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This photo, taken on January 1, 2005, shows the aftermath of massive tsunami destruction along a coastal area in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. NOAA (the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) has stated that "coastal runup in Aceh may have reached over 50 meters." Photo by AusAID; online courtesy Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade via Flickr. License: [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

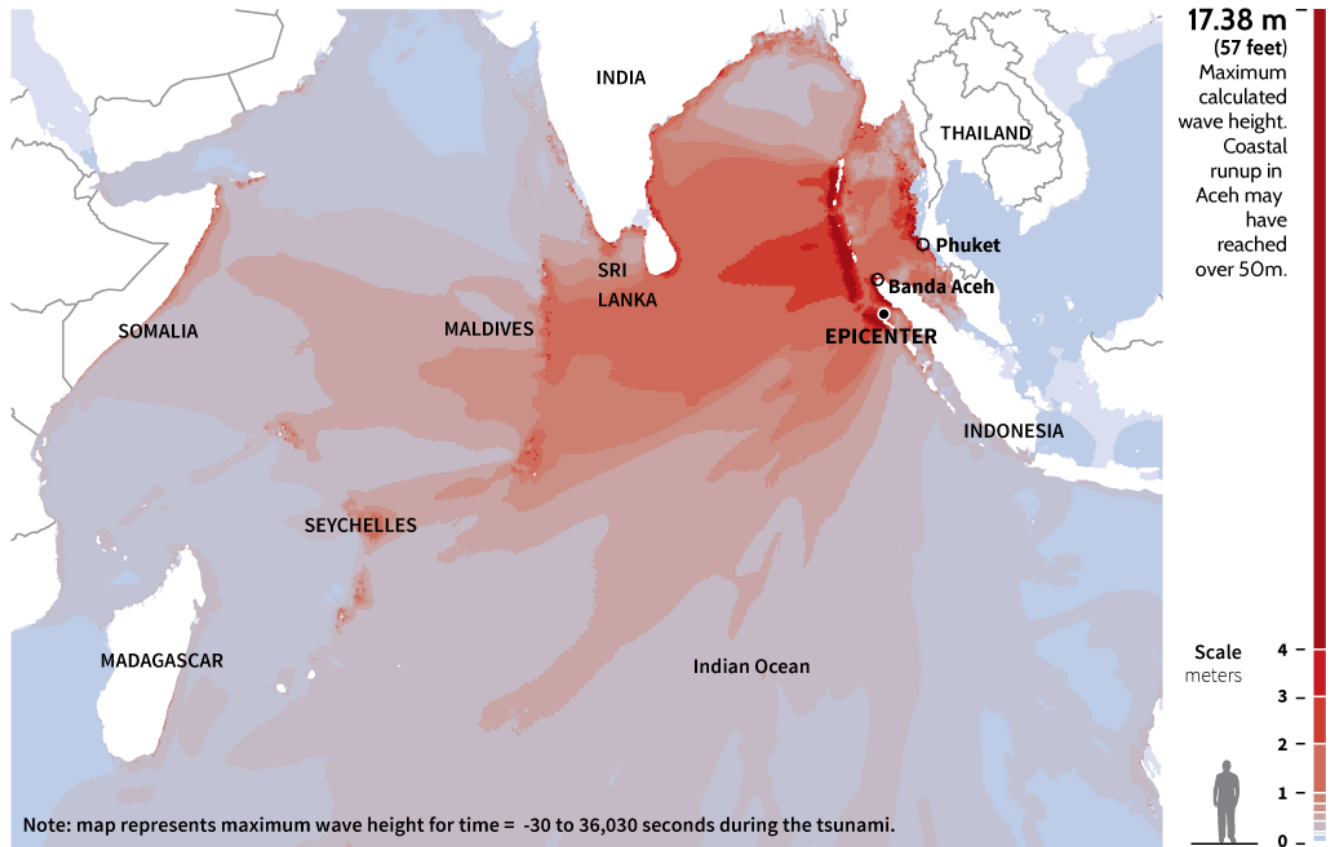
By the time the monster waves had run their course, about 2.2 million people were homeless. Without adequate shelter - particularly in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and India - survivors had limited fresh-water supplies and were at-risk for disaster-related illnesses (like [cholera](#) and [typhus](#)).

Endless debris piles, coupled with rotting organic material, caused a nauseating stench which permeated the hot air. Standing water, left by the tsunami, provided a breeding ground for mosquitoes. (Move this embedded video forward to 1:49 to see the impact in Aceh.)

Sleeping without protective nets, in barely standing shelters, survivors of the nightmare were at-risk for mosquito-spread diseases like [dengue fever](#) and [malaria](#). The misery index, which impacted nearly everyone, was off-the-charts.

Colin Powell, who was America's Secretary of State in 2004, visited Banda Aceh on the island of Sumatra. Closest to the quake's epicenter, this part of Indonesia was the area most badly damaged by the quake and its aftermath (including a massive tsunami).

# 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami wave height



Source: U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Original graphic by S. Scarr, W. Foo, 23/12/2014

REUTERS

A retired U.S. Army General, Powell was stunned by the carnage:

*I have been in war, and I have been through a number of hurricanes, tornados and other relief operations, but I have never seen anything like this.*

In Sri Lanka, Ajith Samaranayake - a philosopher - made this observation:

*For a stark moment, man in the new millennium, armored supposedly against all calamities by his rational technological outlook and advanced political philosophies, has been rendered helpless by nature ... his cities ruined and laid low and all his grand inventions in disarray. ("Sunday Essay," Sunday Observer, 2 January 2005.)*

Kim and Tristan Peatfield - British visitors to Sri Lanka - personally understood Samaranayake's point. The British couple had returned to the place of their honeymoon, this time with their five-year-old daughter, Isabella.

