



VOICES OF HOPE

ADOLESCENTS AND THE TSUNAMI

For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY



This publication highlights UNICEF's commitment to partnering with children and young people. It is based on their voices, thoughts and actions. Children and young people from every region of the world were involved in providing information and commenting on earlier drafts of this publication.

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Details of a drawing by Pattama Muansuwan, 13, who attends the UNICEF-supported Bang Muang School in Thailand's Phang nga Province. She made the drawing during a session to help children recover from the trauma they experienced during the disaster.

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INTRODUCTION

On 26 December 2004, an earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean combined to produce a natural disaster of unprecedented scale, leaving 300,000 people dead or missing and displacing hundreds of thousands more. More than one third of those who died were children.¹

Over the months that followed, young people all over the affected region took action, helping to distribute aid, assisting with clean-up and rebuilding efforts, looking after those younger than them, and using their creativity to let others know about the devastation.



This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers.

The response from young people in other parts of the world was equally inspiring. Only four days after the disaster, UNICEF's interactive website, *Voices of Youth*,² was filled with messages from young people the world over expressing shock and solidarity, and offering to help. In an extraordinary outpouring of feelings and practical solutions, they demonstrated their desire and their ability to comfort, analyse and act.

Bursting with inventive ideas and keen to take part in rebuilding efforts, these young people showed that they have the potential and the right to become significant partners in social change. Nine months

later, however, as the tsunami-affected countries develop mid- and long-term programmes for rehabilitation and development, the enthusiasm and creativity of adolescents³ have yet to be enlisted in that vital effort.

Defined as the second decade of life, adolescence is filled with great possibilities even in times of crisis, both for the individual child and for the community as a whole. Investing in adolescents is an urgent priority not only because it is their inalienable right to develop to their full potential but also because interventions during this period can lead to lasting social and economic benefits to the larger community.

Time and again, adolescents and young people around the world have proved that they can provide innovative solutions in the midst of complex humanitarian crises. When given the opportunity to influence the plans and decisions that affect their lives, adolescents in emergency situations have spoken out against abuse or neglect, have joined hands with planners and managers in designing appropriate community programmes, and have initiated actions to support their peers. In each of these situations, they have brought their vision, idealism and sense of justice to the social agenda and have contributed to cohesion, peace-building and community reconstruction. At the same time, as experience from many countries shows, this participation has raised their confidence and self-esteem, given them citizenship and livelihood skills, and empowered them to protect their own rights.

The comments posted on the *Voices of Youth* website in response to the tsunami highlight the unprecedented opportunity that exists to harness the potential of these young people to improve the quality of reconstruction efforts. Grasping this opportunity is an important step towards bridging the gap between the rights and realities of adolescents. In addition, it is the only way to ensure that they develop the ability to steer their communities towards an equitable and peaceful future. At different times, in different crises, from Gujarat, India, to Bam, Iran, to the tsunami-affected countries, the young have voiced that aspiration. It is time to listen.



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WE ARE HAND IN HAND⁴

We share a common planet.
We share a common home.

Above our head,
is the same blue sky.

Under our feet,
is the same solid land.

Same nature is soaking inside our spirit.
Same blood is running under our skin.

When you are in the storm,
we weather it together.

When you are in the dark,
we give out light.

When you are in the cold,
we send our heat.

Brothers, you will never be separated.
Sisters, you will never be alone.

Don't fear, we are with you.
Don't cry, we will dry your tears.

Be brave, we are shoulder to shoulder.
Be strong, we are hand in hand.

With the power of love,
we will go the distance.

With the power of love,
we will see it through.

With the power of love,
miracle is round the corner.

With the power of love,
peace will get back.

QJ, age 22, China



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1

VOICES OF YOUTH

On 30 December 2004, four days after the tsunami struck, the Voices of Youth website became a space where young people could build a support group for each other and voice opinions about the direction relief efforts should take. The discussion forum that resulted lasted for three months and became known as 'Tsunami terror', a name that was suggested by the young people themselves.

Since 1995, UNICEF's Voices of Youth has provided young people from 180 countries the opportunity to explore, discuss and take action on complex issues of human rights and development. The website has enabled them to share their ideas with children and adults around the world and to learn how others are trying to make a difference in their own lives and communities. Over the years, their messages have been used to inform world leaders and develop strategies to address the rights and needs of young people.

Speaking out

In the first four weeks after the tsunami, young people from every region of the world contributed ideas and practical solutions. Almost 20 per cent came from countries directly affected by the tsunami, while another 6 per cent were from the wider regions. The remainder came from other countries around the world, including Argentina, Brazil, China, Greece, Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Mexico, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom. The largest group of participants from any one country was from the United States of America, while the best represented region was East Asia and the Pacific. Three times as many girls were active as boys, and the majority, 36 per cent, were between the ages of 15 and 17 years.⁵

Page views on the website almost doubled to cross the three-million mark in the first two months following the tsunami. The page views on the discussion boards also showed a similar hike. In January 2005 over six hundred new members registered to get their voices heard, an upward swing of more than 50 per cent, making the tsunami discussion board one of the most active and prolific forums on the website compared to the previous month.⁶

The early postings reflected shock, pain and attempts to grasp the reality of what had just occurred.

"How do you feel if your parents are suddenly taken away to the wild salty sea and [you] never see them again? How do you feel if your sister or brother bodies are found dead behind the rumbles of your house? How do you feel if you lost your cousins, grandpas, grandmas, your friends, your teachers and all the people that you like? And it all happen in one morning? Well that is how the children in Aceh feel now. I have many friends who lost their relatives there. We have to care about how they feel, they need us!"

Nisaa, age 9, Indonesia



Voices of Youth website: www.unicef.org/voyn

There were equally poignant messages from young people in countries far removed from the calamity, offering words of sympathy, compassion and unity.

“Have you taken time to actually think about the living horrors these people are going through? Children have been killed, orphaned, lost, injured.”

kim, age 20, Ireland

“You may be out of reach but not out of my mind. You may be out of my sight but not out of my heart. I may never tell you I love you but deep within me I do. No wonder I am thinking of you during this very agonising point of your lives.”

Blue_Kitten, age 19, Kenya

Some of the early messages on the Voices of Youth website reflected the anxiety of young people who wanted to reach out and lend a hand but had no idea how to go about it. Some referred to the customs in their countries and within their families that prevent adolescents from participating in events outside their immediate ambit. As the sudden shock of the tragedy ebbed, participants encouraged each other to get involved and showed their desire to be part of the healing process.

