

Tsunami Reader 2

Tsunami Aid

Challenges and pitfalls



**Christian Conference of Asia
Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism
Documentation for Action Groups in Asia**

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Preface

Now that the tsunami has faded from the television screens, attention has moved to other media events. Public attention tends to follow the television wherever it goes. In the case of the tsunami there is a huge risk involved. As things now stand, promised aid have not matched actual 'give outs'. They fall short by huge margins. Second, the manner of the administration of aid has been disturbing. Governments in receiving countries have diverted them, for their own political ends, or just not created the channels for appropriate distribution. At the sending end, there have been cries of 'foul' by aid analysts because they see how western governments are using aid as a way to get receiving governments to accept broader liberalization agendas as well as to open up investment spaces in the reconstruction processes.

There is the question of corruption in the use of aid money. Worse, issues of ineptitude in matters of distribution have also arisen. While aid funds sit in government and NGO coffers, the people wait in desperation unattended to. At best, they have received aid whose quality falls far short of humanitarian standards. Local NGOs have amassed financial capacities and reserves and failed to take it through to the people either because the funds they have is just too large, or because they have no real clue as to how it can be usefully utilized. On the other side of the spectrum are the international NGOs who have arrived on the spot as the well-compensated experts, advisors, and consultants handing out advice even they are not too sure about. Because of their relative advantage of larger proportions of funds, they have managed to hire the best staff people at and some salaries. Long standing NGOs find themselves unable to fund and recruit the best staff for their work. People have already begun worrying about how the newly well-to-do relief workers of the INGOs will cope when tsunami operations are closed down- sooner or later.

The people see all this happening around them and wonder if they have any chance at all. They have few choices- await the handful of reliable NGOs and their staff, the not-so frequent government services, and the all-so-frequent splash of jeeps and cars and pick-up vans that ferry aid workers from here-to-there.

To monitor aid is an important challenge for the church today. It has often arrived with strings and pressures. It has also brought with it external ideas quite foreign to the Asian cultural particularity. It is breaking the dignity of receiving communities, and prompted competition among the deprived people.

Tsunami reconstruction is a time to rebuild anew- not just the physical infrastructure important as that is. The real challenge is to build communities who can grow as better protectors of their own lives, livelihoods, and their environments. Aid that does not facilitate the process of community building is counter productive must be examined, and re-routed to guarantee that it is of and for the people from the word 'go'- not determined and/or controlled by anyone external to the community.

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Promoting Big Business”

By Stefania Bianchi

Inter Press Service July 15, 2005

Post-tsunami aid destined for Indonesia and Sri Lanka is not reaching those most in need but is promoting “big business” in the region instead, social and agricultural groups from the region are warning. Representatives from farming, fishing and anticorruption groups from the countries hit by the December 2004 disaster say post tsunami rehabilitation efforts have been marred by” inequity, top-down policies and a lack of coordination, financial and policy transparency, and community participation” and are urging the European Union (EU), as the largest donor to their countries, to take responsibility for efficient delivery of aid.

Delegates from Sri Lanka and Indonesia visiting Brussels this week warn that more than seven months after the tsunami disaster, which killed at least 200,000 people in 13 countries, hundreds of thousands of affected people are still living in “desperate” circumstances amidst “complete uncertainty” about their future. The delegates say aid has still not reached certain “invisible” sections of affected populations, particularly those not seen to have been directly affected by the tsunami.

“In many cases they have been reduced to the state of passive, subservient receivers, as immediate relief is dumped hurriedly without consideration of their needs and desires or of the problems of poverty and in some cases conflict in which they were living even before the disaster,” Sarath Fernando, secretary general of Sri Lanka's Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform, a small-scale farmers organisation, told IPS.

Fernando says the reconstruction of his country is being used to implement government plans which have been drawn up “without consultation with civil society” and which “do not target the most affected communities” such as people working in the fisheries sector. One of Fernando's biggest concerns is that Sri Lanka's so-called Task Force to Rebuild the Nation (TAFREN) set up shortly after the tsunami is dominated by a group of elite business leaders. “There are no representatives of the affected people or of any organisations operating in the affected areas, and no academics or scientists or any professionals with experience of rebuilding after disasters,” he said.

Fernando insists that tsunami rehabilitation is now being used to promote “big business” and tourism in the country, disregarding the needs of those hit by the disaster. Fernando adds that poor communities are being pushed away from Sri Lanka's coastlines to make way for large hotel complexes. Shortly after the tsunami the Sri Lankan government announced that people should not rebuild their houses on the coast, but Fernando says the measures are not aimed at protecting the fishing communities.

“The government is not trying to protect fisher people, but is forcing us to make way for tourism. Promoting high-end tourism seems to be one of the driving forces of the TAFREN plan. This modern society includes high-end tourism, export agriculture and manufacturing and large-scale fisheries. It clearly does not include small-scale fishing, subsistence farming or community-based tourism,” he said.

Joined by Herman Kumara, secretary general of the World Forum of Fisher People in Sri Lanka, Luky Djani, vice coordinator of Indonesia Corruption Watch, Adli Abdullah, secretary general of Panglima Laot (a fishery community organisation in Indonesia) and Arjun Karki, coordinator of the South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication, Fernando appealed Thursday to the European Parliament's development committee to ensure that aid reaches those most in need and that civil society groups and representatives of the most affected communities are involved in the tsunami rehabilitation.

People from across the world responded to the Dec. 26 tsunami disaster with tremendous generosity. Approximately 10.7 billion euros (13 billion dollars) was pledged in aid from around the world to rebuild the lives and livelihoods of the survivors. However, the pace of rebuilding has been slow and thousands of people remain homeless. The United Nations says reconstruction work across the whole affected region could take up to five years, and may cost 7.4 billion euros (9 billion dollars).

The civil society groups from Sri Lanka and Indonesia also warn that much of the money that is being used for the rehabilitation process will not solve long-term problems in their countries. In a statement released to coincide with their visit to Brussels the delegates say that although they appreciate the “sense of urgency” among all people who donated to relief and reconstruction efforts, the “compulsion to disburse such funds within short-term time targets has led to the undermining of local structures and organisations.”

The group says serious problems remain in their countries that can only be addressed through a “people's process that recognises that all resources pledged in the name of affected people genuinely belong to them.” “This can be achieved by setting up reserve funds, to be managed and administered with representation from affected populations. These funds must be available for long-term use and should be transparent and accountable to local people's organisations,” they said.

UN Pulls in “under 10%” of Relief Appeal

By Frances Williams

Financial Times April 7, 2005

The United Nations, appealing for an additional \$110m in aid for survivors of the Indian Ocean tsunamis, revealed yesterday that it had received less than a tenth of the money it needed to relieve other humanitarian crises. The revised tsunami appeal, for 5m victims in seven countries, brings the total amount requested for this year to nearly \$1.1bn (£580m). It follows an emergency request for \$977m in early January for the six months to July, which has already raised \$870m.

Jan Egeland, UN under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs, said emergency relief for the victims of the March 28 earthquake that struck Indonesia's Nias and Simeulue islands was being funded from the tsunami appeal. But, contrasting the unprecedented generosity towards tsunami victims with unmet needs elsewhere, Mr Egeland urged donors to direct further resources to helping 30m people affected by "forgotten" crises in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America.

He said 92 governments had pledged a total of \$5.8bn for tsunami relief and reconstruction, with private individuals and companies promising billions more. But the UN had so far received only \$168m – or less than 10 per cent – of the \$1.7bn it had requested this year for other crises. The \$1.7bn appeal was "one fifth of what Europe spends on ice cream in a year, or the equivalent to 2½ fighter jets", Mr. Egeland said.

Just \$181,000 had been donated towards the \$40m needed for humanitarian aid following internecine fighting in Ivory Coast – which he described as "one of the worst crises in the world". Less than 5 per cent of requested aid had arrived for some other African nations and for Chechnya.

UN: Governments Must Provide More Tsunami Aid

By Chris Brummitt

Associated Press February 8, 2005

The United Nations said governments have provided little more than a third of the aid they pledged to tsunami-hit nations and warned that it needed more cash to fund long-term reconstruction efforts. The world body was also weighing moving its base in Indonesia's worst-hit Aceh province because of security concerns.

Estimates of the number of people killed by the earthquake and tsunami it spawned in 11 nations ranged Tuesday from about 162,000 to 178,000 – most of them in Indonesia's Aceh province. Another 26,000 to 142,000 remain missing, but officials say it's too early to add them to the toll with bodies still being pulled from the rubble. Indonesia said Tuesday it had found 1,055 more corpses, raising the country's confirmed death toll to at least 115,756. Fresh earthquakes rattled the region early Tuesday. Temblors were felt in Taiwan and Papua New Guinea, which were unaffected by the Dec. 26 disaster, but there were no reports of damage or injuries.

With the emergency phase of relief operations over, the U.S. military has started scaling down aid efforts, with other nations' forces preparing to follow suit. On Tuesday, Australian troops handed over the operation of a water purification plant in Aceh's provincial capital to the International Federation of the Red Cross.

But hundreds of thousands of survivors are still in need and the United Nations begged governments to follow through with promises of aid. So far \$977 million has been pledged, but only \$360 million has reached the world body's coffers, said Margareta Wahlstrom, special envoy of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. "This is our key message to government donors: Please convert your pledges into hard cash in the bank. It's only cash in the bank that makes it possible to do work on the ground," she said Monday in Geneva. Although the United Nations is not currently short of funds to maintain its humanitarian relief operations, it warned that money is still needed in the long run for reconstruction. "(Governments) are very generous classically with food, health, and children, but they are very slow in filling us up on livelihoods and shelter," she said.

In Indonesia's Aceh province, security concerns have prompted U.N. officials to consider relocating the base for the massive international relief effort there. Joel Boutroue, U.N. deputy humanitarian coordinator, said the United Nations "does not expect to be a target" of an attack. But he said the gated and walled compound in Banda Aceh where 100 aid workers live and work had "structural weaknesses." "We will probably have to change site, find a new compound," Boutroue told The Associated Press, adding: "Where we are now is not optimal ... from a security perspective." Al-Qaida linked suicide bombers have targeted Westerners in Indonesia three times in the past three years, most recently bombing the Australian Embassy in Jakarta in September 2004.

Aid That Doesn't Deliver

By Emira Woods*

Foreign Policy in Focus February 1, 2005

The Bush administration has pledged \$350 million to tsunami relief. It's a safe bet that at least \$248 million of that money will be spent right here in the U.S. The U.S. government places conditions on its foreign aid that require most relief and development assistance materials and services to be purchased from U.S. companies and agencies. The last time the government revealed any data on this issue – back in 1996-72 cents out of every U.S. foreign aid dollar was spent on U.S. goods and services. This arrangement might strike most U.S. taxpayers as a fair and just arrangement. Why shouldn't the nation's economy and its companies get something out of money the government spends on foreign aid?

For starters, this arrangement makes aid less productive. Requiring that foreign aid benefit U.S. companies often means that precious resources are used buying more expensive goods or services; while valuable time is wasted transporting these goods to the region. This hurts poor countries, including those devastated by this disaster of monumental proportions.

Countries that receive aid also have less control and decision-making on how to spend aid money. For example, countries like Malaysia or Sri Lanka, where the staple diet is rice may get shiploads of sorghum, or wheat, because these items are available from U.S. company stockpiles. What's worse, goods like sugar or roofing sheets that may have been secured in the region, injecting much-needed vigor into the regional economy, are ignored as U.S. materials are imported at top dollar. It is ironic that the Bush administration, which in its rhetoric promotes free markets and less government involvement in the economy, turns foreign aid into corporate welfare.

Adding insult to injury, the U.S. and other rich nations agreed that by January 1, 2002 they would cut the strings and untie aid to least developed countries. This Agreement, the Development Assistance Community (DAC) Recommendation to Untie Official Development Assistance to Least Developed Countries, was finally reached after 30 years of negotiations and was an acknowledgment that tied aid “represents poor value for money and undermines development assistance.”

However, three years later, the U.S. government may well be the worst offender. Despite having signed international agreements and commitments on lifting this kind of restriction on foreign aid, the Bush administration maintains doggedly intransigent. The Bush administration hasn't even bothered to provide any data about the issue. The latest available figures reported are from 1996, when Bill Clinton was president.

At that time, the U.S. estimated that 71.6 percent of bilateral aid commitments were tied to the purchase of U.S. goods and services. These figures were repeated in the U.S.

agency for International Development (USAID) Agency Performance Report published in April 1999. The same data was repeated in the Reality of Aid 2000 edition. No figures have been reported since the agreement went into effect.

The tsunami disaster makes improving the efficiency of humanitarian assistance an urgent matter. There has never been a better time for the U.S. to cut the strings and make sure money spent on aid actually reaches the intended beneficiaries.

Why Cut The Strings?

Tying aid promotes goods and services from the donor country and undermines the humanitarian purpose and the overall effectiveness of assistance. It results often in inappropriate aid, which does not meet the needs of the poor. By allowing greater competition for the provision of services, a recipient country can benefit from buying from suppliers that compete on price, quality, and service. Untying aid can also help strengthen the local and regional economies and contribute to building local productivity.

At the time of a disaster, we must remember that there are ample supplies of local expertise – carpenters, building contractors, management consultants, architects, surveyors – and many of these skilled workers are unemployed. Restoring human dignity to those affected by a disaster will mean giving them the opportunity to earn a living and feed their families. This cannot happen if U.S. companies, agencies, and contractors crowd out locals because of the practice of tied aid.

In September 2004, the United Nations' Economic Commission for Africa's Economic Report on Africa reported that "the donors' habit of insisting that aid funds be spent purchasing goods and services from the same donor countries is crippling Africa's chances of pulling ahead." According to the report, "tied aid" reduces the real value of the assistance by some 25 to 40 percent, given that recipient countries are forced to buy imports that are not priced competitively.

Steps in the Right Direction: The Coalition of the Willing

The ECA report notes that four countries (United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands) were breaking away from the idea of "tied aid" with more than 90 percent of their aid "untied." These efforts must be commended. The tsunami offers an opportunity for the U.S. to join this "coalition of the willing." It's time that this nation's foreign aid started to deliver more benefits and stopped being a vehicle for welfare to U.S. companies.

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UN Backs Call to Accredite Aid Agencies

By Debbie Andalo

Guardian January 27, 2005

The UN today backed a call from Oxfam to develop an accreditation system for aid agencies working in the tsunami disaster region. Oxfam made the proposal following its claim that some aid agencies were hampering relief efforts because their staff lacked appropriate skills and were failing to consult local communities about the help they needed.

The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), based in Geneva, agreed it was a good idea to introduce an accreditation system for aid agencies and other non-governmental organisations working in disaster areas. The OCHA, which helps to coordinate humanitarian relief efforts between international aid agencies and national governments, said anything that improves such coordination was welcome.