The Peatfields had great plans for December 26th. Isabella was especially excited for the family's upcoming safari. Elephants would be a big part of her adventure.

Isabella never got to see those elephants, however. When a powerful tsunami wave pulled her from her mother's arms, she was not seen again until her father identified her remains.

Other children - many thousands of them - lost both parents plus members of their extended families. And ... despite all the financial contributions made by people from all over the world ... not all the aid was fairly distributed. The BBC reports that the divide, between rich and poor, was firmly on display during the disaster's aftermath.

Stories of survivors - and the videos they made while the disaster was unfolding - help us to at least have a glimpse of what millions of people endured immediately following the Banda Aceh earthquake and tsunami. Yet there were millions more from whom we will never hear.

Of all those who died, about 9,000 were tourists visiting various countries throughout the impacted region. That's a significant number, but it pales in comparison to the total number of victims. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) provides us with more facts:

- More than 275,648 people were killed

- 14,459 individuals were reported missing
- At least 228,448 people died just in Indonesia
- 2,242,212 people - at least - were displaced

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/TSUNAMI-VICTIMS-SPEAK-The-Impossible>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/TSUNAMI-VICTIMS-SPEAK-The-Impossible>

## Questions 2 Ponder

### Has Nature Ever Rendered Technology Useless?

After the massive tsunami of December 2004, a Sri Lankan philosopher observed that technology was of no help whatsoever to the millions of people impacted by the disaster.

Ajith Samaranayake - the philosopher - said:

*For a stark moment, man in the new millennium, armored supposedly against all calamities by his rational technological outlook and advanced political philosophies, has been rendered helpless by nature ... his cities ruined and laid low and all his grand inventions in disarray.*

Do you agree, or disagree, with the philosopher's observation that nature can render human beings totally helpless, despite our advanced technology? Explain your answer.

Is there any kind of technology, which humans could develop, to keep natural disasters from killing people, ruining cities and laying low mankind's grand inventions? Explain your answer.

## Media Stream



### Aftermath of Tsunami at Banda Aceh

An unnamed photographer working for AusAID took this photo on January 1, 2005. It depicts a coastal area of Banda Aceh, Indonesia. Online courtesy the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, via Flickr. License: [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Aftermath-of-Tsunami-at-Banda-Aceh>



### Tsunami Victim - Isabella Peatfield

Photo of Isabella Peatfield, online courtesy her parents via the BBC.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tsunami-Victim-Isabella-Peatfield>



### Tsunami Survivors Speak

Darlow Smithson produced "Caught on Camera," a compilation of amateur videos recorded by people who experienced the tsunami on December 26, 2004. It was released, in 2009, for television viewing.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tsunami-Survivors-Speak>



### Tsunami Survivors -2

Darlow Smithson produced "Caught on Camera," a compilation of amateur videos recorded by people who experienced the tsunami on December 26, 2004. It was released, in 2009, for television viewing.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tsunami-Survivors-2>



### Tsunami Survivors - 3

Darlow Smithson produced "Caught on Camera," a compilation of amateur videos recorded by people who experienced the tsunami on December 26, 2004. It was released, in 2009, for television viewing.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tsunami-Survivors-3>



### Tsunami Survivors - 4

Darlow Smithson produced "[Caught on Camera](#)," a compilation of amateur videos recorded by people who experienced the tsunami on December 26, 2004. It was released, in 2009, for television viewing.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tsunami-Survivors-4>

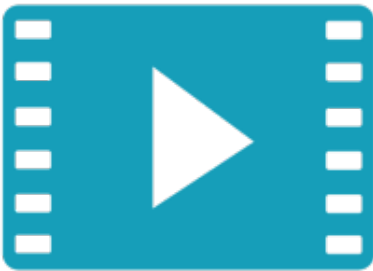


### Tsunami Survivors - 5

Darlow Smithson produced "[Caught on Camera](#)," a compilation of amateur videos recorded by people who experienced the tsunami on December 26, 2004. It was released, in 2009, for television viewing.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tsunami-Survivors-5>

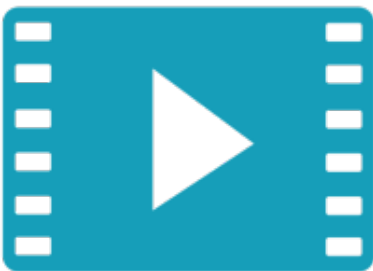


### Tsunami Survivors - 6

Darlow Smithson produced "[Caught on Camera](#)," a compilation of amateur videos recorded by people who experienced the tsunami on December 26, 2004. It was released, in 2009, for television viewing.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tsunami-Survivors-6>



### Tsunami Survivors - 7

Darlow Smithson produced "[Caught on Camera](#)," a compilation of amateur videos recorded by people who experienced the tsunami on December 26, 2004. It was released, in 2009, for television viewing.

View this asset at:

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### Tsunami Survivors - 8

Darlow Smithson produced "[Caught on Camera](#)," a compilation of amateur videos recorded by people who experienced the tsunami on December 26, 2004. It was released, in 2009, for television viewing.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tsunami-Survivors-8>