

# UN Roundtable on Older Persons in the 2004 Tsunami

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GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTION
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By Susanne Paul, President  
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“The human and physical toll left from the December 26 earthquake and subsequent tsunami staggered the world. During the first 24 hours it took for the wave to cross the Indian Ocean, over 230,000 people lost their lives, some 430,000 homes were reduced to rubble, the livelihoods of as many as five million people were thrown into jeopardy, more than 2,174 miles of roads were destroyed, and over 100,000 fishing boats were destroyed or damaged. The disaster caused some \$10 billion in damages in barely 24 hours.” (UNDP website)

Global Action on Aging and Help Age International have organized this two day session to look at the humanitarian response to older persons caught in the tsunami from a number of perspectives. We will hear speakers from the UN and its specialized agencies, its regional organization, several relief and development agencies, and local NGO's in tsunami hit countries. Our speakers will describe what they have seen and heard and offer some suggestions to serve older persons better. Questions will follow. Tomorrow, our panelists will examine how these recommendations can be

advanced, particularly during the 5 year review of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing. All of us want the world's increasing numbers older persons to have an equal chance to survive and recover from terrifying emergencies such as the 2004 Asian Tsunami.

We are grateful to our partners: the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. May I introduce our co-organizer, Susan Erb, Emergencies Coordinator in the World Wide Emergencies Department of HelpAgeInternational. Susan has worked on relief and development programs in Afghanistan, Sudan and several other countries. Global Action on Aging is happy to partner with the wonderful people at HelpAgeInternational in organizing this UN Roundtable.

Susan, you have the floor.