

## **The Christmas Tsunami 2004**

It is one of the biggest natural catastrophes of the 21st century. The disaster begins on the 26th December 2004 at 7.59 a.m. near Simeulue Island. 30 kilometres deep a massive earthquake triggers a cascade of tidal waves in the Indian Ocean. US geological survey experts define a magnitude of 9.1. It is the third strongest earthquake ever recorded.

On Boxing Day 2004 the seabed rises up to 10 metres high, at some places just sinks. On a length of 1200 kilometres there are enormous upheavals. Unimaginable water masses are now moving. If in that case the water column gets moving, the waves spread in all directions. The time distance between the two wavecrests can take up to two hours. They spread with 1000 km/h. The tsunami can cross the ocean within a few hours and spread up to 20.000 kilometres. That's why whole landscapes were destroyed and around 230.000 people in 14 countries lost their lives in the floods 11 years ago. East of the epicentre, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia are hit by the water masses without warning, in the west the floods strike India and Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

It was the biggest nature catastrophe since time immemorial and the word >tsunami< has become a synonyme for fright to the world public.