

The 2004 Tsunami Tragedy

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Time to Read!

The 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami was one of the deadliest natural disasters in history. It was an undersea megathrust earthquake that registered a magnitude of 9.1–9.3 Mw, reaching a Mercalli intensity up to IX in certain areas. The earthquake was caused by a rupture along the fault between the Burma Plate and the Indian Plate.

With a series of at least three large tsunamis occurring over several hours, it affected coastal regions of Indonesia, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The death toll is estimated to have been between 230,000 and 280,000, making it one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history.

Indonesian officials estimated that the death toll there alone ultimately exceeded 200,000, particularly in northern Sumatra's Aceh province. In Aceh, roads, schools, hospitals, and other key infrastructure along the west coast of the province were destroyed, including a hospital in Meulaboh, which was one of only two major hospitals in the province. The tsunami resulted in a shortage of clean drinking water and medical supplies due to the physical devastation to local infrastructure, as well as the loss of life. The impact destroyed much of the housing in the area, which had a scarcity of affordable housing. Survivors left homeless were forced to live in makeshift shelters or refugee camps, where they were dependent on scarce humanitarian aid.

The tsunami had a severe impact on fishing and agriculture, destroying farmland and over 30,000 boats. In response to the disaster, the affected countries received more than US\$14 billion in humanitarian aid from a variety of sources in the three years following the disaster. The event was the first to be broadcast globally via the Internet, and news coverage of the disaster led to a renewed focus on the lack of coordination and heavy fragmentation of humanitarian aid.