



# Global express

The rapid response information series for schools  
on world events in the news


## Tsunami

### A world changing event



© Howard Davis/Oxfam

Subagini, a 13 year old girl in Alankulam camp, Sri Lanka, who lost both parents in the tsunami waves

 Could the public's unprecedented response to the tsunami lead to new commitments to end world poverty?

**THE TSUNAMI THAT STRUCK PARTS OF ASIA ON 26 DECEMBER** caused widespread devastation. The world-wide humanitarian response has been remarkable. **Global express** explores whether the scale of this response could now lead to a shift in political will to end global poverty.

What is  
**Global express?**

**Global express** helps you teach about topical global issues and events.

### Contains

Instant photocopiable classroom activities for 8 to 14 year olds.

#### Primary

Responding to the tsunami  
Thinking about different kinds of disaster

#### Secondary

Explore the links between disasters and their effects  
Charity or justice? What is needed?  
Review a campaign

#### Curriculum

Literacy  
English  
Geography  
Citizenship  
5-14 Curriculum Guidelines (Scotland)

## Disasters and poverty

### The shifts of the tectonic plates off the coast of Sumatra caused an undersea earthquake that led to huge waves around the Indian Ocean.

This tsunami caused widespread devastation and loss of life in a number of countries. The scale of the disaster, which affected local people and tourists in coastal areas, moved people to action. Aid and support have been provided from outside and inside the Indian Ocean. India, for example, although badly affected, has sent ships to clear the harbours of Sri Lanka so that aid may arrive more easily. Large amounts of physical and financial support have been provided in the short-term, but it will take years to fully recover in many areas. Long-term solutions are needed - not only for those in the region, but for the disaster of global poverty.

### Public and political responses to the tsunami

“What happened on 26 December 2004 was an unprecedented, global catastrophe. It requires an unprecedented, global response.”

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan  
Statement in Jakarta, Indonesia,  
6 .1.05

The humanitarian response has been remarkable, with individuals being especially generous. By 13 January, the UK's Disasters Emergency Committee estimated that £200 million would be donated by the public. This is the largest figure ever raised in the UK for a disaster. The total raised or pledged worldwide from people and governments is a huge sum, over £2.4 billion (£2,400 million) on 6.1.05 and still rising. [Source: *Guardian*, 7.1.05]

But further analysis is needed to consider what this response says about the world's willingness to tackle long-term global poverty. Firstly, Kofi Annan

has warned us not to “rob Peter to pay Paul”. Are governments raiding aid budgets to help in this short-term disaster only to reduce long-term development programmes?

Secondly, while pledges made by NGOs are fulfilled, there is the concern that pledges made by governments may not be, which is why the UN is requesting cash - not pledges.

- One year ago, a major earthquake destroyed the city of Bam in Iran. Only 1.7% of the money pledged by governments for that disaster has so far been received.
- Only one-third of pledged funds were eventually received for relief work after Hurricane Mitch struck the Caribbean and Central America in 1998. [Source: *Guardian*, 3.1.05]

Thirdly, who's actually taking the lead - the governments or the people of the world? The evidence from the tsunami appeal would seem to be that the public shamed or indirectly mandated their governments to increase government levels of support. The UK government's initial pledge, very soon after the event, was for £1 million. As the size of the disaster became clearer, this was increased to £15 million. The day after, the UK public had already given over £25 million and the figure was rising fast. The government duly increased its pledge to £50 million.

“The problem is that politicians are just not sure we care - so [tackling world poverty] is not high enough up their priority list. But I don't believe that. In 2003, on Red Nose Day, the people of the UK gave £40 million of their own cash to Africa on one day. Whenever we stop and listen to the lives of people in real trouble abroad, we care desperately.”

Richard Curtis  
writer of *The Vicar of Dibley* and supporter  
of the Make Poverty History campaign.  
[Source: Make Poverty History website]

Most rich countries, including the UK, have made a commitment to provide 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) in development aid. Yet only five countries (Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Luxembourg) have achieved that target. The UK gives 0.27% and has plans to raise this to 0.4% by 2006; the US gives 0.1%.

