

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For millions of people, Sunday 26 December 2004 brought an unimaginable change in their lives. The beautiful and tranquil beaches were transformed to a personal nightmare across the Region when wall-high waves swept across the shores and washed away lives, livelihoods, homes and the certainty of life as it had been.

Without the courage, determination, compassion and humanity of the affected communities themselves, of the local health workers and volunteers and of the many organizations that worked tirelessly in the days following the tsunami, little could have been achieved.

The leadership demonstrated by national governments and district administrations together with the hard work of dedicated people not only enabled immediate assistance to reach the people in need, but also ensured that rehabilitation and reconstruction commenced as soon as possible.

The tsunami also brought about an unprecedented reaction from people and their governments across the world; who expressed their shock and sympathy and whose generous support enabled a quick and extensive humanitarian response. The work of World Health Organization (WHO) during the crisis was greatly facilitated by the financial assistance received from donor agencies.

Two years have passed and, on the surface, life has returned to normal for many of the people who suffered. Houses have been rebuilt, hospitals and schools have been reconstructed and improved, and life goes on. But the images of the day the world changed will remain etched in all our minds.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to all those who worked with WHO and allowed us to make a difference.

WHO also thanks all the photographers whose work appears in this book. This book is a tribute to all of them. The effect of the tsunami on the countries of the Regions is described according to the magnitude of their burden.

Special tanks to Dr Bandana Malhotra and Ms Netra Shyam for putting together this report in such a short time.