

# Tsunami Disaster Situation Report – Sri Lanka

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# Disaster in Sri Lanka

### *Purpose of the Report*

To keep the civil society organizations, NGOs and partners of the Tamil Information Centre (TIC-UK) Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD-Sri Lanka) and Centre for Community Development (CCD-UK) and other relief and development agencies and governments informed of the impact of the Tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka, in particular the north-east region of the island.

### *Summary*

#### **Current reported death toll and displaced persons:**

The official death toll as reported by the Sri Lankan government stands at 28,805 as of 31 December 2004. However, bodies are still being recovered and several outlying areas have not yet been reached by rescue teams, particularly in the north-east. Several thousands of people are reported missing and presumed dead. The final death figures is expected to be well over 45,000 islandwide, and in the north-east alone in excess of 30,000. There are over 25,000 injured nationwide, with 15,000 in the north-east alone. It is estimated that over a million people are displaced from their homes, around 600,000 in the north-east. Sri Lanka has suffered more infrastructure damage than other countries affected by the tsunami. Dr Ian Bremmer of Eurasia Group told *The Times* (UK) that in Sri Lanka, where losses included significant general infrastructure will bring the economic downside to a likely 2% to 4% of GDP.

#### **Estimated loss:**

Many of the villages along the northern eastern and southern coasts have been wiped out with all infrastructure in these areas completely destroyed. The infrastructure loss is estimated to be over \$1 billion.

#### **Rescue and relief efforts:**

Understandably, initial rescue and relief efforts were unco-ordinated and sporadic. In many outlying areas help did not reach for the first few days. During this period, in the north-east, the local people immediately set about assisting those in distress. Villagers in Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim villages helped each other without discrimination. The TIC feels that this co-operation between the three communities at the time of need should be promoted, strengthened and sustained for effective revival of the civil society and development of the affected regions. The government, with international assistance, has put in place several task and coordinating groups to provide relief to all areas, including the north-east. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has pledged to work with international agencies and the Sri Lankan government in co-ordination and assistance with their resources to provide relief to the north-east areas. Reports received from all regions suggest that aid and relief have now

begun to flow to areas affected by the disaster, including outlying areas. However, some areas are still unreachable and others have not received any assistance.

### **Response to the disaster:**

#### **Response of the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE:**

President Chandrika Kumaratunga appointed an apex body named National Relief Operations Unit (NROU) on 29 December 2004 to assist and facilitate relief work undertaken by government and non-government organizations. The LTTE has formed its own task forces to co-ordinate the effort in the areas under their control. The government and the LTTE have also formed joint task forces in several districts with NGOs, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) and other local organizations to co-ordinate efforts.

#### **Response of other governments:**

The response of other governments has been immediate and substantial. The Indian government has sent several ships with equipment and supplies to Sri Lanka and is already at work in Galle and surrounding areas. The US government is sending warships with helicopters capable of ferrying supplies to unreachable areas. The British government has undertaken overall co-ordination of the international efforts in Sri Lanka.

Japan, the EU, Sweden, Pakistan and Nepal among others have begun providing both financial and material help to Sri Lanka. Experts from all these countries are arriving to help with the transporting, distributing and coordinating of relief efforts. Several mobile medical centres have arrived, including an Indian ship with medical facilities.

In addition, the general public in several countries have donated large amounts of monies to international and local aid agencies.

#### **Response of the UN:**

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) announced that it will provide initial emergency cash grants to help affected countries. UN staff will be deployed to support the establishment of the Operations Centre at the Ministry of Public Security, Law and Order. UN assistance will also be provided to set up a website at the Operations Room.

### **Response from International Agencies:**

The ICRC, Christian Aid, CARE International, Oxfam, Save the Children, Forut, the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD) and IFRC are among the humanitarian agencies with existing operations in Sri Lanka have that have joined the relief effort:

The Colombo-based Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), which includes local and international agencies is providing information on the disaster and the humanitarian situation (Website: [www.humanitarian-srilanka.org](http://www.humanitarian-srilanka.org)). The CHA is organizing a discussion on *Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Issues: Options and Challenges* for 8 January 2005.

### **Response from the public in various countries:**

Many individuals and Sri Lankan and non-Sri Lankan community organizations in several countries are contributing to the relief effort. These include, temples, churches and other religious bodies, welfare and refugee organizations and community-based development agencies. The TRO has made an international appeal for assistance.

### **What is required?**

Currently, the main focus of work is the disposal of bodies and provision of basic supplies to the displaced, in particular shelter, food, clean water and public health related needs. It seems that enough clothing has been collected and dispatched to Sri Lanka. However, temporary shelter, basic household materials (utensils, nutritious food etc.) are needed in the short term. Most importantly, water, medicine and healthcare materials are in urgent need in affected areas.

## **Tsunami causes havoc**

The tsunami that hit the Asian region on 26 December 2004 has caused death and destruction on a massive scale. Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, Thailand, and the Maldives were severely affected. Tidal waves also caused death and destruction along the eastern coast of Africa and islands such as the Seychelles. The total number of deaths may be in the region of 150,000. A large number of foreign tourists have also died. In Sri Lanka, the north-east and southern coastal areas bore the full brunt of the Tsunami. The death toll keeps rising and the dead bodies are being buried in mass graves. Some 40% of the dead in Sri Lanka are said to be children and thousands of other children have been orphaned. A huge number of farm animals have also been killed.