The House of Commons International Development Committee (2002) has found that meeting the Millennium Development Goals (targets set by the UN for eradicating global poverty) will require £50 billion each year until 2015. That is double the current aid levels and is well within the means of the world's governments.

But why discuss global poverty when the world has just suffered an unavoidable natural disaster?

### The scale of the disaster was exacerbated by poverty

While an earthquake and a monstrous wall of water were the immediate cause of this tragedy, its root remains with the inability of Southern nations to marshal sufficient resources to make their people less vulnerable to such events; in a word, poverty.

Raywat Deonandan  
Guyanan scientist and author, 3.1.05

The destruction caused by the tsunami was in origin a natural disaster, but it was greatly exacerbated by the poverty and marginalisation of the people in the area. *The poor are always the worst affected by disasters*: their housing is less well built and in dangerous areas; their livelihoods are wiped out more easily; they do not have insurance; they have no personal reserves to help with reconstruction. They live in regions that lack early warning systems, have dilapidated infrastructure, weak communications, and poor health services. Wealthy people, including foreign tourists, certainly suffered from

the tsunami. But the local poor suffered much more and will continue to do so.

### Global poverty is a daily disaster

The UN's emergency co-ordinator, Jan Egelund, has said the effects of the tsunami might be the worst ever from a natural disaster. What defines a disaster and when is a disaster natural and when unnatural?

“Occasionally earthquakes kill hundreds of thousands, and very occasionally floods kill millions at a time. But to focus on these... is to ignore the many millions more who are not killed in such events. There is a daily and unexceptional tragedy of those whose deaths are through ‘natural’ causes.”

Piers Blaikie, development worker and author [Ref: *Dealing With Disasters*, p 29]

Piers Blaikie refers to the daily and unexceptional tragedy of deaths through “natural” causes by which he means people dying from the effects of poverty. Every 30 seconds, an African child dies of malaria. Every 3.6 seconds, someone dies of starvation. *Poverty is a disaster* but it is not thought of in the same way as events such as the tsunami because it is happening continuously. The UK media has covered development and poverty issues extensively after the tsunami, but as Jon Snow implies, it isn't newsworthy because it's commonplace.

“If reporters from Mars visited Earth, don't you think that their lead story would be ‘one in six humans go hungry’? And yet that never makes our headline news.”

Jon Snow, Channel Four News [Ref: *Dealing With Disasters*, p29]

### Events affect politics

Governments of the world might look at the public's generosity and conclude that they *can* increase their aid budgets to achieve the Millennium Goals and work towards reaching the UN's target of 0.7% of GNI for aid budgets.

It is possible to trace many serious political changes in history to apparently

unconnected, but momentous, events. A good example in recent times is the first photograph of the Earth from space, which has been credited as being a catalyst for the huge rise in public support for the environmental movement.

Disasters can have a similar effect. The rapid humanitarian response by Greece after the earthquake in Turkey in 1999, contrasted with the slow action of the Turkish military, led to a significant rapprochement between Turkey and Greece in their tensions over Cyprus, and has liberalised Turkey in anticipation of EU membership. [Source: BBC News website]

There are already signs of significant political change as a result of the tsunami. For example, UN opinion of the US, damaged after unilateral actions in Iraq, is now softening in response to the size of US aid and assistance from troops and equipment in the Indian Ocean region. And, reciprocally, the US has recognised that the UN is the best world body to co-ordinate the relief effort, abandoning its earlier intention of working within its own coalition.

In the region, ongoing conflicts within Sri Lanka and Indonesia may be improved or, conversely, worsened by people's experiences of the actions of their governments or rival groups in response to the tsunami.

It is hoped that something positive can come out of this tragedy. There are many opportunities in 2005 for fundamental reforms and developments.

