. While providing an effective and flexible response to the largest natural disaster in its history, the Thai Government has also reiterated its intent to extend every possible facility to serve effectively as a regional hub for the delivery of UN disaster relief and humanitarian operations. To this effect, on 28 January 2005, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra publicly welcomed the plans of the United Nations to open a regional office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and expressed his wish that it would facilitate the ongoing and future operations in the region in cooperation with other stakeholders.

The latest figures from the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Ministry of Interior, Government of Thailand as of 15 February 2005 are: 5,395 dead (1,900 Thai, 1,953 foreigners and 1,542 unidentified) and 2,993 missing (2034 Thai and 959 foreigners).

In the tourism front, passenger and flight movements at Phuket International Airport fell sharply last month by 64% and 27% respectively from one year ago. The number of international passengers had particularly decreased, plunging 88.8% year-on-year, while domestic travelers slipped 42.4%, according to Bangkok Post Newspaper. This reflects a severe blow that the Dec 26 tsunami has dealt to the resort island's key tourism industry.

II. NATIONAL RESPONSE

Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra announced on 1 February 2005 that the first tsunami detection outpost has now been established in the Similan Islands in the Andaman Sea by the Royal Thai Navy. This monitoring device is lined with satellite transmission receivers as part of many steps to develop a comprehensive national tsunami early warning system. Monitoring and warning towers will be built along the coastline in the next six to twelve months. The Prime Minister also pledged, on behalf of the Thai Government, US\$ 10 million for a Voluntary Trust Fund to establish regional early warning arrangements for the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia.

According to the news reports, the Thai Government has set a target to build 5,000 houses for those left homeless by the tsunami disaster by no later than June 2005. A village for homeless victims has officially opened in Ranong Province.

Deputy Prime Minister Suwat Liptapanlop announced on 7 February 2005 that the 5.9 billion-baht aid fund for tsunami survivors will be trimmed down by 500 to 600 million baht since it has been found that there are fewer affected people than initially estimated.

Mr. Suwat reportedly reassured that there would be adequate sums left for everyone after the cut, which would include compensation equivalent to 70% of the actual damage to fishermen whose

unregistered boats or fishing equipment were destroyed by the tsunami. A total of 3,307 fishing boats, 15,534 fish-breeding baskets and 35,727 items of fishing equipment were damaged or swept away by the tsunami. After the cut, the Fisheries Department will receive 800 million baht, down from the estimated 1.3 billion baht, to help affected fishermen and repair piers in the six tsunami-hit southern provinces of Phuket, Ranong, Phang-nga, Krabi, Satun and Trang.

The Fisheries Department, with the help of the European Union, has also jointly launched a Tsunami Emergency Plan as part of the Coastal Habitats and Resources Management Project (CHARM) to rehabilitate the livelihoods of the Andaman fishermen. The five-year project is aimed at the promotion of sustainable coastal management. The work will be carried out through the coordination of provincial governors and will be implemented by the concerned departments in each province, in partnership with existing NGO networks. Meanwhile, some villagers in the fishing communities felt that aid delivered to communities often served donors' and government's wishes rather than directly responding to villagers' needs. Mr. Pakpoom Witanirawat, an executive committee member of the Save the Andaman Network, expressed concern over the lack of opportunities to express the collective views of the villagers.

To date, more than 200 small businesses have been paid 20,000 baht each in financial aid from the authorities. They are to receive a monthly salary of 6,000 baht each for six months pending the recovery of their business. With regard to education, 1,100 children orphaned by the tsunami will be taken care of by the Ministry of Education for their education, by the Public Health Ministry for psychological care and by the Social Development and Human Security Ministry for improvement of their quality of life. The Ministry of Defense will also receive 208 million baht more for its future rescue and rehabilitation efforts, according to Deputy Prime Minister Suwat.

On 15 February 2005, the Thai Cabinet was asked to approve a four-billion baht budget to revive the tourism industry in the tsunami-affected provinces. About 600 million baht will be spent to improve the condition on Patong Beach in Phuket while another 330 million baht will be invested in Kamala Beach. 800 million baht will be allocated to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) to cover promotional and advertising costs. The TAT had requested an additional 1.7 billion baht budget to launch marketing activities in the post-tsunami period.

III. COUNTRY-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Agriculture and Fisheries: FAO has been closely cooperating with the Thai government for technical assessment of damages and needs in the fisheries and agriculture sector as well as in implementing projects for tsunami-affected fisherfolk and farmers. A joint Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives/FAO detailed technical damage and needs assessment mission was fielded in mid-January. Following the mission, emergency projects were approved, including a project on Emergency Assistance to Support the Rehabilitation in Earthquake/Tsunami-affected Areas for US\$ 400,000, a Japanese Trust Fund Project for Fisheries for US\$162,000, and another agriculture project for US\$ 77,000. The projects will commence with an orientation to concerned officials, village leaders and NGOs during the last week of February.

Early Warning: UNESCO and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) are in the process of developing an interim tsunami alert system in the Indian Ocean which will cover the region while a longer-term fully-fledged system is put in place. One proposal under consideration for the interim system could be operational almost immediately, and would involve the Japanese Meteorological Agency (JMA) and the IOC Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre (PTWC) providing national authorities in the Indian Ocean region with information and warnings arising from their monitoring activities. UNESCO is also working with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre in Thailand and the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre in Japan to accelerate the translation and adaptation of public awareness materials developed for and widely used in the Pacific region.