A spokeswoman said: "Why not have a system if it improves the coordination so long as it doesn't hinder the delivery of assistance." The office agreed with comments made by Oxfam that some small organisations and individuals working alone in the tsunami region lacked experience of disaster relief.

But the spokeswoman said: "In any major emergency or natural disaster there are a lot of small charitable groups or NGOs who arrive with no experience, but who want to help. Sometimes they are more of a burden than a help but we have to see where we can fit them in. We do our best to get these people on board. It is not a criticism of them because these people are full of goodwill."

The Disasters Emergency Committee, the charity umbrella organisation that manages national relief appeals and distributes the money to its charity members, said the Oxfam report raised important concerns. Brendan Gormley, the DEC chief executive, said: "Effective delivery of aid is, of course, vitally important, and Oxfam's stress on local consultation has proven essential in past emergencies." But he said the specific criticisms made by Oxfam about the relief effort were better dealt with by the individual members of the DEC.

Oxfam's comments about the competence of some of the relief agencies in the tsunami disaster zone appear in its report called Learning the Lessons of the Tsunami: One Month On.

UN, Relief Groups Fear Aid Falling Behind Pledges

By Thalif Deen

Inter Press Service January 3, 2005

United Nations - along with international aid agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) - is expressing skepticism over the eventual delivery of the hefty 2.5 billion dollars in pledges made by donors for tsunami disaster relief operations in south and southeast Asia.

Asked if governments could falter on their pledges, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan told reporters Monday: "If we go by past history, yes, I do have concerns." "We have got lots of pledges (totalling) over 2.5 billion dollars but it is quite likely that, at the end of the day, we will not receive all of it," he added. Annan specifically cited the example of the Bam earthquake in Iran in December 2003, where funds received fell short of promises made by the international community. "And we have (other) similar experiences," he added.

Iranian President Mohammed Khatami complained last year that of the 32 million dollars in pledges, only about 17 million dollars have actually been disbursed so far. In an editorial last week, the New York Times said that victims of the Bam earthquake a year ago "are still living in tents because aid, including ours, has not materialised in the amounts pledged." Annan admitted that "not all the money that was pledged for the Iran crisis has been disbursed." "I hope that this time, as the international community is really aware, (and as) everyone is involved, we will fulfill our promises."

As of Monday, both donors and international financial institutions pledged over 2.5 billion dollars in assistance – both for emergency relief operations and for reconstruction in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster which devastated parts of south and southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India. Of the 36 donors, the top five are Japan (500 million dollars), the United States (350 million), the World Bank (250 million), Britain (96 million) and Sweden (75.5 million). "Governments must not only pledge immediate aid for the millions of victims of the tsunami. They must deliver it before it is too late," Raymond C. Offenheiser, president of Oxfam America, told IPS. "And they must support people rebuilding their lives after the cameras have gone. Like all the people in the humanitarian crises that never hit our TV screens, they need the continued, not just fleeting, generosity, of rich governments," he added. Offenheiser said that people and corporations around the world have reacted "incredibly quickly" to the devastation, and given very generously. "We have never seen such a response. It is now vital that the aid gets through quickly and that the world does not forget survivors faced with the long-term task of rebuilding their lives," he added.

Oxfam also urged donor governments to give long-term aid to the millions who will be faced with the mammoth task of rebuilding their homes, businesses and communities. The international aid agency also warned that massive attention for a short time does not

necessarily produce generous support from donor governments. According to Oxfam, most donor governments have “very short attention spans” on their pledges. The “flash appeal” in response to Iran's earthquake 12 months ago was only 54 percent funded (32 million dollars requested, only 17 million given). A series of similar appeals for disasters that hit Haiti from March to September 2004 was only 36 percent funded (only 13 million dollars received of the 37 million dollars requested).

Similarly, Offenheiser said, “relative generosity in one year does not guarantee that donor governments will remain interested”. Afghanistan's 2002 appeal was 67 percent funded, immediately after the rigidly Islamic Taliban government was overthrown. Two years later, its “drought appeal” for 2004 was only 36 percent funded (26 million dollars of the 73 million requested). But donor governments' generosity has also been influenced by political factors – specifically in the aftermath of the U.S.-led military attack on Iraq and the separatist insurgency in Russia's Chechnya province. Iraq and Chechnya's 2003 appeals were both 91 percent funded, while Cote d'Ivoire only received 54 percent, Liberia 45 percent in 2003, and Mozambique only 15 percent of what was requested. “This added up to 40 dollars in aid for each beneficiary in Chechnya, and 40 cents in Mozambique,” Offenheiser said.

At the March 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, U.S. President George W. Bush announced the creation of a Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) that will “reward (developing) nations that root out corruption, respect human rights, and adhere to the rule of law... invest in better health care, better schools and broader immunisation.” The United States selected 16 countries – including Armenia, Benin, Honduras, Mongolia, Morocco, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu – as eligible to apply for U.S. development assistance. But since the creation of the MCA in 2002, “the account is yet to disperse a single dollar,” the Times said in its editorial last week.

Saradha Iyer of the Malaysia-based Third World Network, one of the leading NGOs in the field of development, points out that the Bush administration had promised to donate 1.7 billion dollars the first year of the MCA, 3.3 billion dollars in the second, and 5.0 billion dollars in the third year. Citing a report in the New York Times on Christmas Eve 2004, Iyer said the Bush administration did not even ask Congress for the full 1.7 billion dollars in the first year. In the second year it asked for 1.3 billion dollars and got just 1.0 billion dollars. The next year the administration asked for 2.5 billion dollars and got 1.5 billion dollars. “The worse thing of all is that the Millennium Challenge Account has not dispersed a single dollar yet,” Iyer told IPS. Hopefully, she said, “last week's earth-shaking, coastline-altering, community-devouring quake and tsunami will change all this – and more”.

Jan Egeland, the U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, raised a hornet's nest last week by accusing rich nations of being “stingy” because most of them have failed to meet the U.N. target of 0.7 percent of gross national product (GNP) as official development assistance (ODA) to the world's poorer nations. The United States took strong exception to his criticism even though he did not identify any countries by name. “The United States has given more aid in the last four years than any other nation

or combination of nations in the world,” Secretary of State Colin Powell told reporters. Although in dollar terms the United States is high on the list of aid donors, it falls far behind if measured in terms of the country's national income. Iyer said that the United States gave 2.0 percent of its national income to rebuild Europe after World War II. Today, the percentage of U.S. income going to poor countries remains at 0.14 percent, Britain's is at 0.34 percent and France 0.41 percent.

Only five countries have consistently met – and gone beyond – the 0.7 target which was set by the U.N. General Assembly in 1970. The five countries are Denmark (1.06 percent), Netherlands (0.82 percent), Sweden (0.81 percent), Norway (0.80 percent) and Luxembourg (0.7 percent). “The percentage of national incomes given to poor has always been the test of generosity of nations but countries have consistently failed to match promises with action,” Iyer said. “Now the reality is that unless much higher percentages of national incomes are actually earmarked for rebuilding and reconstruction, there is going to be no promise of any future for the vast majority of humankind,” she added. “Nature's blow must also force us to see the war on terror in some new light as well. Is spending 450 billion dollars annually on the (U.S.) military and 15 billion dollars on development assistance – a ratio of 30:1 – any longer justified?” she asked.

Red Cross Criticizes Aid Agencies' Methods

Jonathan Fowler

Associated Press October 28, 2004

Many of the methods being used by international aid workers may do more to hurt than to help the lives of disaster victims, the international Red Cross said Thursday in its annual report. Aid agencies and governments spend too little time listening to people on the front line and too much time fueling the "disaster victim cliché," which portrays affected communities as helpless, Red Cross expert Eva von Oelreich said. Helping people to help themselves before, during and after disaster strikes is the key to cutting the impact of catastrophes, said the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in its World Disasters Report. "It's a myth that only Western governments and aid agencies know best," von Oelreich told reporters ahead of the report's release.

The Red Cross study said that in 2003 the number of people affected by natural and manmade catastrophes fell to 255 million. The figure was some 2.5 times lower than the previous year - when the total was boosted to 608 million by drought in India - but close to the annual average for the previous decade. The reported death toll, however, leapt to 76,806 – three times higher than in 2002. The 1994-2003, annual average was 62,000.

The Red Cross figures cover earthquakes, weather-related disasters, famine, plane crashes and other "technological disasters" but omit war-related casualties and deaths from disease. Europe's heat wave caused nearly half the deaths from disasters in 2003, said the Red Cross. Up to 35,000 people died in Europe – around half of them in France and most aged over 75 years - as summer temperatures exceeded 104 degrees Fahrenheit. Most of the rest died in the magnitude-6.6 earthquake that struck Bam, Iran, in December. The quake killed at least 30,000 people, injured the same number and destroyed 85 percent of Bam's buildings. The Bam earthquake provided the perfect example of how relief organizations sometimes get it wrong, von Oelreich said.

Thirty-two international rescue teams from 22 countries, headed to Bam in the two days following the quake, complete with sniffer dogs and remote sensing equipment. They saved 22 people. Jonathan Walter, the report's editor, noted that it costs \$50,000 to fund a Western rescue team for six days. The same sum could fund training and pay the salaries for two years for three Iranian dog handlers and their animals, who could be on the scene faster, he said. Teams from the Iranian Red Crescent saved 157 people with 10 dogs in Bam. Local people saved thousands of lives in the immediate aftermath of the quake. "I don't say that external aid is not needed," said von Oelreich. "What I want to say is that there is a need for a balance." "Disaster-affected people often do more to help themselves than aid organizations do, so we need to build on it. Affected people are far more resourceful than we assume."

US Shows Double Standards and Lack of Respect for NGOs

By Nick Cater

AlertNet May 20, 2005

The United States needs to learn respect for international humanitarian law and human rights in dealing with aid agencies, urges commentator and consultant Nick Cater.

For shock and awe, there's nothing to beat an American government spokesperson discussing humanitarian action and revealing both double standards and a failure to grasp the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. Like precision bombing that does "collateral damage" to their own troops, the officials making these pronouncements often miss the point, whether it's the administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) urging NGOs to promote their American funding in high-risk war zones or the latest State Department Verdict on Uzbekistan.

After the Uzbek regime of President Islam Karimov mowed down perhaps hundreds of its citizens following a politically-inspired jailbreak, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher carefully urged restraint by both sides. He added: "We urge the government ... to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other humanitarian organisations full access to the region so we can get the facts, so that they can help take care of people that may need their help."

Leaving aside whether humanitarian agencies are there to "get the facts" for America, the U.S. stance on ICRC access to those in need in Uzbekistan is directly at odds with its blocking of ICRC and Iraqi Red Crescent Society access to the Falluja enclave in Iraq during a 2004 siege. That siege that mocked almost every aspect of the Geneva Conventions that make up international humanitarian law.

The U.S. government has long regarded its observance of international humanitarian law as optional, at best. In 2002, a legal adviser reassured President George W. Bush that the need to quickly obtain information from captured terrorists "renders obsolete Geneva's strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners and renders quaint some of its provisions..."

Such pervasive contempt for international law and human rights – from U.S. efforts to sabotage the International Criminal Court to its indefinite detention of prisoners of war without hearings in sub-human conditions in Guantanamo Bay – has inevitable consequences.

If the U.S. did not, according to the respected U.S. group Human Rights First, maintain around a dozen secret detention centres worldwide in which nameless inmates are hidden from the ICRC, would Abu Ghraib guards have brutally harassed their prisoners?

If the U.S. government maintained as accurate records of Iraqi casualties as it does of U.S. fatalities, would a U.S. Marine have shot dead three injured and unarmed supposed ex-combatants in a Falluja mosque (one incident was captured on film) and be cleared by a military inquiry for conduct "consistent with ... the law of armed conflict"?

No wonder America's reputation is so low that an unsubstantiated Newsweek report of desecration of the Koran by Americans at Guantanamo provokes rioting that kills a dozen or more and injures scores of people.

USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios recently linked U.S. combat, diplomacy and aid when he noted in an AlertNet interview some "unintended favourable good consequences" from the \$1 billion of American tsunami aid and military assistance, such as halving Islamic Indonesia's negative impressions of America. Perhaps \$1 billion is a good price to buy influence, but if the U.S. wants to save a few dollars, a little respect for international humanitarian law and the ICRC would go a long way.

Disaster Aid Furthers Fears of Proselytizing

By Jane Lampman

Christian Science Monitor January 31, 2005

For countries with thousands left homeless and bereft by the tsunami, the outpouring of help from around the world is a godsend. Yet in some nations, the growing presence of faith-based agencies dispensing the aid is posing another challenge - stirring tensions already simmering around evangelism and anti-Christian violence.

In Sri Lanka, for example, prior to the tsunami, two anti-conversion bills that would make "unethical conversions" illegal were introduced into parliament. Reacting to a perceived increase in Christian proselytizing, the bill proposed by a militant Buddhist party would impose fines and five to seven years imprisonment for anyone who gives material aid to someone of another faith. Omalpe Sobitha, a Buddhist monk member of parliament, charged aid groups with offering money, food, employment, or other inducements to convert people to Christianity.

A week before the tsunami hit, a church in Sri Lanka was burned to the ground – the latest in more than 160 violent attacks against churches and pastors in the past two years. In November 2003, the office of World Vision, a global Christian aid agency active in Sri Lanka since 1977, was firebombed. "World Vision was mentioned specifically in parliamentary debates on the legislation, though we don't seek to convert anyone," says Dean Owen, its director of communications. Like several major organizations with faith connections, World Vision follows a Red Cross code of conduct that bans proselytizing.

But since 2000, Evangelical Christians across the globe have mounted a missionary effort targeting the "10/40 Window" – the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist nations between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north latitude. East Asians, such as Koreans, as well as Westerners are active in several countries.

But now the tsunami has drawn a host of smaller Christian groups to the region. They see the tragedy as an opportunity to present their spiritual message along with material aid. There are reports in Indonesia, India, and Sri Lanka of groups handing out Christian tracts purporting to explain the tragedy, seeking to move Muslim children into Christian orphanages, or urging those they provide with goods to attend prayer meetings.

"I think evangelists do this out of the best intentions, but there is a responsibility to try to understand other faith groups and their culture," says Vince Isner, director of FaithfulAmerica.org, a program of the National Council of Churches USA, who just returned from Sri Lanka. "There's a power imbalance when people are in dire need," he adds. "When others offer aid and ask, 'By the way, do you know why this happened to you? There's a better way,' it becomes a delicate power struggle."

Sri Lanka's Buddhist roots go back 2,500 years; Christianity, linked in the minds of many there to colonialism, arrived first with the Portuguese, then with the British.

Today, the island is mostly Buddhist (70 percent), but has minorities of Hindus (15 percent), and Muslims and Christians (each 7 percent). A group of Buddhist monks was elected to parliament last April as members of a radical National Heritage Party (JHU) that promotes anti-conversion legislation, a constitutional amendment to make Buddhism the state religion, and an end to government corruption. In December, the JHU threatened to fast unto death unless the government agreed to bring the anti-conversion bill up for a vote. Since the tsunami, it has publicly questioned the legality of the funds World Vision is getting, saying they should be distributed by the government.