“I want to help the tsunami victims too but i don't know what to do. In my country teenagers don't often do much voluntary work.”

jessey, age 13, Viet Nam

“Considerable effort is being made but it also begins with us. Instead of complaining do something about it.”

hollernene, age 20, Kenya

“Now I have a question for everyone: What can we do to help?”

Lenal, age 17, Sweden

“Personal initiatives are very important! I'm part of the youths' town council of my village, we want to do something to help children in Asia. Continue! We can make things change!”

nina, age 17, France

The hope of creating a better world runs like a unifying thread through Voices of Youth. Displaying a keen awareness of how things can go wrong and asserting their right to ask tough questions, some young people responding to the tsunami brought up the need to empower communities so that they can question and **resist corruption**.

“Please, don’t u ever cheat with the money and funds they gave to our country, just don’t mess around with those money, use those money to build the new houses, new school, new public society, use the money wisely...just imagine if that could have happened to your children one day and your children will be crying out loud, devastated for help, please put it in your mind Mr. President... don’t u ever do that to them... ..I will be so ashamed as Indonesian if that happened...”

Sangsaka, age 24, Indonesia, (living in the United States)

“Amongst the organizers and everyone, there are several taking advantage of the situation for the sake of strategy, politics and money. Such elements will vanish automatically once every individual gets empowered. The best thing is that individual empowerment is free and needs to be instilled at every level; everyone requires it, from a hungry child dying in Africa amidst civil wars to a rich person washed away in sea by Tsunami.”

tusharpasrija, age 25, India

Providing solutions

Having issued a strong warning to governments and international agencies to be vigilant against corruption, young people expressed the hope that the relief effort would be **equitable and non-discriminatory**, with every country and every group receiving its fair share of aid.

“It is really very good to see that people, governments, organisations and everyone are ready with the money and have contributed either through money or materials. Firstly let all the Tsunami victims be treated and helped in the same manner without any kind of discrimination or some silly excuses.”

Zuhur, age 19, Somalia

“PLEASE, we need to make sure that ALL the AID is going EQUITABLY to everyone without any racial or religious discrimination!!”

Goldan, age 26, United Kingdom



A grounded boat in the Takua-Pa District in the province of Phang na, Thailand. Photographed by Ruenpetch Iyaraj-Tharak, a 15-year-old girl in Grade 8, whose family's home and property were damaged.



A damaged home in the Takua-Pa District in the province of Phang na, Thailand. Photographed by Narong Kraithong, a 16-year-old boy in Grade 8.

Some of the young people who had witnessed long years of ethnic strife spoke of their determination to leave the past behind and work towards **peace**, an example of the unique strength of the young: the ability to strive for creative solutions without dwelling too long on the past.

"In the future no matter what it takes I devote myself to help those people. For no matter who they are and what they are they are our sisters and brother, mothers and fathers, uncles and aunts. I know that day they weren't the only ones to cry in fact it was the whole world who cried along with them. The time has come to rebuild our nations. To lift up our spirits and work together. We can't bring back the dead but we can make those who are left behind live again. Give them new hope."

simigalo17, age 18, Sri Lanka

A few young people stressed **global responsibility** and the long-term need to work together to realize their vision of a more equitable and peaceful world. They underlined the need to go beyond individual or national self-interest and expressed the hope that people from different parts of the world would come together as global citizens working hand in hand for a better common future.

"I'm from Germany and well, the life here is very great and comfortable...you have so much money and so much opinions to buy things, so that a lot of people don't want to think about poor people. THEY HAVE TO OPEN THEIR EYES! It can't be that children are dying. Children are the future! Let us together fight against ignorance and help the children."

maracuya, age 17, Germany

"A speaker that went to Aceh to help showed us pictures of how life was there.... and it was the last place on earth u would wanna live... it's heart breaking and at the same time, relief, that at this time of suffering and lost of hope, many others went to give hope, help and aid for the victims.. no matter race, religion or country... it's great even to see so many children/teens like us taking the effort to make things seem brighter and to share thoughts and views on the disaster."

jenniferghc, age 16, Malaysia

The optimism displayed by these young people was not just an idealistic vision, it was underpinned by practical suggestions on how countries need to work to sustain **long-term reconstruction** efforts and not allow the initial enthusiasm to wane before enduring progress is made.

"This is not a 'three week thing' these ppl need help for at least another year. That is why I said earlier that to keep your enthusiasm and resources going for a few more months as well."

Rusiru, age 19, Sri Lanka

"After we have moved off from country-level events, we might just be able to share ideas at the international level and learn from each other our experience. We shouldn't let come true what the news has been saying, 'the hype of helping will soon die off'... I believe we will move the hearts of those donors to donate regularly for as long as help is needed."

verisadz, age 22, Singapore

"lets just hope that governments and ppl [people] continue their efforts...because

SUMATRA, INDONESIA—At a Children's Centre outside Meulaboh on Sumatra's battered west coast, scores of children gather daily to take part in songs and games. Eleven-year-old Angga takes a turn at umpiring a game of tug-of-war. It is clear he is enjoying his chance to play, before having to return to the harsh reality of life in one of Aceh's temporary camps.

After his morning's exertions, Angga returns home to the communal tent where his family occupies one small corner. Despite experiencing some unpleasant flashbacks of the tragedy, he says he is a lot happier now, six months later.

"I like going to the centre because there are lots of volunteers there that I can discuss things with," he says. "And when I grow up, I want to be a volunteer just like them."



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SRI LANKA—Minhaz Haque, 15, stands in his neighbourhood, now destroyed by the tsunami, in the village of Maruthamunai in the eastern district of Ampara. Many of Minhaz' friends are missing and his family home is gone. When the tsunami struck – on a Sunday, when schools were closed – Minhaz was fitting tiles on a roof. He clung to the roof as the water rose, but the house collapsed from under him. First, he grabbed a tree, then a refrigerator that was floating by, then managed to find shelter on the roof of another building. When the water receded, Minhaz found his family – both his parents and five siblings – all of whom had survived and are now living in a relief centre.



© UNICEF/HQ05-0114/SORASAK YANGMEEMAK
Two men pray at a street-corner shrine in the Takua-Pa District in the province of Phang na, Thailand. Photographed by Sorasak Yangmeemak, a 15-year-old boy in Grade 8, who lost several relatives and whose home and belongings were damaged.



