

Prayer Alert Special . . .

Issue 52

CONTACT US: info@prayer-alert.net

FRIDAY 31 DECEMBER 2005

Tsunami One Year On

This disaster that took place on Boxing Day 2004 will not have failed to have affected everybody in every nation throughout the world who listened or saw the details unfold in the media. Over 230,000 people died and many more were injured, with millions more seeing their homes and livelihoods literally washed away. We make no apology therefore that we are majoring our Prayer Alert on this disaster once more and urge everyone to continue in prayer.

Let's not give up and 'You who call upon the Lord give yourselves no rest and give Him no rest.' Is 62: 6-7

Reports below have been taken from a variety of sources, some Christian others secular. Reading these items and others that our readers will be aware of we can see how God has used this atrocity to expand His kingdom for there is much to give Him thanks for. However there is also a need to continue in prayer for the peoples in these nations and for the continuation of God's purposes.

- [Christians offer prayers as world mourns 1st anniversary of tsunami](#)
- [Children recovering after tsunami](#)
- [Jobs 'return to tsunami region'](#)

INDONESIA

- [The tsunami's 'halo effect' has impact on future ministry.](#)
- [World Vision named top tsunami aid provider in Indonesia](#)
- [Tsunami was God's revenge for your wicked ways, women told](#)
- [Indonesian rebels disarm--believers watch the outcome.](#)

INDIA

- [Amidst the wreckage of the tsunami, hope exists and rebuilds](#)
- [Joel Edwards visits India - one year on from the Asian tsunami](#)
- [Tsunami survivors offer prayers at the Lourdes of the East](#)

SRI LANKA

- [Sri Lankan rebels build houses while waiting for tsunami aid](#)
- [Tsunami school links are growing](#)

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLAND

- [Questions over Andaman tsunami aid](#)

THAILAND

- [Hurdles in identifying tsunami victims](#)
- [Where there were no Christian Churches, now survivors are worshipping Jesus](#)

[More detailed information for prayer and action](#)

Christians offer prayers as world mourns 1st anniversary of tsunami

Christians have led people across the world in marking the first anniversary of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami with mourning and prayers. Around the world moments of silence were observed in memory of those devastated by the horrific tsunami, which has been recorded as one of the world's worst natural disasters in the modern era. Over the past year huge aid and relief operations have taken place across the regions affected by the tsunami, but despite all efforts the pain and sorrow felt by millions remains strong. Approximately 230,000 people were killed by the tsunami or are now assumed dead across 13 Indian Ocean countries, with almost three-quarters of them coming from Indonesia's Aceh province on the north of Sumatra, report Reuters. In Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand survivors and relatives of the dead joined national leaders and foreign dignitaries for memorials taking place today. On Boxing Day 2004 a 9.1 magnitude earthquake, which lasted 8 minutes created a wave 10 metres high that travelled and crashed into land as far away as East Africa. Today, one year after the tsunami, Reuters report that 80 percent of the two million people displaced by the incident are still living in tents, temporary shelters or are staying with friends or family away from their shattered homes. Memorials did not just take place with Christians, but also large numbers from other religions paid their respects. In Sri Lanka's southern town of Peraliva, religious leaders chanted blessings at the site where 1,000 people when their train was destroyed by the massive tsunami. The President of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapakse led a two minutes' silence and placed a floral wreath at the foot of a cresting wave-shaped memorial for the 35,000 who died in the tsunami. In Indonesia a tsunami warning system was tested for the first time, which sounded warning sirens on a beach in West Sumatra, where organised evacuation routes have been created for any future tsunamis. Since the disaster, Indian Ocean countries have been cooperating with the U.N. Intergovernmental Oceanic Commission to set up national and regional warning systems. www.christiantoday.com *Please remember in your prayers all those that are still suffering because of this disaster especially those 80% still living in tents and temporary shelters after one year. Pray that the world will not forget them.*

Children recovering after tsunami

The majority of children in the nations hit by last year's tsunami are hopeful about the future, the UN has said. A survey by the UN's children body, UNICEF, said some 80% of children in Thailand, Sri Lanka and India were "happy and confident". But the figure was lower in Indonesia, the nation worst affected by the tsunami, where just over 60% expressed optimism about what was to come. It said the tsunami's psychological impact was still affecting children. UNICEF said the findings showed children were slowly recovering from the 26 December tsunami but that their lives continued to be affected by it in many ways, and they would need support for some time to come. The UN survey polled 1,600 children between the ages of

eight and 17. "Among the four countries, Indonesia... appears to be recovering more slowly," the document said. "The situation in Indonesia is the most challenging, with one quarter saying that their lives are worse now compared to one to five days after the disaster," it said. UNICEF said the findings reflected the severity of their experiences. Although the children surveyed in all four countries were directly affected by the tsunami, almost 70% of those in Indonesia had lost at least one family member. www.bbc.co.uk *Praise God that the majority of children are recovering. Pray for those who are finding it difficult because of the trauma experienced specially for those in Indonesia.*