The Sri Lankan government declared Friday 31 December 2004 as a National Day of Mourning. The statements of leaders in the wake of this great tragedy gave some hope for the future. On 28 December 2004, President Chandrika Kumaratunge extended deepest sympathies to families of victims in Sri Lanka and to the families of foreign nationals who lost their lives in the disaster. She also extended condolences to the governments and peoples of the countries in the Asian region that were similarly affected by the tidal waves:

*"An ineluctable truth has been laid bare before us all. The mighty forces of Nature have compelled us to learn a lesson that some of us refused for long to learn. We have to act together, if we are to emerge from the ashes of this destruction. This disaster has not been selective in the destruction it has wreaked. Tidal waves have treated all people alike. Nature does not differentiate in the treatment of peoples. Loss of life, loss and destruction of property take place irrespective of whether it is in the North or South. It does not differentiate between the Sinhalese, Tamils or Muslims. It knows no difference between religions or castes: the high and low in society or the rich and the poor. It is necessary that we reflect carefully upon this lesson nature has taught us.*

*"It is not possible to deal with a massive natural calamity of this magnitude separately as Sinhalese, Tamils or Muslims. We must all stand together. It is not possible for any one community alone to rebuild this country. It is also a difficult task for political parties to provide solutions to this great challenge on their own. Therefore, it is my earnest appeal that in the sacred task of rebuilding this country from this massive destruction, we all stand together as one country and one people, irrespective of all differences, transcending the boundaries that divide us. In a country where every aspect of life has been politicized, the building of such a feeling of unity may not be an easy task. However, this is a good opportunity to achieve such an end, even though difficult. It is my belief that however great the tragedy we face today, we Sri Lankans possess the courage and strength to overcome it."*

Velupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the LTTE, on 29 December 2004, expressed deep sorrow at the massive destruction of life and property caused from Jaffna to Galle and conveyed his

feeling of attachment, consolation and deepest condolences to the Tamil people undergoing unbearable sorrow and pain:

*"My condolences also go to our Muslim and Sinhala brethren in the southern coastal areas, who have lost their kith and kin, and in deep sorrow. I also take this opportunity to express my condolences and share the grief of all the people in the South Asian nations, India and Tamil Nadu in particular, on whom had befallen this disaster.*

*"Our Liberation organisation, Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation, other Non-Governmental Organisations and several Civilian Based Organisations are jointly involved in relief and humanitarian assistance to our people who have met with this tragedy and are eking out a life of misery. I am obliged to convey my sense of gratitude and affection to our brethren living abroad who are voluntarily and magnanimously extending their helping hand to the relief activities, strengthening our resolve and giving hope to the distressed. I request of them earnestly to continue extending this assistance to salvage our people from the consequences of this major disaster. I solicit the support and magnanimous assistance of the international community and the UN agencies to help our people in distress."*

### ***Huge number of deaths***

According to statistics provided by the District Secretaries on 31 December 2004, some 889,000 individuals belonging to 228,000 families are displaced. Some 280,000 people are staying at 781 relief camps operating in schools, halls, temples and churches all over the country. The death toll is 27,589 and continues to rise. In addition, 4,832 are missing. The number of people injured is 12,482. More than 79,100 houses were destroyed and another 20,685 were partially damaged. (See Annex I for Table submitted by the District Secretaries).

Amparai, Batticaloa, Colombo, Galle, Gampaha, Hambantota, Jaffna, Kalutara, Matara, Mullaitivu, Puttalam and Trincomalee districts were affected by the tidal waves.

Reports indicate that the following places have suffered heavy damage in the north-east:

#### **Amparai District**

Pandiruppu, Karaitivu, Thirukovil, Thambiluvil, Komari, Urani, Sangamankandy, Kalmunai, Oluvil, Akkaraipatru, Pottuvil, Samanthurai, Kalmunaikudy, Sainthamaruthu, Ninthavur, Addalaichenai, Ninthavur.

#### **Batticaloa District**

Navalady, Thiruchendur (these two villages were completely destroyed), Maruthamunai, Pasikudah, Kathiraveli, Palchenai, Kandalady, Vaharai, Kayankerni, Thalankudah, Kurukalmadam, Kodkaikallar, Kallar, Kattankudy, Kallady, Muhathuvaram, Seelamunai, Navatkudah, Mallihaikadu.

## **Trincomalee District**

Muthur, Kinniya, Nilaveli, Trincomalee town, Eechamtivu, Sambaltivu, Linganagar, Kuchchaveli, Pulmoddai.

## **Mullaitivu District**

Koyilkudyiruppu, Mulliyavalai, Kalapadu (submerged), Alampil, Unnapuluwa.

## **Jaffna District**

Vadamaratchy – Kaddaikadu, Vetrilaikerni, Aliyaveli, Vathiriyar, Thalaiyady, Sembianpatru Kudathanai, Keerimalai, Point Pedro, Supparamadam, Valvettiturai, Neduntivu, Karainagar

## ***Response of government***

The Sri Lankan government launched an appeal to all friendly countries, the UN and relief agencies, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 26 December 2004, seeking assistance in the immediate and medium term. In particular, relief and rehabilitation is needed in the following areas:

### **Immediate:**

1. Tents, blankets, linen etc.
2. Food (pre cooked or ready to eat meal packs)
3. Water purification tablets (approximately 2 million)
4. Wheat flour, pulses, rice
5. Drugs: paracetamol, antibiotics, dressings, suture material, disposable syringes
6. Intravenous infusions (saline and dextrose)
7. Portable generators

### **Medium term:**

1. Housing and rehabilitation
2. Reconstruction of infrastructure

## **National Relief Operations Unit**

The government is co-ordinating all assistance through W J S Karunaratne, Secretary to the President (Telephone numbers 94 11 + 2324801, 2326309 and 2435144). President Chandrika Kumaratunga appointed an apex body named National Relief Operations Unit (NROU) on 29 December 2004 to assist and facilitate relief work undertaken by government and non-government organizations. This body is chaired by the Secretary to the President W J S Karunaratne. The Secretary to the Prime Minister and senior officials from the ministries of Health, Rehabilitation, Foreign Affairs, Education, Power & Energy, Highways, Justice and Housing are members of NROU.

