

# TSN News

Newsletter of the Tsunami Support Network

Co-ordinated by



**Volume 1, Issue 2**

**June 2005**

## Welcome to TSN News

Welcome to the second newsletter of the Tsunami Support Network. This has been set up to help provide opportunities for support for people in the UK affected by the South East Asian Earthquake and Tsunami.

As well as our website (<http://www.tsunamisupportnetwork.org.uk>) and ongoing telephone support (**0845 054 7474**), we hope this newsletter will enable readers to obtain and contribute information, share common experiences and benefit from mutual support. Do contact us if you wish to know more.

## About the TSN

The Tsunami Support Network is being coordinated by the British Red Cross which is working closely with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) & the Dept for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). The DCMS is coordinating aftercare for those affected by the Tsunami.

## How to Join the Network

If you wish to receive further newsletters or other general information from us you can register either on our website or call us on the support line number (**0845 054 7474**). Please pass on our contact details to anyone who you feel might benefit from our activities.

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## First Tsunami Support Group Meeting

The first Tsunami Support Group meeting took place on May 21 in London. This was for a private gathering for bereaved families and survivors and those close to them. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for people to meet each other as well as representatives from the Red Cross, the Police, the FCO & DCMS. Members of Disaster Action, whose members are all bereaved and/or survivors from disasters, also attended to share their experience of setting up support groups. We are helping to arrange further local support group meetings and other events in the coming weeks and months. Please contact us if you wish to join a group in your area.

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WWW.TSUNAMISUPPORTNETWORK.ORG.UK  
EMAIL: TSUNAMISUPPORTNETWORK@REDCROSS.ORG.UK  
SUPPORT NETWORK ANSWER SERVICE 0845 054 7474

### TSN Discussion Forum

We have set up a discussion forum for people affected by the Tsunami. This is monitored by a psychologist who can also discuss the emotional impact of the disaster and answer any questions you may have. This is at: [www.tsunamisupportnetwork.org](http://www.tsunamisupportnetwork.org).

### The Compassionate Friends:

(<http://www.tcf.org.uk>)

has a series of online discussion forums on its website offering bereavement support. There are currently discussion forums for parents, for grandparents and for siblings. These provide opportunities for anyone to write about themselves, their experiences & their feelings so that others in similar circumstances can make contact through email. A number of people who have been affected by the tsunami have contacted TCF.

### Tsunami Families:

(<http://www.uktsunamifamilies.com/forum>)

is a website and discussion forum which has been set up by and for those affected by the tsunami disaster. This site is meant for bereaved relatives although anyone is welcome to access it.

### Volunteering Information

Some people have asked how they can volunteer to help in the areas affected by the tsunami. If you would like more information on becoming a volunteer please contact the International Human Resources Department at the Red Cross.

This can be done either via our website [www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk), or in writing to: International Human Resources, British Red Cross Society, 44 Moorfields, London, EC2Y 9AL

You could also try local voluntary organisations in the affected areas.

### Commemorative Wristbands

Victoria and Katie Weston lost their father Peter Weston in the tsunami and they have designed a commemorative wristband which will be available to those bereaved and survivors.

The wristbands are in memory of all who lost their lives in the tsunami, including their father. The purpose of the wristbands is to unite families and groups of people together so they do not feel alone at this very hard time. The wristbands will be 'Cadbury's chocolate purple' and will say "Never Forgotten" on them.

These words, chosen by the girls, express the feeling that nobody should ever forget the loved ones lost and how the disaster destroyed so many lives and livelihoods. They have also put shells on the wristbands to remind them of the happy days they spent in the Indian Ocean before the tragic event.

Please contact us if you would like information about how to obtain a wristband. They will be available in the next few weeks.

