

TELECOMS SANS FRONTIERES

Tsunami Sri Lanka

28th December 2004 - 25th April 2005



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Sri Lanka mission report

1. Evaluation of the catastrophe

Initial situation and analysis :

Initial general situation

On Sunday December 26 2004, a very strong tremor was felt in the Indian Ocean, registering 8.9 on the Richter scale. The epicentre was registered at 3.298 North, 95.779 East, 250 kilometres SSE of Banda Aceh on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. The intensity of the earthquake caused a tidal wave, 10 metres high, which swept across the North West coast of Northern Sumatra, the south and east coast of Sri Lanka, and the west coast of Thailand.

This powerful earthquake hit the coast of Asia and was felt as far as the African coast, affecting 8 countries : the Seychelles, Somalia, the Maldives, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, causing approximately a total of 276,000 dead, 14,000 injured and 200,000 made homeless (source : Reliefweb on 1/02/2005).

Every family had suffered great loss, both human and material.

Most of the world mobilised immediately to face this emergency situation outside their own area.

A call for international aid was made by the Sri Lankan government in the hours which followed the tsunami.

TSF mobilised immediately and the decision was taken to send a team from France by the first available flight.

TSF arrived in Colombo on December 28th, by a flight provided by the French government, less than 48 hours after the earthquake.

Situation on the ground :

The extent of the disaster caused a major mobilisation of workers both government and non-government.

The geographical area to be covered, the difficult access and the lack of communication meant that an early response was essential. People were deeply affected, both physically and psychologically. Waiting for information before beginning rescue attempts was not possible. Access to very limited sources of information is extremely difficult.

From its arrival in Colombo, TSF participated in a coordination meeting with the Sri Lankan authorities, the NGOs present and the representatives of the French authorities in order to target the needs of the population, the areas most affected by the tsunami and to put in place an effective plan of action. 11 districts out of 27 were affected. The most damaged areas were those in the east and south of the country.



Displaced persons /refugees

Sri Lanka mission report

The number of displaced people was very difficult to calculate, considering the extent of the area affected. The estimates are of several hundreds of thousands of people. The population live essentially by fishing, living along the coast and the majority of them had no time to escape towards the interior of the island.

Economic impact

Fishing being the major source of income, the economic impact in the region is catastrophic. In effect, practically the whole fishing fleet has been destroyed by the tsunami and the few boats still undamaged will not go out to sea because the fishermen are afraid of another tsunami.

Health structures :

All the coastal area, the most heavily populated area, has been damaged. The villages which are on the coast as well as the infrastructures and therefore the health centres have been swamped by the murderous wave.

The coastal road though badly damaged is more or less passable. The rescue workers' journeys are frequent and the traffic moves very slowly

Zone of armed conflict / Security :

Several security problems have been reported in the north of the affected area in the Ampara region.

Telecommunications / Electricity:

The landline telephone network has been destroyed in the affected area. There is no more electricity in the coastal zone. The restoration of the network is a priority in order that those who fled the tsunami are able to go back to their homes, or what is left of them.

The GSM network is operational but unfortunately saturated by the volume of calls.

Extraordinary disaster.

2. Localisation of the mission



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3. The mission

TSF arrived in Colombo on December 28th on a flight organised by the French government, less than 48 hours after the disaster.

On December 29th reinforcements arrived from TSF's base in Bangkok, joining the team already in place.

The roads in the Ampara and Batticola districts are still practically impassable, making rescue attempts and the arrival of rescue teams very difficult. On the other hand, the only coastal road between Colombo and Hambantota is partially open even if traffic movement remains difficult. In order to offer a better service and in order to make their services available to the biggest number of people, TSF decided therefore to establish their first post in the south, in the Hambantota district (the 2nd most damaged area), Galle and Matara.

No evaluation of the level of working telecommunications was made. TSF therefore looked at the state of the network all along the coast affected, from Colombo to Matara. The landline network had been destroyed and the GSM network was seriously damaged, only working intermittently, in limited areas.

