



Geneva

Brussels

New York

# New York newsletter 04

Permanent Observer to the United Nations General Assembly | October 2010

 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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## Editorial: IFRC at the MDG Summit 2010

The UN High Level Plenary Meeting on the MDGs, which was held 20-22 September 2010, brought together more than 140 heads of state and government. The purpose of the MDG Summit was to review and accelerate progress toward the achievement of the MDGs by 2015. Parallel to the MDG Summit there were two other high-level meetings. The first as a contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity; and the second, Mauritius +5, a five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The MDG Summit was an occasion for the UN and world leaders to review how much progress was made, and to re-emphasise their commitment to achieving the MDGs by 2015. However, many from the developing world in particular were disappointed that not much was agreed upon in terms of concrete commitments on financing for development. The Summit was also an occasion for civil society organisations to raise awareness about the commitments by the international community toward the poor and the vulnerable, and to pressure governments to do more and to provide critically needed resources. The world media was also tuned to the Summit and the gathering of world leaders in New York. It was a rare moment when the plight of the poor and vulnerable was the focus of the world media. As many argued, helping the world’s poor is important for the rich countries’ recovery from the financial crisis and for sustainable economic growth.

In this context, IFRC participated actively in the MDG Summit, with a delegation headed by Secretary General Bekele Geleta. IFRC organised two side events to highlight the RCRC contribution toward the achievement of the MDGs. The side events brought together IFRC and a number of its partners as well as representatives from National Societies.

The participation of the SG and his statement at the plenary high-level meeting, his remarks at the round table on health and education and the two side events transmitted a very strong message to the international community: RCRC National Societies have played an important role in the achievement of the MDGs as per their mandate and unique role as auxiliaries to their public authorities.

This issue of the New York delegation newsletter covers the participation of IFRC at the Summit and the side events organised by IFRC, as well as an analysis of the issues debated at the Summit and the other parallel high-level meetings.



SG Bekele Geleta speaking at the MDG Summit in New York. UN Photo/Ky Chung

## UNGA 65th Session: General Debate

This year's general debate of the UN General Assembly followed an historic gathering of more than 140 world leaders at the MDG Summit, as well as the other two high-level meetings on biodiversity and the sustainable development of small island developing states. As world leaders focused on the MDGs during the Summit, their statements during the general debate covered a broader range of issues.

These issues ranged from UN reform to peace and security and the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts; from gender equality to fighting global terrorism, and included financing for development, biodiversity, climate change, health, disaster preparedness and migration, as well as global governance and the role of the G20.



Opening of the general debate. UN  
Photo/Rick Bajornas

On UN reform, many states reflected on the ongoing, open-ended consultation on the reform of the UN and the expansion of the membership of the Security Council. Although, there has been a major development in terms of moving to text-based negotiations, many states felt that the process was not moving fast enough. However, the need to move on this issue and present concrete proposals in relating to how many and who should be given a permanent seat at the Security Council is gaining momentum. The new geopolitical realities of today's world can no longer be ignored and must be reflected at the global governance level, as was said by so many representatives.

One issue tackled by a number of world leaders and receiving wide media attention was the Middle East peace. US President Barak Obama dedicated a large portion of the US statement to Middle East and Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. This statement was followed by many others, which stressed the need for and expressed support for the resumption of negotiations and for a two-state settlement.

Sudan was another important issue in light of the planned referendum on the secession of southern Sudan, and the worries of world leaders about the possible fallout. In this context, the Security Council held a high-level meeting on Sudan, which reflected how nervous the world leaders are about the process and the outcome of the referendum.

A focus on the global economy, reform of the global financial system and development issues followed from the MDG Summit. President Obama presented what he called "a new development policy" that will "unleash growth that powers by individuals." Calling civil society the "conscience of communities," he said that the US will "always extend [its] engagement abroad with citizens beyond the halls of government."

The role of the G20 was recognised as a new reality in the current global multi-polar system, although many called for more integration with the UN system as well as increased democratization of international financial institutions and greater justice in the world economic system. Brazil emphasized that the financial crisis of 2008 accelerated the change in global economic governance. The G20 replaced the G8; and while this is seen as a step forward, Brazil called for greater African participation.

Brazil and China both emphasized in their statements their states' focus on south-south cooperation. Africa was highlighted as a focus of China's and Brazil's development policies. They outlined their cooperation and

assistance to Africa as an expression of solidarity with the continent, but also as a priority for their foreign policy.

Climate change was another topic universally addressed by almost all world leaders. As they met in parallel at Mauritius +5 to address the sustainable development of small island developing states (SIDS), the issues addressed at that meeting were reflected in the general debate. SIDS highlighted the specific risks posed by climate change to their countries. The Maldives stressed the urgency of the situation, saying that failure to extend emissions targets beyond 2012 will leave 60 per cent of the world population without durable solutions, with direct consequences for the spread of disease and conflict, and for the erosion of development successes.

