
**Statement by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,
in regard to the Tsunami disaster in South East Asia, 26 December 2004**

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women shares the expressions of support and solidarity that have been offered by so many around the world to all people affected by the devastating Tsunami in South East Asia on 26 December 2004.

The unprecedented scale of the Tsunami disaster impacts on all survivors, women and men, causing loss of life, injuries, separation from and loss of loved ones, extreme trauma and loss of security, basic needs - including shelter, food and water and sanitation - and livelihoods. In the wake of the Tsunami, the gender-specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls must be identified and addressed in all responses to the humanitarian and recovery needs. There are gender perspectives to be taken into account in relation to impacts on both a long and short-term basis, including in relation to health, security and livelihoods.

Pro-active steps must be taken to ensure that women and girls living in the affected communities, as well as local women's groups, and women community leaders and government officials are full, equal and effective participants in all relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts, including in distribution of assistance of all kind.

Particular attention must be paid to identify and respond to specific vulnerabilities of women and girls in situations of disaster, and in particular to gender-based violence, sexual abuse and trafficking. As the protection of safety and dignity of survivors is among the priorities of relief work, specific attention must be paid to the prevention of gender-based violence and abuse of women and girls. All those who abuse women and girls in this situation of particular vulnerability must be brought to justice and severely punished.

The Committee calls on all those who provide assistance and relief, and contribute to the reconstruction of the devastated communities to respond fully to the gender-specific needs of women and girls. The Committee encourages that the ongoing efforts be used as a window of opportunity to ensure that the promotion of gender equality is a central pillar in the reconstruction and development of the affected communities, and that a gender perspective is integrated in all humanitarian efforts. It also suggests that the appropriate intergovernmental body of the United Nations consider preparing a comprehensive action-oriented resolution on the gender perspectives of disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, following the example of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

Adopted by the Committee at its thirty-second session, 28 January 2005
