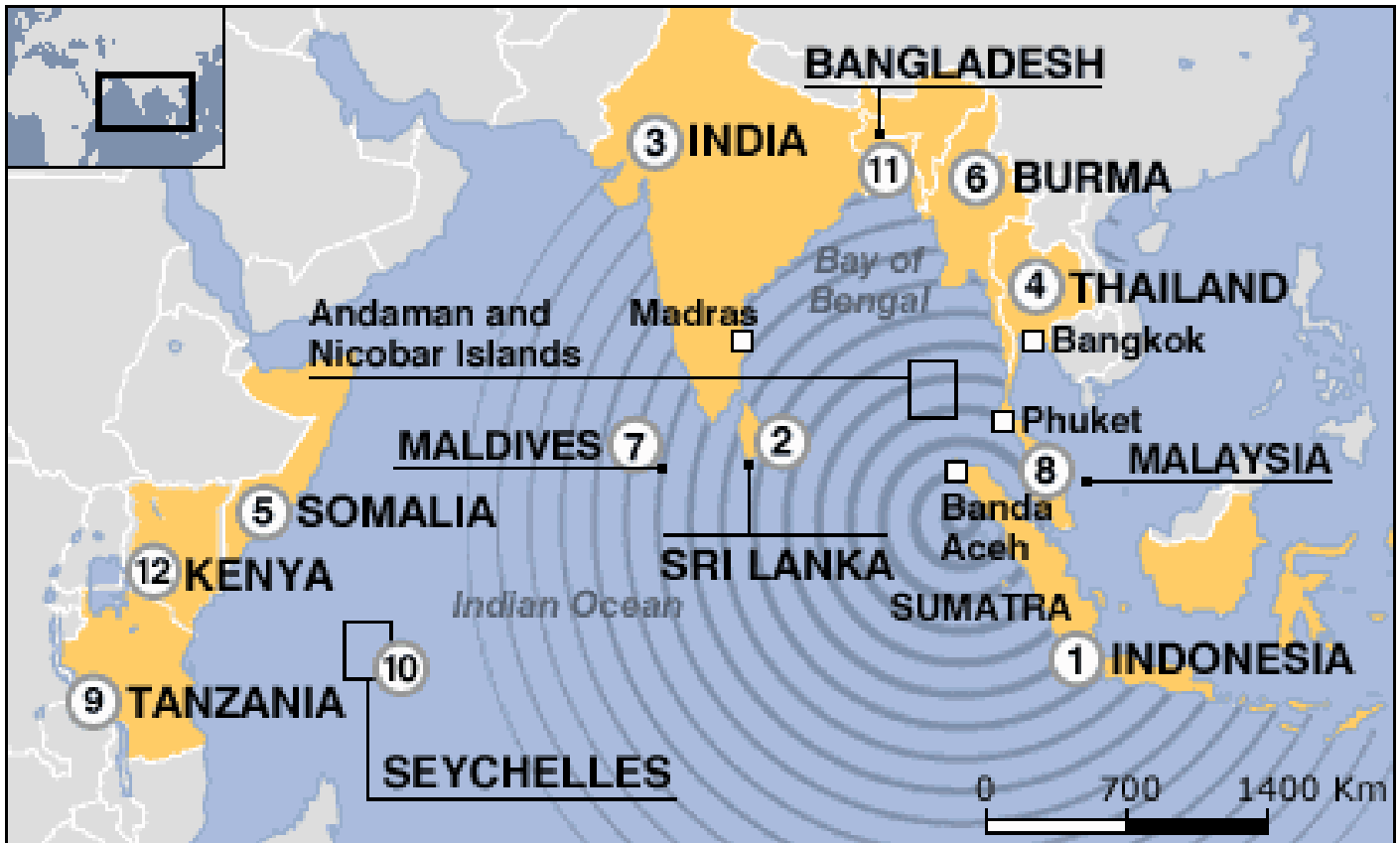


# TSUNAMI TRAGEDY HITS SOUTH

## TRÓCAIRE STUDENT WORKSHEET

The United Nations estimates that the death toll is nearing 150,000, with 500,000 injured and five million lacking basic services. Thus far almost \$3 billion has been pledged worldwide to help victims of this disaster.