One interesting recurring theme was dialogue among civilizations. Many initiatives have sprung out of deliberation in the UN General Assembly; and consequently there are a number of reports by the UNSG reviewing work and progress on this issue. Nevertheless, many still felt that a lot could be done on this topic as our world witnesses greater divisions and misconceptions.

The King of Jordan, proposed introducing a new draft resolution during the UNGA 65th session calling for an annual "World Interfaith Harmony Week." The proposal is for a special week, during which people around the world express in their own places of worship "the teachings of their own faith about tolerance, respect for the other, and peace."

## MDG Summit

The main outcome of the MDG Summit, which convened 20-22 September, was the adoption of a document entitled "Keeping the promise: United to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals." The outcome document includes an overview of lessons learned over the past 10 years (since the adoption of the

Millennium Declaration) and an action agenda for achieving the goals by 2015.

Three months of negotiations led to a text that recognizes the need for a holistic approach to the MDGs and suggests the way forward, emphasizing nationally owned and led development. However, critics, including some developing countries and civil society in particular, have taken issue with the document for lacking specifics as to 'how' the goals will be realized, and failing to resolve issues around debt relief, trade, biodiversity, climate change, and the fate of the most vulnerable.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these shortcomings, the MDG Summit brought political and media attention to the goals, and led to new funding commitments as well as new initiatives.

The main topics discussed were: women and children, global health, inequity, the creation of social safety nets, global crisis, climate change, economic recovery, trade, debt relief, official development assistance, funding and aid effectiveness. Other topics picked up by certain states were the special situation of small island and land-locked developing states, migration, natural disasters and youth.

In his opening remarks, UNGA President Joseph Deiss recognized that "we are... falling short in some areas, especially with regard to eradicating hunger, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health." The review of the MDGs five years from the 2015 target date reveals that while poverty has declined in overall terms, progress remains uneven. Some goals (2, 6) are fairing much better than others (4, 5), with the challenges greatest in Africa.

World Bank Group President Robert Zoellick drew attention to the effect of

<sup>1</sup> See "Keeping the Promise: Outcome of the 2010 MDG Summit," NGLS Roundup, [http://www.un-ngls.org/IMG/pdf\\_Keeping\\_the\\_Final\\_Promise\\_Outcome\\_of\\_the\\_2010\\_MDG\\_Summit.pdf](http://www.un-ngls.org/IMG/pdf_Keeping_the_Final_Promise_Outcome_of_the_2010_MDG_Summit.pdf)

the recent food, fuel and financial crises, noting that "[i]n 1981, 52 per cent of people in developing countries lived in extreme poverty; by 2005, that share had been cut by more than half." While efforts by developing countries were paying off, "the triple-blow... has slowed down and even reversed progress."



Source: UNDP

UNDP Administrator Helen Clark added to the bleak picture, but concluded with a call for action; in her words, "We can turn the MDG promise into a reality. Let's make that happen. Let's just do it."

In the face of these multiple crises, UNSG Ban Ki-moon called on states to provide the necessary investment, aid and political will to end extreme poverty. Answering this call, the EU announced an MDG initiative of EUR 1 billion to make progress on those goals that are furthest from being achieved.

A focus on women's and children's health reverberated with many member states. For example, French President Nicolas Sarkozy promised to increase France's annual contribution to The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which has set the goal to

eradicate mother-to-child HIV transmission. The French contribution is set to rise by 20 per cent to EUR 1.08 billion (USD 1.4b) between 2011 and 2013.

Despite such pledges, funding overall remains a sticking point for all MDGs. Developing countries and their supporters stressed the need for the developed world to live up to its commitments, including the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance (ODA). Going further, Egypt emphasized that the largest part of ODA is used for debt relief, and therefore does not entail new financial flows for use in the development process.

Equity was also a main theme of the meeting, and was raised in different contexts, including the use of resources and environmental sustainability. Switzerland raised questions about the emerging economic success of states such as China, India and Brazil and the consequences for ecological sustainability.

Equity was also raised in terms of social inclusion and ensuring that the most vulnerable also benefit from the MDGs. This was echoed by developed and developing countries alike, with many references to building social safety nets and ensuring basic services.

Another topic garnering much attention from donors was aid effectiveness. Canada, for example, proudly announced that an aid accountability report was introduced for the first time to G8 leaders. Canada went on to stress that aid accountability means focusing on priorities – in Canada's case on food security, children and youth, and economic development.

## Round Table 2—Meeting the Goals of Health and Education

On 20 September SG Bekele Geleta participated in a heads-of-state level roundtable discussion on health and education, both integral to the achievement of all MDGs. This proved an excellent opportunity to put forward how IFRC, with more than 90 years of disaster response experience, is also active in the development field, contributing significantly to the health and education MDGs among other goals.