### The Stephen Magson Memorial Trust

The purposes of the trust are:

1. To keep alive Stephen's memory by raising funds in his name.
2. To help the people of Kho Phi Phi rebuild their lives and livelihoods in the aftermath of the tsunami
3. To maintain strong links with people in the area where Steve lost his life.
4. Encourage and reward Steve's field of interest back home in York.

Contact details:

[www.stephen-magson-mt.org](http://www.stephen-magson-mt.org)

E-mail: [denise.magson@btopenworld.com](mailto:denise.magson@btopenworld.com)

Address: PO Box 422 York YO24 4WR

Tel: 01904 658 515 Fax: 01904 628 111

Please send us details of any other commemorative or fundraising activities you are involved in and would like to share.

## Contributing to TSN News

Some people find it helpful to write about their experiences and feelings. If you might be interested in writing articles, stories, poems or letters for this newsletter, please write to us. We are happy to receive anything up to 500 words and will discuss drafts with you.

## Dealing with the Tsunami: A Personal Account

Every time I open my laptop, a warm familiar photograph greets me. It is a group holiday picture of seven people sat at Colombo airport in Sri Lanka celebrating the New Year. We are all smiling, but there is a haunted look about our eyes after our long journey up from the hills behind Hikkaduwa, through miles of devastated towns and villages.

We were the lucky ones. We watched from the second floor balcony in trepidation as the waters grew and grew until the first floor of our beachside hotel was awash, and the only means of escape was over the roof to the road. I was left alone up there, nervously looking down at a huge hissing canister of gas washed out from the kitchen and wondering what structural damage had been done to the hotel below.

Afterwards, when the water had receded, I clambered through the wreckage of partition walls and plate glass to the safety of the road. A local man who cared for and cooked for us and gave us his family's beds for the night greeted us. It was a frightening night, with the full moon and the sound of the huge waves crashing in onto the beach, not quite far enough away.

Now, three months later, the reality has sunk in. A certain bleakness has overtaken me. I awake with a sense of dread. A few nights ago,

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## Dealing with the Tsunami: A Personal Account

I dreamt I was in a tent on the beach, with the water creeping in. We have returned to our home, to our friends, to our grown up sons and their girlfriends, our lovely pets and view, but there is a sense of unreality. Before our three month trip, we organised the holding of two events, a community lunch for 50 people in nearby woodland, and a woodland day for all with free workshops, walks and talks. In one way, it is good to have that commitment, to have to finalise these events, but at the back of my mind there is a feeling that I should be putting my energies into somehow helping those innocent victims recover from their traumatic experience.

We returned to Hikkaduwa six weeks after the tsunami. Our little hotel was open and full of aid workers from all over the world. Locals beamed when they saw we had returned, just as tourists. Some of the aid workers were professional and effective, but some used more resources than they should. We met teams from Denmark and Germany cleaning out fifteen wells a day, builders from New Zealand sponsored by their local council to come and help these stricken people rebuild their houses and their lives.

Voluntary aid workers helped measure the children's feet for new school shoes and gave them art therapy. A theatre group arrived to amuse them. Some Canadians working in Korea brought and distributed cuddly toys. The children were still terrified of the sea. The beaches always used to be full of happy kids at sunset, playing in the waves, and now their emptiness was a poignant reminder of those horrible needless deaths.

Pip Richards

## Inner Paradise

It has been four months and fourteen days since the Asian Tsunami. Tomorrow, the National Memorial Service for the UK victims of the Tsunami will be held. Only now, have I started to come to terms with what happened. My heart still goes out to all those families and friends who lost someone in this harrowing experience. Individuals who survived cannot believe how or why they survived and many thoughts still cross our minds.

The suffering that was so deep after experiencing and being confronted with things on a multiple scale, I have honoured the grief and the emotional issues. I disconnected from life, I felt lost without meaning and without a purpose. I did not grasp surviving in itself was going to take me to places I had never been before and I was certainly not prepared for this, I guess no one is. I did not have the strength to be a part of a world where this level of devastation took place. It was heartless and cruel. Along the way, I lost all feeling and entered a dark and lonely place. I know I am still on the road of recovery, but writing this has reminded me of how far I have come.

