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Voices of Youth  
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## Tsunami Terror Alert: Voices of Youth

31 January 2005 / New York / France – Four weeks after the disastrous tsunami in South Asia, the world has become more united and concerned about the victims who have had to bear the loss of their homes, their families, their possessions, and more.

This, the seventh Voices of Youth update on young people's thoughts, actions and suggestions on the tsunami, focuses on what young people are doing to help the tsunami victims as well as their concerns about what they have called "the ugly side to tsunami aid".

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### Voices of Youth member summary *Cami78, 15, France*

#### "The ugly side to tsunami aid"

As the different youth of the world relate their thoughts, actions and suggestions, many are bothered by the ugly side to tsunami aid. Religious groups who intervene at the wrong time to evangelise the victims have been thoroughly mentioned: it is in fact important to preserve the cultural beliefs of the victims, and to let them grieve according to their religion.

"I heard about how some religious groups go to a disaster, like the tsunami, and try to evangelise. I think that that is horrible- you cannot go to these people, who have lost their homes, their money, and most importantly, their family, and try to change their beliefs. It's cultural genocide! This is their culture, their way of life, that has been rooted deep in their society for maybe thousands of years."  
(*Soccer.rs99 United States of America*)

#### Innovation & support

However, the tsunami relief has been very efficient since it's beginning, and everyone (victims and volunteers) are trying to get involved in any way possible. Many of us were enthused when a girl, originally from India, living in the United States, sold bracelets bearing the inscription "tsunami relief" on them. What a great way to support the victims and to raise money!

"I want to do something to help the victims like selling t-shirts or raising funds but as you've known they are very difficult to do. Can all of you tell me what I can do to help them?" (*jessey nguyen, Vietnam*)

"My school raised 2,655.06 2day! Even though only 1,943.06 will go to the tsunami... the rest will go to our school because (\$712) we bought 100 bands that say "tsunami relief" on them, and will pay back the school 4 the money they lent us..." (*tranquility13, United States of America*)

#### The tsunami as opportunity

The young people on the forum agree: the world is coming to a better situation for peace even though it's unfortunate that such a catastrophe had to be undergone for all nations to come together in solidarity. From the affected region, people are expressing their gratefulness for all the help that has been brought to them, and encourage us to take action. They also encourage the world to fulfil all the rights of the victims, including addressing their psycho-social and emotional rights and needs.

“...the victims have enough clothes and water. What they need is food. Maybe we can contact UNICEF on how to help. Jetto, we thank you, America, for offering us the much needed help in Indonesia. All I know is, we are all humans, like it or not... When there is a disaster, we help each other. I can't thank the world enough for all your help. THANK YOU...” (*yukakharisma, Indonesia*)

“We've been successful in providing material good such as food and clean water to the victims .But there's one thing which we should concentrate more on. It's the mental status of these people. They've lost everything .One thing they hardly can cope up with is the loss of their loved ones. We have to help them get back to where they've stopped. Please help them to be fit in mind and body. Not only material goods will do. They need someone to talk to.” (*simigalo17, Sri Lanka*)

### Responses to questions from UNICEF

We live in a century where the Voices of the youth of the world are more and more heard: it is our chance to express ourselves, for we are the people of tomorrow. The questions raised in the sixth summary continue to be answered by the participants on the forum, giving rise to a debate.

#### VOY member talks about the importance of Voices of Youth at this time:

“VOY is doing a real great job right now, a surface for all of us to share ideas and ways to help people of the world and in particular now the Tsunami hit countries. What more can VOY be useful for:

1. Summaries- Hope these summaries are taken seriously by the respective field offices in all the different countries of the world. Summaries should be sent to all UNICEF field offices through out the world and not leave some countries out.
2. Being kind of a mediator/communicator between Organization, UNICEF field offices, Policy makers, Leaders, and other's. Since VOY can have access to personally with communicate them I guess.” (*zuhur, Somalia*)

### Concluding message from Cami78:

...So it's important that we all participate as much as we can on these forums and in our communities to help affect policies, to have our voices be heard. We must prepare ourselves to enter the world of tomorrow, and then let our own children take action.

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*You can read more of the Voices of Youth discussions on the Voices of Youth discussion forums at: Tsunami Terror: <http://www.unicef.org/voy/discussions/forumdisplay.php?f=68>. We request you to please use available channels to publicise this e-space with your staff, partner organizations and especially youth organizations and networks in your country and region.*