

TSUNAMI SWEEPS NORTH SUMATRA, INDONESIA

26 December 2004

The morning after Christmas, a massive earthquake hit the Indian Ocean off the Indonesian island of Sumatra and unleashed a series of deadly tsunamis that swept onto Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Indonesia, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Malaysia, and as far as Somalia and Tanzania. The quake, measuring 8.9 on the Richter scale, as reported by the U.S. Geological Survey, is Indonesia's worst natural disaster ever. Thousands of houses have been swept away by the force of tidal waves across the provinces of Aceh and North Sumatra. Indonesia is the worst-hit nation with more than 94 thousand people killed, not to mention those who were missing and injured.

Responding to this national disaster, the ILO Jakarta Staff Union immediately took action by extending aid to the victims in the form of cash and non-cash donations.



On Wednesday, 29 December 2004, Ine Indiravitri, ILO Jakarta SU Representative, accompanied by Budi Setiawati, Titular Representative, delivered the donations to Metro TV / Media Indonesia humanitarian group. This humanitarian group will carry the donations to North Sumatra and Aceh and will distribute it to the victims.

The effort to help the victims is still going-on. We are still collecting donations from staff and wish that our small efforts and donations could assist the victims in this difficult time.

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan arrived in Jakarta, Indonesia on Wednesday, 5 January 2005 to attend the Emergency Summit to discuss the Asian tsunami crisis and will fly to Aceh on Friday the 7th of January. The Summit is not only for Indonesia but for all countries that have suffered from the tsunami. Leaders from 26 nations and humanitarian organizations will also look at the massive reconstruction needed to re-build the shattered lives of millions of people in six nations.

At an informal gathering with UN staff in Indonesia, Kofi Annan informed us that aids are pouring in from all over the world and hoped that all the money will be delivered. At the question why there are substantial aid that had not yet reached survivors in need, particularly those outside refugee camps, he responded that the infrastructure in Aceh was heavily damaged and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to reach certain areas. Therefore, part of the assistance will go to re-build and repair the infrastructures. The Secretary General also ensured that UN will fully support the relief programmes for the Indonesian victims.



from left to right:

Samidjo, UNFPA Programme Officer, Anizar Djalil, ILO Jakarta Fellowship/Meeting Assistant,
Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, Ine Indiravitri, ILO Jakarta Staff Union Representative

Colin Powell, US Secretary of States with Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, the brother of U.S. President George W. Bush, told the reporters at a news conference in the provincial capital of Banda Aceh following a two-hour helicopter tour of the surrounding area in Aceh, that quote "I have been in war and I have been through a number of hurricanes, tornadoes and other relief operations, but I have never seen anything like this". "We've all seen pictures on our television sets and in our newspapers of the damage that occurred here, but only by seeing it in person from a helicopter flying low over the city can you get a real appreciation of what it must have been like when the tsunami came through and caused so much death and destruction." unquote.

On Thursday, 6 January 2005, Alan Boulton, Country Director of ILO in Indonesia calls a staff meeting to brief all staff on the ILO response to earthquake/tsunami in North Sumatra. In the meeting he stressed that ILO is not a humanitarian relief agency, but ILO will play a role in the immediately following phase of rehabilitation and reconstruction. The ILO will seek to contribute in three areas: (1) economic recovery, by proposing employment intensive approaches to infrastructure reconstruction; (2) particular care and measures for vulnerable groups, including concerns for increased child labour and trafficking; and (3) working with the constituents to address their specific concerns, including supporting the Manpower Ministry to re-establish its core functions such as employment services.

Jakarta, 6 January 2005
Ine Indiravitri
ILO Jakarta SU Representative