Jobs 'return to tsunami region'

Up to two-thirds of those who lost their jobs in the Asian tsunami are working again, a report says. Published by UK charity Oxfam, the report says this is partly because of schemes employing people to clear debris and desalinate land. But it also says about a million jobs were lost, and more needs to be done. Oxfam believes that the drive to restore jobs has progressed more than some other areas of the recovery operation, such as shelter. Last week, the charity said about a fifth of those made homeless would be in satisfactory permanent accommodation by the first anniversary of the disaster. The report, called Back to Work, says up to 85% of those who lost their jobs will have new ones by the end of 2006. Unemployment in badly affected areas rose sharply, Oxfam found, reaching more than 20% in Sri Lanka and a third in Indonesia's Aceh province. Many of those worst affected remain among the most vulnerable, the charity says. They include fishing families, small-scale farmers, labourers, small business holders and those in the tourist industry. www.bbc.co.uk *Praise God that so many have managed to find work to support their families. Let us pray for those who are poor and still vulnerable that the Lord will Bless them and provide work for their hands.*

INDONESIA

The tsunami's 'halo effect' has impact on future ministry.

[Words of Hope](#) reports the 'halo effect' is helping their partner ministry in Indonesia. The team has a new facility opening in the beginning of 2006 in Sulawesi. While far from the disaster zone, Words of Hope's Lee DeYoung explains that this opportunity came as the result of the testimony developed by Christians who helped in the tsunami crisis. He says what's interesting to note is the similarity of response to Christians in the disaster zones of Muslim countries like Pakistan and Indonesia. "In some ways this parallels recent reports that the opinion of Christians in Pakistan has greatly increased in just the last several weeks seemingly as a direct result of the role that Christians were known to play in bringing relief to those who were devastated by the terrible earthquake." DeYoung added that this is an investment in the future church. "We see an expanded opportunity for even more training that will primarily be impacting Christians, but the minority of Christians in that area can benefit greatly from greater discipleship training and also helping them to be more effective in outreach." www.mnnonline.org *Praise God for answered prayers! As more opportunities are given let us pray that Christians will be strengthened in their faith to take up the challenge to spread the Good News.*

World Vision named top tsunami aid provider in Indonesia

World Vision was identified as the top provider of emergency relief by beneficiaries of tsunami relief in Indonesia and one of the top providers by beneficiaries in India, according to a recent study conducted by the Fritz Institute. Individuals in Indonesia and India who were affected by last year's tsunami ranked World Vision as the top provider of emergency relief, according to a recent study by the Fritz Institute. The survey asked aid recipients to rate international aid agencies, local relief organizations and their governments who offered relief in their areas. Among the 500 aid recipients in five affected Indonesian provinces, World Vision was named most often for outstanding service. www.assistnews.net *Thank God for the work of Word Vision (see link to full report below) and other agencies who have been so faithful in meeting the demands of those in so much need.*

Tsunami was God's revenge for your wicked ways, women told

Religious extremists are using last year's storm to oppress the survivors Marluddin Jalil, a Sharia judge who has ordered the punishment of women for not wearing headscarves, was uncompromising: "The tsunami was because of the sins of the people of Aceh." Thundering into a microphone at a gathering of wives, he made clear where he felt the fault lay: "The Holy Koran says that if women are good, then a country is good." A year after the disaster which many see as a divine punishment, emboldened Islamic hardliners are doing their best to eradicate sin — and women are their prime targets. With reconstruction slow, irrational fears of a second tsunami high, and nearly 500,000 still homeless along 500 miles of coastline, the stern message falls on fertile ground. A Sharia police force modelled on Saudi moral enforcers enthusiastically seeks out female wrong doers for public humiliation. The Wilayatul Hisbah, which loosely translates as "Control Team", has arrested women, lopped off their hair, and paraded them in tears through the streets while broadcasting their sins over a megaphone. The poor, powerless and female have borne the brunt of the moral enforcers' righteousness. In the tent camps and temporary wooden barracks where desperate survivors endure grim conditions, Dr Jalil's views are often well received. There are 67,000 survivors still living in tents and a further 75,000 are in the slum barracks, which are taking on a semi permanent air. Only half of those who lost their jobs in the disaster are back at work and drug abuse among the young is growing. Although Aceh province is now a giant building site, the sheer scale of destruction has slowed work. A third of government servants died and 1,000 miles of roads were wiped out, making the logistics of recovery extremely difficult. The Government says it has built 12,000 of the 80,000 permanent homes it aims for and that housing will be its top priority next year. But some aid workers think there could still be families under canvas in three years' time. www.timesonline.co.uk *Pray that the rhetoric of those that spread such untruths be silenced and the Holy Spirit will enlighten those that are blinded.*