Sri Lanka is a signatory to the international covenants that ensure political and religious rights; and the US State Department has expressed concern about the "overall deterioration in religious freedom" there. "Sri Lanka is a multi-religious, multiethnic, secular democracy," says Devinda Subasinghe, the country's ambassador to the US. "Buddhism permeates the society and culture, not too dissimilar to the way Judeo-Christian values permeate US society. But that in no way suggests any hostility toward the flourishing of other religions."

The Sri Lankan government says it respects religious liberty and has signed international covenants. But it may also feel the need to placate militant Buddhists, suggests Roger Severino, a lawyer for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a US based law firm which is working with some Christian churches in Sri Lanka. Mr. Severino points out that there are significant concerns about the fact that the Sri Lanka Supreme Court has ruled that while the constitution protects religious freedom, it "does not recognize a fundamental right to propagate a religion."

The second anti-conversion bill, drafted by the ministry of Buddhist affairs apparently as a counter to the JHU bill, may have even broader in its implications. "The way these laws are cast with rather sweeping language would make even an accidental conversion an act for which the religious body giving the aid is guilty," says John Witte, an expert on law and religion at Emory University in Atlanta.

Some worry the massive relief efforts now under way present a potentially explosive situation. A few instances of genuine proselytizing have been reported in Sri Lanka. But most groups are "focusing on delivering the relief people require," says Ambassador Subasinghe.

US, Indonesia Mull Closer Ties

By Tom McCawley

Christian Science Monitor February 9, 2005

The USS Abraham Lincoln wrapped up a month-long emergency relief mission last week and left the waters off Indonesia's tsunami-afflicted Aceh Province. But left in the Lincoln's wake are ripples of interest in both the United States and Indonesia for a return to closer ties.

Fresh debate has emerged in Congress over whether to restore relations with the Indonesian military, which had been damaged by human rights concerns. In Indonesia, the month-long US presence has so far helped to polish America's image, which political observers say had been tarnished by the war in Iraq.

"The tsunami in Aceh showed that people in the West were serious in giving aid to Muslim counties," says Ulil Abshar Abdalla, an Islamic scholar and liberal Muslim activist. "It will shift perceptions of the West as a bloc." Mr. Ulil says that prominent Islamic leaders thanked US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz at a meeting at the US Ambassador's residence in Jakarta. "It was the first time, I'd heard [the Islamic leaders] say thanks," says Mr. Ulil. "It made me very happy."

Mr. Wolfowitz, a former ambassador to Indonesia, is among those calling for closer military ties with the world's largest majority-Muslim country. Wolfowitz told reporters in Jakarta last month, "We would also like to see how the TNI [the Indonesian military] has endeavored to put itself under the control of civilian supremacy."

Supporters of mending the 13-year rift with Indonesia's military argue that it could be a more central ally in the war on terrorists, including Southeast Asian groups linked to Al Qaeda. Indonesia's navy also polices the Malacca Straits, a major world shipping lane prone to pirate attacks, and, intelligence agents say, possibly a major marine terrorist attack.

Critics claim that the Indonesian military has not done enough to reform itself after decades of human rights abuses, including in Aceh province, which has been the site of a separatist rebellion since 1976.

Human rights concerns

The US ended a training program known as IMET with Indonesia in 1991 after Indonesian soldiers massacred demonstrators in a graveyard in mostly Catholic East Timor. The ties were further scaled back in 1999, after the Indonesian military orchestrated a scorched earth campaign killing hundreds, following East Timor's vote for independence in a UN-sponsored plebiscite.

The US training programs, which included courses on operating a civilian chain of command, are exactly those needed by militaries such as Indonesia to improve their record, argue supporters such as Sen. Kit Bond (R) of Missouri. Under the IMET program, Indonesian officers were exposed to Western military practices, including codes of conduct and rules of engagement.

John Haseman, a former US military attaché in Jakarta, says that the "cost of cutting IMET" has been that many senior officers have not had exposure to US military practices. Some US military observers have noted that tsunami relief coordination went more smoothly with the Thais because both militaries know each other under the IMET program, and have conducted military operations together. India, Pakistan, and Malaysia also take part in the program.

In a speech in late January, Senator Bond called for an end to military sanctions against Indonesia, claiming the country could be a stronger ally in the war on Al Qaeda-linked terrorists. In a statement, Bond said that sanctions on the sale of spare parts had slowed the delivery of aid to tsunami victims. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is also believed to support closer ties.

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D) of Vermont, the architect of the 1999 restrictions, disagrees. Senator Leahy, a vocal critic of the TNI, argues that Indonesia's military has done little to change its ways. He says Indonesia has failed to bring to account officers involved in atrocities in East Timor, dismissing the convictions of a Jakarta-based ad hoc court for human rights crimes in East Timor.

In the US Senate last week, Leahy accused the Indonesian military of consistently obstructing justice. "Although senior Indonesian military officers have repeatedly vowed to support reform, they have done next to nothing to hold their members accountable for these heinous crimes," he said in a statement.

Some ties remain

Leahy said that Indonesian officers already receive some US training. Such programs include counterterrorism skills. And Indonesia, with proper disclosure, can purchase from the US some military spare parts for "nonlethal" items.

US investigators have accused the Indonesian military of blocking an FBI investigation into the deaths in 2002 of two Americans for 18 months in the far flung Papua province near a gold mine operated by a US company. The murders have further complicated efforts to restore links.

Although he did not mention the IMET program, after his visit to Indonesia in mid-January, Wolfowitz said that cooperation between the US and Indonesian militaries could mean closer ties. He said that the US needed to "help build the kind of defense institution

that will ensure in the future that the Indonesian military, like our military, is a loyal function of a democratic government."

A study sponsored by the United States-Indonesia Society (USINDO), a Washington-based nongovernment organization, is also calling for the US to lift restrictions on military ties. The report from USINDO, whose members include US corporations that do business in Indonesia, such as Freeport-McMoran Copper & Gold and Exxon-Mobil, is calling for expansion of military ties. Meanwhile, the US still has a 1,000-bed hospital ship, the Mercy, in Aceh's waters as part of the \$4.5 billion relief effort there.

But Islamic scholars such as Ulil say that among many ordinary Muslims the enhanced post-tsunami image for the US – regardless of the relations between the governments – will not be permanent. "As long as there is aggression, as long as there is a US presence in Iraq, there will be distrust [among ordinary Muslims], it has very deep roots in history."

The NGO Phenomenon

By Michael Hill

Baltimore Sun January 9, 2005

When a disaster like the Asian tsunami strikes, an enormous industry surfaces to provide relief. In the United States, the companies that make up this industry might be called aid groups or charities or nonprofits. Most of the rest of the world refers to them as NGOs - nongovernmental organizations.

The image – in some cases carefully constructed, usually reinforced by the media – is of straightforward charity, feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, treating the sick, in a hands-on, handout fashion resembling so many Mother Teresas dispensing aid and kindness.

The reality is that disaster relief is only the tip of the NGO iceberg. In fact, the organizations are as richly diverse in their goals and methods as private corporations. Many have specialties, ranging from trade policy to environmental concerns, democracy building to disaster relief. Others are multifaceted organizations that try to coordinate a variety of activities to sustain long-term solutions to problems that are both chronic (poverty, disease, corruption) and acute (natural disasters).

"In addition to saving lives, NGOs promote democracy and civic participation," says I.M. "Mac" Destler, director of the Program on International Security and Economic Policy at

the University of Maryland, College Park. "They have really had a significant role in a number of situations. The Ukrainian election is the most recent."

An event like the tsunami puts the NGOs in an intense spotlight where they must perform for an audience that will sustain them financially. But few in the audience will have a long-enough attention span to learn which NGOs perform well. The best of the NGOs know that the kind of relief effort going on in Asia is an unglamorous calling - hard work that continues long after the spotlight has moved elsewhere. The worst of them look at disasters as little more than fund-raising opportunities and relentlessly follow the spotlight to keep the donations coming in.

"During disasters, there is such a public relations frenzy," says John Hammock, an associate professor of humanitarian aid at the Fletcher School of Tufts University. "Everybody is trying to get on TV with their T-shirts on. And for good reason: That translates into dollars [...] For me, the key is to give money to organizations that are committed to stay there over the long term. Some organizations come in and leave when the money dries up," he says.

Such long-term commitment is seen as the way to turn relief into sustainable development that can make communities devastated by these disasters flourish again. "NGOs need to move beyond charity to address broader issues like of governance and accountability," says James V. Riker, associate director of the Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland, College Park. "I think many groups that started in Asia, in Bangladesh after its floods, in India and Sri Lanka, addressing dramatically the needs of hunger and health care, realized as time went on that they needed to go farther than addressing the symptoms, that they needed to get into community building and rehabilitation projects that would have a longer-term impact," Riker says. A group handing out food to tsunami victims today, for example, might put pressure on international trade organizations next month in an effort to aid economic development in the devastated countries.

Many of today's NGOs got their start in the aftermath of World War II, aiding refugees in war-ravaged Europe. The CARE package is a symbol of what might be termed the romantic image of these NGOs. For a generation of Americans, CARE – which originally stood for Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe – will always be connected with the package that carried its name, originally a box of military surplus foodstuffs that was delivered to the war refugees amid the devastation of Europe. A later version that included tools and seeds was promised to poor countries around the world in fund-raising appeals that aired during the early years of television. Some 100 million CARE packages were distributed over two decades.

The growth of NGOs in the post-World War II decades paralleled the growth of international awareness. The United Nations was created and helped focus attention on problems across the globe. It contracted with many NGOs to deal with those problems, a symbiotic relationship that still exists.

Television brought pictures of disease and destruction, famine and flood, into the comfortable living rooms of industrialized societies. Improved transportation allowed meaningful responses to the problems. Charity was not as it once was, giving money to a local group for the poor of your community – it was now responding to an outstretched hand halfway around the world. As the NGOs grew, their roles became more complex and sophisticated. Now the term "CARE package" has slipped into the vernacular as a box of goodies delivered to anyone in need – such as a college student facing exams – not as an instrument of disaster relief. Atlanta-based CARE no longer delivers them.

Contracting out relief

CARE – which now stands for Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere –is a \$500-million-per-year operation with a wide variety of projects in the developing world. Most of its money does not come from the individuals who once bought CARE packages for specific recipients, but from governments and U.N. groups. It contracts out the business of relief. This is not true of all NGOs, as some large operators, such as Oxfam and Baltimore-headquartered Lutheran World Relief, continue to rely primarily on private funding, in part to insure their independence.

But, like CARE, many of the most admired NGOs, such as Baltimore-based Catholic Relief Services, get a great deal of their money from government and U.N. contracts. Certainly they cherish small donations – the outpouring of generosity after the tsunami has had a huge impact on NGO budgets – but they no longer depend on them. "There is still a very significant private fund-raising effort in international relief," says Lester M. Salamon, who studies the nonprofit sector at the Institute for Policy Studies at the Johns Hopkins University. "But it is the case that governments provide major parts of the money. It's cost-effective to do it that way. It is really hard to keep a major organization going through private donations."

With all these groups, personnel who once might have been handing out those old CARE packages are now engaged in very unromantic work. That often means trying to run huge freight transportation companies under difficult conditions – finding trucks and drivers and passable roads in order to get the basics of life from the places where they are plentiful to the places where they are needed. "They are still romantic in their objectives," Salamon says of the NGOs. "But they are very concrete in their content."

The story of the nuts-and-bolts work at the core of NGO operations is coming out in the tsunami disaster probably more than ever before, in large part because of the intense media concentration on the disaster. Still, newspapers and television are filled with the kinds of stories that perpetuate the traditional image of NGOs – stories that tell of an individual from the developed world enduring hardships and risking his or her health for a small paycheck to help pitiful victims of floods and famines, earthquakes and, now, tsunamis.

Often these stories resonate with memories of bygone colonial eras, with all their racist underpinnings. "Look at most of the images of famines in Africa," says Hammock,

former head of Oxfam America. "It's always a white nurse feeding a black African. There's always the native victims and the white person comes in to save the day. It's like a morality play."

The media play their parts in this image-making dance, usually arriving at the scene in tandem with their peers from the NGO community, often sharing quarters with the aid workers. These First World visitors certainly live in a rough environment, but it is almost always one that offers protection from whatever disaster is at hand – disease or hunger or homelessness. It is not surprising that these Western reporters seek out stories of their peers dispensing aid, nor that the NGOs encourage this approach, knowing it is grist for the fund-raising mill.

Hammock and others say the long-term success of these operations depends on getting away as soon as possible from that handout relationship – though it plays well in the heartstring-tugging news stories and donor appeals – and instead taking advantage of the tremendous capabilities that disaster victims possess. "Any organization that defines its mission as just giving stuff has got it wrong," says Hammock. "You might save a person's life by sending stuff, but what you have to save is their livelihood."

"It is true in Asia right now, that most people are going to survive on their wits, not on foreign aid," he says. "Most of these people are not victims, they are people like you and me. They do not want aid. They might need it for a bit of time, but then they want to make it on their own."

That means not setting up large camps stocked with donated food that might provide good photo-ops but also foster a culture of dependency. Instead, it means getting people back in their homes – exactly where they want to be – as soon as possible, and figuring out what help they need to stay there and flourish.

Bangladesh example

Bangladesh is considered a case of how to do it right. The country was born in 1971 in a man-made disaster – a horrific war as Pakistan tried to retain control of its eastern province on the other side of India. That drew the attention of Beatle George Harrison, whose Concert for Bangladesh focused a spotlight on the nascent country, about to face a famine, and raised \$9 million in relief funds. The first of such concerts – now de rigeur after any disaster - it helped bring the international NGO community to a new level of awareness and importance on the world stage.

"It was the classic case of a country doomed not to survive," Tariq Karim, former ambassador from Bangladesh to the United States, says of his native land. "One phrase from the early '70s got it all – Bangladesh was a 'bottomless basket case.'" But what happened is that the international NGOs that descended on Bangladesh just primed the pump. Bangladeshis began forming their own organizations that focused on education, industry and other fundamental development work. One, called BRAC, is now considered the largest NGO in the world.

"These NGOs went into empty spaces that the government could not cover," says Karim, who is a senior adviser at the IRIS Center (Institutional Reform and the Informal Sector) at the University of Maryland. The result, he says, is a growing economy, a declining birth rate, a fairly stable democracy and tremendous progress on the problems of famine and flooding that used to draw the world's attention on a regular basis.

Karim contrasts what happened in Bangladesh, a Muslim country, with its former ruler, Pakistan, where the government kept the international NGOs out and saw the growth of madrasses, fundamentalist Islamic schools that are seen as incubators of the fanaticism that leads to terrorism. "This confirms my theory that no space remains vacant, that it will be occupied by some agent or another, benevolent or malevolent," Karim says.