Aid to the population : on December 29th, TSM began its first humanitarian telephone operations in camps in the Galle district.

3.1 NGO centres :

Objectives for the NGOs :

Making possible communications between the NGO head offices and their teams in the field

Making possible the coordination of rescue operations by putting teams out in the field in touch with each other

Making possible the exchange of information, the dispatch of reports, lists of medicines in order to better respond to the needs of the afflicted population.

The NGOs were working all along the affected coast in the 11 damaged districts.

TSF therefore made available to the NGOs, rescue teams and local authorities satellite telephone lines in the Coordination Centres in the Matara, Hambantota and Ampara districts.

<i>Ong's coordination center Hambantota</i>	405 fax
<i>Ong's coordination center Matara</i>	2114 calls

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3.2 Humanitarian telephones :

Objectives for the population :

Psychological support : a telephone call to a relative offers support and may rekindle feelings of hope

Financial support : the money sent by citizens abroad is an important source of revenue

Locating victims : without means of communication it is impossible to know exactly where to find victims

Family contact : numerous families were separated by the tsunami and do not know where to find family members, or even if any are alive.

TSF offers 5 minutes of communication to each family affected, living in the camps where the teams are operating in the coastal districts of Kalutara, Galle, Matara, Hambantota and Ampara.

The telephone operations which continued until the end of April were placed in the camps, but also in the central points where victims were grouped such as Temples, Mosques, schools, hospitals.

TSF also made satellite telephone lines available in rescue coordination centres in Hambantota, Matara and Galle districts.

Detailed List of Camps and the Population Covered

Emergency phase TSF Sri Lanka

28 december - 19 april

Date	Name of the district	Name of the camp	Number of families
	HAMBANTOTA (South east)		
31.12	6 camps	TISSAMARAMA	114
01.01		SURIYAWAWA	65
		Mosquée HAMBANTOTA	65
02.01		SURIYAWAWA	84

Sri Lanka mission report

02.01		Mosquée HAMBANTOTA	165
03.01		Temple HAMBANTOTA	180
		Mosquée HAMBANTOTA	56
04.01		KIRINDA School	203
05.01		TANGALLE School	60
06.01		TANGALLE Scuol	105
	MATARA (South West)		
07.01	15 camps	MATARA RAHULARE College	94
08.01		MATARA	91
09.01		MATARA	103
10.01		MATARA	100
11.01		WELIGAMA centre	452
12.01		MIRISSA	188
13.01		DENUWALA 3 sites	168
14.01		SRI SUBADRARAMAYA temple	
		NI GRADARAMAYA	160
15.01		GUNARATHANA	
		MOHIDEEN JUMMA	
		DHARMAPALA VIDYLAYA	337
16.01		UDUKAWA KANISTHA	
		UDUKAWA CHARLIMOUNT	19
	GALLE (South West)		
18.01	21 camps	THASIM VIDYALAYA	159
19.01		SEENIGAMA KUSUMARAMA	216
20.01		HIKKADUWA MAHAMAYA BALIKA	116
		SAMARASEETHA	
21.01		MATHINDARAMAYA	
		KURUPPUKANDA	
		JAYANTHI	
		VIJAYABA	116
22.01		WERELLANA NELUMVILA	
		KULEEGODA VANAWASALA	
		THELWATTA RAJAMAHA	239
23.01		URAWATTA	
		DEVAGODA-SIRIWARDANARAMAYA	103
24.01		DADALLA	
25.01		I-DIH WATTHA DADALLA	
		REJJIPURA	
		RATNODAYARAMAYA	
		SRI SANANANDANARAMAYA	130
26.01		RATNODADAYARAMAYA	
		SRI-SANANANDANARAMAYA	165
27.01		AMBALANGODA 2 sites	64