Indonesian rebels disarm--believers watch the outcome.

Indonesia (MNN)--The civil war in Indonesia's Aceh province may be over. Rebels have officially disarmed. [Voice of the Martyr's](#) Todd Nettleton says peace talks between the rebels and the government were already underway prior to the tsunami. However, once the disaster struck, priorities changed. "Both sides saw that in order to facilitate the rebuilding of that part of Indonesia, they were going to need to work together. It really wasn't a time where there was room for conflict. It was pretty much 'all hands on deck! We're going to have to work our hearts out just to rebuild.'" Nettleton confirms the connection between humanitarian aid, relationship building and the ongoing potential for evangelistic work. He says in the early days of the crisis a year ago, they sent Indonesian church teams to the hard hit region with Life Packs. These kits contained the basic daily physical needs and supply tools that bring 'eternal relief,' namely a Bible and a copy of 'He Lived Among Us' (a 180-page Gospel storybook). Along with a connection to the local church, there is also discipleship for new Christians. However, prayer remains essential. "Thousands of people around the world prayed for this region because Indonesia is an area that has persecution, that has hostility towards Christians but the absence of armed conflict is obviously

going to be a good thing for the people of Banda Aceh, for the people of the Aceh region." www.persecution.com and www.mnnonline.org *Let us thank God for this answer to prayer. Pray for continued opportunities to spread the Gospel and that the Lord will protect our Christian brothers and sisters. Pray that the Life Packs will bring much fruit.*

INDIA

Amidst the wreckage of the tsunami, hope exists and rebuilds.

Along the shores of India, the visible marks of the fury of the ocean are slowly receding. Like many other aid groups, [Hopegivers International's](http://www.hopegivers.org) Bill Bray says they're out of emergency mode, and well into Phase Two of their tsunami reconstruction plan. He lays out their strategy. "We have two or three buildings in construction now, additional cottages that we're building for the children. We hope to have 12 Hope Homes constructed by time we're done." Bray says they're working on a five-year timeline for the homes. He adds that both this phase and the next and future outreach would not have been possible without the disaster. "Through the tsunami relief, there are new open doors in many of these villages for ongoing relationships and evangelism." As their projects take on a life of their own, Bray says, "Our next step is to put full-time, permanent couples in most of these villages. They will be doing church planting and a long-term presence will be established." [www.Hopegivers.com](http://www.hopegivers.com) *Praise God for these open doors and for the work of all the aid agencies.*

Joel Edwards visits India - one year on from the Asian tsunami

Joel Edwards, General Director of the Evangelical Alliance has just returned from a fact-finding mission to India to review progress. He was accompanied by World Vision UK's Chief Executive Charles Badenoch who was there to see how money raised by the UK public is being spent. The people they met, the stories they heard and the work they saw pointed to a stronger, more secure future for those affected by the disaster. Since the tsunami struck, World Vision has provided more than 3,700 transitional homes in India and has assisted more than 200,000 people. The aid agency continues to work in the vital areas of community rehabilitation and economic recovery and will rebuild over 6,000 permanent homes. Joel commented, "Meeting people whose lives have been devastated by the tsunami made me realise how we, in the UK, make a fuss about nothing. A late train suddenly pales into insignificance. It makes us ask, what is hope? I've seen it more pronounced over these three days in India than ever before – hope is a red tractor, hope is a new building with five concrete pillars, and hope is a long walk to recovery." Vailankanni is a 17th Century Catholic Basilica in Tamil Nadu, India. (see below) Up to 3,000 people were killed on Boxing Day last year on or around Beach Road, which leads from the shrine down to the ocean. As the tsunami hit, pilgrims were making their way to the Basilica from all over India. "Its eerie standing where the greatest number of people died in the shadow of the Basilica," said Joel. "Three thousand people's lives were lost in this place, many of them pilgrims – but faith has endured. Lives have been lost but faith and human relationships have deepened." World Vision worked with shopkeepers working along Beach Road to help them rebuild their businesses. A group of ten businessmen gathered with Joel and Charles – the men were Hindus, Muslims and Christians. They all said the same thing: "In the tsunami we lost our material possessions, but we gained a deeper respect for humanity and each others' faith"... "The tsunami has brought us all much closer together." "The tsunami has become a connector between our faiths and between people all over the world through compassion, empathy and global solidarity." www.eauk.org *Pray that Joel will be able to use his influence to keep the ongoing needs in the public eye. Pray that the deeper respect for humanity and each others' faith may continue and Christians will shine with the light of Christ.*