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The NROU will have its headquarters at the Presidential Secretariat and will coordinate with the special UN team now in Sri Lanka to undertake a situation analysis and assess the needs of people in the affected regions. The ten-member UN team will also operate from the Presidential Secretariat and will report their findings to the NROU. The UN Team members will travel in small groups to the affected areas for their study.

On 28 December 2004, the government requested all monies destined for the victims of the disaster to be sent directly to the two special bank accounts opened for this purpose instructing all state institutions and government authorities not to open separate bank accounts to collect funds.

A Disaster Management Unit (DMU) has already been set up at the President's Office. The government says relief supplies and other material collected may be delivered directly to the affected areas in consultation with the DMU and this unit could also arrange for relief supplies to be collected in Colombo.

### **District Disaster Management Authority**

On 28 December 2004, the President appointed a District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) for each district to co-ordinate relief activities. A Minister or senior government official will head each Authority, while Government Agents have been appointed as Competent Authorities. The DDMA will comprise the Chairman, representatives of the three armed forces, the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) of the area and all heads of government departments and institutions in the area. The DDMA may also include leading members of the civil society.

The Rehabilitation Ministry says several loads of tents and bottled drinking water, 2,000 tonnes of sugar and 195 tonnes of lentils have been dispatched for distribution among the victims in the five districts of the north-east. The Rehabilitation Ministry has also granted approval for regional government officers to purchase rice from areas close to the affected districts, while additional supplies will be sent from Colombo. The government will provide a cash donation for expediting the disposal of bodies after taking necessary steps to facilitate identification.

### **Response from the LTTE:**

The LTTE mobilized its units to assist in rescue operations and dispatched the injured to hospitals and the nearest medical facilities of the LTTE. During the initial phase of the rescue operations, Tamil Eelam Police and health teams rendered assisted the victims.

The Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) with its backup teams, arranged evacuation of the survivors to places of safety, providing them with temporary shelters and cooked food with the assistance of local NGOs and volunteers.

Planning and Development Secretariat (PDS) of the LTTE organised Steering Committees and the Special Task Forces, which included government District Secretaries of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaittivu and Vavuniya, International NGOs, TRO and local NGOs and civilian based organisations. Similar mechanisms were put in place for the districts of Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai.

### *International response to government appeal*

Many countries and organizations have responded to the Sri Lankan government's international appeal for immediate and medium term aid. These include, India, France, Russia, Japan, Pakistan, Israel, the UK, Greece, Nepal, China, Australia, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Turkey, Switzerland, Canada, the USA, UAE, Italy, Belgium, Bhutan, the Red Cross and UN organizations.

#### **India, Pakistan & Nepal**

Immediately after the tidal waves struck, India sent 600 kg emergency medical assistance along with a team of medical officers. Four ships with medical teams, diving teams and relief items and inflatable crafts arrived in Sri Lanka. Indian aircraft arrived at the Katunayake and Ratmalana airports with medical teams and emergency relief. India has also provided helicopters for relief operations. An aircraft from Pakistan with relief goods arrived on 27 December 2004. Nepal has offered \$100,000.

#### **Britain**

The British government already pledged £50 million in immediate aid to the region and asked all British agencies to make an assessment of the long term needs. Prime Minister Tony Blair gave assurances that Britain will support the long term reconstruction and rehabilitation of the region. The British government has sent 50 tons of plastic sheets and tents worth \$481,000 (£250,000). Britain said it would be contributing \$711,000 (£370,000) to the EU aid effort and a further \$100,000 (£52,000) to the World Health Organisation. In response to an appeal by the Disaster Emergency Committee, comprising 12 British agencies, the British public and businesses contributed £115 million (\$60 million).

#### **Japan**

On 27 December 2004, emergency assistance equivalent to \$100,000 was pledged including tents, sleeping mats, plastic sheets, electricity generators, water purifiers and portable water tanks. In addition to the above, initial emergency assistance of \$145,000 (Rs. 15.2 million) was also announced. On 29 December, the Japanese government extended \$1 million (Rs. 144 million) in cash to the Sri Lankan government. 2,400 tonnes of rice was made available to meet the immediate food needs of the affected communities through the World Food Programme as part of the food assistance already provided by Japan. The total contribution of Japan to the disaster relief in the Asian region is \$450 million.

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A 20-member Disaster Relief and Medical Team for rescue and relief operations arrived in Sri Lanka from Japan on 27 December 2004 for deployment in the eastern coastal areas. The Japanese government is further assessing the situation in Sri Lanka, and will provide necessary assistance towards reconstruction and rehabilitation required for restoring socio-economic activities in the affected areas.

### European Union

The European Union announced on 27 December 2004 that further substantial aid for victims of the tsunamis in Asia will be released after an initial pledge of \$4.06 million (€3 million). The first amount was allocated to the International Federation of the Red Cross to meet vital initial needs. The European Commission will be able to mobilize up to \$40.8 million (€30 million) promptly through its emergency procedures.

Further funding depends on needs assessments and on requests made to the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) by agencies on the ground.

