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Tsunami Eyewitness & Survivors

Tsunami Resilience Section



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On 26th December 2004, the fault between the Burma and Indian tectonic plates fractured in the sea floor off Indonesia. It unleashed the third largest earthquake in recorded history, a 9.3 magnitude monster that vibrated the planet. From under the Indian Ocean, a massive tsunami sent waves up to 100 feet (30 meters) high towards the coastlines as far away as Africa at speeds over 400 mph (644 kph). A mountain of water smashed into coastal communities, killing nearly 228,000 people.

In 2024, the 20th anniversary of the cataclysm, UNESCO is producing a series of portraits of and interviews with survivors of that deadly day.

IOTIC – BMKG: Preserving Past Tsunami Information for Future Preparedness

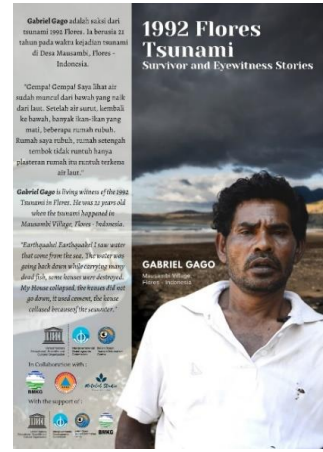
2015



2016



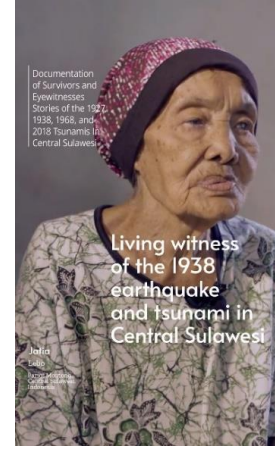
2018



2019



2020



2021



2022



2023



1945 Makran
Tsunami
38 videos

1950 Ambon
Tsunami
28 videos

1992 Flores
Tsunami
45 videos

1994
Banyuwangi
Tsunami
46 videos

Central Sulawesi
Tsunamis (1927,
1938, 1968,
1996, 2018)
30 videos

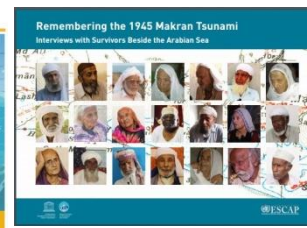
1996 Biak
Tsunami
60 Videos

2000 Banggai
Tsunami
72 Videos

1995 Dili
Tsunami
East Timor
37 Videos

356 Stories of Eyewitness and Survivors of Past Tsunamis (222 in YouTube IOTIC 134 in Process)

6 Booklet Publication



Project Impact and Outcomes



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Impact: Understanding of and preparedness to tsunami hazard, risk and impacts has increased worldwide

Outcome N°1: Tsunami survivors and eyewitnesses stories documented for use in the Tsunami Survivors Portraits (and Documentary)

Outcome N°2: Tsunami survivors and eyewitnesses stories shared and disseminated worldwide and public awareness of tsunami hazard, risk and impact is increased.



Components

The Tsunami Eyewitness & Survivors Project will be implemented through two components:

- **The Survivor Portraits:** 15 portraits and accompanying editorial feature profiles will be developed by UNESCO-IOC. The portraits and text will be repurposed for travelling exhibitions in museums and public spaces globally, with QR codes to link with short interview-videos of each Eyewitness & Survivor. Shooting and video recording will be performed at UNESCO Studios.

- **Public Outreach Events:** Organization of a series of related public outreach events both during the production in June 2024 (when tsunami survivors are at UNESCO in Paris for the photography shoot and interviews) and post-production, in late 2024 and 2025, from World Tsunami Awareness Day 2024, going through to the 20th Anniversary of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, and all the way to the Third UN Ocean Conference (June 2025, in Nice, France).

Activities



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Activity 1: Organise public WTAD 2024 event at UNESCO Headquarters featuring onsite participation of tsunami survivors and eyewitnesses.

Activity 2: Organise an event at UNESCO Headquarters (Paris) centred on the Tsunami Eyewitness & Survivors Project to launch the Project, celebrate WTAD 2024, and honour the 20th anniversary of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.

Activity 3: Organise a UNESCO Campus event to showcase the Tsunami Portraits and the Tsunami List Documentary, and to share expert knowledge on tsunami hazard, risk, and impact with youth.

Activity 4: Organise at least four (4) side events featuring the Tsunami Survivors Portraits and stories at key international events, including the 2nd International Ocean Decade Conference (Barcelona, April 2024), the Pre-conference for the 2025 UN Ocean Conference (Costa Rica, June 2024), the UNESCO-IOC Assembly (June 2024), and the 3rd UN Ocean Conference (France, June 2025).

Activity 5: Promote the Tsunami Portraits products with UNESCO-IOC Member States to be used for preparedness activities.

Activity 6: Identify and collaborate with institutions and events to host the Tsunami Portraits travelling exhibitions.

SUGGESTED SURVIVOR SUBJECTS INCLUDE:

Petra Němcová was in Khao Lak, Thailand, with her main photographer and boyfriend, Simon Atlee, when the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami struck. Atlee drowned and Němcová suffered a broken pelvis and serious internal injuries, but she managed to hold on to a palm tree for eight hours until she was rescued by Thai civilians and airlifted to an inland hospital nearby.



Tilly Smith is an English woman who has been credited with saving the lives of about 100 beachgoers at Mai Khao Beach in Thailand by warning them minutes before the arrival of the tsunami. Smith, who was ten years old at the time, had learned about tsunamis in her geography class.



Tomas Alvarez-Belon was eight when his family were separated for two days after the wave hit. Tomas, his father Quique, mother Maria and brothers Simon, five, and Lucas 10, were staying at the Orchid Resort Hotel in the Khao Lak region of Thailand. Tomas, his father and Simon were in the pool playing with a ball when the tsunami hit. Mrs Alvarez-Belon was watching as Lucas got out of the water to fetch the ball when they heard the roar of the 30ft (9.1 metres) wave.



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For Tsunami Day 2021, we launched **The Girl and The Tsunami**



Based on a real event during the 2010 earthquake and tsunami in Chile.

Narrated by the protagonist herself, 11 years after.

A beautifully crafted animation with original music score.

The story a young girl taking the lead to protect her family, her town and her island.

Project sponsored by UNESCO and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

Click to watch the film

<https://vimeo.com/709651949>

Password: martina