Tsunami survivors offer prayers at the Lourdes of the East

Tsunami survivors came as pilgrims to offer special midnight mass prayers on Christmas in the Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health in Velankanni, Tamil Nadu, known as the Lourdes of the East. Hundreds of pilgrims took part in a procession in the newly-restored church, which had been badly damaged by the December 26 seaquake, ahead of mass. Survivors of all faith took part in the ceremony. "We had only a 30 per cent attendance at the midnight mass as compared to other years," the Rector of the Basilica Fr P Xavier told AsiaNews. "For some of the survivors the wounds of the tragedy seem to have re-opened on the anniversary of the tragedy. However, for those who came to the mass, there appears to be a process of healing. For us priests at the basilica, it is an overwhelming feeling of sadness woven into a feeling of gratitude to God and also a feeling of fulfilment for all the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction work the Church could carry out for people of all faiths and castes. "You can say that our mission for these tsunami victims," Fr Xavier stressed, "is to ferry people from a place of despair to one of hope you could say has been our mission." Nagapattinam alone had 6,065 deaths in the catastrophe, or 76 per cent of Tamil Nadu's total death toll. A majority of the victims were fishermen and their families. Not only did many lose their lives or those of family members, but most also lost their homes and means of livelihood as well. Tamil Nadu was the worst affected Indian state in the December 26 tsunami, claiming over 7,000 lives, more than a third of them children. At least 16,000 people were killed in tsunami in India. www.asianews.it *Pray for all those that this anniversary brought back memories and awakened wounds that still need healing. Pray that the Lord will meet their needs and bring healing.*

SRI LANKA

Sri Lankan rebels build houses while waiting for tsunami aid

A Sri Lankan separatist group is using its own funds to build homes for tsunami survivors in areas under its control, raising concern aid money still isn't reaching the parts of the island where it's needed most. Tamils in rebel-held areas who were left homeless by the Dec. 26 tsunami are living in transitional shelters, built with funds from overseas Tamils and non-government groups, the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization said. The charity is building permanent houses in the north and northeast, where almost half the 30,000 Sri Lankans killed in the disaster lived. International donors hoped a joint operation by government and rebel forces to rebuild areas hit by the tsunami would help break a three-year deadlock in peace talks aimed at ending Sri Lanka's civil war. An agreement to jointly distribute \$3 billion of aid was scrapped in July, adding to tensions between the two sides and threatening the February 2002 cease-fire. "There would have been a lot more funds coming through and benefiting the whole country if there was a joint mechanism on aid," said Julia Hume, a project development manager with the Tamil rehabilitation group. "There are a few examples of work together, but essentially there is no such coordination." An agreement was needed because the U.S., U.K. and India have designated the Tamil Tigers a terrorist group, which stops most international aid organizations from providing aid to the group and the victims of the tsunami in areas it controls. www.bloomberg.com *Pray for the situation in Sri Lanka that the Lord will intervene and bring about reconciliation between the factions. Pray that the desperate needs of those who have not received help may be met.*

Tsunami school links are growing

From one-way charity to international partnership, the Indian Ocean tsunami a year ago has forged links between schools across the world. Like many pupils and staff in the UK, those at Wales High School in South Yorkshire were moved to try to help those whose lives had been wrecked. They raised £4,000 initially - but have since built relationships which are now a part of a business and enterprise course at the comprehensive for 11 to 18-year olds, and are in it for the long term. Three-way link teacher Gareth Hughes contacted the British Council, which facilitates links between schools as part of its work. He was put in touch with Mahmud Ladies College, a large Muslim girls' secondary school in Kalmunai in south-east Sri Lanka. It lost 23 pupils in the disaster and about 1,000 were affected in some way, many losing parents and other family members. The co-ordinator of the scheme at Mahmud Ladies, Hanoon Umar, said the financial support had enabled it to help children who had been very badly affected, to provide study materials for pupils and organise workshops for teachers of English, among other things www.bbc.co.uk *Praise God for these links with our schools that bring such awareness and understanding.*