### 2005 - a momentous year?

This year, the UK hosts the G7 Finance Ministers meeting and the G8 gathering of world leaders and holds the presidency of the EU. On 6 January, 2005 the UK Prime Minister called for “a comprehensive approach [towards Africa] that increases aid, cancels debt, makes trade fairer, reduces conflict and promotes good governance.” Chancellor Gordon Brown has proposed a new “Marshall Plan” for the developing world, to transform the prospects of poor countries, particularly

in Africa. This refers to the European Recovery Plan, proposed by US Secretary of State George Marshall, and implemented after World War II.

These proposed initiatives may well be received by the world's politicians with more enthusiasm in light of the public's response to the tsunami.

[Sources this section: BBC News website; Make Poverty History website]

“There is the equivalent of a man-made preventable tsunami every week in Africa. I do not accept there is compassion fatigue on behalf of the British people. I believe there is every chance of mobilising the same extraordinary generosity of spirit and solidarity that Britain and the world have shown over the tsunami tragedy in tackling the tragedy in Africa.”

Tony Blair, UK Prime Minister [Source: Downing Street press conference, 6.1.05]

### Make Poverty History campaign

Perhaps the juxtaposition of events - the tsunami, the response and solidarity of the world's people, and the forthcoming G7 and G8 Summits - will see the beginning of a new relationship between North and South, in which the richer countries of the North work more in partnership with the poorer countries of the South to change the systems and structures that continue to keep them poor. Northern countries help with events like the tsunami, but if the unfair trading systems and “Third World” debt are dealt with, the level of need when natural disasters occur again will be dramatically reduced.

Leading up to the G8 Summit in July, and a UN Special Session in September, will be a campaign run by a coalition of all the major aid agencies in the UK, called Make Poverty History. Its message is summarised in nine words: “Trade justice. Drop the Debt. More and better aid.” Will a shift in the Earth's plates lead to a shift in political will to tackle and solve world poverty once and for all?

“Here on earth, charity doesn't worry injustice, it tries to hide it.” Eduardo Galeano, 2000



# Information to support classroom activities

## Why are government pledges and donations from the public so large?

Possible reasons:

- Size of disaster is unprecedented
- Time of year (Christmas is a time for giving)
- Images in the media spectacular and moving
- Extent of media coverage
- Mental links with recent frightening disaster movies
- Europeans were directly involved - brings it nearer home

## Causes and effects

### UNFAIR TRADE RULES

Taxes, tariffs and subsidies placed on commodities being imported or exported can benefit one country over another. If a Southern country's economy is based on a single natural resource, such as bananas, it can be crippled by tariffs placed on imports of bananas by trading partners. The effects of unfair trade are long-term; they damage economies slowly and lead to loss of livelihood and poverty. For example, an African farmer has to pay two to six times more than the world market price for conventional fertilizers.

### ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

Some examples:

- Over-felling of trees can lead to flooding or erosion of land.
- The loss of natural barriers (mangrove swamps and coral reefs) caused by development for tourism led to greater damage by the tsunami in the Indian Ocean.

### LACK OF EDUCATION

There are many links between lack of education and poverty. For example, education of girls and women leads to lower infant mortality, lower incidences of HIV/AIDS amongst girls, greater levels of child immunisation.

## Facts on ...

### Debt and debt relief

- Original debt of the world's 52 poorest and most indebted countries: £199 billion.
- Debt that the G7/8 promised to write off: £53 billion.
- Amount of debt actually written off so far: £24 billion.
- Proportion of the debts of the 52 poorest/most indebted countries written off: 12%.
- Amount of money the 52 poorest/most indebted countries still have to spend on debt repayments: over £30 million every day.
- In Benin, 54% of the money saved through debt relief has been spent on health, including on rural primary health care and HIV programmes.

- In Tanzania, debt relief enabled the government to abolish primary school fees, leading to a 66% increase in attendance.
- After Mozambique was granted debt relief, it was able to offer all children free immunisation.
- In Uganda, debt relief led to 2.2 million people gaining access to water.