Sri Lanka mission report

28.01	KALUTARA (South West)		
29.01	4 camps	MODARAWILA	21
31.01		GALGODA	35
		GALGODA	
		MODARAWILA	
		WERAGALA	
		GOMARAKANDA	112
	AMPARA (East)		
05.02	29 camps	ISLAMABAIRTH	
		R.K.M School	
		MANACHAIN	98
	AMPARA		
06.02	26 camps	PERIYA NEELAVANAI VISHNU	
07.02		SCHOOL	
		PANDIRIPPU NAWALAR SCHOOL	
		AL MANAR CENATRAL COLLAGE	
07.02		PUBLIC LIBRARY	
		PUBLIC HALL	
		AL HAMRA SCHOOL	93
08.02		SARASWATHI VIDDYALAYA	
		PERIYANEELAWANI	
		THIRUPATHAI AMMAN KOVIL	
		MASJTHUL	75
09.02		KAL/ AL HILAL SCHOOL	
10.02			
11.02		MOHOMAD BALIKA SCHOOL	
		ZAHIRA COLLAGE	
		GMM SCHOOL	
		NERU HALL	59
12.02		AGRARIAN SERVICE CENTRE	99
13.02			
		GAYATHRI TEMPELE	41
		SANGAMAM GRAMAM	11
		SAKALAKALAI AMMAN	17
14.02		KUDINILAM	
		SHAKTHI SCHOOL	
		SAMATI PILLAYAR TEMPLE	16
15.02			
		SAHARA 01	
		SAHARA 02	4
16.02			
		SARVODAYA PURAM	
		NEW KOMARI	

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		KOMARI 2	25
Results first phase operations		Préparation second phase	New teams shift
	HAMBANTOTA		
28.02	5 camps	KIRINDA	31
		SIDUJAYPURA	37
01.03		DARMAKAMOSQUE	101
02.03		SIRIBOPURA VILLAGE	50
04.03		AMBALANTOTA	122
	MATARA		
07.03	16 camps	POLHENA SCHOOL	58
08.03		HITHTHETIYA RAJA VIHARAYA	88
09.03		LE FORT KOTUWA	26
10.03		WELLIGAMA	130
11.03		WELLIGAMA	96
14.03		PANBURANA CAMP	49
15.03		KITHULEWELA PIRIWENA	71
16.03		TOTAMUNA	89
		LABINA CAMP	
17.03		KAMBURUGAMUWA/MAHANAMA SCHOOL	69
18.03		GODAKANDA SAMURDRATHEERA	75
21.03		SUDARMARAMA/BANDARAMULLA	100
22.03		MIRISSA/MANA MADUVA TEMPLE	
		MARADANA	99
23.03		MIRISSA/DENUWALA CAMP	30
24.03		GRAMILLA HOSPITAL CAMP	46
	GALLE		
25.03	21 camps	PETTIGALLAWATA	40
28.03		HANAGAMA	
		SEWA LANKA	70
29.03		WALAUWATTA	97
30.03		SEA BREEZE GARDEN	96
31.03		SEENI MODARA	65
01.04		MAGALLE	38
04.04		ABZDAN SCHOOL	43
05.04		KOGALLA VILLAGE	20
06.04		DEDALLA IDH CAMP VILLAGE	61
07.04		WELLABAD	58

Sri Lanka mission report

08.04	RATGAM	71
09.04	PERELIYA	
	SEENIGAMA	102
12.04	SAMARASEEHA NANDA RAMAJA	
	AKURALA SUDURA RAME	98
15.04	KAILAWATHTHA VILLAGE	128
16.04	THOTAGAMUWA	80
18.04	MAHAMODARA CAMP et VILLAGE	90
19.04	REJJIPURA	26
Families Total		7373
Covered camps Total		117



4. beneficiaries :

7373 families 117 refugee centres were covered in the affected zone

4.1 Local authorities, aid organisations, local and international NGOs, international agencies working with NGO centres based in the affected areas.

From December 29th opening of a telephone line in the coordination centre at Hambantota and on January 3rd 2005, opening of a telephone line available to the NGOs in the rescue coordination centre in Matara.

The majority of authorities or of NGOs having a need for communication were able to benefit from the presence of TSF for their telephone contacts.