© UNICEF/HQ05-0115/NARONG KRAITHONG
Children in the Takua-Pa District in the province of Phang na, Thailand, sit amidst piles of donated clothing at a temporary shelter for people whose homes were damaged or destroyed. Photographed by Narong Kraithong, a 16-year-old boy in Grade 8.

usually the trend is for the fervour to die out as soon as the media hype is cooled up.”

Emmen, age 19, Pakistan

In their messages, a few young writers paired idealism and aspirations with **practical suggestions** for working together and sharing the fruits of development using media and modern technology.

“Start some online courses with teachers all around the world (online volunteers) and learn because many schools from South Asia were destroyed and children and young people have no place where to go, they are isolated and lonely and can’t continue their classes for the moment. ask directly for the material help they really need: they should have a password and access to a special website where they should post their needs.”

Lucy12, age 17, Romania

“In addition to the idea of ‘setting up an internet accessible place for children in those Tsunami-hit countries’, we could have a mlrc-style⁷ of channel set up, where all the children and helpers including youth members, NGOs, counsellors can go into the channel and chat with them....”

verisadz, age 22, Singapore

Making a difference

Voices of Youth proved to be a vehicle for young people to share not only their thoughts and emotions about the tsunami but their actions as well. Within days of the disaster, as world leaders tried to come to grips with the magnitude of the devastation and struggled to raise resources for gigantic relief efforts, the website was full of stories of students raising funds, collecting toys and books, supporting local efforts and writing letters of support to other young people in the affected countries.

“We are all there to help support do whatever we possibly can from our side. on a personal level me and my friends have gotten together and collected some money for the tsunami victims of sri lanka because that is the only country so far whose embassy is accepting goods in donation and we want to send food and blankets to them.”

Emmen, age 19, Pakistan

“Regarding what youth artists can do to help, may be u guys can draw up some pictures, which would help soothe the minds of the children affected by the tsunami. These kids are traumatized after all the destruction and loss of lives that they have seen right in front if their eyes. Some kids apparently can’t sleep bcos they keep seeing nightmares of the tsunami. So maybe u guys can make some drawings, which would help soothe their minds. These drawings could later be hung up in the schools that are being rebuilt.”

Rusiru, age 19, Sri Lanka

“Students are volunteering to pack and organize packages at a warehouse in Jakarta today.”

J.O.Y, age 14, Indonesia

“At my school, all of the student organizations, such as our Student-Government, Habitat for Humanity, Japanese Club, National Honor Society, etc. are planning a huge event. We are collecting money during homerooms for 2 weeks, possibly more, and having a Student/Teacher dodge ball game...”

KateKat2416, age 17, United States

“All of you guys are Great. In the last few days I was busy with collecting money & clothes for the people in south Asia... Now... I found that I am not alone who think and act for them. Thank you.”

M.Salih, age 22, United Arab Emirates



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2

ADOLESCENCE

“Adolescence is a period when character crystallizes and identity forms. It is also a period when many adolescents are contributing to society in remarkable ways: as parents, workers, caretakers of young children and elders and as role models.

Society has an obligation to shepherd its young people through their adolescent years and to treat them with respect and understanding. When it assumes these responsibilities, the benefits multiply in ways never imagined.”

From Adolescence: A time that matters, UNICEF, New York, 2002.

A time that matters

The young contributors to the Voices of Youth website have turned the spotlight on adolescence. Defined as the second decade of life, adolescence is filled with great possibilities even in times of crisis, both for the individual child and for the community as a whole.

Investing in adolescents is an urgent priority not only because it is their inalienable right to develop to their full potential but also because interventions during this period lead to lasting social and economic benefits to the larger community.

Adolescence offers one of the last opportunities to help mould the kind of adults children will become, but it is also a time when children run the greatest risk of having their rights violated or neglected. There are few programmes that specifically focus on the protection or development of adolescents. And while the under-18 population of many countries grows increasingly larger, especially in those countries affected by the tsunami (*see Table 1, next page*), there is still not enough attention paid to the particular risks, as well as the potential, of the second decade of life.

TABLE 1: Proportion of population under 18 in tsunami-affected countries

Country	Total population* (2003)	Population under 18* (2003)	Percentage of population under 18
India	1,065,462	414,965	39
Indonesia	219,883	77,966	35
Malaysia	24,425	9,427	39
Maldives	318	158	50
Myanmar	49,485	18,759	38
Somalia	9,890	5,401	55
Sri Lanka	19,065	5,734	30
Thailand	62,833	19,183	31

*In thousands

Source: United Nations Children's Fund, *The State of the World's Children 2005*, UNICEF, New York, 2004.

A generation at risk even before the disaster

- About 7.5 per cent of Indonesian children aged 10-14 years (almost 1.6 million children) participate in the labour force. There are also more than 4 million children under the age of 18 (more than 1.5 million of whom are girls) working in occupations potentially hazardous to health or safety.^a
- In Indonesia in 2002-2003, 34 per cent of women and 21 per cent of men in the 15-24-year age group had never heard of HIV/AIDS.^b
- In Thailand, the country's 'open' borders have let in problems like drug trafficking and trafficking in children and women.^c
- In India, an increase of 500,000 HIV infections in 2004 brought the total number of HIV-positive cases to an estimated 5.1 million, making it the country with the second-largest number of people living with HIV. The epidemic is increasingly affecting women and young people.^d

Sources:

- a. International Labour Organization, *Eliminating the worst forms of child labour, Indonesia: Working out of Poverty*, no.8, A series of Policy Recommendations, Decent Work and Poverty Reduction in Indonesia, ILO, Jakarta, 2004.
- b. Indonesia Demographic and Health Surveys (IDHS) 2002-2003, Maryland.
- c. United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Thailand 2004 Annual Report*, UNICEF Bangkok, 2004.
- d. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *2004 Report on the global AIDS epidemic*, UNAIDS, Geneva, June 2004.

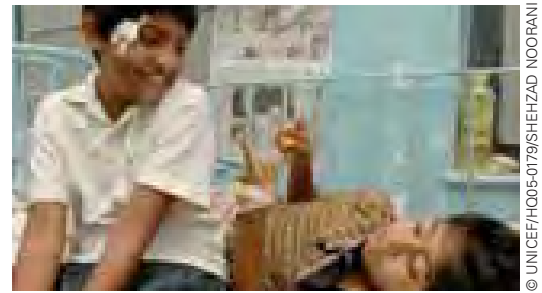
But it is during emergency situations that adolescents face the greatest challenges, and the tsunami has demonstrated this reality on a very large scale. The fears expressed by the young participants on the Voices of Youth discussion board reflect the growing awareness around the world that adolescents in emergency situations are vulnerable in different ways than younger children and need special protection and guidance. Relief efforts typically focus on the urgent health and nutrition needs of under-five and primary-school-age children, often overlooking adolescents. Yet it is the latter age group that may be specially targeted in times of conflict or disaster.

