

Disaster Relief

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The recent disaster in the Indian Ocean basin has left most of us deeply affected. The estimates of 220,000 people killed leave the mind and heart staggering. The devastation wreaked by the Tsunami will affect economic and social institutions for years to come. I am very pleased to see the incredible giving that has occurred in the U.S. and throughout the world to alleviate the suffering caused by this disaster. I encourage people to help in any way they can.

But (you knew that was coming) there are a number of other tragedies occurring worldwide. Based on information from the World Health Organization Aids Epidemic Report (2003), over 400,000 children (under age 15) died of Aids in 2003 and over 2 million adults died. That is the equivalent of 2 Tsunamis in 2003 for the children alone. These deaths occur year, after year after year.

The Food and Agricultural Organization (United Nations) estimates that 5 million children die of malnutrition each year. That's another 22 Tsunami's each year. Every year. Year after year.

There are so many other tragedies in the world today. It's quite obvious that the Tsunami is "front page news" because it was sudden and unexpected. But one should reflect, does this mean we have come to expect loss of life? Does this mean that if loss of life occurs through a mechanism that is not unusual that it is somehow less important? I would argue that it is the "usual" mechanism for which we should seek solutions, since the largest "bang for your buck" is likely to be in places where we have recurring tragedy, not the unusual cases.

I encourage you to donate to any of the reputable Tsunami relief funds. I certainly did. But I also encourage you to look at other ways these agencies (such as the Red Cross, Catholic Relief Services, or Episcopal Relief and Development) work throughout the world to help improve the lives of those less fortunate. Many of the projects will impact far more people over the next few years. Consider making part of your donation to other projects or to these organizations' general funds.