4.2 Sri Lankan population affected by the tsunami.

Mobile telephone centre in **117 refugee centres** in the Hambantota, Matara, Galle, Kalutara and Ampara zones.

Sri Lanka mission report

Numerous families are single-parent because one of the parents often travel abroad to search for work. Numerous telephone communications have been established with the Middle East which is one area where Sri Lankans are employed. Most worker abroad only return to Sri Lanka after several years abroad far from their country. Their financial resources being low, they are unable to telephone and therefore have had no news from home for years. The presence of TSF meant that parents working abroad could have news of family members still in the country. Imagine the anxiety of a parent, having learnt of the catastrophe which has battered their village but have no news from their country.

Several stories covered by the TSF team in the Hambantota district (south-eastern Sri Lanka)

The little boy from Leka

A little 4-year-old boy lived with his father and his three brothers and sisters. The tsunami left them with nothing, but they were all together! To help the family, their mother left to work for a family in Kuwait, where she was a maid. It has been 3 years since this little boy has spoken to his mother because the family did not have the money to telephone. The TSF team helped his father to get a telephone number to contact his mother. After several attempts, at last they contacted her! His mother could at last talk to her family. The little boy would soon celebrate his birthday and his mother asked what he would like most for his present ... the little boy replied: « Nothing ... I only need you! »

For 17 years, Leka had worked as a maid for a family in the Lebanon, under difficult conditions; she wanted to build a little house-the tsunami took all her savings. She now has no choice but to call her former bosses and ask for her job back.

Nadeera DILSHANI, 7 years old, an escapee on December 26th .

The day after the tsunami, a little girl was found by the Matara police in ruins near to the Buddhist temple of *Kitulawala Pirivan*. She was one of the first uninjured survivors found after the disaster.

Nadeera DILSHANI pretended to have no surviving family members, but after an enquiry the police discovered that she had an aunt (Priyanha, her mother's sister) living where the house had been ruined. The young girl was placed in a camp where she lived for several days with her aunt and uncle, in order to finally be placed in an orphanage in Matara - *The Buddhist Childrens' Home Nupe* - her family being unable to look after her properly.

After making several visits to the camp where Nadeera's aunt and uncle were refugees, the TSF team found out that her father had been dead for 4 years and that her mother, Sashika, had worked as a housemaid in Beirut, the Lebanon, since 1998.

Thanks to support from the Centre for the Protection of Children in Matara, TSF were able to contact the orphanage and meet Nadeera. She has never seen her mother and remains alone today.

The team has a letter accompanied by a photocopy of her passport which her mother had recently sent to her to announce that it was impossible for her to return.

Through the TSF team, her aunt could telephone to Nadeera's mother and give her news of her daughter ... the first for 2 years!



Nadeera Dilshani

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5. NGOs Results

Made available telephone lines in the coordinations centre of Hambantota and Matara. The activity in these 2 centres totalled 405 faxes and 2114 calls.

Elsewhere, a GSM line was installed at the “Alliance Française” in Matara to facilitate the work of NGOs working in this area.



6. Pop

7373 families



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7. Activities:

Put in place :

10 satellite lines

1 centre for data transmission

Humanitarian Telephones :

The TSF teams moved from refugee centre to refugee centre, enabling the camp population to contact family members in Sri Lanka and abroad. Numerous family are one-parent, because many Sri Lankans worked abroad, most often in the Middle East. Information on the service offered by TSF was displayed in the nerve centres of villages (schools, mosques, town halls ...) also the daily use of megaphones; a part of the population stayed in the area of their home to prevent looting and theft of their personal affairs which they had been able to rescue after the tsunami.

Psychological Support :

The immensity of the disaster caused psychological shock and terror amongst the population of the area damaged by the tsunami. This disaster will be remembered as a serious event in the history of humanity.

The psychological assistance is a priority in response to the emergency and numerous organisations offered this support.

Calls of 5 minutes on average per family.

TSF brought personalized help by support both psychological and economic. Money sent by Sri Lankans working abroad is the primary source of finances, tourism taking second place.



