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# Communicating Disasters

## Building on the Tsunami Experience and Responding to Future Challenges

A Regional Brainstorming Meet  
Bangkok, Thailand: 21 - 22 December 2006

Organised by TVE Asia Pacific (TVEAP)  
and  
United Nations Development Programme Regional Centre in Bangkok (UNDP-RCB)

### Draft Agenda

**Shared with all confirmed participants for their comments**

The Indian Ocean Tsunami challenged the media professionals and media organisations in Asia in many different ways. On the eve of the disaster's second anniversary, TVE Asia Pacific - a regional leader in communicating sustainable development using the broadcast and new media - is organising this regional brainstorming meeting that will bring together up to two dozen media professionals, disaster researchers and managers and development communication specialists from the main Tsunami affected countries in Asia.

Our goal is to discern the key communication lessons of the Tsunami (and other disasters), both in terms of the mass media and new media. Our objectives:

- To explore the role of media professionals and their use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) before, during and after a disaster;
- To share lessons learned among media professionals and key players in disaster risk reduction based on the experience of the Tsunami disaster; and
- To come up with a few suggestive guidelines for engaging the mass media and new media for more effective communication before, during and after disasters.

The discussions, findings and conclusions of the meeting will be captured in a book to be published following the meeting.

## Meeting Formats:

### Panels:

- Typically 3 - 4 panelists
- Moderator introduces topic in 3 - 5 mins
- Each panelist gets 5 mins for initial remarks (prepared statements or PowerPoint presentations not expected - you may speak from notes).
- Q&A engagement with the full group for at least 30 mins

### Debates

- Typically 4 participants in 'fish bowl' style seating arrangement
- Moderator introduces topic, and elicits brief initial responses from participants
- Cross-talk between participants is allowed and encouraged
- Moderator moves around, asking pointed questions of both participants and the live audience - aim is to provoke and stimulate
- With moderator's permission, the audience gets to pose questions to participants, or make very short and relevant comments

### Interactive sessions

- These will happen involving the full group, or in smaller working groups.
- Exact nature, scope and tasks are to be announced during the meeting.

### Film screenings

- Large screen projection of relevant documentaries, preceded or followed by brief discussion on issues raised by them.

### Overall meeting facilitators:

- **Chin Saik Yoon**, Communications specialist and Publisher, Southbound Press, Penang, Malaysia <http://www.digital-review.org/bau32.htm>
- **Nalaka Gunawardene**, Director and CEO, TVE Asia Pacific <http://www.childrenoftsunami.info/crews/exec.php#4>

## Workshop Sessions Overview

Day	Time	Session/activity
Day 1 Thursday 21 Dec	AM	Opening remarks and self introductions
		Session 1: Distilling media experiences & learning of Asian Tsunami
	PM	Session 2: Beyond Tsunami: zooming out to the wider issues
		Evening dinner and river cruise
Day 2: Friday 22 Dec	AM	Session 3: Enhancing media's role in communicating disasters
	PM	Session 4 (with more local participants joining): Strengthening links between media and disaster managers
		Closing remarks

*Detailed agenda follows over next few pages.*

## Day 1: Thursday, 21 December 2006

*Note: Bullet points given under each topic are only suggestive, and not in anyway meant to confine or influence the discussion in a particular direction. Moderators will use these and other points to provoke wide-ranging discussion.*