A joint UN system mapping exercise for early warning roles was recently conducted in Bangkok at the request of the UN Special Coordinator for the Humanitarian Assistance to the Tsunami. The mapping suggests a framework for UN system wide activities in support of post-tsunami multi-hazard early warning systems development.

Disaster Management: On 4 February, UNDP presented the DesInventar Disaster Database to the Royal Thai Government's Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM). The meeting was also attended staff from the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC). The DesInventar presentation was very well received by the DDPM, who were very interested in partnering with the ADPC and UNDP for disaster management capacity building. Specifically, the DDPM expressed a strong need to increase disaster data collection capacity at the village and tambon level. The DDPM would like to meet again soon to discuss developing a broader training program. A pressing need for tools related to hazard mapping in support of early warning system design was also discussed.

Migrant workers: Given a general lack of knowledge about the situation of migrant workers in Southern Thailand, two UN joint assessment missions were conducted in January 2005. The second mission, composed of IOM, UNHCR, OHCHR, UNIFEM and the World Bank, was conducted on 20-25 January 2005. The mission assessed the geographical distribution, dislocation and general situation of tsunami affected migrant workers in the Provinces of Krabi, Phuket, Ranong and Phangnga in order to more precisely determine the issues that need to be addressed, and to ensure that the foreign workforce is properly assisted so that it is readily available for the reconstruction in the tsunami devastated areas.

The assessment mission found that during the emergency immediately following the tsunami, relief was made available to migrant workers. Following the immediate emergency response, however, it has become increasingly difficult for migrant workers to avail themselves of further assistance. The most often cited factors which prevented migrants from accessing aid were: (1) fear that both documented and undocumented migrant workers may be subject to further arrests and/or deportation; and (2) discrimination at aid camps.

Small Businesses / Employment: The ILO has consulted its constituents in the Ministry of Labour, employer organizations and labour unions on their perceptions of needs, responses and priorities for ILO support. For the medium to longer-term rehabilitation of employment, the ILO has offered the Ministry existing Thai-language tools on starting and improving small businesses, labour-based methods for creating maximum local jobs in infrastructure reconstruction projects, and policies and training for newly disabled workers. The ILO is participating in UNCT advocacy and support to help migrant workers re-establish registration documentation and to regain productive employment.

On 30 January, the ILO co-sponsored a workshop in Phuket for labour unions on the "Impact of Tsunami Disaster on Workers in Andaman Coastal Areas of Thailand." Legislators, officials from the Ministry of Labour, representatives of various labour unions, and NGOs working with migrant workers assessed current levels of assistance and gaps and made specific recommendations for official and private responses. The ILO has also adjusted ongoing work on labour migration (e.g. employers' survey on migrant workers, labour market analysis) to take into account the lessons learnt through the experience of responding to the tsunami disaster on migration policy, discrimination, and regional and occupational concentrations.

Tourism: An emergency plan to assist the tourism industries of countries ravaged by the December 26 tsunami was adopted at a special session of the World Tourism Organization Executive Council on 1 February 2005. Tourism experts representing 42 countries, the private sector and several international organizations drew up the "Phuket Action Plan" which spells out a comprehensive series of activities intended to restart the region's economically-vital tourism industry--stalled since the tsunami struck. The main goal of the Phuket Action Plan is to speed up recovery of the tourism sector in the affected destinations, by restoring traveler confidence in the region. The plan also aims to help

destinations resume normal operations by maximizing the use of existing tourism infrastructure and by helping small tourism-related businesses and employees survive the recovery period. The recovery plan is divided into five operational areas: marketing-communications, community relief, professional training, sustainable redevelopment and risk management. Some of the activities included in the plan are regional in nature, while specific actions are indicated for Sri Lanka, Thailand, the Maldives and Indonesia.

Generous offers of assistance were pledged by 14 countries attending the meeting (Andorra, Australia, Brazil, China, Germany, Hungary, India, Israel, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Spain and Turkey). International organizations, such as the Asia Development Bank, the International Finance Corporation and the United Nations Development Programme also promised support.

Coordination: The UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator recently met with representatives of Sweden, the European Union, Denmark, and Norway to exchange information regarding tsunami recovery activities.

Civil-Military Coordination: OCHA's Civil-Military Coordination Hub in U-Tapao representing the UN System closed down on 12 Feb 2005 as the Combined Support Force 536 (CSF 536) ended its operations on the same day. CSF 536 brought together Military Liaison Officers from 13 countries to provide various military assets in support of the tsunami relief effort. To OCHA's knowledge, at least 35 countries have contributed military assets in the regional effort to assist victims in Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

IV. REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

The Royal Thai Government has decided not to appeal for international financial assistance; however, the government will accept foreign technical assistance such as equipment, tools, training, as well as offers to build schools or hospitals for the poor. To this end, UN agencies in Thailand have participated in the Regional Programme of the UN Flash Appeal to facilitate technical assistance activities. To show their support for the region, The Royal Thai Government plans to share half of the material donations for Thai tsunami victims with Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

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 has established a Tsunami Recovery Open Fund to mobilize resources in support of the medium- to longer-term recovery and rehabilitation efforts in the six provinces of Southern Thailand seriously affected by the Tsunami. The Open Fund will finance projects that will provide flexible and responsive support to the Thai Government, local NGOs, and communities in the priority areas of sustainable livelihoods recovery and the rehabilitation of the environment.

Please note that past Situation Reports and additional information are available on the Thailand Tsunami Response Website: <http://www.un.or.th/tsunami/index.html>