Deprived of the protective networks offered by family and social community, adolescents in crisis situations must somehow cross over from childhood into adult roles while battling their own fears and losses. The disruption of school activities leads many to drop out permanently, depriving them of education and the chance to break out of the cycle of poverty.⁸ Lured by promises of a better life, children in poor countries may find themselves working in illegal or unorganized trades under hazardous and exploitative conditions, and many are sold into domestic labour.⁹ Despair and depression often lead adolescents to risk-taking behaviour, exposing them to drug use, commercial sexual exploitation and conflicts with the law.

“I think no matter how much security you have and measures in place to protect children, it boils down to the predators and ethics. If people are intent on causing harm, they will find a way to do so no matter what.... We can do our best to prevent but we cannot directly control the predators from their criminal actions.”

Mingzy, age 22, Singapore

Adolescent girls are particularly at risk during these periods of crisis and social upheaval. They are often the primary target of violence and sexual abuse. Child marriages tend to increase during emergencies, as parents try to protect their daughters from rape or look for ways to reduce their own burdens. This exposes young girls to a number of health problems including premature pregnancy and HIV/AIDS.



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SRI LANKA—Nadisa, 11, visits her sister Dilini, 8, in the general hospital in the southern city of Matara. Both girls are being treated for injuries received during the tsunami. They were with their family at the bus station when the tsunami struck. Nadisa tells their story: “My father...took my younger sister in his arms and went outside to see. Soon after, an even bigger wave of water came and swept my father and sister away. Many others were trapped ...[and] died when furniture, luggage and buses were tossed around by the water.” Their uncle found Nadisa, Dilini and their mother, Malkanti, and took them to the hospital. The father and youngest sister died.



© UNICEF MYANMAR/2005/THAME

MYANMAR—“That morning I was selling snacks with my mother, and while we were cooking the first big wave struck the shore,” says 12-year-old Phyto Ei Khine. “We ran to a monastery, and then the second wave hit. Our house was destroyed and almost everything we had was swept away.”

UNICEF quickly responded, providing affected families with survival kits packed with essential supplies.

“We received a UNICEF box with blankets, pillows, pots and pans,” said Phyto Ei Khine.

THAILAND—Eleven-year-old Isamael Gumuda remembers clearly the day the huge waves took away his seven-year-old brother. They were at school rehearsing a performance for the upcoming New Year celebration when they heard a roar.

“We turned and saw a giant wave, taller than our school building, was coming to hit us. I held my brother tightly, but the wave separated us. I survived because the wave carried me to the bottom of the mountain while my brother couldn’t make it. I miss him very much and pray for him,” recalled Isamael.



© UNICEF/2005/BURLINGAME

SRI LANKA—“Sometimes I get a little mad with my brothers and sister, but really, I’m so glad that we’ve found each other again,” says 12-year-old Nishanthini. She has two younger and three older brothers, plus a five-year-old sister.

The children come from Navalady, which was a village of around 600 families in Sri Lanka’s eastern Batticaloa district. After the tsunami they were taken in by an uncle, who lost all his family in the disaster apart from one son. Unable to cope, he placed each of the seven children with different people, mostly distant relatives. Nishanthini was put in an orphanage.

That they have found a caring and nurturing home – together – was no stroke of luck but a determined effort by UNICEF staff, who are helping to implement a new government-run fostering programme for children left adrift and orphaned by the tsunami.

Improving life skills

According to the findings of a survey of young Sri Lankans between the ages of 10 and 19, a sizeable group of adolescents lack sound life skills but live in a society with many situations requiring a considerable amount of such skills.

Considering the large adolescent population (3.7 million) in Sri Lanka, and the prevailing environment, improving the life skills of adolescents is a priority. It is important to identify innovative, rapid, effective and feasible strategies to reach adolescents in all walks of life over a relatively short period of time. Strategies other than imparting knowledge and skills through traditional classroom approaches should be developed. An important component of any such strategy would be to establish a strong advocacy campaign and to solicit the support of policymakers and society. Creating awareness, especially among parents and making them active participants in the programme, is crucial for success.

Source: United Nations Children’s Fund, *National survey on emerging issues among adolescents in Sri Lanka*, UNICEF, Colombo, 2005.

Dropping out

The changing nature of work in a globalized environment requires better education, new skills and relevant capacities. Old approaches to education are rapidly becoming obsolete and are being challenged by students, parents, businesses, teachers, policymakers and the media. *Speaking Out*, a 2001 survey of young people aged 9-17 from throughout the East Asia and Pacific region, asked why they are out of school. The most common reasons young people gave were lack of money (43 per cent), the need to help at home (22 per cent) and the need to work, while more disturbingly, not liking school and not wanting to attend was cited by 19 per cent of those not attending school.

Source: United Nations Children’s Fund, *Speaking Out: Voices of children and adolescents in East Asia and the Pacific*, UNICEF, Bangkok, 2001.



© UNICEF/HOO5-0118/PANADDA SRIKOTCHA

Children in the Takua-Pa District in the province of Phang na, Thailand, climb into the back of a military truck that will take them to school. Soldiers are helping communities re-establish basic services. Photographed by Chai Kla-talae, a 15-year-old boy in Grade 8, who lost several relatives and whose home was destroyed.



© UNICEF/HOO5-0118/PANADDA SRIKOTCHA

A couple stands in front of a house that escaped undamaged in the Kato District in the province of Phuket, Thailand. Photographed by Panadda Srikotcha, a 9-year-old girl in Grade 3. Her family survived the disaster, but her home and school were both damaged.

Investing in adolescents is vital for:

1. Implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
2. Defending girls' rights to legal, later (to exact age 18 or above), informed and voluntary marriage
3. Protecting reproductive health and establishing positive health habits
4. Realizing investments in human capital, including health investments made in early childhood, which are undermined without attention to adolescent development and observance of adolescents' rights
5. Intervening at a crucial point to reduce or reverse gender disparities in health, social and economic resources
6. Building an effective economic base in poorer economies (adolescence is the period in which most women and men begin their economic life, however properly or ill prepared they are for it)
7. Contributing to the reduction in rapid population growth by increasing the span between generations.