Sri Lanka mission report

Telecommunications centres for NGOs :

The telecommunications centres in Hambantota and Matara, dedicated to authorities and to NGOs enabled them to make contact with each other and also to collate the information coming from various districts. This activity had been very important not only in quantitative terms but also in qualitative terms, the coordination of aid coming to be optimised. In effect, the humanitarian response following the tsunami coming from outside the area, and the need to coordinate all the rescue efforts being used became an obligation to avoid unnecessary complications.

TSF and the Logistics :

Coordination of transport

National and international calls

Ensuring the logistics and communication with the capital, Colombo

TSF and the administration :

Internet connection : sending emails and daily reports to the central offices of each organisation and institution on site, presentation of projects requesting finance

Telephones : international and national calls whilst the GSM network is saturated. Numerous faxes sent

Office work : editing reports, photos, printing, scanning etc.

Permanent contact number : reception of telephone calls

TSF and the diffusion of information :

Situation status report

Information gathering during assessment of the area : presenting data to NGOs

Information/resources centre:

Making available TSF technology to search for tourists from the EEC of whom there is no news

Family links :

In collaboration with different local partners and families, TSF worked to establish family links and contacts.



Sri Lanka mission report

On site evaluation :

TSF went out to survey the disaster area and report back on general conditions (state of the roads and bridges)

Technical assistance :

Advice, solving technical computer and satellite problems for humanitarian organisations. Installation of satellite dishes, configuration of computer and satellite systems.

8. TSF's departure

The emergency mission to Sri Lanka ended on April 25th 2005 (started on December 28th 2004), once the landline and mobile phone networks were in place and again operational and once the majority of refugee centres had been visited.

Since the beginning of May, TSF has installed in Matara (the area of the island most badly affected) courses in computer studies and introduction to the Internet aimed at child victims of the tsunami. This programme is still running at the end of May and it is not known when it will finish, given the great need and enthusiasm of the population for such courses.

9. Comments and conclusions

The TSF team arrived on a Foreign Ministry flight from France within 48 hours following the Sri Lankan government's appeal for help, and fully responded to the breakdown in telecommunications in the area devastated by the tsunami.

The entire international community was mobilised in the face of such a disaster and local organisations were immediately formed and worked in an efficient way.

In the past, we have never seen experienced such a feeling of solidarity or seen such an amount of aid arriving from outside the country, such intense work meant a great degree of coordination was necessary in order for the aid to be used effectively and to channel all the willingness to help effectively. The need for communications to share the accounts of the situation in each disaster zone was paramount.

The population - given that many parents working abroad needed to be in touch with their families above all to find out their current situation but also to send money in order for them to repair or rebuild their homes. It was noted that all the international calls could be made easily thanks to the satellite communications system, thus freeing up the local telephone network.



Sri Lanka mission report

Since the beginning of May, TSF has been working in the town of Matara in the south of the country.

Educational part - the Orphanage of Buddha Kanta Lama Niwaase, MATARA region

This project has been established in agreement with the Director and teaching staff at the orphanage, within and complementary to their education system.

Beneficiaries - girls aged between 8 and 20, living in the orphanage

The course is given to groups of 4 children at a time, grouped by age, and adapted to their school programme, the teachers accompanying each group.

3 areas :

Use of computer programmes (Word, Excel ...)

Introduction to the Internet (research for and visiting sites selected within their school curriculum)

Introduction to English

The courses begin with a presentation of the equipment and programmes, followed by an explanation of their use.

Themes chosen for Internet research are Zoo animals, the environment and pollution, the history of Sri Lanka games and quiz sites in English.

Outside of the educational benefits, these courses have been for the children their first introduction to computers and also the first successful project offered to the orphanage.

The themes chosen have above all allowed the children to face up to the tsunami and externalise the fears which are still with them, four months after the disaster.

This educational scheme which TSF has initiated comes under the heading of post-emergency missions, designed to give psychological support to a population traumatised following such a catastrophe.