Salamon says that the Bangladesh experience has been repeated in many other countries where people frustrated by corrupt governments and inefficient economies formed NGOs as the best way to have a positive effect on their societies. "I think there has been a global association revolution, a massive upsurge around the world of private nonprofit activists," Salamon says. "It is striking in its dimension and its breadth. And it is not limited to individual countries as networks have formed among organizations on international levels, among environmental groups, human rights groups, major development organizations.

"To call it an industry comes with unfortunate pejorative implications, but it is certainly now a major economic and major political force," he says. "These are vehicles in which people take the initiatives and change the lives of their countries. It is an absolutely massive worldwide phenomenon."

Riding the Wave

By James Ridgeway

***Village Voice* January 4, 2005**

Playing politics with disaster victims does not make a pretty picture, but aid relief in South Asia is being carried out against a background of crass opportunism. Although its slow and tepid reaction might at first appear to be a setback for a "stingy" Bush administration, in fact, the tsunami opens a new ball game – allowing the conservative government to one-up the U.N. (which it intensely dislikes), reinforce an alliance with Japan and India, project military force in the Indian Ocean at a point where Al Qaeda is on the move, and restore the world's faith in the lovable U.S. military.

The Asian catastrophe comes at a difficult time for the U.N. Echoing a longtime conservative theme, the Bush administration is engaged in an all-out attack on the international institution – trying to get rid of not only Secretary-General Kofi Annan but

also Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency. The seriousness of the attack on Annan was underscored by The New York Times' revelation of a secret meeting at the New York apartment of Clinton U.N. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke to shore up support for Annan.

The tsunami offers the U.S. another opportunity to undermine the U.N. Instead of routing its aid through the international organization, which is directed by its members to coordinate disaster relief and equipped with full-time employees to do the job, Bush announced that four nations – the U.S., Japan, Australia, and India – would lead the relief effort. He then dispatched a veritable armada of U.S. warships, planes, helicopters, and marines to take the lead in doing the job. Former U.K. International Development Secretary Clare Short saw it as "yet another [American] attempt to undermine the U.N." And indeed, the U.S. pointedly ignored the U.N., with Secretary of State Colin Powell hoping that "people will see that the United States is willing to reach out to the Muslim world in this time of need."

The armada dispatched to the eastern reaches of the Indian Ocean offers immediate aid to the stricken areas of Sumatra. It includes aircraft carriers and other naval vessels, with a total crew complement of 6,500 sailors and marines. Its deployment represents one of the biggest military operations in Asian waters since Vietnam. In doing so, the U.S. is extending military force into Muslim Indonesia, which is fighting its own war on terror against Al Qaeda. Around the tip of Indonesia to the east opens the Strait of Malacca, by all odds one of the world's most crucial shipping channels, the passage through which ships bring oil from the Middle East to China and Japan.

Since the election, the administration has put the U.N. under siege, demanding the resignation of Annan because of alleged corruption – including wrongdoing by Annan's son – in the oil-for-food program in Iraq. In the past, the U.S. has blocked funding for U.N. population programs, and through such congressional figures as Jesse Helms has gone out of its way to frustrate U.N. operations. Before the Iraq war, the U.S. manipulated Security Council countries, spying on them and trying to pressure them into voting for the invasion. Currently, in addition to getting rid of Annan, the U.S. wants to fire ElBaradei at a time when Bush seeks to persuade public opinion that the Iranians are secretly going forward with plans for nuclear development, i.e. the bomb.

The secret meeting in early December at Holbrooke's New York apartment, to get liberals to circle the wagons and fight for the life of the U.N., was called amid a congressional investigation of the oil-for-food program, charges that U.N. officials were running prostitution rings in Africa and kidnapping and raping young women, and criticism of U.N. management by staff unions. Minnesota Republican senator Norm Coleman has called for Annan's resignation.

"The intention was to keep it confidential," Holbrooke told The New York Times. No one wanted to give the impression of a group of outsiders, all of them Americans, dictating what to do to a secretary-general...which, of course, is exactly what he is doing. He said the group gathered in his apartment were all people "who care deeply about the U.N. and

believe that the U.N. cannot succeed if it is in open dispute and constant friction with its founding nation, its host nation, and its largest contributor nation." He added, "The U.N., without the U.S. behind it, is a failed institution."

The U.S. has shamelessly used the U.N. during and after the Cold War. Among other things, as James Bamford points out in his recent book *A Pretext for War*, having the U.N. in New York made it easier for the National Security Agency to tap the conversations of officials from all over the world. When Bush was laying out the disinformation campaign as a prelude to going to war in Iraq, the NSA used its super-secret eavesdropping equipment to tap the phones of chief U.N. arms inspector in Iraq Hans Blix – including his cell and the HQ for the U.N. inspection team in Baghdad. The transcripts were given to British officials. Clare Short, then a member of the Blair cabinet, later said, "I have seen transcripts of Kofi Annan's conversations. In fact, I have had conversations with Kofi in the run-up to war, thinking, 'Oh dear, there will be a transcript of this and people will see what he and I are saying.'" Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Annan's predecessor, remarked at one point, "The perception is that you must know in advance that your office, your residence, your car, your phone is bugged."

Smoke and mirrors

Kicking back at his Texas ranch over the holidays, Bush was attacked for the initial piddling response to the tsunami, but then, upping the amount to \$350 million and potentially to a billion, he looked good.

By Monday the U.N. reported that total donations were up to \$2 billion, and Bill Clinton and Bush's father were joining up to get more money. But as *The Guardian* (U.K.) points out, those who pledge money often don't come through. The \$2 billion includes \$500 million from Japan and \$530 million from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Robert Smith, spokesman at the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), told *The Guardian* on Monday, "We should be very cautious about these figures. Let's put it this way: Large-scale disasters tend to result in mammoth pledges which ... do not always materialize in their entirety. The figures look much higher than they really are. What will end up on the ground will be much less."

OCHA's Rudolf Muller noted, "There is definitely double accounting going on. A lot of the money will be swallowed up by the military or will have been diverted from existing loans."

In the case of the U.S., where the \$350 million will come from is unclear. Officials at the U.S. Agency for International Development claimed that its emergency funds were exhausted – and that was when Bush was still talking about pledging only \$35 million.

Officials point out that while it might appear that governments are offering more money, what actually happens is that they switch aid money between existing sources and other projects. Most of the time, the promised amounts haven't materialized. As an example, *The Guardian* cites Bam, the Iranian city destroyed by an earthquake a year ago. At the

time, foreign nations and organizations promised \$1.1 billion, but only \$17.5 million ever came through. When Mozambique faced huge flood damage in 2000, nations promised \$400 million, but less than \$200 million materialized. In 1988, Hurricane Mitch killed 9,000 people and left 3 million homeless in Honduras and Nicaragua. Governments promised \$3.5 billion, and development banks pledged \$5.2 billion more. But only a third of that was received.

In the aftermath of the tsunami, some of the money, especially in the case of the military, might be reallocated from existing funds. Jasmine Whitbread, international director at Oxfam, said, "We are concerned that humanitarian aid could be sucked from other crises, such as Sudan and Congo, where the needs are just as great."

Stop Sending Us Money, French Aid Group Says

*MSNBC * January 4, 2005*

The medical aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors without Borders) urged donors on Tuesday to stop sending it money for Asian tsunami victims, saying it had collected enough funds to manage its relief effort there. In an unusual step, the group said it has enough to finance emergency medical aid projects in Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

In a statement on its U.S. website, MSF urged donors to instead contribute to its general Emergency Relief Fund, "which is enabling our quick response to the current disaster in South Asia as well as humanitarian needs in war-torn Darfur, Sudan, and elsewhere in the over 70 countries where MSF is working around the world."

In Europe, the group's branches in France and Germany said they had already raised 40 million euros (\$54.4 million) and 20 million euros, respectively.

Undercutting efforts?

The decision surprised other aid groups and drew criticism that it could undercut an unprecedented wave of private giving to provide relief to the region devastated by the Dec. 26 tsunami which has killed at least 140,000 people. "It's the first time we are led to take this kind of decision," MSF Director General Pierre Salignon said. "This might seem to run counter to the mood of general mobilization, but it's a question of honesty toward our donors. We don't want to continue to lobby the public for projects that are already financed," he said in a statement. A spokesman for MSF's German branch, Aerzte Ohne Grenzen, said it had adopted the same policy.

"What shocks me is that you are taking the risk of pulling the carpet under the feet of other aid organizations. Many groups still need more money," said Jean-Christophe Rufin,

head of the French aid group Action Contre la Faim (Action against Hunger). “It’s a bit irresponsible. We’re all in the same boat in humanitarian aid,” Rufin told France 2 television.

'Just the beginning' for other aid groups

Some German agencies said they had no plans to follow suit and privately several said they were shocked by MSF’s decision. “MSF mainly provides emergency aid, whereas UNICEF stays on. We build schools, carry out vaccination programs and so on. For us this is just the beginning and that’s why we still need donations,” said Astrid Prange of UNICEF Germany, which has received more than 10 million euros in pledges.

“Our experience is – and our feeling is – that people want to give to this or nothing. It’s not that they want to give in general,” said Oxfam Germany director Paul Bendix. Some German aid agencies attributed MSF’s move to its focus on providing short term aid, which is treated differently for tax purposes under German law on charitable donations than long-term development assistance. A spokesman for the German Protestant church charity Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, which has also received 10 million euros in pledges, said most German charities had been careful to broadly frame their aid requests so that they were not legally tied to providing specific assistance in one country.

MSF in France said it was committed to use money donated for South Asia only there and not for other crises. “If a person calls us to make a donation, we will tell them that these programs are already financed and that they can make a donation for a different crisis,” an MSF spokeswoman said.

Reuters contributed to this report.

Debt Cancellation: Historic Victories, New Challenges

By Mark Engler*

Foreign Policy In Focus May 2005

How 100% debt cancellation for poor countries—now being debated by wealthy nations—was transformed from an implausible demand into a winning issue, and what barriers lie ahead for the debt relief movement.

An old maxim in social movements (adapted from Schopenhauer's prickly take on the history of great ideas) states: “First they ignore you. Then they attack you. Then you win.” For years, campaigners for debt relief in the developing world and their international supporters were dismissed or derided. For 2005, however, a new question has emerged: Will they finally be able to claim victory?

A decade ago, in 1995, activists pushing for world leaders to cancel the huge debts that stunt development in the global South were told simply, “debt will not be a major issue.”

By 1998, these same groups – led by the Jubilee debt coalition – were warned that they were asking too rudely for too much. “If you make a campaign out of it,” one columnist wrote, or “use extreme language... the very people you want to influence, the ministers and officials of the rich democracies, stop listening to you.”

The campaign continued despite these admonitions. Now, observers of the debt issue have predicted that major advance for cancellation is within reach, possibly as soon as this summer. Although leaders from the Group of Seven, or G7 *, wealthy industrialized nations failed to finalize a debt agreement in Washington, DC in April, they will continue their deliberations when they come together for their annual meeting on July 6-8 in Perthshire, Scotland. On the table is a plan to grant up to 100% multilateral debt relief for many of the world's heavily indebted poor countries. That the legitimacy of 100% debt cancellation is now widely accepted represents a dramatic reversal in the debt debate. Many have commented in recent years that the globalization movement has won the moral argument about trade and development, but that its positions have not translated into policy. Yet the issue of debt provides one clear instance in which a network of international activists has affected governmental decision making and in so doing has opened real possibilities for human development.

At the same time, with U.S. Treasury Secretary John Snow presenting fresh barriers to progress on full cancellation and with advocates discussing difficulties that will face developing nations even in a post-debt-relief era, a win long in the making is bringing with it a series of new challenges.

The Making of “a Major Issue”

In the early 1990s, debt cancellation was far from the mainstream political agenda. While in the global South a discussion that began in the 1980s was raging– condemning an emerging debt situation in which some impoverished countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, were paying more in debt service to advanced, capitalist nations than they were receiving from them in aid–the issue had very little traction in wealthy nations. “There was almost zero awareness” of the debt issue in the U.S. at the time, says Neil Watkins, National Coordinator of Jubilee USA. When a small group of social movement activists, along with government leaders from the developing world, tried to gain a hearing for the issue at the 1995 UN Copenhagen Social Summit, the U.S. impeded discussion. President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister John Major ultimately avoided attending the summit altogether.

Not long after, though, the grassroots work on the issue began to bear fruit. The formation of the Jubilee network in 1997 united a broad spectrum of religious, labor, and nongovernmental organizations into a joint international campaign. In May 1998, Jubilee helped mobilize 50,000 supporters to protest the G7/G8 summit in Birmingham, England. The protests returned in full force at the following year's summit in Cologne, Germany,

where another 50,000 people formed a human chain through the city's streets to represent the "chains of debt."

During the same period, concerned members of religious congregations, in particular, witnessed some gratifying developments. The efforts of Roman Catholics drew notice when, in 1996, the Catholic Bishops of Africa began publicly denouncing debt payments made "at the expense of providing basic healthcare, education, and other social services to the poor in our countries." Bishops from Latin America came forward with similar statements. In November 1998, the late Pope John Paul II, who had shown previous sympathy for the campaign, held up fight against poverty." Demanding immediate action, he asserted "it is the poor who pay the cost of indecision and delay."

Other religious bodies throughout the world came forward to endorse the Jubilee campaign. In the U.S. alone, these included the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Mennonite Church, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Presbyterian Church, and inter-faith groups like the Inter-Religious Task Force on Central America, Church World Service, and the Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean.

By this time policymakers and pundits could no longer afford to ignore the call for debt cancellation. But some went on the attack. Following the Birmingham demonstrations, Andreas Whittam Smith, a columnist with the London Independent, echoed much of elite opinion by calling the Jubilee campaign's goals "laudable," but criticizing its political strategy as "badly conceived." Cautioning against "monstrous accusation" he defended the laborious negotiations about debt taking place at the World Bank and IMF, and he charged that the Jubilee coalition's political action would "be ineffectual... if not counter-productive."

First Victories

In fact, as grassroots efforts to highlight the issue grew, the G7 responded at each stage by grudgingly expanding its limited proposals for debt relief. In 1996, the countries controlling the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank introduced their first Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) plan, designed to offer 42 of the world's most indebted poor nations some relief after six probationary years. Unfortunately, actual cancellation of multilateral debt involved high levels of "conditionality." HIPC required poor countries to implement IMF-advised structural adjustment programs, which often resulted in cuts to health care and social service spending. Moreover, as HIPC progressed it soon became clear that debt relief was coming far too slowly to have any substantial effect.