### The United States

The US Embassy in Colombo announced on 27 December 2004 that as an immediate measure the US government will provide \$100,000 (Rs 10 million) for disaster relief. At least six US C-130 cargo planes based in Japan have started delivering food, fresh water, medicine and other emergency supplies to Utapao Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, the headquarters for a military task force assembled to co-ordinate US relief efforts. Meanwhile, the *USS Abraham Lincoln* carrier strike group, with five ships and thousands of sailors, has been dispatched from Hong Kong and is expected to take up station off the coast of Sumatra, near the epicenter of the disaster. Another Navy flotilla, the *USS Bonhomme Richard* expeditionary strike group, consisting of seven ships and 2,100 Marines based in Okinawa, has been diverted from ports in Guam and Singapore to take up stations in the Bay of Bengal. They are expected to arrive within seven to 11 days.

Nine Navy P-3 Orion surveillance aircraft have started flying reconnaissance sweeps from bases in Thailand and Diego Garcia over some of the areas believed to have suffered the worst damage. The military also was responding to the problem of contaminated drinking water to prevent disease. Seven giant supply ships, each capable of producing 90,000 gallons of fresh water a day, set sail from Guam and Diego Garcia.

The US Navy battle groups will probably be used to ferry emergency food, plastic sheeting for temporary shelters and water-purification supplies to thousands of far-flung islands. The US has committed \$350 million for disaster relief in the Asian region.

### Other Countries

The Sri Lankan government says that aid has been promised or sent by the several countries.

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The Belgian government is flying 22 tonnes of aid from Medecins Sans Frontieres and UNICEF to Sri Lanka. Canada would make an initial contribution of \$814,000 (Canadian \$1 million) to an appeal for some \$6.5 million by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). China said it would airlift emergency aid to stricken countries.

The Czech Republic dispatched a plane to Sri Lanka with drinking water. Czech officials said \$444,400 in aid would also be sent. French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier headed to Sri Lanka and Thailand on a flight carrying aid. Paris has sent another plane with about 100 rescue workers and five tonnes of aid to Sri Lanka. Germany said it was contributing \$1.36 million (€1 million) in emergency aid to the international effort and take part in the EU programme. Germany sent a disaster relief team to Sri Lanka. Greece has offered Sri Lanka medical assistance including 17 doctors and staff. Israel sent a medical team with medicines and equipment to Sri Lanka and plans to send a military search and rescue team.

Russia has sent over 25 tons of humanitarian aid to Sri Lanka. Russian rescuers are helping in the search for survivors and distributing relief. The Kuwaiti cabinet agreed to send aid supplies worth \$1 million to the affected region. The Netherlands said it was contributing \$2.72 million (€2 million) to the Red Cross-Red Crescent appeal, beyond its participation in the overall EU programme. Singapore said it would contribute around \$1.2 million to the global effort. Spain would send a plane with first aid and sanitary equipment to Sri Lanka. It promised \$1.36 million (€1 million) in aid and is considering sending specialists to help distribution. Sweden sent two communications specialists to help UN relief efforts in Sri Lanka. The Swedish Red Cross said it would contribute \$750,000 to the global IFRC appeal. The United Arab Emirates pledged \$2 million in aid and its Red Crescent was planning to send three plane-loads of aid to India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka..

### *The response of the United Nations (UN) to the disaster*

#### **General**

A US-led Core Group which includes India, Japan and Australia has been formed to lead the aid efforts. International agency Oxfam says that the Core Group must come under the umbrella of the United Nations to be effective and warned that chaos and duplication would result. Oxfam further said that the best needs assessment and proper allocation of responsibilities between agencies to maximize the benefits of disaster aid are vital.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) announced that it will provide initial emergency cash grants to help the affected countries. The UNDP released an initial emergency grant of \$100,000 and deployed information management and field coordination teams. WFP deployed emergency teams and is providing food aid for 500,000 people for two weeks.

In addition, WFP allocated \$500,000 to purchase food for immediate distribution to the affected population. The UN together with bilateral and NGO partners is organizing assessment missions to the nine most affected districts.

### **The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

According to the OCHA, additional UN emergency staff are being sent to the affected countries to reinforce the capacity to support government efforts. Immediate humanitarian needs include portable sanitation facilities, medical supplies, tents and helicopters to evacuate people in crisis spots. This is the first step in what will be a larger United Nations response to losses suffered as a result of the earthquake and tidal waves, according to UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland. OCHA is deploying the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team and is also organizing an airlift of relief items from its UN Humanitarian Response Depot located in Brindisi, Italy.

The UNDAC team is a stand-by team of disaster management professionals, nominated and funded by member governments, OCHA, UNDP and operational humanitarian United Nations Agencies such as WFP, UNICEF and WHO. Upon request by a disaster-stricken country, the UNDAC team is deployed within hours to carry out rapid assessment of priority needs and to support national authorities.

### **The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

UNDP immediately mobilized its financial and human resources to assist the Sri Lankan government in emergency relief to the affected areas. Within a few hours of the disaster, the UNDP Country Office redeployed its team of UN Volunteers working on disaster management in some of the worst affected districts. UNDP Headquarters released an initial allocation of \$100,000 on 26 December 2004 for the purpose of assessment and co-ordination efforts.

UNDP's disaster relief plan also includes immediate deployment of its most experienced technical staff from the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) to the stricken countries. This will include a Regional Disaster Reduction Advisor, a United Nations Volunteer (UNV) Information Co-ordinator, three UNV Field Co-ordinators.