Source: Adapted from Bruce, Judith, *Investing in the Diverse Universe of Adolescents: A note on research, program and policy priorities*, (draft), Population Council, New York, 2005.

“I may not know my rights, but you do not know my life.”¹⁰

A young boy in Bangladesh

Critical partners

The postings on Voices of Youth that followed so soon after the devastation caused by the tsunami are eloquent reminders of young people’s strong desire to participate in making the world a better place. Even though this participation is now widely recognized as an important right—both as an end in itself and as a means of achieving other rights—it continues to be the least understood of all child rights. There is little awareness of either the meaning of child participation or of the methodologies to ensure

it. Nevertheless, whenever opportunities have been created for adolescents to become part of community processes, remarkable gains have been achieved.

In times of crisis, child participation has proved to be especially effective. During these times young people have shown their exceptional ability to overcome obstacles and turn challenges into opportunities. Their meaningful contributions in situations of political strife, war, natural disasters and epidemics are often the best way to understand how young people can become effective agents of social change.

Parents, teachers, government bodies and development agencies must recognize that children have important ideas and talents to contribute. Inclusion and non-discrimination are essential so that all children everywhere, regardless of their sex, class, ethnicity or location, can be heard. In post-tsunami reconstruction it is crucial to create meaningful mechanisms for accessing the expertise of children and for providing young people with a variety of platforms to communicate their priorities and needs.

Numerous examples from all over the world show situations in which young people have displayed their desire to be part of development processes by taking action and having an impact on the issues that affect their lives.

Adolescents...

Speak out

In **Afghanistan**, 11 consultations were organized between 2002 and 2003 to elicit children's views on the reconstruction of the country after the devastation of years of war. Children spoke out on the issues that affected their lives the most. These consultations resulted in a Children's Manifesto and the formation of children's groups for promoting child rights in many parts of the country. Children's voices were heard in many regional *jirgas* (assemblies) as well as a national *jirga*, and are being incorporated into plans for rebuilding the country. In a nation faced with complex problems and a scarcity of resources, decision makers have not been able to ignore what the children have said and this is becoming the basis of safeguarding their rights to education, protection, safe water, sanitation and health.^a

Engage in civic life

In **Timor-Leste (East Timor)**, nine days before independence was celebrated on 20 May 2002, a Student Parliament held its inaugural meeting at the parliamentary assembly. As the new nation moved towards independence, UNICEF and its partners launched a vigorous campaign to educate young people about democracy. Under the banner 'Build a nation with children and young people', youth were encouraged to become involved in the political process. The Student Parliament was born out of this campaign. Students debated a range of issues, from health care to education and HIV/AIDS. They called upon the new government to ratify human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and demanded improvements in health and education in rural areas.^c

Take action

The Tamil village of Sivanthivu in **Sri Lanka** lies in a 'grey' area controlled neither by the government nor by the rebel group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Following a decision by the local Sri Lankan army commander to block the road to the village, the local children's club organized a petition to have the road reopened. Its closure had ended the education of those children who had to travel by bus to a nearby village to attend school. Walking or cycling would have exposed them to harassment by soldiers. Previous efforts by the villagers had failed, yet the initiative of the children's club to gather the signatures of all the residents on a petition paid off. Staff at non-governmental organizations passed this petition on and managed to have the matter raised with the army at a senior level. The road was duly reopened and the bus has come to the village ever since.^b

Use the media

In **Somalia**, a country deeply seated in tradition, culture and religion, youth groups are giving voice to the concerns of their generation by promoting greater community awareness about issues such as female genital mutilation/cutting, disarmament and HIV/AIDS. Because Somalia retains a strongly oral culture, the importance of mass media as a conduit for the spoken word is fundamental. To that end, UNICEF supports the Youth Broadcasting Initiative, which works with 20 youth groups around the country, providing training to young people in radio and video production. The programme requires that those who take part go on to produce programmes for their communities that focus on the key issues of concern to young people. The ongoing training and day-to-day management of productions is done by the youth groups with the support of producers from the local media. The videos and radio programmes are broadcast and distributed on a regular schedule. At the same time, UNICEF, the youth groups and other agencies working in Somalia have access to the videos and radio programmes to use in community mobilization activities, as training tools to launch local debates or as a form of entertainment.^d

Sources:

- a. Save the Children, PowerPoint presentation shown at Regional Workshop on Strengthening Participation of Girls and Boys in Tsunami Response Programme, Kathmandu, Nepal, April 2005.
- b. United Nations Children's Fund, *The State of the World's Children 2003*, UNICEF, New York, 2002.
- c. Ibid.
- d. Ad hoc working group for youth and the MDGs, *Youth and the Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities for Implementation*, Case Study 19: Youth Training and Awareness through Media in Somalia, 2005.



A building that was partially destroyed by the tsunami faces a calm sea and a white sand beach in the Kato District in the province of Phuket, Thailand. Photographed by Panadda Srikotcha, who described the scene as 'the sea that frightened me'.



A woman cooks in an outdoor area of a temporary shelter in the Takua-Pa District in the province of Phang na, Thailand. Photographed by Wannee Lakonvong, a 15-year-old girl in Grade 8, whose home was damaged.

Key lessons learned on adolescent participation in crisis situations

- A level of trust and openness is necessary to stimulate interaction.
- Participation should provide learning opportunities for adolescents to make decisions, assume leadership roles and initiate action.
- Sustainable and meaningful participation requires the engagement of adolescents from the project's inception.
- The talents, skills and learning abilities of adolescents must be recognized and existing capacities and strengths must be built upon.
- Traditional knowledge and wisdom must be integrated and local resources used.
- Each girl and boy is unique and will bring forward specific capacities and talents.
- Specific affirmative action strategies will be needed to overcome ethnic, religious, political or gender discrimination.
- Girls may need additional encouragement and support to overcome social, cultural and economic barriers to their full participation in community life.
- Sustainability is best achieved through involving parents, teachers and community leaders in young people's programming activities.
- Adolescents who are out of school should have access to programmes through youth groups or other community outreach.

Source: United Nations Children's Fund, *Adolescent Programming in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations*, UNICEF, New York, 2004.

"I know that day they weren't the only ones to cry; in fact, it was the whole world who cried along with them. The time has come to lift up our spirits and work together. We can't bring back the dead but we can make those who are left behind live again."

simigalo17, age 18, Sri Lanka

"When we send money to them as a union, we could write a letter and put it with the money. Money can help them rebuild their home; love can help them rebuild their hope."