In 1999, with pressure mounting, the IMF instituted HIPC-2. This plan accelerated the pace of relief, but it kept debt cancellation contingent upon structural adjustment. Moreover, the amounts of debt it canceled still left poor countries with unmanageable burdens. By the end of the year 2000, 22 countries had received some relief from the HIPC initiatives, yet the program on average had canceled only one third of each

country's debt – hardly an adequate solution to the crisis, especially for impoverished nations that had more than paid off their original loans, but still owed massive debts. As the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's 2004 report on Africa explained, “the continent received some \$540 billion in loans and paid back some \$550 billion in principal and interest between 1970 and 2002. Yet Africa remained with a debt stock of \$295 billion.” The report concluded that the continuation of exploitative interest payments constituted “a reverse transfer of resources” from poor to wealthy countries.

Perhaps a more important victory came in September 1999, when President Clinton responded to intensive lobbying by announcing that the U.S. would cancel 100% of the bilateral debts owed it by the HIPC nations. Two months later, the UK put forward a similar plan for bilateral debt cancellation; other creditor nations, such as Germany, France, and Japan soon followed suit. The governments' actions marked a critical milestone. At the same time, in dollar terms, the total cost of this U.S. bilateral debt relief was estimated at \$330 million, while totals for debt owed by poor countries to multilateral creditor institutions, such as the IMF and World Bank, were estimated in the hundreds of billions.

In 2000, Jubilee activists were also instrumental in pressuring Congress to pass legislation requiring U.S. representatives to the World Bank and IMF to oppose any project that charges end-user fees for basic healthcare and education services. Because of the influence the U.S. wields within these institutions, this measure dramatically curtailed the use of user fees, especially in education. As Robert Weissman wrote in a September 2003 Washington Post op-ed, 1.5 million more Tanzanian children were able to start school as a result of the 2000 victory. HIPC itself, with all its limitations, also had an important impact. Because the program did provide some debt relief, it began establishing a track record for what cancellation could accomplish. Critics had regularly charged (and some continue to believe) that money from debt cancellation would be mismanaged and would not be used to reduce poverty. In fact, HIPC demonstrated that cancellation could be a most effective form of foreign aid, allowing developing countries to retain and make use of their own resources. By 2004, HIPC had advanced some measure of relief to 27 countries. A 2004 report from the World Bank showed that together these countries nearly doubled their total spending on poverty reduction – including education, healthcare, and clean water – in the period from 1999 to 2004.

Iraq's “Unjust Burden”

A final turn in U.S. policy came in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq, when the Bush administration appealed to creditor nations to forgive Iraq's estimated \$120 billion debt. Long-time advocates of debt cancellation unexpectedly heard their arguments adopted by the president. In December 2003, as he was sending former Secretary of State James Baker on a special mission to lobby allies to cancel Iraq's debt, George W. Bush argued that such debt endangered the country's “long-term prospects for political health and economic prosperity,” and that the world must not allow the financial obligations to “unjustly burden a struggling nation at its moment of hope and promise.”

By extension, the administration's stance on Iraq's debt put the U.S. on the record in favor of debt relief for a wide range of struggling countries. Yet even before this shift, calls for cancellation had become increasingly mainstream. A most visible example of the issue's popularity was then-U.S. Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill's highly publicized May 2002 tour of debt-stricken African nations with Bono, the rock star turned humanitarian. A notable bloc of conservatives, led by economist Allan Meltzer, also defended the economic soundness of debt cancellation, arguing that a scaled-back World Bank should extract itself from the hopeless cycle of debt re-lending and refinancing. Meltzer's position has been influential within the Bush administration.

With even the U.S. government on board, the moral legitimacy of debt cancellation had been almost universally acknowledged; what remained was for policy to catch up. Observers were hopeful this would happen at an October 2004 meeting of G7 finance ministers in Washington, DC. Disagreements over details of a debt plan kept anything concrete from being completed at that time, however. G7 ministers came closer to an agreement when they met again in early February in London. In the wake of the tsunami disaster in Asia, the wealthy countries issued a statement agreeing in principle to "as much as 100% multilateral debt relief" for the 42 HIPC nations. Their stance in support of full cancellation marked another milestone for the Jubilee movement, but it left many practical questions unanswered.

The G7's Current Debate

Currently, there remain several key disagreements between U.S. and the European countries, led by the UK, about how a new debt plan should go forward. These issues will be on the table at July's G7/G8 summit in Scotland.

A first issue concerns how many countries will receive cancellation. The UK proposal, while theoretically open to all HIPC nations, would only offer immediate relief to the 15 countries that have completed a mandated program of economic reforms, along with five or six other non-HIPC countries who receive poverty reduction support from the World Bank. The U.S. plan, while less concrete, would likely grant relief to 27 HIPC countries, but not to poor nations outside of HIPC's purview.

Activists have criticized the fact that not all the leading proposals actually cancel these countries' debts. The UK proposal would make debt service payments on behalf of poor countries over a period of ten years, after which developing countries would still be responsible for the original debt stock.

Finally, perhaps the most contentious question that finance ministers are now debating pertains to how the program, whatever its scope, will be financed. The UK has proposed that debt relief be financed primarily through a sale of the IMF's gold reserves. The reserves are widely acknowledged to be undervalued, and a simple revaluation could allow relief to be granted swiftly and painlessly. But the political will required for such a move is not necessarily easy to come by. One reason the White House opposes this approach is that existing laws would require it to gain congressional authorization for

such an action, something it is not eager to do. Instead, the White House contends that funds for debt relief should come out of the budgets for the IMF's and World Bank's poverty reduction initiatives. Its plan would attempt to avoid any major gold revaluation that would require congressional approval. European representatives are opposed to this idea. They argue that a new debt program should include additional aid for poorer nations, and should not simply substitute debt relief for other aid that the countries are now receiving. To finance supplemental aid the British plan calls for increased contributions to the World Bank from its member states.

European complaints about U.S. financing proposals are rooted in a broader political opposition to American unilateralism. In economic foreign policy as in its push for “regime change” in Iraq, the Bush administration has shown a willingness to sidestep international bodies and act alone. In contrast to the Clinton administration, which relied heavily on International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to enact its trade and development agenda, Bush's officers have largely shifted toward using direct aid payments as incentives for poorer countries to comply with U.S. desires and also toward initiating bilateral trade negotiations with nations that they consider strategically important.

In this context, European nations are interested in maintaining the World Bank and other Bretton Woods institutions as multilateral checks on U.S. prerogatives. With regard to debt relief, they are distressed that the U.S. plan will reduce the power of the Bank. They are opposed to suggestions made by Allan Meltzer, and increasingly forwarded by the White House itself, that the World Bank phase out loan-making in favor of giving grants. Absent large loans in its portfolio, the Bank's standing as a major creditor – and thus its influence on development policy – would be significantly diminished.

While European governments are convinced that this would be a bad thing, many critics from across the political spectrum would disagree. Interestingly, this debate has united unilateralist conservatives and long-standing progressive opponents of the IMF and World Bank. Each group favors decreasing the power of the existing IFIs, although for different reasons.

Erecting a new roadblock, Treasury Secretary John Snow announced in late April that the U.S. is unwilling to compromise on the issue of IMF gold sales, removing this option from the negotiating table. This has led to increasing skepticism that the G7 will reach a deal on this institution's debt stock in time for their July meetings in Scotland, and it represents a step backward from previous statements supporting broad relief in the near future. At the same time, an agreement on World Bank debt may still go forward; this step would create a landmark precedent for full cancellation.

A Movement Looks Forward

“As we celebrate our victory, we should remember that we have our work cut out for us,” wrote Watkins to Jubilee USA supporters after the G7’s nod toward 100% relief. In the build-up to and aftermath of the July talks, Jubilee and other advocates of debt cancellation will closely monitor negotiations and will push for several key demands. First, they will lobby to ensure that the plans adopted actually reach the 100% target. The formulas created in upcoming meetings will determine whether full cancellation becomes a reality for many countries or whether it will remain rhetoric for all but a few of the very poorest debtors.

Second, advocates will continue to push for non-HIPC countries to receive cancellation. A number of very poor countries, such as Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Jamaica, and Haiti, are not included in the HIPC process. Some “middle income” countries, such as Brazil and Mexico, have large populations living in desperate poverty, yet are too prosperous to qualify for debt cancellation under the HIPC guidelines. These countries require a new process that would allow them to spend their resources on poverty reduction and human development rather than debt service.

Many of the debts held by these countries were accumulated by dictators or other corrupt leaders; these are “odious” debts. Campaigners have long argued that peoples who overthrow undemocratic governments should not be saddled with debts accumulated by the deposed leaders. (As President Bush argued in the case of Iraq, the future of a people “should not be mortgaged to the enormous burden of debt incurred to enrich” a despot.) Instead, the international community must create a mechanism through which debts can be ruled illegitimate.

Third, activists will demand an end to neoliberal conditionality, working to see that the plan enacted by the G7 does not come with structural adjustment mandates like those included in the HIPC initiatives. Campaigners have rightly expressed concern that proposals such as the UK’s only cancel the debts of poor countries that have completed the HIPC program. In effect, countries would continue to be required to submit to economic restructuring before being granted relief.

Finally, other advocates are moving beyond “historic” debt and working to see that, in a post-cancellation era, new debts do not accumulate anew. In 2004, the IMF and World Bank introduced a Debt Sustainability Framework to address new lending to developing countries. Civil society organizations have welcomed discussion of the new initiative, but they charge that the current proposal would keep negative “conditionality” firmly in place. As proposed, the framework would make the international institutions responsible for rewarding “strong policies” – which in IMF parlance has too often meant structural adjustment and trade liberalization. Given these policies’ poor record of producing growth in many developing countries, it is unclear how perpetuating them would preempt a new debt crisis.

This debate demonstrates that, ultimately, debt is only one aspect of the system of economic neoliberalism – better known in the U.S. as “corporate globalization” – that in the past 30 years has deepened the divide between wealthy countries and the nations of the global South. Even if thoroughgoing debt relief comes to fruition, most developing countries will still face steep barriers to exercising true self-determination and pursuing economic models that are not favored by the U.S. Treasury. Whether through making use of the IMF or directly leveraging their power as major donors and trading partners, G7 countries have often been zealous in promoting programs of economic restructuring similar to those forced on HIPC nations—even among countries that are not heavily indebted.

As neoliberalism falls into increasingly ill repute, and as a greater number of countries escape the bonds of debt, a globalization movement that has attracted many new supporters with its call for debt cancellation will face the task of defending alternative economic courses that defy Washington orthodoxy. In this respect, debt relief will not be an end in itself, but a means of confronting the broader issues that are shaping the course of international development. Long-term challenges need not detract from historic advances, however. If 2005's meetings match expectations for progress, campaigners in the global South and their broad network of allies should be able to savor an important, if incomplete, victory.

** The G7 includes Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United States. Since 1998, the Russian president has also joined the heads of state from the G7 countries at annual summits, creating the G8. However, because Russia is not considered a major economic power or a leading creditor, finance ministers from the G7 nations continue to meet as a distinct group. Decisions about debt cancellation will be determined by the G7 countries, although Russian representatives will be present at meetings like the July summit in Scotland to discuss other matters.*

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UN shines in Tsunami calamity

by Ray Hanania

"If the UN did not exist, as many in Americans would wish, there is no doubt that the level of the suffering and death caused by the Tsunami would certainly be far higher than the toll it has so far claimed."

Why is world suffering often more political than world's conflicts? Could it be that helping the victims of conflict underscores the transgressions of the victors?

For that very reason, no international agency or world body has come under more political criticism than the United Nations. Yet stepping in to assist the victims of cataclysmic tragedy may in fact be the UN's primary mandate.

You don't have to go far in the United States to come across evidence of how much the UN is hated. Anti-UN billboards, slogans and bumper stickers are everywhere. Newspapers are filled with anti-UN rhetoric and the cable TV giants that fire the flames of demagoguery use the UN as timber.

But the Tsunami in South Asia has demonstrated how important the United Nations is to the world, and how political the resentment of Western and wealthy nations like the United States really is.

Whether it is Kosovo, Iraq or Palestine, the UN is there to help as the nation's most equipped to help seem driven more by political agendas.

Americans hate causes they view as unpopular, like the Palestinians, and they view any support of their "enemies" as disloyal and treacherous. None has lingered longer than the tragedy of the Palestinians, caused in part by the manipulation of the UN after its founding by Western nations who favored Israel over justice.

In 1948, while the United States embraced the victor, the UN extended its arms to help the nearly 800,000 civilian refugees forced from homes by Israel's military.

Under a UN partition plan pushed by the West, Israel was offered half the country. But months before Israel declared independence, it attacked and captured 10 major Arab cities located in the proposed "Arab State." Slick propaganda shifted its aggression to resistance.

In the end, Israel not only controlled the half of Palestine it was given, but it also ended up occupying half of the land set aside for the Palestinians, an occupation faded from memories by time.

Tragedy is often the result of politics, and maybe that is why Americas were so slow in giving to help the Tsunami victims.

Or maybe, the real problem is that people in the West just don't care for people in the Third World where suffering is expected.

The Tsunami erupted the day after Christmas near the city of Aceh at the northern tip of Sumatra, Indonesia, expunging hundreds of cities in a dozen countries that hug the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal to the north. The casualties continue to rise to staggering heights, starting at 10,000 on the first day and climbing to nearly 150,000 by weeks' end.

In the Tsunami's wake, only the voice of the UN stood resolute. The response of the world's richest nations seemed stingy. The stingy ratio seemed to correspond to the ratio of wealth and anti-UN attacks.

President Bush finally upped America aide from \$35 million to \$350 million when provoked by France, a nation who gave more but whose per capita wealth can't compare to America's wealth.

And if thoughts of politics seemed remote, Bush formed his own four-nation coalition to disburse its aid.

But the Tsunami response also exposes the hypocrisy of the Arab and Islamic Worlds, nations located in the immediate area of the suffering. It is true that their embrace of the plight of the Palestinians has been as much about justice as it is about partisan politics.

Suffering is as much a political football to them as to America.

Arab American Institute President Jim Zogby, who speaks for the interests of many of these Arab/Islamic World governments, was on CNN on New Year's day politely criticizing the Bush administration.

Much of that criticism is driven by American politics – Zogby is a Democrat and Bush is Republican. But didn't Zogby address the region he is most familiar with questioning the very Arab/Islamic countries that have funded his political agenda over the years?

The Tsunami demonstrates the real reason why the UN is so important to this world. It was mandated with many roles that don't seem to work effectively: arbiter providing neutral observers to monitor cease fires and conflict resolution; and the one world body that is supposed to lead the war against oppression, a mandate that grew out of World War II.

But it's real importance may be its ability to look beyond politics and help the victims of tragedy in a non-partisan manner that rises above the politics motivating reactions from France, the United States and the Arab/Islamic World.

If the UN did not exist, as many in Americans would wish, there is no doubt that the level of the suffering and death caused by the Tsunami would certainly be far higher than the toll it has so far claimed.

