

# IMPACT OF TSUNAMI ON THE ENVIRONMENT ASSESSED

BHRC specialist, Charles Kelly, has played a critical role in the rapid assessment of the effects of the Asian tsunami on the environment. A REA (Rapid Environmental Assessment) Project visit to Sri Lanka in early January, at the request of UNDAC (United Nations Disaster Assessment & Coordination), revealed that, although the tsunami did not cause any air or water pollution events, it did result in locally severe damage to natural resources. In particular, the waves plugged estuary outlets, damaged or removed coastal vegetation, emplaced sand onto productive agricultural land and resulted in salt water intrusion into surface and sub-surface water resources. Future potential environmental problems highlighted include the logistics of debris removal, the provision of non-polluting sanitation facilities and judicious asset rebuilding avoiding the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources. The full draft field report: Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment - Sri Lanka Tsunami can be downloaded from the [www.benfieldhrc.org](http://www.benfieldhrc.org) Indian Ocean Tsunami pages. Mr Kelly was also a contributing author to the UNDAC tsunami REA report for Sri Lanka, and a technical consultant to the Indonesian Ministry of the Environment during the preparation of its tsunami REA Report for Banda Aceh. Both reports, along with a third focusing on Aceh Province, can be downloaded from the BHRC website.