QJ, age 22, China

"In these days with the tragedy in South Asia I realized that the youngsters want to participate and make a better world. All [their] ideas show that the young people are united and willing to help the people that need their support. The youngsters are acting locally and that's great because they show their urge to live in a better world."

CaTaLiNa, age 18, Colombia

THAILAND—Nong, a quiet 15-year-old schoolgirl, still weeps when she talks about her mother, who disappeared when the tsunami struck six months ago. Sitting alone on one side of her school's playground, Nong explains her mother's absence by saying she has gone away to marry a new man. Denial is the only way she can deal with her grief. In fact, Nong is an orphan. She faces the same bleak future that confronts more than 1,200 children in Thailand who lost their parents to the tsunami. But Nong's case has one major difference: She lives 1,000 km from the sea, in the impoverished province of Nakhon Phanom.

On 26 December, the waves reached up to 3 km inland, but their effect was felt across the whole country. In the north and north-east, hundreds of children like Nong were orphaned when their parents, migrant workers in the fishing and tourism industries of Phuket, Pee Pee and neighbouring islands, were caught up in the tsunami's fury. Of the thousands who were working in the south, many never returned home.

Nong and her three siblings are being supported by their grandparents, who cannot afford the trip south to try to find and identify the body of Nong's mother.

As a result, there may not be enough money for Nong to continue her schooling. She dreams of becoming a motorcycle mechanic.



INDONESIA—Refanja Rahmatillah, 13, holds up an account he has written in English of his experience during the tsunami, in his class at Ketapang Dua Aceh Besar School in Banda Aceh, capital of Aceh Province. It reads: "Because [of] killer waves, my mother is sick in hospital and my sister died. My school [was] lost too... I [am] very sad, because my young sister [is] lost."



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ADOLESCENTS IN ACTION

Young people in many of the tsunami-affected countries have taken the initiative to actively participate in emergency interventions and become true agents of change.

Agents of change

In **Sri Lanka**, dozens of eager medical school graduates initiated a programme, aided by UNICEF, to provide psychosocial support to young survivors of the tsunami. The programme involves play therapy to help the children find their way back into a normal life.¹¹

In **Indonesia**, a group of students from a Jakarta University mountaineering club came to Banda Aceh on their own initiative and at their own expense to take part in relief efforts. In collaboration with local groups, they worked under gruelling conditions to collect data in camps for internally displaced persons, which helped international relief agencies to focus and improve their humanitarian response. They also took part in a rapid assessment of schools and then laboured to clear tons of debris and mud in those schools that were still standing and could be made functional. As a result, thousands of children were able to return to school a month after the tragedy.¹²

Integrated response

“The destruction left behind after the tsunami required massive mobilization of humanitarian organizations, community groups and volunteers to assist survivors and to clean up and rebuild lives and communities. The youth in Indonesia, often being a very socially and politically active group, were an integral component of the tsunami response. Their presence was integrated rather than a separate response and they often suffered hardship in their commitment to respond.”

Claudia Hudspeth, UNICEF, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

INDIA—UNICEF is training volunteers to handle the delicate task of staffing the shelters for victims of the tsunami. Volunteers learn how to weigh children correctly, prepare nutritional supplements and encourage children to play, and in doing so facilitate their return to normal life.

Sixteen-year-old Prema is one of the volunteers. She knows first-hand about losing loved ones to the tsunami: “The tsunami killed my mother, my older brother, my aunt and my grandfather. I lost four family members on the same day,” she says.

Prema and her surviving brother are living with an uncle. She is volunteering because she believes it is important to help all the children rebuild their lives.



SRI LANKA—Dilan takes a shower in the ruins of his home that was heavily damaged in the tsunami, in the village of Piyadegama near the popular southern tourist town of Hikkaduwa. Dilan lived with his grandmother, who died in the disaster. He said, “When the first wave came, I was on the road...[and the water] was up to my knees. A little later, the second wave came and I tried running but the water caught up with me.... Many people died in this area: my grandmother in this house, a woman and her daughter in the neighbourhood, and my uncle next door.... My school is also destroyed.”

In the **Maldives**, Girl Guides and Boy Scouts were very active in the camps for displaced persons set up early on in schools in Male. They assisted with several tasks, including the distribution of aid and playing with children. Many youth volunteers helped out in sorting food, clothes and other items collected from local inhabitants, as well as aid received from abroad before it was distributed to the islands. In addition, the Disaster Management Centre had its own volunteering desk with a number of youth volunteers.¹³

Caution is needed

“The largest task in the first month was to remove all the bodies (more than 120,000) from the debris and to bury them in mass graves. This was a terrible task and as the weeks went on the bodies were decomposed. Thousands of volunteers poured into Aceh to help with this task. Many of the volunteers were young people. It will definitely leave them with emotional scars but it was a critical task that was too much for only the remaining community members to handle on their own. It is not always realistic to have young people participate in emergency relief and community rehabilitation. Their engagement should be voluntary and caution should be taken to ensure they do not suffer emotional scars, exploitation and trauma themselves.”

Claudia Hudspeth, UNICEF, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

In **India**, the *Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangathan*, which operates under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, is one of the world's largest youth organizations. It has the unique advantage of grass roots-level youth clubs in villages that can be mobilized quickly during emergency relief efforts. The youth groups were among the first citizen volunteers to arrive at the tsunami-hit Andaman and Nicobar islands. They joined the search for bodies and helped to cremate and bury them. They set up waste disposal systems to deal with the huge amount of debris left behind by the receding waters, assisted the authorities in building temporary shelters and road links and distributed relief material in the camps for internally displaced persons.¹⁴



People search through debris in a coastal area in the Takua-Pa District in the province of Phang na, Thailand. Photographed by Wannee Lakonvong.



Adolescents entertain younger children in the Takua-Pa District in the province of Phang na, Thailand. Photographed by Narong Kraithong.

Youth-led activities

“Small populations are dispersed over several hundred islands. Even under these difficult circumstances, a group of students from engineering schools volunteered to repair schools as well as build new learning spaces for children living on islands that were damaged or destroyed by the tsunami. With their teachers, the young volunteers moved to a selected island and spent 10 days on the rebuilding and repair project, making it possible for young children to resume their studies and return to a sense of normalcy. Other groups travelled from Male to offer counselling to young people on tsunami-affected islands. All of these initiatives were youth-inspired and youth-led.”