### **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**

The FAO announced on 29 December 2004 that it is conducting damage assessment missions in each of the countries affected by the devastating tsunamis in South Asia to assess the impact on agriculture and fisheries sectors and provide detailed information on assistance needed. FAO representatives in affected countries are working with other UN agencies to co-ordinate relief efforts, and the UN is preparing to launch a flash appeal to fund aid to all the affected countries.

FAO already has technical staff working in most of the countries, and as aid comes in, these experts will be able to assist governments in setting priorities. The assessment missions currently underway will provide a better picture of the needs of hard-hit fishing communities, where the loss of boats and fishing gear mean loss of income and livelihoods, especially for poor fishing households who may not have adequate savings to replace their assets and who are unlikely to meet the immediate food needs of their families without assistance.

Damage to crops and agricultural land will also be assessed and help FAO plan its agricultural rehabilitation and food security activities. The most immediate needs in the agricultural sector include seeds, fertilizers, tools, small livestock and assistance in rehabilitating small-scale infrastructure such as irrigation schemes, animal shelters, and market and storage structures.

In Sri Lanka, FAO is responding to an official request for assistance by helping the government mobilize its field staff in affected districts for emergency-related work. It will also provide necessary rehabilitation assistance to the food and agriculture sector after making an assessment of the damage.

### **World Food Programme (WFP)**

WFP issued an initial call, ahead of a UN flash appeal, for \$1.5 million for immediate food needs of victims in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand. The agency has already identified available stockpiles from projects in the region, but urgently needs \$500,000 in cash for each country to quickly purchase food as near to the disaster zones as possible, from where it can be rapidly transported.

The number of internally displaced people in Sri Lanka continues to swell, with some 400,000 taking in public buildings, schools and makeshift camps and WFP is poised to start distribute some 4,000 tons of rice, wheat flour, lentils and sugar - enough to provide emergency rations to 500,000 people for two weeks.

### **The UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)**

The UNFPA is calling on governments, sister United Nations agencies and other humanitarian partners to ensure that the special needs of women and girls are factored into all short- and medium-term relief planning. To help meet immediate needs, the UNFPA has committed up to \$1 million and additional staff for rapid health assessments, hygiene needs and health supplies, including water purification tablets. The UNFPA is collaborating closely with governments and other UN agencies and humanitarian partners to assess immediate and longer-term needs and to develop an inter-agency flash appeal to be issued to major donors in the coming days.

Among the affected are tens of thousands of pregnant and nursing women, who are especially susceptible to waterborne diseases and may require supplementary feeding,

prenatal care and delivery assistance. Even in ideal circumstances, some 15% of pregnant women require emergency obstetric care to avoid maternal and infant deaths. The UNFPA warns that physical and psychological trauma will mean even more pregnant women in need.

To address these concerns, the UNFPA is working with partners to ensure that all humanitarian assistance addresses the special vulnerability of women and girls in disaster-affected areas. Priority areas to be addressed by the UNFPA in a soon-to-be-issued donor appeal will include emergency obstetric care, the establishment of temporary health facilities, and the provision of equipment and supplies.

### **The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)**

UNICEF has responded to a Sri Lankan government request for shelter supplies, providing more than 30,000 blankets and sleeping mats as well as t-shirts and other articles of clothing from local emergency stocks. UNICEF offices in the island are mobilized and UNICEF teams are in the field evacuating people and providing emergency supplies such as blankets, bed-sheets, drinking water, and medicine. UNICEF will bring in medical supplies sufficient for 150,000 people over three months. A relief flight from Copenhagen to Colombo on 28 December 2004 took 45 tonnes of supplies, including oral re-hydration salts for sick children, medical supplies sufficient to serve 150,000 people for three months, shelter equipment such as tents and blankets, and other urgent relief items.

UNICEF Sri Lanka expects to issue an appeal for some \$6 million to help meet urgent needs for Sri Lanka's children.

### **The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is initially distributing \$380,000 worth of supplies, including 23,500 plastic sheets for shelter, 24,500 plastic mats, clothing, towels and 20,000 kitchen sets. The agency is considering putting at the disposal of the UN country team further relief supplies from UNHCR's regional warehouses in Africa and the Middle East and its central warehouse in Copenhagen, Denmark, if requested. UNHCR will provide whatever immediate humanitarian support it can until international relief items arrive in the country. It will also assist the UN country team in strengthening the Sri Lankan government's response to the disaster and actively support emergency co-ordination at the district level.

At an emergency meeting on 27 December 2004 with the Sri Lankan government and other UN agencies in Colombo, it was decided that UNHCR would concentrate on delivering relief items in the east of the country, where it has offices and access in a region. Overall, UNHCR has seven offices in Sri Lanka, where it has worked for nearly two decades helping displaced populations as well as returning refugees.

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In southern India's Tamil Nadu state, UNHCR received a report that 1,000 Sri Lankan refugees in Keelputhupattu camp were affected by the tidal waves but subsequently moved themselves to a Christian missionary hostel in Pondicherry. The refugee agency is planning an assessment mission from Chennai as soon as possible. No loss of life at the camp was reported.

### World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization (WHO) is shipping four emergency health kits for hospitals with medicines, disposables and instruments sufficient to support 40,000 people for three months. As it is vital to assess the health situation as precisely as possible, and reach all the affected areas, WHO gives priority to rapid health assessment by supporting the efforts of national and local counterparts. In Sri Lanka, a senior WHO official is on the UNDAC evaluation team.

