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Tsunami Devastates Asia, Africa

Ryan Gallant
Managing Editor



Various UPEI organizations have begun campaigns to raise money in an effort to aid the areas stricken by the tsunami last month in Asia. A benefit concert was held last Friday night headlined by Smothered with Hugs at the Wave, raising over \$500 and this week the UPEISU Executive will give up a day's pay to put towards the relief effort. Also this week UPEI Advancement Services and the Student Union will be setting up booths in the Student Centre to raise funds for the victims of the disaster in Asia.

In the early morning hours of December 26th (7:59 a.m. local time) an earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale was detected off the coast of the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Preliminary reports estimated that the earthquake itself was so powerful, comparable to 23,000 Hiroshima bombs, that it shifted the earth on its axis by as much as an inch and the US Geological Survey recorded that the vertical shift of landmass that occurred during the earthquake has resulted in the rotation of the earth being permanently sped up by 2.676 microseconds a day. It was the strongest quake on record since one measuring 9.5 hammered Chile in 1960. The quake was created by the heaving of two tectonic plates along a 1000 kilometre fault-line,



resulting in the rising of the sea floor by as much as ten metres and thus displacing hundreds of cubic kilometres of seawater. This significant displacement of water generated a tsunami, a series of huge waves, that proceeded across the Indian Ocean, plowing into everything in its path. Waves reached the height of ten metres and affected Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Somalia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Maldives, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Seychelles, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Cocos Island and Reunion, killing hundreds of thousands, rendering millions homeless and causing billions of dollars in damage.

At press time, reports pegged the death toll at 140,313 to over 156,000, while numbers reported by CNN indicated that the number of people both missing and dead totaled 234,099. In addition to this, there is a fear that thousands more are vulnerable to the

spread of disease and to malnutrition, a situation that could pose a threat to thousands more in the region. "We now estimate that as many as 150,000 people are now at extreme risk if a major outbreak in the affected areas occurs," said World Health Organization Director-General Dr. Lee Jong-Wook.

While the international community scrambled to get aid to the region quickly, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan re-iterated that the money and aid pledged by individual countries was needed sooner rather than later, and that \$1.2 billion would be needed immediately. He called the situation in Asia and Africa a "race against time." In response to the disaster nations around the world promised aid to the tune of over \$4 billion, aid that the UN is intent on seeing reach the affected nations. Jan Eneland, the UN

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