



EDITORIAL

Since publication of the last ALERT, our perceptions of natural hazards and the mayhem they have the potential to cause have been transformed. The Boxing Day, 2004 tsunami demonstrated with utter callousness that geophysical events neither respect national boundaries, nor differentiate between local and visitor. Most importantly, it showed that such events can be large enough to affect the entire planet or a substantial portion thereof. No longer are low-frequency, high-magnitude hazards such as climatemodifying volcanic eruptions, asteroid impacts or ocean-wide mega-tsunami regarded as teetering on the edge of science fiction, and moves are afoot to at least take such threats more seriously. In the US, NOAA quickly put forward a proposal for an Atlantic Tsunami Warning System, at least in part to help counteract the threat of the unstable Cumbre Vieja volcano on the Canary Island of La Palma. In the UK, the government moved rapidly to establish a Natural Hazard Working Group, charged with making recommendations about how the international community might tackle global and para-global hazards. The negative side of the Asian tsunami catastrophe balance sheet shows a third of a million dead, half a million injured, 400,000 homes destroyed and the citizens of forty countries wiped out. The positive side is a new perspective on the geophysical events that face our planet and our race, which, in the long term, may save countless lives. In this tsunami special issue, we include disaster scene findings from two BHRC staff, together with other tsunami-related news and features.

[Image: Phi Phi Island, Thailand. Courtesy Tiziana Rossetto, BHRC]