Current figures concerning injured people indicate that hospitals will have to manage mass casualties with appropriate surgical and medical care. While national counterparts can provide the necessary human resources and systems, international partners will have to ensure the provision of necessary supplies.

- WHO is preparing to supply at least 15 New Emergency Health Kits (each kit is designed to cover the basic health needs of 10,000 persons for three months) and 13 trauma kits (each covering 100 interventions) to the countries in the Region.
- WHO has sent four New Emergency Health Kits (NEHK) to Colombo, Sri Lanka, with the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In Sri Lanka there are already hundreds of camps housing people made homeless by the tsunami. Overcrowding and inadequate shelter provide favorable conditions for acute respiratory infections, a major cause of death, especially for children, if left untreated. Overcrowding facilitates mosquito bites and therefore transmission of malaria. WHO is setting in place a strict monitoring of the epidemiological situation through the malaria regional programme and the regional DengueNet.

Poor quality and quantity of water and insufficient sanitation, overcrowding and poor hygiene in temporary camps will bring forward the risk for outbreaks of different diarrhoeal diseases.

- WHO is providing chlorine and water purification tablets to partners
- In order to be prepared against possible outbreaks of disease, WHO is mobilizing at least 15 diarrhoeal kits (each kit is designed to treat 100 severe cases of diarrhea and/or cholera).

Apart from biological pollution, there is a possibility of pollution by leaks or overflows from flooded chemical factories and warehouses. Water can be contaminated by gasoline and oil leaking from damaged vehicles. WHO programmes for water and sanitation and for international chemical safety have been alerted.

Dead bodies do not pose any health threat, but they feed fears and can divert precious attention and resources from effective relief efforts. Technical guidance and rational decisions based on sound scientific evidence are another priority need for the health of all the affected and surrounding populations. WHO is working on strengthening health coordination and evidence-based decision making in all affected countries in the region.

Coordinating joint action for health is critical. To this end WHO is:

- strengthening the capacity of its South East Asia Regional Office (SEARO) to ensure harmonization of regional relief operation
- collaborating with UNDAC and other UN bodies
- working closely with national authorities

Financial support has been received from the Government of Italy and funding for immediate action has been provided by the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

### ***Other International agencies***

#### **Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) International**

In the wake of one of the worst natural disasters in modern history, CHF International is committing at least \$30,000 to respond to immediate critical housing and sanitation needs of communities in Sri Lanka and India.

Founded in 1952, CHF International serves as a catalyst for long-lasting positive change in low- and moderate-income communities around the world, helping families improve their economic circumstances, environment and infrastructure. CHF International began working in Sri Lanka in 1984, and has been providing the country's internally displaced persons with lightweight, but sturdy, transitional shelters since July 2003.

#### **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**

The ICRC has delivered emergency supplies such as tarpaulins, buckets, cooking pots, clothing and hygiene items to some 1,000 families hit by flooding in the town of Point Pedro on the Northern peninsula. The organization is also providing support for two Sri Lankan Red Cross mobile clinics serving displaced persons in the area.

In the Vanni and Mullaitivu areas of northern Sri Lanka, the ICRC and the National Society of the Red Cross have distributed relief supplies to approximately 1,500 families and delivered 1,500 body bags. Meanwhile, in Eastern areas of the country such as Trincomalee and Muthur, and Batticaloa and Amparai, the ICRC and the Sri Lankan Red Cross have helped evacuate injured persons and transferred the remains of those who perished in the floods.

## Tsunami Disaster Situation report – Sri Lanka

The ICRC plans to provide aid to some 150,000 persons in the north-east of the country. The organization will also set up a system enabling family members separated by the disaster to re-establish contact. ICRC activities will be co-ordinated with those of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and other humanitarian organizations.

### Needs and Requirements

#### Sri Lankan government and TRO appeals

On 26 December, the Government issued a list of immediate requirements as follows:

- Water and Sanitation equipments (water bottles, water pumps, plastic buckets, 2000 liter-plastic tanks, soaps, detergent powder, water purification tablets)
- Food (noodles, milk powder, jam, rice, biscuits, pulses, sugar, canned fish, wheat flour)
- Kitchen utensils (plates and cups, etc.)
- Shelter (Tents, plastic rolls, mattresses, mats, blankets, linen)
- Generators.

The relief supplies procured/mobilized in relation to the current emergency situation will be exempted from taxes. A Logistical and Reception Centre has been set up at the airport in Colombo.

The Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) has listed the following requirements for the north-east region:

- Food (milk food, precooked food) for 80,000 families
- Non-food requirements – Kitchen utensils, 100,000 mats
- Clothing – especially for women and children
- Drugs – Paracetamol, antibiotics, dressings, suture material, disposable syringes
- Water purification tablets (500,000), water containers (15 litre capacity)
- Temporary shelters (25,000 tents for families and 50 medical tents)
- Portable generators

The Batticaloa Deputy Provincial Director of Health Services has identified the urgent medical needs:

- |                        |                  |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 1) Paracetamol tablets | 100,000          |
| 2) Paracetamol syrup   | 50,000 vials     |
| 3) Amoxycillin         | 100,000 capsules |

## Tsunami Disaster Situation report – Sri Lanka

4) Amoxicillin syrup	5,000 vials
5) Bactrim tablets	50,000
6) Bactrim syrup	5,000 vials
7) Hydrocortisone skin ointment	10,000 tubes
8) Chloramphenicol skin ointment	10,000 tubes
9) ORS	25,000 packets
10) Gauze rolls	5,000
11) Savlon	5,000 litres
12) Cotton wool rolls	5,000
13) Phenergan tablets	10,000
14) Phenergan syrup	5,000 vials
15) Normal saline	50,000 litres
16) Hartmans solution	10,000 litres
17) TCL	100 barrels