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Western hypocrisy in tsunami aid

WE had Shakespeare's "Tempest" at school and the tsunami recalled some lines:

*"Full Fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change into
something rich and strange."*

For weeks after December 26, 2004, the media were splash-painted with nothing but the tsunami and its aftermath. We haven't yet got over it and as the media-barrier lifted a teeny bit, the American Administration packed off two of its prize showboys on a trip to Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and India to sympathise and fold hands. Bush-elder and Clinton must have been stunned.



A girl taking food at a tsunami relief camp in Car Nicobar

Was this hypocrisy and even that quite late in the day? America began with aid for tsunami worth \$15 million when there were loud grumbles from outside and inside the country. The UN coordinator of aid Mr Jan Engelend, a quiet and unassuming man but compassionate called the Western response "stingy" and George W. Bush angrily commented that Engelend was "misguided and ill informed" but the arrow hit its mark because American aid was lifted to \$35 million and then to \$350 million and the two prize-envoys were sent to silence the criticism where even tiny Sweden forked out \$75.5 million.

It was lip curling to hear the elder Bush praise the American administration for doing so much. This was, of course, a former Director of CIA speaking.

The present people round the White House cabinet table know the falsity of American claims and the unpopularity which Bush faced on his recent European trip. A recent survey showed that the American people thought they give about 24% of their GNP to overseas aid when in fact it is a mere 0.14%! George W. Bush had stayed on in his farm at Crawford. Tony Blair had to fly back early from his sunbed in Egypt as political criticism was too strong. Bush launched his Millennium Challenge to give African countries \$5 billion a year – this account has not yet released a single dollar.

Of course, we have already got into the statements of how are the receiving countries distributing the aid, and victims in Indonesia and elsewhere have begun to say that they

have been getting little and would prefer to get it directly than through their governments. It's the speech writers who have on field day: Blair said that Africa has a "tsunami every week".

The sardonic have said that large dollops of money have come from the West and Japan because so many tourists from those countries lost their lives. It is, however, true that there is a near correlation between those environmentally and politically stressed. A few centimeters of rise in the sea level could make some people desperate. A 12-metre tsunami could be disastrous.

The year 2005 in the century year of Albert Einstein's most productive year. But to think that growing and better technology would solve problems like the possibility of an underwater earthquake is simply a dream. Nor is it likely that the rich countries would dip into their pockets to feed the starving three billion people who still exist on less than \$2 a day.

A real enemy is the short memory of people. One can make a 'watertight' case with figures but the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse still keep riding through our poor lands. Who remembers the Iranian city Bam that was totally destroyed by earthquake? \$1.1 billion was pledged for the rebuilding but only \$17.5 million was sent.

Africa today is 25% poorer than at the time of the first Live Aid 20 years ago. Every now and again one of the G8 countries come up with a new Commission for Africa or of total debt discharge. But poverty drags on and even the poor take little notice of the renegeing on promises. All the corals and pearls of the ocean-deep will not compensate for the human loss that South and South-east Asia have encountered.

But all this statistical sermonising is of no use if the so-called coalition of the willing really remains a coalition of the killing. The Americans dead in Iraq are over 1300, the British are not clearly known.

The number of Iraqis killed might run into hundreds of thousands. To expect the killers to have a great deal of compassion for the Iraq body count is to expect too much. To expect that countries like the US and Britain will accept war to be out of bounds is to expect the impossible.

There will be a lot of semi-sociological writing about tsunami in foreign newspapers and books. Though the devastated areas are our neighbors, Indian reporting has been spasmodic. Inmates of Auschwitz say that the daily killings there equaled that of tsunami.

This is unbelievable except that the concentration camp killings went on and on. But still one reads or watches with stomach-turning the car bomb explosions that took out almost 120 people a few score miles out of Baghdad.

Coral Reef Management after the Tsunami

1. Introduction

The Andaman Sea is one of the special places around the world that are the most important areas for nature conservation on our planet. Within the Andaman Sea, in India, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands; and in Myanmar parts of the Arakan Coast and Islands, as well as the Mergui Archipelago, are key areas. In Thailand, a 12,000sq.km block including a 200km stretch of the Andaman coast from Ranong to Northern Phuket and extending 60km out to sea includes the Similan Islands, the Surin Islands and Phra Thong Island. This part of Thailand is important for the conservation of some of the world's most diverse coral reef ecosystems, home to at least 600 species of coral reef fish in 22 families; and for the conservation of 4 species of marine turtle. In addition this area contributes significantly to the Thai economy through tourism activities, including such world famous dive sites such as Richelieu Rock, renowned for its whale sharks, as well as many others.

2. Impacts of the Tsunami on Coral Reefs in Thailand and Myanmar

The Tsunami has been a terrible tragedy for all those involved, and a shock for people all over the world. Although we must be careful not to appear cruel and insensitive, from an environmental perspective, the Tsunami has provided Thailand with a golden opportunity – a second chance to start all over again with tourism development and try to do it better. While those who have lost loved ones may find this hard to accept, there may be some small amount of comfort in the thought that these deaths may not have been completely in vain, if the rebuilding of coastal tourism in Thailand is achieved in a more sensitive and equitable manner, which over the longer term provides a better quality of life and more sustainable fishing and tourism based livelihoods for local people, and a better tourism experience for their surviving relatives for generations to come. As tourism in the Andaman Sea relies on healthy marine ecosystems such as coral reefs, an important first step is to assess the actual damage to coral reefs caused by the Tsunami, and decide what action needs to be taken as a response.

There are two major sources of information regarding Tsunami impacts on coral reefs in the Andaman Sea of Thailand and some neighbouring parts of Myanmar. The first is a set of informal surveys conducted by some members of the Dive Operators Club of Thailand. (DOCT) The second is a set of formal surveys conducted by academics from 8 educational institutes, involving over 100 researchers and 120 divers, coordinated by the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR). Although the methods used and level of detail differs, the results from both sets of information show a high level of similarity.

2.1 DOCT- Phuket Survey

An ad hoc assessment was conducted by dive operators from the Dive Operators Club Thailand – Phuket, and the private sector. It used established dive-masters to estimate damage done to recognised dive sites. The areas surveyed were in the world-renowned Surin and Similan archipelago, and those in the south of Phangnga Bay, the sites closest to Phuket. The great benefit of this method is that the survey teams were day-in day-out familiar with the sites. The drawback is that the methodology was neither standardised nor rigorous; and the baselines, being only memories, are open to variation and interpretation. The survey boats involved included - The Junk, Sea Bees, Colona, and Sea King, with additional information from the Ocean Rover, a live-aboard dive boat operating in the Mergui Archipelago.

Damage was divided into 3 categories, as a percentage of coral cover damaged

Slight: (0-33%)
Moderate: (34-66%)
Heavy: (67-100%)

Of 70 sites surveyed (a fairly comprehensive list of the Thai dive sites commonly visited from Phuket) 51 (73%) were found to have suffered “slight” damage, with more than half of these (27 sites) having no or minimal (10% or less) damage.

A further 6 sites (8%) suffered “moderate” damage, while 13 sites (19%) were found to have suffered “heavy” damage.

2.2 Department of Marine and Coastal Resources Rapid Assessment

A rapid survey was conducted from 30 December 2004 to 15 January 2005 by a team of 100 researchers and technicians drawn from 8 educational institutes, supported by 120 volunteer divers, and coordinated by the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources. The survey included 324 spot checks, and results from 174 validated representative sites were used for analysis. All researchers used the same standardized methodology that has been jointly developed and promoted by the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), the International Society for Reef Studies (ISRS) and the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN)

While this set of surveys had the advantage of standardized methodology, one drawback is that it didn’t require prior familiarity with the sites being assessed. Potentially this can cause inaccuracies if for example surveyors cannot tell if a coral was killed by the Tsunami, or before the Tsunami by a previous coral bleaching event.

Damage was divided into 5 categories

0% No damage
01-10% Very Low Damage

11-30% Low Damage
31-50% Medium Damage
50% High Damage

Of the 174 representative sites, 40% showed no impact; 21% very low impact, 17% low impact, 9% medium impact and 13% high impact.

In general there was limited impact on coral reefs in Phang-nga, Phuket, Satun, Trang and Krabi Provinces, (except for at Phi Phi Islands in Krabi). The 13% of coral reefs which suffered high impact (over 50% damage) were concentrated in Ranong Province, the Surin Islands, Similan Islands and Phi Phi Islands.

3. Discussion And Analysis:

Although the two surveys defined damage categories using different percentage intervals, there is close correspondence between the results. If the medium and heavy damage categories of the DMCR survey are combined then 22% of sites (N=174) suffered over 31% damage. If the moderate and heavy categories of the DOCT survey are combined, then 27% of sites (N=70) suffered over 34% damage. A margin of error of at least +/- 5-10% in both sets of surveys could easily be expected.

With specific reference to well-known dive sites we can see that most were not significantly damaged and are still dive-able, whereas a small number of sites may need to be closed temporarily to allow recovery.

Tsunami Impacts on well-known dive sites

Surin Islands: some of the shallow hard coral fringe reefs show damage Ao Chong Kad, and sites in the deep straits between Ao Pak KAAD and Torinla Island suffered the most extensive damage, with Ao Pak KAAD and the shallow corals of Torinla Island suffering medium levels of impact.

Similan Islands: Damage appears to be limited to the shallow part of some fringe reefs. A few of the rock formations had soft coral removed by the wild current. Highly popular dive sites such as Fantasea Reef, Sunset Point at Similan Island 4; Deep Six, West of Eden and Pusa Rock at Similan Island 7; North Point and Breakfast Bent at Similan

Island 9 are in fine shape. However the China Wall site on the Southeast of Similan 4 and Snapper Alley on Similan 9 suffered the worst damage.

Ko Tachai: Some damage in the shallows. Twin Peaks undamaged. **Ko Bon:** Minimal damage to The Ridge. **Shark Point and Hin Daeng:** unaffected. **Richelieu Rock:** No damage but the strong current moved some of the rubble at the base of the rock

The Mergui Archipelago in Myanmar was largely unaffected. Ocean Rover was there when the tsunami hit Phuket and did not experience any large waves, only "weird" currents. **The Burma Banks:** No damage.

3.1 Some specific points to note:

- Overall reef damage is considerably less than might be expected and was initially reported (given the coastal damage).
- As on land, significant damage is extremely localized.
- Exposed shallow fringing reefs suffered most (as one might expect).
- Coral with delicate and intricate structures (such as gorgonian fans) were most susceptible to impact (as one might expect)
- Damage otherwise followed no obviously discernable pattern, often being counter-intuitive (e.g. at the North end of the Similans despite the wave coming from the South West).
- Similan Island 9, Surin Island and Phi Phi island suffered most of the serious damage.

Interestingly, of the few severely damaged sites, several are at depth. For example an aggregation of rubble at the base of a seamount that is otherwise unscathed. This suggests the possibility that there is additional damage along the seabed in places that cannot be surveyed (because they are too deep for normal diving)

Fish and other life appears generally unscathed, apart from benthic (bottom dwelling) organisms that have disappeared along with the fine sand, exposing rubble. A DMCR survey of approximately 70% of the total 80 sq.km of seagrass beds along the Andaman Coast revealed generally less than 5% damage.

4. The Need for Management and Protection of Coral Reefs

It is clear that coral reefs in the Andaman Sea in Thailand were already significantly damaged before the Tsunami (see table below). In this context the additional overall damage caused by the Tsunami is actually quite small. Indeed some have gone as far as to say that generally, the tsunami event may prove to be a positive thing for the health of

the reef systems as a whole, (just as in the right circumstances forest fires can play an important role in reinvigorating the forest ecosystem by allowing a spurt of fresh growth).

This is in contrast to the ongoing daily damage that occurs from pollution, global warming, habitat destruction, damaging fishing practices, and over-fishing. These insidious dangers are in fact the real issues that need to be addressed so as to maintain the health of the reef ecosystems that so many local livelihoods in both the tourism and fisheries sectors depend. For the specific sites significantly damaged by the Tsunami (such as parts of Surin, Similan and Phi Phi Islands) it is clear that recovery will not be successful if these other pressures are not completely removed from these areas. It is therefore important to consider not only the need to rehabilitate the damage caused by the Tsunami, but more importantly to consider the overall needs for improving coral reef management in Thailand.

Relative Health of Andaman Coral Reefs before the Tsunami					
Province	Very Good	Good	Moderate	Deteriorated	Severly Deteriorated
Ranong	1.5	7.6	36.4	37.9	16.6
Phang-nga	1.8	5.4	28.2	29.9	34.7
Phuket	2.0	7.7	23.6	35.0	31.7
Krabi	3.5	13.5	49.6	23.2	10.2
Trang	5.0	26.9	28.1	16.9	23.1
Satun	10.7	19.2	36.2	18.8	15.1

Source: Fisheries Department

5. Spotlight on the Surin Islands

Recently I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to visit the Surin Islands in December just a couple of weeks after they re-opened for tourism and just a couple of weeks before the Tsunami struck (the islands are closed from May-November each year because of bad weather and rough seas making tourism too dangerous)

A fast speed-boat seating 35 passengers made the bumpy 60km crossing from the pier at Kuraburi to the Surin Islands in just over an hour, passing along the way a number of live-aboard dive boats around the world-famous site Richelieu Rock, undoubtedly searching for the whale sharks for which it is renowned.

Wet, salty and wind-swept, those of us who had endured sitting at the front of the boat were rewarded by the first view of the pristine white sands and exquisite turquoise waters of the Surin Islands. The Surin Islands group actually consists of 5 islands but Surin North and Surin South are the two largest amongst the group. The Marine National Park Head Quarters is located at “Chong Kad” bay, on the North Island. Accommodation (bungalows or tents) managed by the National Park, was available here and at one other site “Mai Ngam” Bay a 40 minute walk away along the nature trail.

The only other infrastructure on the islands at that time were two small simple Moken Sea Gypsy villages, a Fisheries Department Protection Office (seemingly staffed by a

single daily-paid worker) and a school originally built by the Fisheries Department, but sadly in disrepair, with a single assistant teacher about to leave after a two-year stay on the island, and not knowing when (or if) her replacement will arrive.

The Moken People are an indigenous community inhabiting the Andaman Sea. They traditionally spent much of their time living in their house-boats, traveling between the Mergui Islands of Myanmar and the Surin, Similan and other Islands in Thailand, building houses on shore only during the stormy season when the sea is too rough. Their rich folklore and traditions are inherently interlinked with the ecology of the area. In recent decades, both conflict in Myanmar, and the creation of Marine National parks in Thailand have made life more complicated for the Moken. Now the communities on the Surin Islands appear to be living a more settled lifestyle. Many are employed by the National Park (albeit mostly for menial labour tasks) but unfortunately many of them spend most of their wages on alcohol, and alcohol abuse is becoming a growing problem for the Moken.