Sherazade Boualia, UNICEF, Maldives

Also in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a schoolboy shaken by the images of suffering began a somewhat unusual campaign to secure aid for affected island people. Fourteen-year-old Nakul Goel completed a 20-minute film he shot entitled *Kudrat ka Kahar* (Fury of Nature) and made plans to launch it in major Indian cities to collect aid for the affected. “Most people don’t realise how difficult the logistics in the islands are and how tough it becomes for relief agencies to provide succour. This aspect is being conveyed to agencies and individuals who are still confused about how much to contribute,” he said, his conviction and purpose belying his age.¹⁵

In addition, 15 adolescent tsunami survivors have been trained to work as volunteers at a day care centre for young children in a village in Tamil Nadu in the southern part of the country. Putting their own



A house that was heavily damaged faces the sea in the Katoo District in the province of Phuket, Thailand. "This is what is left of my house. I feel sorry for my parents who have to work hard to rebuild it," says the photographer, Panadda Srikotcha.



A road runs through a coastal area littered with debris in the Takua-Pa District in the province of Phang na, Thailand. Photographed by Sorasak Yangmeemak.

grief and loss behind them, they spend their day looking after the young ones who attend the day care centre, playing games and using songs and poems to teach them simple arithmetic as well as bird and animal calls. They have also learned how to measure the children's height and weight, and can teach basic sanitation and hygiene practices as well as nutrition. Seventeen-year-old Sonia, who lost her mother and came close to losing her own life when the tsunami hit her village, says that looking after the children helps her to forget the horrors of that fateful day. The laughter of the children as they push and jostle before settling down to their lunch makes her smile too. Helping others to recover from their trauma is the best way she knows of healing her own sorrow and moving towards her goal of becoming a nurse one day.¹⁶

Governance and urban planning

"In Somalia, UNICEF must operate in situations where administrative preparedness to deal with disasters such as the tsunami is very low. The response by the local youth to the disaster indicates that young people are ready to be creatively involved when authorities are too overwhelmed to respond and support communities.

UNICEF plans to train local youth groups in local governance to ensure that urban planning issues affecting youth will be listened to and that young people will be involved in decision making.

UNICEF also plans to capitalize on the existing relationship between youth and the administration to ensure that young people play a major role in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of tsunami-struck Hafun."

Alhaji Bah, UNICEF, Somalia

In Hafun, **Somalia**, most youths have either dropped out of school or have never attended. They spend most of their time fishing and selling their catch in the local market. However, when the tsunami struck, the sea became a no-go zone for fear of a repeat tsunami. This provided an opportunity for UNICEF to mobilize the youth in the distribution of relief and emergency supplies, including learning and recreational materials. But the efforts of these young people did not end there. They committed themselves to supporting the registration of schoolchildren, which spurred UNICEF to begin building a bigger school. In addition, the young people formed a group, which has been conducting HIV/AIDS-awareness activities and will soon benefit from skills training at literacy and community learning centres. UNICEF provided recreational materials to ensure that the youth would not only have fun but continue to be involved, too. UNICEF also plans to conduct sporting activities supported by parents and the wider community. Experience shows that even in a culturally strong community like Hafun, where youth participation in such tragedies is typically minimal and rarely appreciated, young people have a role to play and should be included at all stages of community activities (planning, decision making, implementation and reviews).¹⁷

Some of the areas hit hardest by the tsunami had been reeling for years under the effects of ethnic violence and civil war. Young people from these countries have reached out to survivors across barriers of ethnicity, language and religion, indicating their desire for peace and reconciliation and demonstrating wisdom and compassion beyond their years. In Wellawatha, **Sri Lanka**, 19-year-old Prabhath C. and his friends decided to come together to help survivors in their country. "We collected some food, medicine, clothing and additional things and went to Pothuville [south-eastern coast of Sri Lanka] and distributed these among the people. We didn't think we are Sinhalese helping Tamils or Muslims. We didn't think of race or religion. We just helped people. If we don't help them now there is no point in living, you know...that kind of feeling came to us."¹⁸

THAILAND—Eleven-year-old Usa Munoh lost her mother, older sister and sister-in-law to the tidal waves. "I am still sad with what happened," she said. "The waves took away the lives of my loved ones, including my mother, sister and teacher whom all my fellow students were close to. My father and I feel miserable with my mother's death although he doesn't show it. I also feel sorry for him because he cannot go fishing now since his fishing boat was destroyed. I miss my mother so much that I cry. But I know that I need to be strong. I'm angry at the sea for murdering my mother and sister."



© UNICEF MALDIVES/2005

MALDIVES—Fifteen-year-old Ruga Medina narrowly saved herself from the tsunami by climbing on to the roof of her house. Not everyone in her family was so lucky. "My young nephew and my grandmother were killed, and some of my other family members were injured. I just hurt my knee and was scraped up," says Ruga.

Call to action

Nine months after the tsunami, young survivors in the affected countries are still waiting to be enlisted as partners in rebuilding their nations. Long-term reconstruction plans must have enough spaces for adolescents to become actively involved in creating new lives for themselves and their communities. Those young people who have had the chance to do so have

expressed their hopes and concerns, have demonstrated their ability to be compassionate, have made objective assessments and have provided relevant solutions. It is now time for them to become partners in renewal. Leaving them out of a vital endeavour would put us in jeopardy of not achieving our objectives of rehabilitation and development in tsunami-affected countries.

The time has come to listen to the young, to create appropriate and meaningful opportunities for their active involvement, and to sensitize decision makers to the legal, moral and social benefits of adolescent participation.

Listening has proved to be critical to integrating children's voices and recommendations into long-term plans.

This is one of the foremost challenges in post-tsunami reconstruction. Some children have spoken; many more are still waiting to share their unique knowledge and experience of being young survivors. Meaningful mechanisms must be created for accessing this expertise.

Examples of such mechanisms can be found in Albania and the Philippines where young people have used the media to great effect to communicate with each other and with adults in their communities.

Today young people must be provided with a variety of platforms to communicate their priorities and needs in the aftermath of the disaster. Ways to listen include:

- Opinion polls
- Surveys
- Consultations
- Access to journalism and broadcasting opportunities in newspapers, radio and television
- Access to local authorities and policy makers
- Access to information and communications technology, e.g., computers and the Internet.



Creating spaces and opportunities that are relevant to young people is an important element in enabling them to become partners in change.