I would like to share some of my feelings and thoughts. These words are not about reflecting on what happened yesterday, but how the event has impacted my life today. Perhaps some of you will already have the same feeling.

I have learned the art of appreciating the simpler things in life. Rather than striving for the unimportant things, my values of life have changed and life has become more beautiful.

I am freer from false hopes and expectations. Sometimes we forget our true purpose in life and conform to society and cultural values. I have now started to let go and started to feel

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alive again. It is a whole new concept that I have had to adapt with in my life.

My relationships with people have changed. I take the time that I never used to before and my life is enriched with every person I meet. I will laugh and listen closely.

I have accepted that life is short-lived. We are a nation who constantly makes excuses and pushes our dreams and aspirations below the surface. Every minute is precious, it is important to find our true self worth and fulfil our inner desires.

The cost of devastation of major loss and change has united the humanitarian spirit around the world. We must not forget at the end of the day, "We are all one".

At the age of 31 I consider myself extremely fortunate, I have been granted with a second chance and whilst feeling vulnerable, my deeper spirituality, increased sense of self worth and heightened appreciation for life has escalated into greater maturity. I survived and when I look back at the path travelled to where I am now, I have learned extensively. From this knowledge I have been granted a new inner strength to keep on going and not to give up. It must not be mistaken, healing time is required to allow inner growth and there is no timescale before we come alive and bounce back to life once again.

I have been fortunate to have the people in my life who have provided me support through this difficult period. The new people I have met have shown me a new meaning and I have had to dig deep to seek the real me. We travelled to Koh Phi Phi to search for beauty and it was paradise. It still is and one day I will see again with new vision, but I have been reminded that you do not have to search or go to any lengths, the inner soul is paradise.

Kam Dhillon

## How is the Rebuilding Going?

A number of people have been requesting details of the rebuilding programmes in affected areas, how people are recovering there and about developments in the early warning systems. We asked some researchers where people could look for updates. The following sites were suggested:

The standard website for sitreps, particularly country-based, is:

**Reliefweb:** <http://www.reliefweb.int> or their 26 December tsunami page at: <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/dbc.nsf/doc108?OpenForm&emid=TS-2004-000147-LKA&rc=3>

Another useful page for rapid updates which also includes analyses and commentaries is:

**Alertnet:** <http://www.alertnet.org> or their 26 December tsunami page at: [http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/emergency/SA\\_TID.htm](http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/emergency/SA_TID.htm)

For reconstruction and recovery, both international and local news services have good and bad stories and analyses, many superficial but also many in-depth such as:

The **UNHCR** tsunami page at: <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/tsunami>

and the **UNDP** Indonesia tsunami page at: <http://www.undp.or.id/tsunami/index.asp>

Examples of what agencies are providing can be found on:

The **FAO** tsunami reconstruction page at: <http://www.fao.org/tsunami> and on all the NGO, IGO, and government aid agency pages such as **USAID** at:

[http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia\\_near\\_east/tsunami](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east/tsunami)

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## How is the Rebuilding Going?

A final good information source for these topics (UN-biased) is:

The **HIC** at: <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org>

Please do let us know if you have access to other sources or updates on how the rebuilding is going. We would welcome short articles on this subject.

## Charitable Help with Joblinks

The Association of Charity Officers has issued details about a searchable website called Joblinks set up to help individuals in need to find sources of charitable help.

Anyone who needs assistance, be it financial or another type of support, counselling or a listening ear, can look for help at the Joblinks website which is designed to connect people in difficulty with the funds that can help. Joblinks is run by a network of work-related charities.

There may be people affected by the Tsunami who may be eligible for help from member funds. The help on offer could include grants, allowances, debt counselling, sheltered housing, residential accommodation, nursing homes, care or support at home, as well as information and advice on a range of problems.