Apart from the idyllic beaches and blissful tranquility, the undoubted highlight of the Surin Islands has always been the snorkeling, with at least 10 spectacular sites to choose from around the islands, and visibility of 40m making for an extremely rewarding experience, well worth the effort needed to get to the islands! Long-tail boats have always been available for rent, many driven by local Moken people who have intimate knowledge of the islands. Another impressive aspect of the management of the park before the Tsunami was the large number of mooring buoys available for boats at all locations, meaning that no boats needed to damage coral by anchoring. On one morning alone, my companions and I snorkeled at three separate locations – Ao Suthep where we saw some of the most magnificent coral available anywhere; Koh Khai where we saw three hawksbill turtles, and the area between Ao Pakaad and Ao Tao where we saw three black-tipped reef sharks – not a bad tally for one morning, but apparently this was the “norm” rather than the exception!

Coral Status in Surin Islands

In the Surin MPA, stony coral communities have remained relatively unchanged over the last 5 years, except as Laem Mae Yai, where diversity of coral recruits, including soft corals *Lobophyton* and *Sacrophyton* has been observed, after a severe coral bleaching event in the last decade.

Soft coral *Dendronephthya* one of the dominant species in the past disappeared after the coral bleaching event of 1988, and now recruits of *Stereonephthya* are abundant. Large colonies of *Supergorgia* were damaged by diseases in the last 2-3 years. The biggest colony at Lamer Mae Yai was partly damaged but still in relatively good condition. Reef fish monitoring shows continued high diversity and abundance. There is also a high diversity of reef crabs and shrimps

Source: 'Assessment of Conservation and Management of Coral Reefs in Thailand' commissioned by WWF/WFT and implemented by Marine Biodiversity Research Group, Ramkhamhaeng University

On a normal week-day in season the islands probably used to receive less than 100 visitors and on a normal week-end probably several hundred. On a long week-end such as when I visited, including as it did His Majesty the King's Birthday, the total number of visitors was around 7-800. However despite the number of visitors the overall impression was that the Park was well-run and orderly. Waste management was exemplary, with sorting of waste, composting of organic matter and transport of glass and plastic, etc back to the mainland by boat every two weeks or so. "Lights out" was at 10.p.m. and the noise pollution associated with so many camp sites in Thailand seemed relatively minimal on Surin Islands. In terms of visitor services perhaps the only thing that could have been improved on was the rather complex arrangements for ordering meals, and the rather unhelpful unsmiling service of the girls behind the counter (who were probably overworked and exhausted).

Being so far away from the mainland means that life is always a little bit unpredictable. On the day of our intended departure strong winds and high waves that developed late in the afternoon, meant that it was impossible for us to leave the islands. Stranded along with us were a large number of "day-trippers" from hotels in the Khao Lak area, (at that time a burgeoning new tourist destination on the Andaman coast, which tragically bore the greatest impact of the Tsunami) Once again this situation highlighted how well-managed the park was, with their ability to respond to this situation and provide accommodation and meals for all the unexpected overnight guests. What everyone was wondering was how long we would be stranded in paradise for? Some tourists were of course concerned about their flights back to Europe.

We were told to be ready to leave at 6:30 a.m. the next morning as it was expected that the sea would be calmer in the early morning. Sure enough, by 6a.m. an expectant crowd was gathered on the beach, bleary eyed and wishing that the coffee-shop was already opened. We departed in a convoy of four speed-boats at exactly 6:30 a.m. and arrived back in Kuraburi shortly after 8.a.m. for a welcome cup of coffee before the two hour drive to Phuket Airport and a flight back to Bangkok.

Luckily there was no loss of life as a result of the Tsunami, on Surin Islands. However there was extensive damage to the parks infrastructure (estimated at around \$500,000) and more importantly significant damage to the coral reefs. Results from the DMCR survey show that of 21 sites assessed in the Surin Islands 12 suffered low/very low damage while 5 suffered medium damage and 4 suffered high damage. Ao Chong Kad, and sites in the deep straits between Ao Pak Kaad and Torinla Island suffered the most extensive damage, with Ao Pak Kaad and the shallow corals of Torinal Island suffering medium levels of impact.

6. Conclusion and Next Steps

Most coral reefs in the Andaman Sea in Thailand (and most of those that were significantly damaged by the Tsunami) are within Marine National Parks. WWF Thailand believes that the most important issue for improved management is putting in places the correct institutional structures and processes to ensure effective management. In particular this requires the establishment of local site committees with adequate stakeholder representation, as well as participatory management planning processes.

Legal reform is also required. A recent review commissioned by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) concluded that a number of existing laws need to be revised because they are not in line with the spirit of the Constitution and the Decentralisation Act that provides for the rights and responsibilities of local communities in natural resource management. Amongst the problematic laws identified, was the National Parks Act (1961) the main legal instrument used in management of marine National Parks. Improved protection and management of coral reefs in Thailand's Marine National Parks will also require the cooperation of the private sector – particularly the dive industry. Diver Operators and individual divers have a clear role to play in

- Adhering to codes of conduct and “best practice” standards for dive tourism
- Preventing illegal trade in souvenirs and other products of marine species (such as corals, giant clams, sea horses and turtle shell products, etc)
- Acting as “watchdogs” and reporting any illegal activities in Marine Parks
- Informing and educating others about the importance and values of healthy coral reefs and why they should be conserved
- Supporting the call for appropriate legal policy and institutional reforms necessary to improve coral reef protection and management

The Department of Marine and Coastal Resources should follow through with its plan to conduct more detailed assessments of severely impacted reefs, and to conduct long-term monitoring of recovery. They should also experiment with and evaluate the effectiveness

of different rehabilitation techniques at demonstration sites; conduct carrying capacity studies, implement zoning systems, improve coral reef mapping and reef topographic mapping for important dive sites, as well as conducting a programme of mooring buoy installation.

Only when all of these measures are put in place will all of the corals damaged by the Tsunami have an opportunity to recover. More importantly such measures will ensure that all Thailand's remaining coral reefs will be in the best condition they possibly can be when they are faced with the next big bleaching event that will occur with the next El Nino or as sea temperatures rise with global warming. We need to do our best now, to ensure that Thailand's coral reefs. Can meet their next big impact in as strong a condition as possible and hopefully survive. It is not a question of "if" but of "when" this will happen.

Robert Mather, 14 February 2005

Beyond Sudan and the Tsunami: Aid Shortfalls Threaten Emergency Response Efforts

Refugees International Michelle Brown and Keegan Kautzky 202.828.0110
29 April 2005

As the 60-nation Oslo donor conference for Sudan concluded two weeks ago, the success of the meetings underscored an alarming disparity among international humanitarian response efforts. While the Sudan and the tsunami-affected countries are receiving strong financial support, the response to most humanitarian crises around the world remains severely under-funded and neglected.

Far exceeding the initial aid request of \$3.6 billion for emergency relief and recovery efforts, donors have now pledged an impressive \$4.5 billion to Sudan for 2005 to 2007. Even more remarkable has been the response of the international community and donor governments to the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami. With more than \$2 billion already committed, the international community has pledged \$6.7 billion in aid to the tsunami-affected countries.

The United Nations Consolidated Appeal for 2005, developed prior to the December 26 tsunami, requested \$1.7 billion in aid to provide basic survival and protection services to an estimated 26 million people in 14 targeted emergencies around the world. While the Appeal for all humanitarian emergencies, including the tsunami, is currently 36% funded, the severe shortfall for most emergencies is hidden by the magnitude of aid directed to Sudan and the tsunami response. Absent the response to those two appeals, only 9% of

the requested funds had been committed for all other emergency appeals in the first quarter of 2005, nearly 25% lower than funding levels for all appeals one year ago.

While the full effect of the global humanitarian response to the Indian Ocean tsunami will not be known for some time, widespread concern that personnel, resources and international aid have been diverted from other crises now appears to be justified. On a recent mission to assess the condition of Sudanese refugees fleeing violence in Darfur, Refugees International found that vital personnel had been removed from short-staffed refugee camps in Chad in order to assist the oversubscribed relief efforts in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. Crucial to the protection and assistance needs of the displaced and vulnerable, the loss of scarce protection officers, nutrition specialists, psychosocial counselors, water and sanitation consultants, and medical staff significantly threatens the welfare of these refugees and all afflicted populations that lost personnel and services as a result of the tsunami response.

Despite repeated guarantees from donors that pledges to tsunami relief were made above-and-beyond prior commitments, national legislative restrictions and capped budgets may have forced some governments to divert funds intended for other emergencies in order to fulfill their highly-publicized obligations. Although a shortterm fiscal measure, the diversion of funds has deprived the international response to other humanitarian crises.

To bolster the international community's ability to respond effectively to complex emergencies, the United Nations established the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) following the 1991 Gulf War. The CAP effectively brings together, UN agencies, the Red Cross Movement, NGOs and local authorities to analyze context, assess needs, and plan a prioritized response. Together, the UN and its partners then appeal for funds to provide essential protection and response services to populations affected by a wide range of humanitarian crises, including war and conflict, instability, disease, displacement, famine and natural disaster. The amounts requested in the various Consolidated Appeals are a "bare bones" assessment of funds required to cover the most critical needs of those most affected.

The severity of funding shortfalls is particularly pronounced in individual country appeals. While exact funding data is difficult to access due to institutional delays and failures to publicly report up-to-date pledges and contributions, the shortage of humanitarian assistance to certain countries is clear. As of today, financial tracking records show the appeals for Somalia and the Central African Republic have garnered only 4% of the humanitarian assistance needed to provide basic emergency relief. Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Burundi and Uganda are each severely under-funded at a meager 8%. Chechnya and neighboring republics have reached 13% of their appeal for emergency assistance, while Guinea, West Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are under-funded at 15%, 16% and 16%, respectively. The absence of funding restricts provision of basic services in these countries, specifically affecting food security, education, agriculture, health, water and sanitation, shelter, economic recovery, security and protection efforts.

The funding shortfall for the 2005 Consolidated Appeal is not a new phenomenon. Since 2000 humanitarian funding levels for the Consolidated Appeals have ranged from 52% to 65% of the amount requested.

In order to compensate for these critical shortfalls, new commitments must be made in the second and third quarters of the funding cycle. The impressive global humanitarian response to support the Sudan peace process and provide relief and reconstruction support to communities devastated by the Indian Ocean tsunami must not overshadow the needs of the forgotten millions afflicted by war and natural disaster elsewhere. Progress on one front does not justify losing sight of commitments to others.

A core principle of good donorship, endorsed by the United States and other major aid donors, is that of allocating funding in proportion to needs. Time is short in 2005 for donors to demonstrate this commitment and provide adequate, equitable assistance to the vulnerable in all emergencies. Senior Advocate Michelle Brown is Refugees International's New York Representative. Keegan Kautzky is an intern at RI's Washington headquarters.

Step by Step, Oxfam Helps Rebuild Stronger Communities

3 March, 2005

Building houses and mosques, reuniting families, offering free ferry rides to the market—these are just some of the steps Oxfam is helping people make as they return to normalcy after the December 26 tsunami. They are community-building steps, a way for people to begin weaving the threads of their old lives into the stronger fabric of new ones.

In Leupung, Indonesia, where 700 men camp in tents while they participate in cash-for-work programs to clean the area, Oxfam is building temporary shelters that will allow 165 women to move back and join the men. The agency also plans to build two small mosques that will do double duty as community centers.

For some of the residents of Lampaya, Indonesia, a more settled life is something they can begin to imagine: Early next week, Oxfam will start building the first houses planned for that area.

Many displaced Indonesians are still living in camps scattered across the district of Aceh Besar. Oxfam recently conducted assessments of all the camps in that area. While some agencies have stopped providing sanitation services, Oxfam will continue to provide assistance. The agency is also distributing household and hygiene kits – 125 of each – in three camps in Aceh Besar. The household kits include items such as toothbrushes,

cooking pots, a stove, and plates; the hygiene kits include toothpaste, soap, and shampoo, among other items.

Cash-for-work programs continue in the region as well, and in at least one case the program is beginning to lead into the next phase of recovery. Village leaders and women's representatives from 17 communities participating in the cash-for-work program in Lamno met recently with Oxfam. They discussed community needs and how to draw up an action plan. The plan will include livelihood support once the cash-for-work program is complete.

Some of those livelihoods may get a boost from a ferry that Oxfam has rented to cross a river at Lamno. The tsunami destroyed Lamno's bridges, preventing people from crossing the river to get to the markets and their communities on the other side. People can now ride the Oxfam ferry free of charge.

Looking Ahead at Livelihoods in India

While the fishing industry took a major blow from the tsunami, other industries in India also suffered. Oxfam has conducted agricultural assessments in 12 villages in Cuddalore to gauge the damage the wave caused to farmland. The agency is also considering undertaking a topographical survey in the Nagapattinam district to identify locations suitable for mangroves and other trees. Oxfam is assessing the needs of workers in other fields, too, such as rope makers, shell collectors, shell processors, shell craft workers, and tourism service providers. Meanwhile, the agency has completed cash-for-work projects in 10 villages in the Nagapattinam District and is considering extending the program to four other villages.

Throughout the tsunami response, Oxfam is paying particular attention to the needs of women. For example, in the Kanyakumari District, the agency has made sure that workers install tar sheet screens around the women's toilets to ensure privacy.

Oxfam continues to carry out water and sanitation activities in a number of areas. Two staffers are helping with the construction of 80 toilets and 80 washrooms in Campbell Bay, and a public health team has trained a group of hygiene promoters in the Nagapattinam District.

Shelters, Houses, and a Hall Go Up in Sri Lanka

Building – of all sorts – is underway in Sri Lanka. Oxfam recently completed the construction of 17 transitional shelters in Hambantota, Mataram, and plans to build a communal hall in Killinochchi. Construction on the hall is due to start early this month. And in Trincomalee, an Oxfam partner will help build 150 temporary houses.

In Eachilampathu, Trincomalee, Oxfam is also building semi-permanent latrines – 12 of them – and digging two temporary wells.

Cleanups of various sorts are part of the works, too. Volunteers – 39 women and 4 men – participated in garbage collections in some of the camps in Trincomalee. In Kinniya, Oxfam has been distributing household trash cans and larger garbage cans in some of the camps.

A total of 88 people in Killinochchi cleaned and chlorinated wells and repaired latrine doors and walls in a cash-for-work program. In Matara, 17 women and 15 men are also participating in a cash-for-work program to clear land for 25 houses. In Velloor, Trincomalee, 100 are involved in a similar program to clear debris from house sites. And in Wattawan Village, Batticaloa, 172 people, in a cash-for-work enterprise, have been cleaning compounds and a lagoon.

Cash-for-work programs are the first step. Rebuilding livelihoods comes next, and Oxfam is helping to reestablish the Fisheries Cooperative Society in Killinochchi. The society has played a major role in people's livelihoods, but since the tsunami it has suffered from the lack of proper marketing channels.

Oxfam is also working with UNICEF to reestablish a women's network that was in place in Trincomalee prior to the tsunami.

