

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Responding to the 2004 Tsunami

On December 26, 2004, a powerful underwater earthquake off the coast of Indonesia in the Indian Ocean caused a massive and destructive tidal wave known as a tsunami. The tsunami devastated coastal areas in twelve countries, killing an estimated 300,000 people and leaving approximately 5 million people



homeless, primarily in the countries of Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and India. The 2004 tsunami was one of the worst



natural disasters in recent memory. News about the widespread devastation and suffering spread quickly via the Internet, TV, radio, and newspapers. Generous responses poured in from individuals, organizations, and nations around the world to help with the immediate need. Countries slowly began to return to normal after the first few months, yet today long-term problems and challenges remain. Read below to find out more.

### Part I: The Initial Event

Many people in the United States responded to the initial tsunami relief effort by organizing fund-raisers and donations. In the excerpts below, read about some of these efforts as described by students and teachers on the Quarters from Kids Web site [[www.quartersfromkid.org](http://www.quartersfromkid.org)]:

#### From Massachusetts...

Anonymous

My friend and I went outside and played our guitars on the street. We asked people walking by if they wanted to help support the tsunami victims. We were able to raise \$14.29 on the first day! We hope to raise more money very soon!

#### From Michigan...

Forest Hills Public Schools

Students are collecting pre-packaged T-shirts for the tsunami victims. Students made posters to spread the word, and the . . . newspaper covered the event. Through the newspaper, community members were informed they could also make donations to be dropped off at their community public school.

#### From California...

Marin Country Day School

[At its first meeting] the 3rd–5th grade student council . . . immediately said that they wanted to raise

money for tsunami victims and that was their top priority. They organized a bake sale . . . and they raised over \$1,000. They are dividing the money between UNICEF and Oxfam.

#### From Florida...

Rebecca (age 9) and Joseph (age 11)

When we heard about the tsunami in Asia we knew we had to help. We went on *Good Morning Littlewood*, our school's television show, and asked for donations from other kids. We are glad they took it seriously! We raised \$453.34 and donated it to Oxfam America and the Red Cross.

#### From New York...

P.S. 209, Whitestone, Queens

Our student council . . . met and set a fund-raising goal of \$3,500 to be donated to UNICEF. . . . Notices were sent home. Student council members ask[ed] local merchants if [they] could put a collection bin in their establishments. . . . To date they have raised \$6,100.

## Part 2: Continuing Effects

Long after the initial tsunami, its continued effects are experienced in South Asia. While relief and world response to the initial event was great, longer-term consequences of the tsunami present many remaining problems. For example, children attend temporary schools in many places, while many countries still wait for building supplies. Read the news article below to find out more about some of these longer-term challenges.

### Rebuilding Tsunami-Torn South Asia

Months after a devastating tsunami struck eleven countries in South Asia, the countries are slowly returning to normal. However, the recovery effort is far from over. In fact, the most difficult work is yet to come. And in some of the hardest-hit places, a full recovery could be ten years away.

"It takes years for any place, in a country rich or poor, to rebuild from a disaster, but the tsunami affected so many people in so many places," Dan Shepard, communications officer for the United Nations Development Program, told *Scholastic News Online*.



Children assist in the repair of a bamboo roof of a house damaged by the tsunami in India.

For now, the main task is to decide what needs to be fixed first. Housing, health, schools, and water are just some of the countries' top priorities.

"Now it's to the point when we start working with communities more and trying to really understand what it is going to take to get these people back on their feet," said Jennifer Poidatz, who works for an aid agency in Sri Lanka, one of the hardest-hit countries.

In Aceh, Indonesia, kids are taking their first steps to a new life by going back to school. UNICEF and the Indonesian government are working hard to build temporary schools in the most damaged areas of Aceh and North Sumatra. The tsunami severely damaged or destroyed around 1,500 schools in this area alone.

"The tsunami may have swept away their past, but

it should not be allowed to destroy their future," said UNICEF's representative in Indonesia, Gianfranco Rotigliano. "What we all do now will have a profound influence on the lives of these children."

### A Few Bumps on the Road to Recovery

Some parts of the recovery effort are making progress, but there are still obstacles and challenges slowing down the process.

"Before you can rebuild a home, the government has to figure out who owns the land and many land records were destroyed. So this takes time. And proper planning takes time—people have different ideas on how to rebuild, and that takes time to resolve. And getting the right materials to the regions takes time. And it takes a lot of time for governments to do what they have to do," Shepard said.

Although natural disasters can't be prevented, precautions can be taken. An early warning is an important step, but it's going to take more than that.

"We have learned that we can build in a way that makes people less vulnerable to storms, earthquakes, and tsunamis. Being prepared means proper planning and this has to become part of the rebuilding process," Shepard said.

In the meantime, the United Nations is working hard not only to rebuild the countries, but also to improve them.

"The idea isn't just to rebuild what was there, but to rebuild in a way that will make things better than before, so the survivors of the tsunami have more opportunities to lead better lives than they had before," Shepard said.

—By Rachel Laskow, reprinted from [www.scholastic.com/oneworld](http://www.scholastic.com/oneworld)

## Part 3: What Do You Think?

After you've read Parts 1 and Parts 2 above, answer the following questions. Write your responses on the back of this page, and discuss your answers with your classmates.

1. In Part 1, what motivated students to raise money for victims immediately following the tsunami? What are some of the ways they responded?
2. Why do you think so many people around the world have responded to the tsunami?
3. In Part 2, what are some long-term effects of the tsunami?
4. Can you think of some ways that individuals can respond today?
5. How can people stay informed about long-term effects of the tsunami, or other events, after the event stops being "in the news"?