

FACT SHEET 2

TSUNAMI AID INTENSIFIES

The tsunami disaster affected countries in Asia and Africa, in particular Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Somalia, Tanzania, Kenya, Mauritius and the Seychelles. The catastrophe resulted in the loss of several hundreds of thousands of lives and large-scale destruction amounting to billions of US dollars.

The devastating effects of the tsunami continue as millions of displaced people struggle to cope with the destruction experienced by affected coun-

tries. The private sector and the South African government, through its various departments, have responded to the plight of tsunami victims and are currently facilitating mitigation and relief efforts. Our call for help to the vast community of civil engineering professionals and the industry has generated over sixty industry responses from private individuals, companies and firms who have offered and volunteered their skills, resources and products to aid with relief proceedings.

A MINISTERIAL TEAM represented South Africa at the Global Tsunami Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 6 January 2005 where relief discussions originated. At the summit, specific contributions were proposed that will lend assistance in the alleviation of suffering in disaster stricken areas. These include

- management expertise and systems
- technical expertise (water, sanitation, roads, etc)
- disaster management expertise and management systems
- infrastructure operational expertise (water boards)
- research needs through the Water Research Commission and CSIR

Disaster management is being handled in three phases:

- Phase 1 dealt with the emergency intervention directed towards the immediate threat presented by the disaster.
- Phase 2 addresses rehabilitation aimed at the secondary threats presented by the disaster, that is, food, shelter, water, disease prevention, re-establishing communication, making roads passable, etc.
- Phase 3 is geared towards reconstruction and is developed to help restore normality through the restoration of infrastructure including institutional infrastructure and systems.

The tsunami disaster management is now in phase 2, during which rehabilitation is gaining momentum. For example, the rehabilitation of existing water supplies and sanitation is currently receiving substantial attention – wells, boreholes and emergency toilet facilities. Restoring wells that have been polluted with saline water takes a high priority in many areas. In this phase, the planning of phase 3 intervention will also commence in order to progress towards long-term reinstatement and the restoration of normality.

Other areas of support identified include

- the provision of field workers in development and co-ordination efforts
- programme management and co-ordination
- assistance with planning and reconstruction work

- assisting the Maldives in addressing the problem of contamination of potable water supplies with effluent from septic tanks

- assisting Sri Lanka with 1 000 mT of alum for water purification in order to avoid a second disaster with the spreading of waterborne diseases

South Africa will work within the NEPAD framework to look after the interests of Africa in the planning, design and implementation of an early warning system for Indian Ocean countries. In addition, there will be an ongoing drive to promote private sector and NGO participation in rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

South Africa will also support research needs in terms of water, sanitation, health and hygiene, and will help to consolidate the scope of intervention into the larger disaster relief plan by communicating with various stakeholders. In addition, there will be an increase in the promotion and development of education, awareness and community participation in disaster prevention.

The response by the South African government and its people is a testimony to the national spirit of goodwill towards those affected.

Effective co-ordination is needed to ensure that intervention is not only timely, but also appropriate and sustainable.

The activities are too many to relate here, but the following give an idea of what has been achieved and what will still happen:

- The compilation of a SAICE database containing available skills, resources and products which may be utilised to support rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Industry responses were most favourable. For example, an offer by Knowledge Base has extended the use of their Civil Designer and AllyCAD software (at no charge) to the Civil Engineering Tsunami Relief Task Team (see p 25 of this issue). Another example – Iscor Ispat has donated tens of thousands of square metres of metal sheeting.
- The establishment of South African technical task teams consisting of health,

sanitation, engineering and other relevant professionals.

- Increased communication and talks across public sectors, private sectors and the civil society (NGOs and CBOs) in respect of tsunami aid and setting up long-term networks and information facilities.
- Linking up with the UK-based RedR initiative, which hosts a register of engineers who could be mobilised when disaster strikes.
- Extensive outreach to the media to ensure coverage of what the engineering community has been doing.
- South African academic institutions and academics are offering existing material developed over many years, as well as new courses and research regarding natural disasters.
- SAICE 2004 president, Ron Watermeyer, was commissioned by the International Labour Organisation to evaluate procurement systems in Sri Lanka. Indications are that our South African models may be used.
- A task team to address housing needs in Somalia and Maldives is being set up, utilising South African expertise and products.

The tsunami of 26 December 2004 is considered to be one of the biggest natural catastrophes in recorded history, but together we can bridge the gap and build a stronger future.

The contributions of a number of individuals and firms and government departments are greatly appreciated. The disaster is certainly giving birth to stronger relationships and, in true South African pioneering spirit, positive progress is being made on many fronts.

Dawie Botha

SAICE executive director, February 2005

Our special thanks go to Yolanda Desai of Knowledge Base Software, who compiled this report

Repro sponsored by Marketing Support Services, Pretoria