### Tsunami devastates coastline of South East Asia

On December 26<sup>th</sup> 2004 an earthquake measuring 8.5 on the Richter scale occurred off the Indonesian island of Sumatra, resulting in a massive tsunami. The tsunami has given rise to enormous human and material destruction across the Bay of Bengal. An estimated 150,000 people are believed to have been killed in over eight countries including India, Indonesia (Aceh), Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Seychelles and Somalia). The worst affected countries are Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India.



Widespread damage to property has left thousands of families displaced.

*Trócaire's Deirdre Ní Cheallaigh writes from Colombo in Sri Lanka:*

Almost one million people have been displaced from their homes in Sri Lanka as a result of the mass destruction caused by the tsunami on December 26 last. A total of 178,886 families are being housed in approximately 750 makeshift camps in temples, churches and schools.

At present, Trócaire in Sri Lanka is very concerned about the issue of shelter and is working with a shelter coordination group to agree housing standards so that they are well built and suitable for the area's climate.

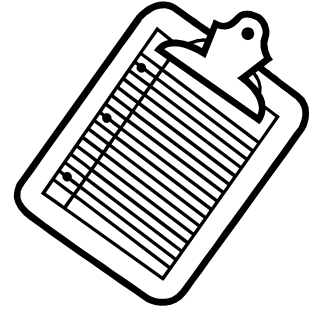
The provision of water purification systems and well cleaning have also been identified as priorities to prevent the spread of disease until the shelter issue can be resolved.

The heartbreak of the families who have lost loved ones and are still desperately trying to find them is apparent when you pick up a local paper. In the 'Daily News' of January 5 a notice appeared seeking information about Wannakula Waduge Upali Fernando (44), his wife Jayani Fernando (41), their son, Udara (10) a student at St. Thomas College and their daughter Udeshika (8) a student in Methodist college, Colombo. "Missing since December 26 when they were travelling to Matara by train," the notice read.



# Tsunamis – what are they?

- Tsunamis are usually caused by underground earthquakes.
- These often occur offshore and start a series of waves that rush outward
- These waves travel very far and very fast - more than 500 miles/hour, or the speed of a jet airplane.
  
- There is no way to stop a Tsunami once set in motion but there are warning systems called SEISMOMETERS. Unfortunately, no such system exists under the Indian Ocean.



## SOME EMERGENCY TRUTHS ...

When a disaster of such a scale occurs the world's attention is focussed on the countries affected. The media transmits images of destruction and chaos. Governments and aid agencies immediately begin to set emergency responses into action.

Examine the statements below with your classmates to decipher some of the truths behind such emergencies.

**1. When a disaster strikes, the most important thing for a relief agency to do is to respond immediately.**

**2. In the immediate aftermath of an emergency and thereafter, most of the hard and dangerous work is done by the local people.**

**5. A disaster of similar nature and size causes the same amount of deaths in poor countries as it does in richer ones.**

**4. 95% of deaths caused by disasters occur in poor countries.**

**3. The best way to help**

One week after the Tsunami hit, almost \$3 billion in aid has been pledged by the world's governments.

But, did you know...

Disaster	Amount pledged	Amount Received
Bam earthquake, Iran, 2003	\$1.1billion	\$17.5 million
Hurricane Mitch, Honduras, 1998	\$2.5 billion	less than one third
US/UK strikes on Afghanistan, 2001	\$700 million	less than half

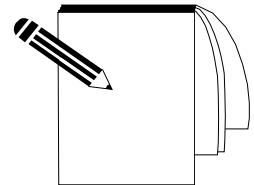
The amount promised is not always the amount received. Large figures can look higher than they actually are. What rich countries end up actually giving is often much less.

