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**UNDP RESPONDS TO THE
EARTHQUAKES AND TSUNAMIS IN ASIA**

The death toll in the South and South-East Asia region as well as the East African coasts continues to rise dramatically, and is estimated to reach up to 80,000 - 90,000 or more lives lost. This is coupled with enormous population displacements, as well as the loss of livelihoods, homes, infrastructure and hard-earned development gains in many countries including India, Indonesia, Maldives, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Reports indicate that there has been some level of impact in other places such as the Seychelles, Myanmar, and Somalia. Estimates speak of about 5 million people in need of assistance, making this one of the worst disasters in the region in many decades and also one of the most complex humanitarian and recovery operations ever. Close coordination and cooperation amongst governments, the UN family and the international community at large will be of utmost importance during the coming weeks and months.

UNDP continues to support ongoing efforts in the most affected countries. Resources were made available immediately (**US\$500,000 in emergency funds** within the first 48 hours of the disaster) and expert teams were deployed to the most affected countries, to contribute to the overall national and international efforts of assessing the extent of the damages, identify and address the priority needs and ensure the effective coordination of relief operations. In so doing, UNDP aims at integrating risk reduction goals and measures into recovery and reconstruction programmes at the earliest possible time in order to avoid risks and vulnerabilities being rebuilt. The Government of India/UNDP Vulnerability Reduction Programme has already released experienced national UN Volunteers for deployment to the most affected countries to support coordination and recovery efforts. Offers of support from other UNDP Country Offices have been received and BCPR will help ensure that this in-house experience is fully utilised in this unprecedented operation. Additional staff is on stand-by to provide further support as required.

In **India**, UNDP released Trac 1.1.3 emergency resources in the amount of US\$100,000 to support coordination, logistics and assessment endeavours, and will continue to monitor the situation from its regional outpost in Delhi. The UN Disaster Management Team has been requested by the Government of India to focus UN assistance on recovery measures, while national authorities are addressing the immediate needs of the affected population. The Ministry of Home Affairs has deployed Disaster Risk Management Teams which are engaged in information support throughout the affected area, including the Tamil Nadu State Coordination Unit. A Tsunami alert was issued by the Meteorological Department on the 29th December, which resulted in the evacuation of populations in danger zones. No reports of further incidents have been received so far. India will not participate in the regional Flash Appeal.

In **Indonesia**, a UNDP staff joined an UNDAC team in an assessment mission to Aceh which will be providing detailed information on damages, needs and priorities. Over 36,000 deaths have been reported with more than 80,000 people said to be displaced and many in dire need of medical assistance. The affected areas have suffered serious damage to public facilities, transport, telecommunications and electricity. UNDP released US\$100,000 Trac 1.1.3 emergency resources to support this and other priority endeavours of the country office. In terms of recovery needs, UNDP has identified the shelter sector as one of the priority areas. Two UNDP BCPR recovery experts have been deployed to Indonesia and will arrive in-country today and tomorrow respectively to assist with further developing UNDP's recovery strategy and preparing the country flash appeal. One UNV from India will be mobilised over the week-end to assist information coordination and assessments.

The **Maldives** is among of the worst hit areas in the region. About 100,000 people are estimate to be affected with about 54 confirmed deaths. The Resident Coordinator preliminary estimates that the most

pressing needs include boosting the Government's capacities and organising and providing shelter. About 50% of the houses have been assessed damaged or affected by the disaster throughout the country. A Trac 1.1.3 cash grant of US\$100,000 was released for coordination and assessment, and a UNDP BCPR Built Environment Specialist has arrived in Maldives to coincide with the UNDAC team on site. In addition, two UNVs from India have been deployed to assist the Government on a longer-term basis, to address both information management during the emergency phase as well as recovery planning needs.

In **Sri Lanka**, the effects of the earthquakes and tsunami waves have been especially severe. The latest government figures indicate about 22,500 deaths, approximately 500,000 displaced persons and thousands of people still missing and injured. A Trac 1.1.3 allocation of US\$100,000 has already been released to support ongoing assessment and coordination efforts. BCPR's Regional Disaster Reduction Advisor for South West Asia and one UNV arrived in Colombo on the evening of 27 December. The UNDP/CO has already deployed its team of UNV's working on disaster management in the southern districts to some of the worst affected districts. In addition, one UNV from India and one staff of the UNDP Country Office in India will arrive today in support of field coordination and recovery activities. UNDP has launched and is temporary host to a website on the Tsunami, an information sharing platform for the government, international community and civil society organisations. UNDP Project Field Offices throughout the country are gearing up to support local district administrators in liaising with assessment teams and information coordination. Preliminary estimates of UNDP participation in the Flash Appeal reach US\$8.7 million, to cover priority areas identified so far: strengthening of local organisations, restoration of livelihood systems, restoration of shelter and minor infrastructure, response and recovery information dissemination and mine action.

In **Thailand** the worst hit areas include Ranong, Phang-Nga, Phuket, Krabi, Trang and Satun. The combined population of these provinces is 1.9 million, with many living in coastal areas. Government assessments speak of about 2,000 deaths and over 5,000 injured, and many more displaced persons. UNDP cash grant of US\$100,000 was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as initial support to relief operations, particularly in terms of transport of emergency relief. UNDP and the MFA have agreed to set up a special bank account for a "UN Emergency Relief Fund" to be managed by the MFA Humanitarian Relief coordinator, through which at least the initial support from the UN agencies will be channelled. This fund will provide a quick and flexible mechanism to support the relief operations, logistics, transport of items and personnel, search and rescue operations and medical supplies. Another Trust Fund account is being set up by the MFA for larger contributions from bilaterals and others. Additionally, UNDP focuses currently on liaising with the Government of Thailand, supporting the UNDAC team and the Resident Coordinator as well as identifying rehabilitation needs. In support of the latter, BCPR will deploy its Regional Disaster Reduction Advisor for South-East Asia and the Pacific by early next week. Recovery priorities in an estimated amount of US\$2.8 million include restoration of livelihood systems in poor coastal fisheries communities, restoration of shelter in poorer communities, coastal management and environmental rehabilitation.

In **Malaysia**, national authorities are providing immediate financial and materials help to those affected and multi-agency government support is well-coordinated and assisted through volunteers. One UNDP and one UNICEF staff have been deployed on a mission to the affected areas in Penang and Kedah.

Preliminary reports of damages have been received from the **Seychelles** and **Somalia**. For this and any other eventuality, BCPR has staff on stand-by and is ready to provide assistance as required.

This unprecedented disaster has clearly evidenced the extreme vulnerability of coastal areas in the Indian Ocean. A functional early warning system would have been able to avert at least some of the enormous losses. Such a system exists for the Pacific Rim countries and has already proven its efficiency in terms of saving lives. The main thrust of the recovery efforts during coming weeks and months will have to be on re-establishing people's livelihoods, their coastal environments, and housing by improving safety standards and reducing risk.