08:30 - 09:00	Registration of participants and distribution of materials
09:00 - 09:15	Welcome and opening remarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nalaka Gunawardene, Director and CEO, TVE Asia Pacific</li> <li>Marcia V.J. Kran, Deputy Regional Manager and Head of Policy and Programme, UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok</li> </ul>
09:15 - 09:45	Getting to know each other: one minute spotlight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell us who you are, what you do and where you come from</li> <li>Share a quick personal experience related to any disaster</li> </ul>
09:45 - 10:00	Meeting agenda and formats explained
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Distilling media experiences and learnings of the Asian Tsunami</b>
10:00 - 11:00	<b>Panel 1: Covering the Asian Tsunami: the hard news edge</b> Journalists and news editors recall how they covered one of the biggest news stories in recent years <u>Moderator:</u> Chin Saik Yoon <u>Proposed panel:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Milind Khandekar, Deputy Managing Editor - Star News</li> <li>Nani Afrida, Jakarta Post</li> <li>Asoka Dias, Sirasa TV/Mararaja TV, Sri Lanka</li> <li>Ahmed Shakeeb, Television Maldives</li> </ul>
11:00 - 11:30	Tea/coffee break
11:30 - 12:30	<b>Panel 2: Covering the Asian Tsunami: beyond news headlines</b> <u>Moderator:</u> Manori Wijesekera, TVE Asia Pacific <u>Proposed panel:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pipope Panitchpakdi, Director - Documentary, Nation Broadcasting Corporation, Thailand</li> <li>Joanne Teoh Kheng Yau, Executive Producer, Channel News Asia</li> <li>Dendy Montgomery, Freelance TV professional, Aceh</li> <li>Frederick Noronha, Freelance journalist &amp; new media activist, India</li> </ul>
12:30 - 13:00	<b>Film screening:</b> <i>Children of Tsunami: No More Tears</i> Co-produced by TVE Asia Pacific and Channel News Asia, December 2005 (see synopsis at the end)
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch break
<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Beyond Tsunami: zooming out to the wider issues</b>
14:00 - 15:15	<b>Debate 1: Communicating Disasters or Communications Disasters?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is information an essential 'relief item' during and after disasters?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where does the media's role begin and end in disasters?</li> <li>• Should media merely report and analyse - or get involved in rescue, relief, recovery and rehabilitation as well?</li> <li>• How do we balance the public's right to know with the right to privacy of disaster affected persons</li> <li>• How do new media alter the traditional media coverage of disasters?</li> <li>• Can citizen journalists help improve communication of disasters?</li> </ul> <p><u>Moderator:</u> Nalaka Gunawardene  <u>In the 'fishbowl'</u> (proposed):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lynette Lee Corporal, Project Editor, Inter Press Service - Asia Pacific</li> <li>• Amjad Bhatti, Regional Coordinator, Duryog Nivaran - South Asian Network for Disaster Risk Reduction</li> <li>• Shahidul Alam, Director, Drik Picture Library, Bangladesh</li> <li>• A S Panneerselvan, Executive Director, Panos South Asia</li> </ul>
15:15 - 15:45	Tea/coffee break
15:45 - 17:00	<p><b>Interactive session: "I wish...."</b></p> <p>Each participant gets to express one wish on how hazards, disasters and post-disaster situations can be better communicated in the media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Format: express in 1 min or less (alternative: write on flash card)</li> <li>• Feel free to add to someone else's wish</li> <li>• Facilitators will cluster and collate all wishes to produce a synthesis for Day 2</li> </ul>
17:00	End of sessions
19:00	Dinner reception and river cruise
22:00	Estimated time of return to the hotel

## Day 2: Friday, 22 December 2006

09:00 - 09:15	The combined 'wish list': A synthesis of participants' wishes expressed on Day 1 Summed up by Chin Saik Yoon & Nalaka Gunawardene
09:15 - 09:30	<b>Film screening 2</b> <i>Title to be determined</i>
<b>Session 3</b>	<b>Enhancing media's role in communicating disasters</b>
09:30 - 10:30	<p><b>Panel 3: Communicating before disaster strikes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What meaningful role can the mass media play in disaster awareness and preparedness at community/national levels?</li> <li>• How can media cover different types of disasters - some evolving slowly (e.g. droughts) and others more rapidly or without prior warning?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How best can mass media amplify credible hazard warnings, broadcasting them to the largest numbers in shortest possible time?</li> <li>• What role do the new media play in disseminating early warnings?</li> <li>• How can we improve the nexus between disaster managers, early warning systems and the media?</li> </ul> <p><u>Moderator:</u> Roopa Rakshit, Communications Officer, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC), Bangkok</p> <p><u>Proposed panel:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cherdsak Virapat, National Disaster Warning Centre, Thailand</li> <li>• Pablo Torrealba, Regional Risk Reduction Specialist, Crisis Prevention and Recovery (CPR) Team, UNDP</li> <li>• Lakshman Bandaranayake, Managing Director, Vanguard Management (ETV channel), Sri Lanka</li> <li>• Joe Carlos, Programme Manager, Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD)</li> </ul>
10:30 - 11:00	Tea/coffee break
11:00 - 12:15	<p><b>Working group activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants divide themselves into three smaller groups and work in parallel sessions to come up with some guidelines for more effective engagement of mass media and new media before, during and after disasters.</li> <li>• Working groups will be provided a brief and the meeting convenors will roam among the groups to provide inputs if needed.</li> </ul>
12:15 - 13:00	<p><b>Group work presentations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working groups come back together to present each group's recommended guidelines</li> <li>• Followed by discussion.</li> </ul>
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch break
<b>Session 4</b>	<b>Strengthening links between media and disaster managers (involving several more participants from Bangkok)</b>
14:00 - 14:10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcoming newly joining participants from Bangkok-based UN agencies, disaster management organisations and mass media</li> <li>• Summing up what has happened so far</li> </ul> <p>By Chin Saik Yoon and Nalaka Gunawardene</p>
14:30 - 15:15	<p><b>Debate: Communicating under duress - Part 1</b></p> <p><b>Do disaster managers make good communication managers?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When disaster strikes, how to balance media's insatiable thirst for new information with ground realities and survival needs of affected</li> <li>• How can disaster managers cope with media scrutiny and criticism?</li> <li>• Do journalists get in the way of relief and rescue efforts?</li> <li>• Who looks after public accountability and transparency?</li> <li>• What media can disaster managers take into confidence?</li> <li>• Which media outlets are most important - local, national or global?</li> <li>• How can we optimise the strengths of print, broadcast and online</li> </ul>