Three Months On – Community Tourism Takes Shape Observations from Sri Lanka

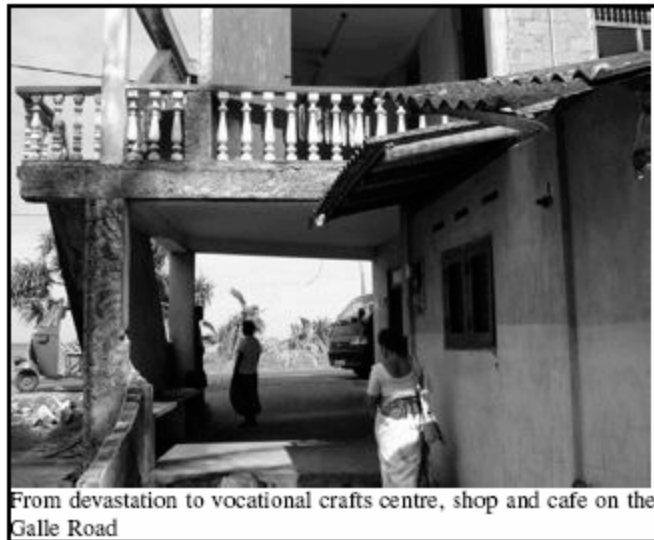
Catherine Leech, Community Tourism Initiative
July 2005

I joined Sarvodaya three months ago as a professional volunteer. I am adjusting to life in Colombo where I am based and really feel that I am living here now, as opposed to passing through. Sri Lankans are joyously friendly with a generous flair for hospitality. The driving has taken some adjustment! It is best described as psychotic – the rules appear to be that there are no rules other than a thinly disguised rule to avoid other vehicles! The language spoken is ‘horn’ – one to four blasts according to your point – the ‘I am passing you’ horn, the ‘I have seen you’ horn, the ‘don’t even think about it’ horn and the blood-curdling ‘one of us has to blink first and it isn’t going to be me’ horn – it works, bizarrely!

I am a travel and tourism expert from the UK and I recently gave up my job as Managing Director of a luxury travel company in London in order to do voluntary work overseas. I view it as the very best possible outcome of this decision that I now find myself working for Sarvodaya to establish its first ever Community Tourism Initiative (CTI).

The objective of the CTI is to enhance sustainably the income and value of Sarvodaya and its village communities at grassroots level by sharing its natural resources, village culture and vision with paying visitors from home and overseas who seek meaningful and enlightening experiences. It is a first principle that all income will devolve directly to the community.

The experiences offered will range from simple home stays in village communities, farm visits, meditation retreats and *Shramadana camps for ‘voluntourists’ to the development of an eco-hotel, a handicrafts vocational centre, an agricultural museum and an environmental resource centre. The projects are located in Sarvodaya villages and sites throughout Sri Lanka, some in the Tsunami belt and some in the rural areas. *Shramadana Camps are village community gatherings where an entire village and any willing visitors work collectively over an intense 2 or 3 day period to build, repair, landscape or whatever is needed. It might be a preschool building, a water well, a repair to a reservoir or a community building for example. Visitors will be asked to make a



contribution to participate and stay in a local home or one of our dormitory facilities knowing that their efforts and income are being directly beneficial to that community.



Discussing project ideas with a women's group in Mirissa, close to Matara

Within a week of arriving, I had an unforgettable day in the east at a stone-laying ceremony in Vaddavan – see <http://www.sarvodaya.org/2005/04/29/a-lesson-in-community-spirit-and-cooperation/>. This was my first face-to-face experience of post-Tsunami Sri Lanka and I remember being overwhelmed by the sheer dignity and bravery of the people I met and faces which greeted me.

Since then, I have travelled extensively, viewing various potential project sites, meeting with the village and district leaders and learning as much as I can about both the philosophy and reach of Sarvodaya and about Sri Lanka's tourism industry and product.

We are now over six months on from the Tsunami tragedy and, whilst my work is not restricted to the Tsunami belt, there are a number of projects in the affected areas. This has brought me in to direct contact with a number of individuals and village communities who have been tragically impacted by the Tsunami. It feels desperately harrowing one moment, uplifting the next. I am not a trained aid worker and have never before been in a situation such as this – there are times when I feel totally unqualified to help but find tremendous support from the Sarvodaya team who are simply outstanding and who understand how to deal with disaster recovery. And there are times when I feel so encouraged and energised to see that the Community Tourism Initiative can really help improve people's lives in so many cases.

Some people I came across are still literally waiting for aid to come and make their lives better – many are homeless, bereaved or both and six months is actually not very long for someone trying to cope with such total devastation in their lives.

Smiles were never in short supply but I found little sense of 'can do' and entrepreneurial spirit – maybe it was there and was washed away by the Tsunami or perhaps Sri Lanka suffers



Meditation retreats at Vishva Niketan, close to Colombo city centre

now from many years of dependency on foreign aid.

It is in this, the all-important issue of self-empowerment and self-governance that I stand in amazement and awe at the goals and achievements of Sarvodaya wherein all work is designed to engender self-reliance. This sense of ownership and pride is much needed and will be the most effective tool for the many thousands of Sri Lankans who need to rebuild their lives.



Kabithigollava – a potential agricultural museum

My challenge is to work with communities to develop projects which are going to be sustainable, employment generating, community involving and culturally sensitive. The last thing we want to do is to *impose* anything on a community and so the best I can do is to give ideas and encourage local discussion to ensure there is 100% buy-in. We now have teams in various communities developing project ideas to ensure they will work for them and my next task is to help those communities to bring the projects to fruition. Some require external

funding, some do not but all will deliver immediate and long-term benefits to the communities which are desperately needed.

On a lighter note, there have been moments of high comedy – my favourite is this: I needed an interpreter during a meeting with **Jay**, a Tamil speaker in the north east. The interpreter, nudging 75 or so, had learned his English from the British army when they were stationed at Trincomalee so lots of ‘jolly good show’ and ‘would you like a cup of tea’ punctuated the day. I asked my questions but the interpreter himself promptly answered them with no reference to **Jay** - I asked him to please ask **Jay** to which the answer was ‘he is agreeing with me’. We got there in the end and finished the day as firm friends – but he saved the best until last when **Jay** wrapped up the meeting by speaking passionately and eloquently in Tamil for about 10 minutes – I turned to the interpreter for the translation, expecting a long-winded rendition only to be told ‘**Jay** is agreeing with me and is very happy’. I gave up! One thing is for sure – Tsunami or no Tsunami, this island nation boasts some of the world’s most breathtaking experiences, sights and sounds – it is such a cliché but there really is something for everyone from beaches to rainforest hikes, ancient Buddhist temples to leopard safaris, elephant orphanages to kayaking, simple lodges to sophisticated boutique hotels. We will post more details of the CTI projects once they are up and running – *in the meantime, anyone wanting to make a donation to the Community Tourism Initiative please drop us a line!*

Catherine Leech, Community Tourism Initiative
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July 2005

Thailand 6 Months After

Posted July 1 2005

The Thai grassroots networks and supporters have been very active over past months establishing rehabilitation processes for housing, employment, education and welfare. However in many instances LAND disputes persist. A total of 412 villages in Southern Thailand were affected by the tsunami. After the tsunami, about 15,000 people in 25 villages found their ownership rights erased or redrawn. Many became homeless living in temporary shelters in Phang Nga and Phuket.

There are still thousands of unsatisfied villagers, says Maitree Jongkrajug, a resident of the hard hit fishing village of Ban Nam Khem in Khao Lak. Many of the unresolved cases – affecting some 7,000 villagers in 14 cases – involve disputes with private landowners and these disagreements have so far defied resolution, he said.

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Land Disputes in the 6 Provinces Hit			
	Status / Affected Villages	Families	People
1	Resolved: Villages have no land rights	918	6,185
2	Resolved: Villagers have land rights	284	1440
3	Unresolved: villagers seem to live on state property	1,008	1440
4	Unresolved: villagers assumed to live on private property	10	415
	Total	2,310	14,478

Thailand Tsunami Survivors and Supporters were in Sri Lanka where they shared experiences with other survivors

The Thai team presented some of effects of the Tsunami and statistics for the affected provinces along the west coast of Thailand:

- 5,800 people died
- 2,900 people are missing
- 3,600 house destroyed
- 4,300 boats destroyed
- 412 communities affected

How people organised a grassroots network amongst survivors and supporters.

In the province of Phang Nga (where approximately 2,000 people died), before the tsunami, there was no grassroots community organisation but within one week a network was developed and commenced work on the following:

- In the first 1-3 weeks temporary housing was constructed through the collaboration of government, NGOs, businesses and community organisations.
- An “affected community network” was established.
- The issue of land rights was quickly recognised by the network as a priority concern, with the land either being owned by the public or private sector. Many people decided to return to their old villages to construct permanent houses despite the government saying that this was not permitted.
- Those in the network who didn’t have to deal with the land issue focused on livelihoods. The network began to talk about “repair” groups and livelihood groups to tackle the main problems.
- The people were able to use the community network to deal with government.

In summary the communities made strategic moves to deal with the separate yet linked issues (land, housing, livelihoods etc.) and then by linking the groups together they formed the network. This approach could now be used as a learning example for the other 6 provinces.

It was noted that the land issue is more serious in Thailand and this has led to the strategies of land invasions, building and then negotiations for ownership or land sharing. Households and communities build without government help, and work with architects and planners to construct buildings which are more practical, beautiful and liveable than the public housing

The complexities of the LAND issue

Tung Wa Village

Again the government did not want people to return to the villages. The Thai’s felt the most important step was to organise the people themselves to negotiate with the government. The government was not going to allow them to return, but they did, and they have constructed 17 houses thus far. Money and material for this has come from other sources, not the government, as the community decided not to wait for government assistance. After the land occupation and the media attention, a land sharing agreement was being negotiated

Tabtawan Village

The community has occupied the land for the past 100 years, but after the tsunami a problem arose when a private company claimed ownership of the land. The villagers took refuge in the highlands and

were cut off from information and assistance but have now returned to occupy the land and organise their community.

Nam Khem Village

50 members of this community have already been in the courts fighting for the right to the land they have lived on for generations. This land is presently being fenced off, but people have begun construction of housing regardless

“The 3 Thai presenters come from 3 communities which have different kinds of LAND problems. The land issue in Thailand appears to be much more serious than in Sri Lanka because many have been on public land for a long time and now the government has announced that “you don’t have the right to stay here - you have to go.”

One community had lived on the land for more than 100 years and suddenly – after the tsunami – there appeared a landlord, a private landlord who claimed that he owned the land. In the other community, the Nam Khem community, it is very complex. There is a court case underway. But if community gets involved with the justice system – they are sure they will not get their land, they will lose the land. For these people the strategy is just to invade the land. Hopefully the media and public are still aware of the affected people, and so they have started to build their houses and get publicity. Someone fenced off the land. Even then, people invaded the land and got onto the land on which they had lived before and began to build on it. By building their houses, they are negotiating for the land and now they’ve acquired it.

This third community has obtained a compromise through a land-sharing agreement (i.e. as a group, they agreed to move from some of the land on which they formerly lived and to retain a smaller portion) and they can stay with quite a pleasant and healthy environment. This community will be the centre of the Moken (traditional fisher-folk or the sea gypsies) network, who live in the 6 provinces.

In the case of the Tubtawan community, the network has persuaded the government to set up a committee to discuss their case, and the community is waiting to see how it deals with that: However, while that negotiation is going on, the people never stop building houses. Using the donors’ money, they can manage everything and use volunteers to support their work. It’s not going to stop here because once these few communities start building up, it creates the waves that say that communities can stay on the same land. So the linking of the 6 provinces strengthens the community based movement, through sharing and exchanging.

We do not say this is the way to go – to break the rules of the government - but we think this is the way to get the system acting in a more appropriate way. It provides answers for the government.

In the communities where people are building, we support them with architects and planners to help them plan their areas. In fact the houses they build are very beautiful, and have received a lot of media attention, This is especially so when compared to the government housing box like structures located 5-6 kms away which many people have said look like “pig houses”, not houses for human beings. So the government housing authority starts feeling ashamed because the people houses are more beautiful.”

NOTE: Under Thai law, people can apply for legal title to a plot of land after 10 years of continuous use. In practice, few succeed, and millions of Thais live on what is technically public land. Speculators exploit this ambiguity by bribing officials to backdate land purchases, then accuse villagers of encroaching. Battles over land title are common in Thailand, particularly when tourist dollars are at stake. Before 1930 all land was owned by the King, hence all people lived on "public" land. Some of the fisher folk have lived on the coastal land for more than 100 years.

See *In Thailand, a 'land grab'* –

<http://www.achr.net/000ACHRTsunami/Thailand TS/Thai Extras Tsunami .htm#Thailand>>

Thai Survivors Plans for April - May - June

- To find land for permanent settlements and for those who do have land, establish what their rights are;
- To undertake participatory housing design with specific input from women;
- Continue improving skills & sourcing materials for boat repairs;
- Establish a revolving fund for livelihood development;
- Establish a community welfare fund to provide unconditional loans based on community decisions not funding agency decisions;
- To strengthen the community network so all the affected communities can share experiences and transfer skills;
- Establish an effected migrant workers link and support network as 2,500 died, 7,000 are missing and 1,800 remain in the area and are in need of assistance;
- A warning system is what is necessary to be established as opposed to the setback zones;
- To organise the people to provide co-ordination between donors and the communities.

The first 3 months of stories and reports 'Thailand Tsunami - The First 3 Months' <<http://www.achr.net/000ACHRTsunami/Thailand TS/Thailandmths1to3.htm>>

The **Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)** is a regional ecumenical organization representing 15 National Councils and over 100 Member Churches in Asia. The CCA is a forum of continuing cooperation among the churches and national Christian bodies in Asia within the framework of the wider ecumenical movement. And within the context of deep spirituality and theology, CCA acts as a facilitating agent for dialogue and action on issues of common concern and for the breaking down of barriers that separate and cause division between the peoples of Asia.

Website: www.cca.org.hk

The **Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT)** is a Hong Kong based coalition of regional ecumenical organizations and over seventy secular and faith-based groups. It seeks to unite people around collective efforts that negate the undesirable effects of modern tourism and, in its place, institute socially responsible and ethically oriented tourism. It believes that tourism must be based on justice and sustainability for host communities and that; therefore, tourism planning and practice must be democratized. ECOT advocates respect for the protection and dignity of the human rights of women, children, indigenous peoples and workers in the tourist trade. It opposes tourism projects that create environmental devastation.

Website: www.ecotonline.org

Documentation for Action Groups in Asia (DAGA) was formed in 1973 by the Urban Rural Mission desk of the Christian Conference of Asia to serve ecumenical action groups in the area of information solidarity – by collecting, analyzing and sharing information for action. DAGA envisions a just world in which all peoples, especially the marginalized, participate in decisionmaking processes that affect their lives and livelihood. DAGA is also envisions a world where peace is not the absence of war or violence but rather a product of a community living with justice. One major initiative working towards this vision is the *Center for Just Peace* in Asia

Website: www.daga.org



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