### ***Coordination of rescue and relief efforts to North and East:***

The government says all donations of funds or relief supplies will be distributed to all the affected areas the South, East and North of the island, in a fair and equitable manner depending on the needs of the areas. But some MPs in the north-east have complained that aid is not reaching the Tamil regions. Presidential Secretary W J S Karunaratne has sent a letter to the LTTE Political Wing Leader S P Thamilselvan conveying the message that all government services are available for deployment in the Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu districts in the same manner as for all other affected parts of the country. Director General of the Peace Secretariat Jayantha Dhanapala has also conveyed this offer to S Puleethevan, Secretary General of the LTTE Peace Secretariat. The Presidential Secretary in his letter has also invited the LTTE to participate in a high level coordinating committee that President Kumaratunga has established to ensure prompt and effective delivery of relief services.

On 29 December 2004, the government requested the Government Agents (GA) of affected areas in the north-east to assess the damage to life and property and estimate the immediate requirements of the people displaced. According to the government, the President directed the allocation of Rs 10 million (\$95,800) to each district for immediate relief efforts. The districts of Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi, Vavuniya in the north and Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara in east were granted a total of Rs 70 million (\$670,000). The GAs, in their capacity as Competent Authorities, have been empowered to expend these monies according to the needs of the people affected.

The government further says large stocks of sugar, lentils and other essential requirements have already been dispatched to the north-east from Colombo, while the total requirement of rice will be purchased locally by the districts. UN agencies including UNHCR, UNICEF, FAO and the ICRC are assisting the government in its relief efforts in the North-east. On 26 December 2004, doctors and ambulances were sent to Vavuniya and medical supplies

## Tsunami Disaster Situation report – Sri Lanka

received and foreign doctors from India, Russia, France and Israel were sent the following day. The other districts will also be supplemented with medical aid received from overseas, while some foreign doctors will be assigned to those areas. Requests from the LTTE's Development Secretariat for assistance are being met and parliamentarians of the North-east are also assisting the authorities with relief efforts.

According to the government, since 26 December 2004, Vavuniya Government Agent K Ganesh has been meeting officials to assess the damage to life and property and has estimated that over 350,000 persons will need assistance and food for at least the next 15 days. International and local volunteer organizations are working with government officials and members of the LTTE's political wing to distribute relief supplies. The Rehabilitation Ministry has sent several loads of tents and bottled drinking water to the north. The requirement for the period is 2,000 tonnes of rice, 320 tonnes of lentils and 160 tonnes of sugar. Food stocks already available in the province have been assessed. Some 2,000 tonnes of sugar and 195 tonnes of lentils have been dispatched for distribution among victims in the five northern districts.

District	Sugar (in tones)	Lentils (Dhal) (in tones)
Jaffna	1,400	130
Mullaitivu	205	25
Kilinochchi	210	30
Mannar	78	08
Vavuniya	46	02

### Conclusion

The full scale of the disaster and the needs may be known only after the UN agencies and other organizations complete their field studies and assessments. There is great enthusiasm within and outside Sri Lanka for the relief effort. Local communities in many areas in Sri Lanka have come together in the face of the catastrophe and have helped each other out of humanitarianism without thinking about differences in race or religion. This co-operation needs to be encouraged and strengthened. This is also an opportunity to strengthen the civil society that will be able to freely engage in the rehabilitation, development and the political processes without hindrance or fear. We hope that the international community will make use of this opportunity to commit itself not only to rehabilitation and reconstruction but also to energizing the civil society and expediting the peace process.

## **Appendix 1**

### ***Useful Contact details:***

#### **1. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

*Contact: Disaster Reduction Unit  
Bureau for Crisis Prevention Recovery (BCPR)  
UNDP, 11-13 Chemin des Anemones, CH 1219 Chatelaine, Geneva  
Tel: 41 22 9178433  
Fax: 41 22 9178060  
e-mail: [bcpr-disasters@undp.org](mailto:bcpr-disasters@undp.org)*

#### **2. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

*Contact: Brian Grogan – Tel: 201 315 1827  
Advocacy and Public Information contact: Elizabeth Byrs – Tel: 41 22 917 2653  
Mobile: 41 79 473 4570  
Fax: 41 22 917 0020*

#### **3. European Union**

Contact: Amadeu Altafaj (Spokesperson): +32 2 498 95 26 58  
ECHO Information : +32 2 295 4400 (during office hours)  
+32 498 98 12 40 (mobile)

#### **4. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**

*Contact: Teresa Buerkle, Information Officer, FAO  
[teresamarie.buerkle@fao.org](mailto:teresamarie.buerkle@fao.org)  
Tel: 39 06 570 56146*

#### **5. World Food Programme (WFP)**

*Contact: Jordan Dey, Senior Public Affairs Officer, Sri Lanka  
Sat+ 8821654203510  
[Jordan.Dey@wfp.org](mailto:Jordan.Dey@wfp.org)*

## **6. The UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)**

*For more information: David Del Vecchio at Tel.: +1 (212) 297-4975,  
e-mail: [delvecchio@unfpa.org](mailto:delvecchio@unfpa.org);  
Omar Gharzeddine at Tel.: +1 (212) 297-5028, e-mail: [gharzeddine@unfpa.org](mailto:gharzeddine@unfpa.org)*

