

**DÓCHAS**  
*The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations*

24 December 2009

**PRESS BRIEFING**

**5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Asian Tsunami in which nearly 230,000 people died**

**Lessons from tsunami relief effort highlight the importance of professional standards and effective coordination, say aid agencies**

Five years ago this Christmas, the world was shocked by the enormous devastation caused by a tsunami resulting from an undersea earthquake off the west coast of Sumatra, Indonesia.

In the Indonesian region of Atjeh alone, 168,000 people died. Sri Lanka, India and Thailand were also hit hard, and the effects of the tsunami waves were felt as far away as Somalia, Tanzania and Madagascar.

The people and governments in the affected nations were to some extent overwhelmed by the enormity of the catastrophe, and within hours a massive international humanitarian relief operation was under way.

“The scale of the relief effort was truly amazing, and the amount of support from people all over the world was unprecedented. We have saved many lives, and have been able to rebuild communities in many countries. And we have been able to evaluate the international response. Those evaluations have shown clearly that when aid is coordinated, it works extremely well – and when it is not, the long-term results are poor, or even negative,” said Hans Zomer, of the umbrella group of Irish aid agencies, Dóchas.

“As always, people in Ireland responded very generously to the disaster, and millions of euro were donated to the relief effort. What we have learned, however, is that many people did not realise how much coordination is required behind the scenes to ensure that the aid really reaches the people who need it. Good aid is about so much more than good intentions alone,” said Zomer.

The Irish aid agencies, working together through Dóchas, launched a website to enhance the provision of information about aid coordination. The website, [www.HowYouCanHelp.ie](http://www.HowYouCanHelp.ie), sets out how Irish aid agencies and the Irish government respond to emergencies, and it presents some of the basic principles of Irish aid.

The site describes how aid organisations identify needs and coordinate their work, and provides suggestions on how people in Ireland can help aid agencies to continue to give the right kind of aid. It has been developed in order to inform everyone - from staff working in aid agencies to members of the public - about how best to lend support in a time of emergency.

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NOTES:

- Independent evaluation reports of the relief effort are available from the UN's Office for Humanitarian Response (OCHA), at:<http://ocha-gwapps1.unog.ch/rw/srch.nsf/doc304SearchResults?OpenForm&view=rwrwb&dt=%22Evaluations%20and%20Lessons%20Learned%22&emid=TS-2004-000147-LKA>
- For more details of how professional emergency aid organisations work together, see [www.HowYouCanHelp.ie](http://www.HowYouCanHelp.ie)
- See also the Dóchas briefing paper on NGO cooperation:  
[www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/Development\\_ngos\\_working\\_together\\_for\\_greater\\_impact.pdf](http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/Development_ngos_working_together_for_greater_impact.pdf)