	<p>media?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can anything be done about 'chequebook journalism' that some media organisations indulge in at disaster scenes (paying/rewarding affected people to talk to them exclusively)?</li> <li>• What non-media communications methods are available to disaster managers?</li> </ul> <p>Moderator: Chin Saik Yoon</p> <p><u>In the 'fishbowl'</u> (proposed):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof Nalini Rajan, Dean, Asian College of Journalism, India</li> <li>• Heru Hendratmoko, Radio 68H, Indonesia</li> <li>• Lisa Hiller, Communications Manager, UNDP Nepal</li> <li>• Surein J S Peiris, Deputy Director General, Sri Lanka Red Cross</li> </ul>
15:15 - 15:45	Tea/coffee break
15:45 - 16:30	<p><b>Debate: Communicating under duress - Part 2</b></p> <p><b>How to build better 'bridges' between media and disaster managers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the best models and examples for media and disaster managers cooperating well?</li> <li>• How best to accommodate and amplify the voices of disaster affected people?</li> <li>• How to avoid confrontations between journalists and disaster managers when it comes to communicating disasters?</li> <li>• Balancing the interests of governments, local NGOs and international NGOs - all engaged in disaster relief and management</li> <li>• What happens when charities and relief agencies compete for media attention and coverage, each vying for their '15 minutes of fame'?</li> <li>• Do disaster relief items become 'logo delivery mechanisms' for high profile relief agencies?</li> </ul> <p>Moderator: Chin Saik Yoon/Nalaka Gunawardene</p> <p><u>In the 'fishbowl'</u> (proposed):</p> <p>Same debate participants continue</p>
16:00 - 17:00	Further engagement with the enhanced audience
17:00	<p>Concluding remarks by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-facilitators: Chin Saik Yoon and Nalaka Gunawardene</li> <li>• Co-organiser: Manori Wijesekera, Regional Programme Manager, TVE Asia Pacific</li> <li>• Co-organiser: Cherie Hart, Regional Communications Advisor, UNDP Regional Centre Bangkok</li> </ul>

## Film synopsis

### Children of Tsunami: No More Tears

They have never met each other. Some have never travelled beyond their native village. On December 26 2004, the sea rose and rose and took everything they cherished.

Documented over the year, locally-based filmmakers returned to Asia's battered coasts in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand to track the healing and the hurt through the eyes of children.

Asia's recovery process from the tsunami is being captured through the stories of three girls and two boys aged 8 to 16 years.

Of different races, worshipping different Gods, they live on different shores in different countries. They are the tsunami generation, sharing the vulnerability of a child and the legacy of the tragic tides.

Young survivors of the Asian tsunami let us into their lives to personalise the mass of statistics, aid pledges and recovery plans. "Children of Tsunami" is a tapestry of intimate stories, woven by voices of individual and collective resilience, heroism and recovery.

**Duration:** 24 mins

**Year of production:** 2005

**Countries filmed in:** India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand

*In each country, a locally based production crew carried out filming for TVE Asia Pacific.*

#### Regional Production Team

Supervising Producer: Bruce Moir

Production Assistant: Yohan Abeynaike

Production Manager: Manori Wijesekera

Executive Producers: Joanne Teoh Kheng Yau and Nalaka Gunawardene

**Co-Produced by:** Channel News Asia, [www.channelnewsasia.com](http://www.channelnewsasia.com)

In partnership with TVE Asia Pacific, [www.tveap.org](http://www.tveap.org)

Broadcast Asia-wide by CNA on the first anniversary of the Asian Tsunami, 26 Dec 2005

**For more information, visit:** [www.childrenoftsunami.info](http://www.childrenoftsunami.info)

**The meeting is planned and coordinated by TVE Asia Pacific in consultation with UNDP regional offices in Bangkok and Colombo.**

**Content and logistics are coordinated by TVE Asia Pacific**

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