## **7. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)**

*Contact: Martin Dawes, for India, Sri Lanka and Maldives: (977-1) 417-082 x 222  
E-Mail: [mdawes@unicef.org](mailto:mdawes@unicef.org)*

## **8. World Health Organization (WHO)**

### ***For information contact:***

*For media and/or general enquiries:*

*Tel. +41 22 791 2222,*

*Email [mediaenquiries@who.int](mailto:mediaenquiries@who.int)*

*For specific government/donor related queries, please contact:*

*Marianne Muller - External Relations, Health Action in Crises*

*Telephone: 41 22 791 1887 ; Email: [mullerm@who.int](mailto:mullerm@who.int)*

## **9. CHF**

For media inquiries contact Jennifer Hyman, Communications Manager E-Mail:  
[jhyman@chfinternational.org](mailto:jhyman@chfinternational.org)

Tel: (301) 587-4700 or (202) 997-2454 (cell)

## **10. ICRC:**

contact: Marçal Izard, ICRC Colombo, tel. ++94 11 250 33 46

Eros Bosisio, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 21 01

For information about family members: [www.icrc.org/familylinks](http://www.icrc.org/familylinks)

## **11. Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) (UK):**

*The members of the DEC are Action Aid, Age Concern, British Red Cross, CAFOD, Care International, Christian Aid, Help the Aged, Oxfam, Save the Children, Merlin, Tearfund and World Vision.*

*Secretariat: 15 Warren Mews, London W1T 6AZ*

*Telephone for donations: 0870 60 60 900*

*e-mail enquiries: [enquiries@dec.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@dec.org.uk)*

*Website: [www.dec.org.uk](http://www.dec.org.uk)*

**12. Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO)**

*79 Hoe Street, Walthamstowe, London E17 4SA  
Tel: + 44 (0) 20 8520 5876*

**13. White Pigeon (Venpura)**

*Tel: + 44 (0) 20 8265 2764  
Fax: + 44 (0) 20 8333 7904  
e-mail: info@whitepigeon.co.uk  
Website: www.whitepigeon.co.uk*

**14. Medical Institute of Tamils (MIOT)**

*339 South Street, Romford, Essex RM1 2AP  
Tel: +44 (0) 1708 722303 (voicemail only)  
Fax: +44 (0) 1708 725388  
e-mail: admin@miot.org.uk*

**15. Tamils Health Organisation (THO-UK)**

*Tel: +44 (0) 20 8296 8480  
e-mail: info@tamilshealth.com  
Website: www.tamilshealth.com*

**16. Standing Committee of the Tamil Speaking People (SCOT)**

*The Steps, Boxford, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 5HP  
Tel: +44 (0) 1787 210860*

**17. Tamil Information Centre (TIC)/Centre for Community Development (CCD)**

*Studio 2, Sutherland House, Clifton Road, Norbiton,  
Kingston-upon-Thames KT2 6PZ  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 8546 1560  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 8546 5701  
e-mail: info.tic@sangu.org  
ticorg@aol.com*

**18. Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD)**

*6 Aloe Avenue,  
Colombo 3, Sri Lanka.  
Tel: 4710273; Fax: 2564269; E-mail: chrd:sltnet.lk*

**19. Disaster Management Unit (DMU), Sri Lanka**

*Tel: + 94 11 + 2435082, 4733531, 24373362, 4733427*

**20. National Relief Operations Unit (NROU), Sri Lanka**

*Contact: W J S Karunaratne, Secretary to the President*

*Tel: +94 11 + 2324801, 2326309, 2435144*

**21. Sri Lanka High Commission, London**

*13 Hyde Park Gardens, London W2 2LU*

*Tel: +44 (0)20 7262 1841-846*

*Fax: +44 (0)20 7262 7970*

*Email:lancom@easynet.co.uk*

# Tsunami Disaster Situation report – Sri Lanka

## Appendix 2

Situation Report: Tsunami Disaster, 26 December 2004: Sri Lanka

As at 31/12/04

As at 10.30hrs

District	No. of Persons					Houses Damaged (Fully)	Houses Damaged (Partially)	No. of camps	No. of Families In camps	No. of Persons In camps
	Displaced Families	Displaced Individuals	Deaths	Injured	Missing					
Colombo	4,395	24,500	65		12			54		
Gampaha	6,400	32,000	7			500		10		
Kalutara	4,836	33,794	170	726	31			66		
Galle		44,582	3,724	2,500		7,500		150		
Matara	12,000	40,500	1,061	4,000		10,000	4,500	64		
Hambantota	28,946	28,785	4,500			5,000		38		
Ampara	38,624	183,527	10,436	120		19,100		125		183,527
Batticaloa	63,424	285,408	2,222	1,106	600	29,000	11,485	93		
Mullaitivu	5,517	24,557	1,700	2,500	1,300	4,000		19		
Trincomalee	37,948	93,408	925		327	4,000		92	25,374	97,014
Jaffna	13,652	48,729	2,076	541	500			38		
Puttalam			4							
Polonnaruwa										
Vavuniya	22	99	140	109	2,000			10		
Kilinochchi	12,500	49,286	559	880	62		4,700	22		
<b>Total</b>	<b>228,264</b>	<b>889,175</b>	<b>27,589</b>	<b>12,482</b>	<b>4,832</b>	<b>79,100</b>	<b>20,685</b>	<b>781</b>	<b>25,374</b>	<b>280,541</b>

Note: These figures are tentative and are presented here as reported by the respective District Secretaries

Source: District Secretaries

Disaster Operations Centre  
Ministry of Social Welfare  
Sethsiripaya - Baththaramulla

**Appendix 3**