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

Questions over Andaman tsunami aid

The administration in India's eastern archipelago of Andaman and Nicobar is constructing mud sea walls all around the inhabited islands. The Andaman and Nicobar islands were one of the worst hit by the tsunami six months ago. Nearly 4,000 people died and close to 50,000 people were displaced. Unofficial sources place the number of dead at "not less than 10,000." Local officials say the sea walls will offer some protection to people living by the sea. But environmentalists say the mud walls are a "colossal waste of funds". The government has earmarked 200m rupees (\$4.6m) for constructing the mud walls. One-tenth of that amount has already been spent and the walls have already gone up in some areas where sea water gushes in during high tide, destroying crops and submerging roads. Even as the controversy rages over whether funds are well spent on the sea walls or a waste, villagers in the islands continue to complain of paltry compensation packages. Many who lost their source of livelihood have got a few hundred rupees as compensation. Some have got even less - one Nicobarese tribeswoman was paid a cheque of two rupees (less than five US cents). A plethora of aid agencies have flooded the islands with food and other relief material. But many have made tall claims which have not been borne out on the ground. www.bbc.co.uk *Pray for wisdom for those in authority that they will use the monies given wisely. Pray that more will be made available for such vulnerable peoples.*

THAILAND

Hurdles in identifying tsunami victims

A year after Thailand was hit by the Asian tsunami, more than 800 bodies have yet to be identified or those still missing loved ones, the process can seem agonisingly slow. "It seems to be taking such a long time," said Yupin Chortpatpad, who is still searching for the body of her nine-year-old son. "I've already given five different samples to the authorities." The samples Ms Yupin is referring to include data from close relatives, fragments of the missing person's hair, toothbrush and schoolbooks - anything, in fact, that the experts at the Thai tsunami victim identification centre can use to link the profiles of those still missing with the bodies still unclaimed. As time goes on, the families still waiting for news are gradually facing up to the fact that they may never find the remains of their loved ones. www.bbc.co.uk *Pray that with so many people still unable to trace their loved ones that the experts will be able bring closure to many more.*

Where there were no Christian Churches, now survivors are worshipping Jesus

Recently, about 50 people gathered in the Buddhist city of Nam Khem, Thailand along the tsunami devastated Khao Lak coast to worship Jesus Christ. A year ago there were no Christian churches in the area; now, a year after the tsunami, there are about 20, mostly started by US based evangelical groups that aided in the area's reconstruction. One such group is Life in Action in Thailand, whose leader, James Garwood, is a former heroin addict who found Christ in prison. He says "hundreds of hundreds" of local residents have converted to Christianity since the tsunami. Garwood arrived there three days after the earthquake, says reporter Sebastien Berger, equipped with a bag of balloons to entertain children in a nearby refugee camp. "I didn't come here to start a church," he insisted. But, he added, "I felt God tugging at my heart." Another Christian organization built about 50 homes for some underprivileged Thais, a few of whom have converted. Mon Khatalay, 28, said: "I came to know the Lord after the tsunami. I'm so happy, so grateful and thankful to God." At the church, Gan Klathalay, 46, wore an orange T-shirt reading "Prayer changes things" on the front and "Thank you Jesus" on the back. A Buddhist before the tsunami, Berger reports that he now attends worship five times a week and holds a prayer session at home. "It seems like the Christians are very good to me, that's why I converted," he said. As expected, the increase of converts to Christianity is not sitting well with Buddhist leaders, but as the good news continues to be preached and Christians around the world continue to pray, God's grace will continue to be discovered in remarkable ways. www.breakingchristiannews.com *Praise God for this growth in His Church and how He has used this atrocity for His good. Pray that these new believers will be protected and strengthened in their faith.*

Prayer changes things – thank you Jesus!

More detailed information for prayer and action can be obtained from the following:

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/tsunami/index.htm>

http://domino-201.worldvision.org/donate.nsf/child/tawv_tsunami_oneyear?open&lid=oneyear&lpos=today

<http://www.barnabasfund.org/proj-tsunami.htm>

<http://www.tearfund.org/News/Asia/> Tearfund have produced a PowerPoint presentation and OHP acetates for use in your church, small group or prayer meetings, with information on the situation in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and India one year on from the tsunami with prayer points.