Following the tsunami, adolescents from the affected countries came forward to involve themselves in assessing damage to schools; they helped rebuild classrooms and homes; and they provided psychosocial support to their peers and younger children. Each of these settings provided them with an opening to interact with both peers and adults, helping them to articulate their concerns and develop solutions to problems.

Giving young people access to such gateways is important to trigger their inventiveness and harness it in the vital task of reconstruction. Care must be taken to ensure that the participation of children is voluntary and has significance and meaning in their own lives. Relevant spaces and opportunities include:

- Youth clubs and student associations
- Sporting, music and drama events
- National or international conferences
- Livelihood surveys and research
- Evaluation and impact assessment of community projects.

Sensitizing policymakers and programme planners is essential to create an environment for children's meaningful and ethical participation in reconstruction efforts.

This is particularly relevant in the complex process of rebuilding social cohesion and peace in situations of ethnic strife and conflict. Many young people today are calling for a return to peace. But they need the support and guidance of concerned and sympathetic adults. Care must also be taken that young people are protected against physical danger, psychological trauma or malicious intent.

In Indonesia, Christian and Muslim women's groups in Maluku helped to create a safe platform for a participatory children's parliament in which adolescents worked together across the ethnic divide and, while learning important lessons in democracy, also underscored the possibility of peace in their communities.¹⁹

There is an urgent need to create more opportunities for young people to act on their strong sense of justice and help them to work together to build the better world they want. In order to sensitize policymakers and programme planners, it is essential to enlist the cooperation of:

- Governments
- International development agencies
- Civil society
- Community leaders
- Parents and teachers.

Mentoring and financing

Youth-led projects, whether they emphasize social or economic development, are often hampered by a lack of skills, experience, networks and connections with traditional power centres within a community. Mentorship (including two-way mentorship) needs to become a major priority, as a practical realization of the concept of intergenerational partnership, connecting experienced adults with young economic and social entrepreneurs.

Another one of the main challenges young people face is a lack of access to finances, whether it be grants or loans, to support the implementation of their projects. Existing grant mechanisms within the UN system should be made more relevant and accessible to young people, through simplified or adapted application processes, the inclusion of young people on selection committees, and recognition that young people often lack formal structures.

Source: Ad hoc Working Group for Youth and the MDGs, Youth and the Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and opportunities for implementation, April 2005.

Adopting recommendations for action ensures that young people are involved in their own and their community's development. Young people who are ready to take on new challenges in different settings have already made strong recommendations.

With reference to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, youth groups from around the world have urged governments, civil society and the international community to:

- Encourage governments to include young people in the implementation of new projects identified in national development plans and poverty reduction strategies, as well as support existing youth-led development initiatives.
- Ensure that development policies prioritize the growth of rural areas, which have high percentages of unemployed youth and little public infrastructure, by engaging young people in creating necessary services and infrastructure.
- Encourage governments to adopt and promote the concept of peer-led initiatives and encourage young people in school to undertake community-based initiatives that encourage school participation.
- Provide incentives and funding opportunities for non-governmental and youth organizations to initiate non-formal education activities for girls and women. Where initiatives already exist, develop replication strategies and scale up existing initiatives.
- Establish adolescent clinics and promote peer-to-peer education on sexual and reproductive health, encouraging young people in the community to take a role in the design and needs assessment required for these programmes.
- Provide opportunities for youth to speak about their culture and insist that their voices be a part of community formation.
- Fund and support youth-led media and awareness campaigns about the scientific implications of some cultural practices.
- Fund regional and international youth networks in order to facilitate global cooperation.
- Ensure that intergovernmental agencies develop or scale up and replicate initiatives supporting youth participation in policy and programmatic development on environmental sustainability.
- Support and resource new coalitions and partnerships around information and communication technologies.²⁰



CONCLUSION

The recommendations outlined in this publication take on an added urgency in the wake of the tsunami. Any government, non-governmental organization or international agency that believes that the voices of youth must be heard—and their vitality and energy channelled into national reconstruction—will find that these recommendations are unambiguous, relevant and feasible. They are a call to action and embody the hopes and dreams of a new generation.

Abundant national and international resources in the form of funding and expertise are available for the enormous task of rebuilding lives shattered by the tsunami. There is also a shared desire around the world to do things right; to rebuild without the flaws and gaps of the past. Now more than ever before it is possible to pursue the unfinished agenda for children by giving adolescents the right to become partners in their own development.

Losing this opportunity would mean losing the dynamism and creativity of a whole generation. By seizing the chance to bring their energy and ingenuity into post-tsunami reconstruction, we could build a better world, for them and for ourselves.

“I’m spending my time,
Looking back at all these years,
The times that we had,
Be it good or bad,
It’s the time that we shared.

The dreams that we had,
Shatter just like broken glass,
Your waves came so fast,
You lay down your wrath,
On everything in your path.

They say that life goes on,
Leave scenes of the past behind,
Let us rebuild our lives,
Let us open our minds,
And lead a brand new life.”

yukakharisma, age 17, Indonesia

SRI LANKA—Twelve-year-old Vishara Madushan is no more afraid of the sea. Vishara fled his home in southern Sri Lanka on 26 December as the surging waters swallowed everything in their path. Six months later, a trauma recovery programme staffed by volunteers who are recent medical graduates has helped him overcome lingering fears.

Referring to the volunteers, he says, “These ‘akkis’ [elder sisters] have helped us to forget and move on in life. I bathe in the sea at least once a week now. I’m getting used to it.”



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SRI LANKA—Hasina, 11, sits amid the debris where her house used to be before it was destroyed by the tsunami, in the village of Maruthamunai in the eastern district of Ampara. “All these years we lived here,” she says, “... but there is nothing left. Everything, my books, toys, even my friends, everything is gone.” The day the tsunami struck, she was playing with her 9-month-old cousin outside her house. People came running, shouting that water was coming. She ran inside her house, gave the baby to her mother and then ran from the approaching water. Her mother also tried to leave but was caught in the water. She survived but is severely injured. The baby was lost. Hasina’s grandmother died in the tsunami and many of her friends are missing.

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'The sea that frightened me' — Three weeks after the 26 December 2004 tsunami, children photographed their communities' initial efforts to recover from the disaster. The children, between 9 and 16 years old, live in two of the worst-affected districts in Thailand's southern provinces of Phang nga and Phuket. UNICEF distributed cameras to a sampling of schools to promote the inclusion of children's perspectives on the tragedy.

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vkaranan@unicef.org

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