Source: [www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk](http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk), 2005

**Poverty:** In 2001, the World Bank estimated that 1.1 billion people lived in absolute poverty. This is defined as not having the minimum basic needs required to sustain life (i.e. adequate shelter, food, clothing and drinking water). The Bank also expresses this as having an income of under \$1 per day.

## Who gives what

Governments and international institutions (top 10)	Pledges to tsunami (£ million)	Aid budgets as % of GNI
Australia	434	0.27
Germany	361	0.27
EU	278	-
Japan	266	0.28
US	186	0.10
World Bank	133	-
Norway	97	0.80
UK	50	0.32
Italy	49	0.13
Sweden	43	0.80
Public donors (top 3)		
Germany	106	
UK	100	
Australia	47	

Table showing a comparison of sums pledged or donated to the tsunami disaster with the proportion of Gross National Income given in long-term aid. Note: UN target is 0.7%.

Figures: *Guardian*, 7.1.05; World Aid Trends, Development Initiatives, 2002

The figures in the box above are changing daily. Check the internet for more recent figures on giving.

“Respect for the fragility and vulnerability of coastal ecosystems has been sacrificed for hotels and holiday resorts, shrimp farms and refineries.” Vandana Shiva

## IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM

The tsunami may have generated extreme emotion amongst some children in your class. These activities will need to be used with sensitivity. The first helps pupils explore their emotions.

### Curriculum links

#### PRIMARY

**Literacy:** non-fiction.

**English:** speaking and listening; writing in response to stimuli.

**Citizenship:** research, discuss, debate topical issues; participate

**RE:** dealing with death and grief

#### SECONDARY

**English:** speaking and listening

**Citizenship:** topical issues; the significance of the media; the world as a global community

**Geography:** trade, interdependence and issues of topical significance

### Our reactions

**Age range:** 8-14

**Purpose:** To provide pupils an opportunity to explore and express their reactions to the tsunami, and to reflect on what they have done about it.

Start with pupils working alone. Ask them to write down words that describe their feelings, e.g. sad, angry and so on. They could then work in pairs to explain their feelings and to give reasons for them. Either individually or in pairs, give them page TS1. Explore how strong feelings of upset can be a trigger to want to act to help. Discuss the size of the public's donations. There is information on page 4 that might help with your discussion.

### What is a disaster?

**Age range:** 8 to 14

**Purpose:** To understand that some disasters are long term and have a human cause. These generally receive little media coverage.

Brainstorm the answer to the question "What is a disaster?". Using the list generated by the class, distinguish between the following: short-term one-off disasters and long-term ongoing situations; catastrophic acts of nature (acts of God) and human generated disasters such as poverty which are due to injustice or inaction; those that usually get high media coverage and those with low media interest.

After discussion, ask pupils to try to write their own definition of a disaster. They could do more research as homework. (Page 6 suggests some websites pupils could go to.)

### Causes and effects

**Age range:** 10-14

**Purpose:** To increase awareness that there are different kinds of disasters that produce the same effects. To consider why some kinds of disaster get more media coverage than others.

Pupils could work on this alone or in pairs, then feedback to the class. Ask them to explain their reasoning. You may wish to go through the questions at the bottom of the sheet as a class discussion. Help pupils think through why the media reports on deaths caused by a tsunami but doesn't regularly report on deaths caused by factors related to poverty.

### Responding to disasters

**Age range:** 8-14

**Purpose:** To enable pupils to think about the difference between providing charity and tackling unfair structures that cause poverty and disaster.

Before handing out TS3, work with the pupils to get their ideas about what can be done about disasters. You might find Oxfam's Coolplanet website useful for this (see page 6). Then give the pupils copies of TS3. Ask them to add ideas to the web and in groups to discuss and answer the questions relating to it.

People have given money because they felt sorry for victims of the tsunami; perhaps they empathised with them. If pupils feel more should be done than just giving money, discuss who they think should try to change unfair systems - people (e.g. by buying fair trade goods) or governments (e.g. by changing trade rules).

Do they think governments should spend more on aid, given the amounts raised by people? On the other hand, government money could be used for other things - perhaps pupils think they should *not* raise their aid budgets?

