



Australian High Commission  
Colombo

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Australian High Commission commemorates the tenth Anniversary of the Indian Ocean Tsunami**

**1 December 2014**

This month marks ten years since the Indian Ocean Tsunami struck the coastal areas of eleven countries around the Indian Ocean rim.

At an event held to commemorate the anniversary, Australian High Commissioner, Robyn Mudie, said “The Tsunami was a devastating event which had a devastating impact on the lives of millions, including many Sri Lankans from the south coast to the northern tip of the island”.

On the morning of 26 December 2004, a massive earthquake off the coast of Sumatra caused the world’s worst natural disaster in 40 years. The human and physical impact was unprecedented.

More than 35,000 Sri Lankans lost their lives and more than 400,000 coastal villagers were displaced. The tsunami also greatly affected economic activity, particularly fishing, hospitality, small industry, banking, domestic trade and transport.

“Australia responded by providing immediate humanitarian assistance like food aid, shelter, clean drinking water and emergency medical supplies”, Ms Mudie said.

“We worked in partnership with a number of trusted donor organisations to deliver this assistance, and I am honoured to be joined at this commemorative event by the Chief Executive Officer of World Vision Australia, Mr Tim Costello.”

When the tsunami struck, World Vision launched an extensive emergency response in 11 districts across Sri Lanka, providing food, clothes, shelter, medical supplies and safe spaces for children. Mr Costello flew into the country the following day, visiting many of the communities struck by the tsunami.

“It is exciting for me to be returning a decade later to see firsthand how communities are faring and to witness the extraordinary endurance of the human spirit embodied in the tsunami survivors of Sri Lanka,” Mr Costello said.

Australia also helped with the longer-term recovery including helping to re-establish essential services, transport infrastructure and livelihoods in affected communities. With the help of various partners, Australia also worked with communities to provide protection against sexual and gender-based violence and offer psycho-social support for families who had been through so much.



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Australia continues to work with tsunami-affected communities, as well as vulnerable groups across Sri Lanka, having provided nearly AU\$400 million in development assistance since 2004 in areas like education, health and economic development.

Ms Mudie also commended the Sri Lankan Government for their progress in developing the response capacity to major natural disasters over the last ten years, including improved early warning systems, coordination and response mechanisms.

Paying tribute to those lost in the tsunami as well as to those who survived to rebuild their lives, Ms Mudie said “It is testimony to the determination and strength of spirit of the many people affected by the tsunami that, in travelling around Sri Lanka today, there are only faint traces of the damage and destruction which took place on 26 December 2004. Instead of encountering hopelessness, grief or anger, you find optimism and a great determination by people who survived the tsunami to keep building a decent life for themselves and their children”.