In addition, aid money is often diverted from other areas where there is great need to pay for the current work arising from a disaster. The US and UK were accused of directing money from areas such as Central America to pay for their efforts in Iraq. Countries such as Sudan, where thousands have died and millions are at risk, may suffer as aid money does not expand but is merely moved around to deal with the high-profile Asia disaster.



Why not track through the media who is pledging what.  
 What is the Irish government doing?  
 What is the UN doing?  
 Why not follow the papers in the weeks and months to come.  
 Are the journalists still talking about South East Asia?  
 Have all the problems been solved?

## Take Action!



Trócaire has called on the Irish government to use its influence abroad to ensure that all aid pledged to the tsunami victims in Asia is actually delivered.

*Write to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dermot Ahern:*

- Expressing concern for the people of S. E. Asia and thanking the government for their response on behalf of the Irish people.
- Reminding the Irish government of the need to encourage all donors to fulfil their aid pledges.
- Pointing out that pledges do not always translate into cash, as seen in Honduras and Iran (use the figures quoted above).

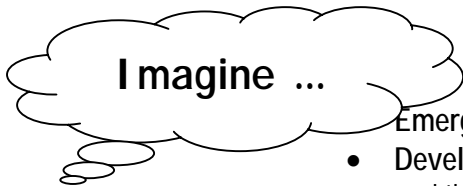
*Ask the Minister to pass the following important points on to his European Union colleagues:*

- All aid for this crisis should be additional to existing aid programmes and must not take resources away from existing development programmes or other humanitarian emergencies.
- The delivery of aid must be untied – this means that it should not be conditional on recipient countries buying donors' goods or services. Ireland has a policy of 100% untied aid but needs to promote this principle with other EU donors, the US, Australia and Japan – the highest donors in the tsunami response.

**Write to: Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dermot Ahern TD,  
 Dept. of Foreign Affairs, Iveagh House, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2.**

# Trócaire's Response

Since 1<sup>st</sup> January, two members of Trócaire's Emergency team have been in Sri Lanka. Vicky Tindal and Deirdre Ni Cheallaigh are part of an international Caritas team assisting our local partners with search and rescue operations, recovery of the dead and injured and providing food, shelter and sanitation for the survivors. A nationwide appeal has been launched and so far almost €2 million has been raised. Much of the relief and rehabilitation work will be concentrated in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.



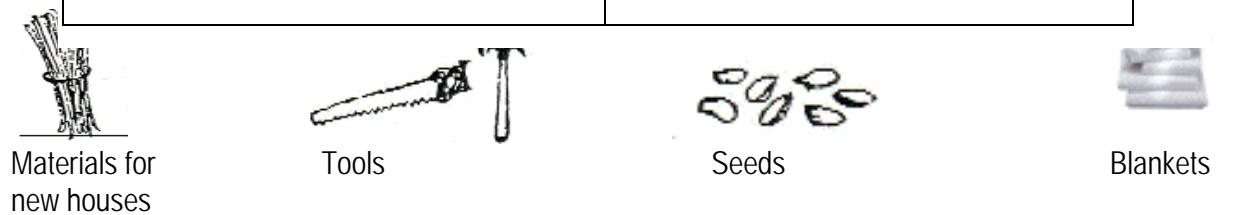
Imagine you work for Trócaire's emergency team and that you will deliver two types of aid:

- Emergency relief to help people survive
- Development aid to ensure that people will be able to provide for themselves and their families into the future.

Look at the list below and divide them into two columns: items that people need in the short term and those they need in the long term.



SHORT TERM AID	LONG TERM AID



- For stories, photos and information on Trócaire's work in South East Asia see [www.trocaire.org](http://www.trocaire.org) over the coming weeks and months.
- Check out the following useful links for information on the tsunami:
  - <http://news.bbc.co.uk>
  - [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)
  - [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)
  - [www.ipsnews.net](http://www.ipsnews.net)
  - [www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org)
  - [www.thejakartapost.com](http://www.thejakartapost.com) - Indonesian English language newspaper
- Action Project:** Collate all of the information you gather from the sources above and hold an awareness raising display in your school.