Their website is - [www.joblinks.org.uk](http://www.joblinks.org.uk). Those trying to reach a charity that can help can also use the Helpline on 01707 651777 (Mon-Fri 10am to 4pm) or email [helpline@aco.uk.net](mailto:helpline@aco.uk.net).

## Legal Support

The Solicitors Pro Bono Group is coordinating the provision of free legal help and assistance for those affected by the Tsunami.

This can cover a wide variety of legal issues and they have a large number of lawyer volunteers from all over England and Wales. Although they do not have volunteers in Scotland and Northern Ireland, they may well be able to find someone. So, residents of both should still apply to them.

The assistance they do provide is free. There is no charge for the Tsunami legal helpline (other than standard phone charges) and their lawyers have volunteered their time for free.

To access this free legal help for Tsunami victims and their relatives, call their helpline number which is 020 7090 7363. The line is open 9:30 to 4:30 every weekday.

Or go to the website at:  
<http://www.tsunamilegalhelp.org.uk/>

## Tsunami Research Project

Researchers from Cambridge University have started a research project on the Tsunami disaster.

They are looking to compile the accounts of people who witnessed the tsunami, which they hope will help prevent the recurrence of such a tragic event.

If you or anyone you know who would be willing to talk about their experience, or to provide a detailed written account, please call Maria Sylvester by phone: 01223 460475 or Keiko Saito by email: [ks269@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ks269@cam.ac.uk)

Further details are available at:  
<http://www.arct.cam.ac.uk/curbe/tsunami.html>.

## BBC Horizon

BBC Horizon are making a programme on the forensic science operation following the Boxing Day tsunami. They are looking specifically at the problems that were encountered with the identification of victims, and how the disaster victim identification process was implemented in Thailand in particular. They want to see what lessons have been learned as a result of this process which may alter the way such disasters are dealt with in the future.

They are very keen that the programme should reflect not only the perspectives of the police and forensic teams who worked on repatriation of victims, but also those of the families who lost loved ones in Thailand.

At this stage they would very much like to talk to anyone who feels their experiences may help to tell this story, whether or not they would eventually be interested in appearing in the television programme.

If you would like to know more please contact Nicola Cook, producer:  
([nicola.cook@bbc.co.uk](mailto:nicola.cook@bbc.co.uk)) Tel 020 8752 6237  
or researcher Catherine Wyler:  
([catherine.wyler@bbc.co.uk](mailto:catherine.wyler@bbc.co.uk)) Tel 020 8752 4248

## The TISEI Project

A group of clinicians at the University Medical Center Utrecht is inviting anyone interested to participate in a web survey. The TISEI project - Tsunami International Survey on Emotional Impact – has been set up to supply information about the emotional aftermath to victims and their relatives. It offers advice on receiving psychological help and performs research on the effects of the disaster. For more information, go to [www.tisei.org](http://www.tisei.org)

### Beads from Asia

We are hoping to start up a bead import business in Kent and wonder if there are suppliers in Asia, affected by the tsunami that we may buy from to help with trade.

Please contact Carol and Dave Broomfield on: [CAROLABROOMFIELD@aol.com](mailto:CAROLABROOMFIELD@aol.com) if you can help, or if you have any ideas on who they can contact for more information.

### Guidance on Dealing with the Media

We have available a leaflet offering guidance on dealing with the media. This has been prepared by representatives from the DCMS - the Department of Media, Culture and Sport - and Tom Clarke, who acted as media representative for the September 11th Family Support Group in the UK.

Please contact the Tsunami Support Network if you would like a copy of this leaflet on **0845 054 7474** or email us at [tsunamisupportnetwork@redcross.org.uk](mailto:tsunamisupportnetwork@redcross.org.uk)

### Talking to the Media

The media occasionally contacts us with requests for interviews with people affected by the tsunami. If you might be interested in this please contact us.