### Make Poverty History!

**Age range:** 11 to 14

**Purpose:** To raise awareness that debt relief, increasing aid, and having just trade rules can contribute significantly to eradicating poverty. To realise that change is possible.

Give pupils TS4 and ask them to read through the information.

The page suggests the pupils work in pairs to think of a question they'd like to put to Mr Blair before the G8 summit this Summer.

In the discussion afterwards, try to explore why it is difficult to persuade countries to change trade rules, cancel debt and give more aid. Who might suffer from these actions? Do all the pupils agree they are a good idea?

## Recommended resources

AVAILABLE MAIL ORDER FROM DEP  
Postage and packing will be charged extra.

**Dealing with Disasters - Teaching about disasters and development for ages 11-16. Oxfam, £13**

Provides teachers with many practical ideas for working with pupils in relation to any disaster. Sections cover understanding disasters and how the media reports them; what causes disasters; primary and secondary effects; what we can do.

**Thinking about Disasters - exploring the effects of disasters on our world. Christian Aid, £14.99**

Covers similar ground to the previous resource, containing case studies based on disasters involving volcano eruption, war, cyclone and hurricane. Includes a video. KS 3&4.

**Global express 24: After the Earthquakes.**

This focuses on the Gujarat earthquake in 2001 and how people were rebuilding their lives.

**Local Citizen, Global Citizen. Christian Aid, £13**

A lively pack to help children aged 7-14 explore and understand concepts of development, interdependence and relationships. Begins with the familiar local environment and works towards global issues.

**Sustainable Human Development. Peace Child International, £7.99**

A fun reference book for young people, demonstrating that development is not just about economics but also health, education and happiness. Questions and activities on each page.

## Websites



**www.globaldimension.org.uk** A good starting point on the internet and will quickly help you find free teaching ideas about the tsunami from many of the main aid agencies (e.g. Oxfam, Save the Children, Red Cross), and will also guide you to Education Centres in your region that you can visit for further help and resources. (Go to 'Development Education' under Useful Resources.)

**www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet** Lots of activities and information for teachers on teaching about the tsunami.

**www.christianaid.org.uk/learn** Activities and information.

**www.savethechildren.org.uk** Teaching materials and resources in the education section.

**www.geography.org.uk/news\_events/index.asp** Practical ideas with a geographical approach can be found on this Geographical Association website.

**www.sln.org.uk/geography** Includes an excellent discussion forum on the tsunami, offering thoughts, ideas and practical assistance by teachers for teachers.

**www.citizenship-global.org.uk** Links to information to support the global dimension to Citizenship education, including guidance on dealing with sensitive and controversial issues.

**www.makepovertyhistory.org** For more information about this current campaign.

**www.un.news/** Up-to-date information about the impact of the tsunami and about funds raised.

**http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/uk/this\_Britain/story.jsp?story+597488** An article offering further analysis along the lines of this edition of *Global express*, available to subscribers.

**www.commissionforafrica.org/english.htm** Further details about Gordon Brown's statement.

**www.esrnational.org/sp/we/healing.htm** Educators for Social Responsibility, US site has useful ideas for working with children on traumatic events.


**Global express** aims to enable young people to gain a greater understanding of the context in which news stories from the developing world happen, and to build links between their experience of life in the UK and their understanding of development issues. Editions reach teachers as soon as possible after a high-profile news story, and provide materials that help answer young people's questions and increase their critical awareness of how the media can influence their image of the developing world.

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Pages TS 1 to TS 4 are photocopiable for classroom use within the purchasing institution.

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Visit the **Global express** web site: <http://www.dep.org.uk/globalexpress>

## Previous editions

Some editions (\*) are out of print and can be downloaded from our website. Back copies of other editions may be ordered. Send a cheque to DEP (address below) for £4.50 for each edition ordered.

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36 Forgotten famine

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Edition 1, *Tune into the News*, is a 16-page edition which has activities on the media and exploring controversial issues.

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