Among the IFRC programmes highlighted were education and school fees in post-disaster situations, water and sanitation for disaster-stricken schools, maternal care, vaccination, blood donation, and fighting the stigma of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

SG Bekele Geleta stressed that civil society and IFRC must be part of the decision-making process and recognized at a national level. He also pledged to intensify and scale up IFRC's contribution toward the achievement of the MDGs. Partnership will be one of the important tools in that endeavour, he said.

On a final note, SG Bekele Geleta acknowledged the transformation taking place in the world of today, a transformation seen not only in globalization, and in the speed and scale of mobilization, but also in people's minds. "It's time to recognize that people want to be part of their own future. We must let people help to change their lives," he concluded.

## High-level Meeting on the Mauritius Strategy

The high-level review meeting on the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) took place on 24-25 September.

The meeting was a platform for voices of support for SIDS, as well as sharing of national initiatives aimed at reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening resilience in the face of multiple challenges, including climate change and sea-level rise.

The outcome of the meeting was the consensus adoption of a document, which calls upon states to take urgent action on climate change (in line with UNFCCC principles); to support national climate change adaptation and mitigation programmes; to support agricultural production and food security for SIDS; and to assist SIDS in protecting oceans and coastal areas.<sup>2</sup>

In an interactive roundtable session on regional perspectives the head of the New York delegation took the floor to express solidarity with the SIDS, and to urge governments to make use of Red Cross Red Crescent national societies grass-roots knowledge and to include them in the consultation and implementation process of national development planning. He also pointed to IFRC's work with non-traditional partners in areas such as public communication, and the benefits of using new technology to reach out to communities.

Throughout the meeting it was recognized that economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities have worsened in the past 10 years, and that SIDS face considerable challenges from external shocks such as the financial crisis, natural disasters and climate change.

Participants recognized that while substantial progress (particularly on gender, health, education and environmental goals) has been made in implementing the Mauritius Strategy, many commitments have yet to be fulfilled.

Indeed implementation of initiatives has been weak, due in part to low funding. SIDS are often not eligible for special financing, and there was much discussion on the need to develop a SIDS vulnerability index (which the SIDS unit of UNDESA is now working on).

In light of the particular vulnerabilities faced by SIDS, it was suggested by a number of states, including the Pacific SIDS group, that consideration should be made for formal recognition of SIDS as a special category within the UN, with preferential access to finance, trade, etc.

Priorities highlighted for future action were: defining measurable goals and indicators for SIDS' progress; strengthening capacity for data analysis; scaling up resources for SIDS to meet new challenges; enhancing partnerships especially at regional level and with the UN, e.g. through UNDAF; and strengthening south-south cooperation.

A range of other issues were picked up in various statements, including consideration of climate change as a security issue (raised by AOSIS).

The Commonwealth Secretariat referred to its work with the World Bank in producing two reports in 2000 and 2005 on the inherent vulnerabilities and strengths of small states, and particularly of remote islands.

Marshall Islands spoke encouragingly of the Dutch-led "fast start finance dot org" website initiative to provide transparent information.

For further information please consult the UNSG's report<sup>3</sup> on the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy, which provides an overview of the present situation, and elaborates on the lack of a proper vulnerability index for SIDS.

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.sidsnet.org/msi\\_5/docs/GA/A.64\\_L.68.pdf](http://www.sidsnet.org/msi_5/docs/GA/A.64_L.68.pdf)

<sup>3</sup><http://www.un.org/en/ga/65/meetings/mauritiusreview.shtml>

## IFRC Side Event: “Immuni- zation: Unfinished Business”

Although the world has never been so close to eradicating polio, the most challenging 1 per cent remains. To promote the lifesaving power of vaccination and the key lessons from polio eradication, IFRC organized a side event in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF, the GAVI Alliance, Rotary International and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

SG Bekele Geleta delivered opening remarks, sharing his own childhood experience of carrying his polio-stricken friend to school, and pointing to the challenges remaining.

“We are almost there, but we need to scale up our efforts” he said and called for increased geographical outreach, social and political inclusion of vulnerable groups, and the support of volunteers to walk the last mile to reach remote communities.

The key note speaker, WHO Director General Margaret Chan stressed the importance of partnerships, strategies and technology, as the key to eradicating polio. She also noted the difficulties of reaching out to countries in conflict and distress. “We need your independent assessment, it lends credibility to the work on the ground. The UN cannot reach the goal on health alone,” she said with a clear address to IFRC, whose volunteers not only move from door-to-door, but help spread messages about the importance of immunization.

UNICEF Director of Programmes Nicholas Alipui stressed that national ownership of programmes is crucial. The focus on national leadership was reinforced by Nigeria NPHCDA Executive Director Muhammad Ali Pate. “Since 2009, the war against polio has been working in our favour, leading to the current dramatic gains that have firmly placed Nigeria on the verge of interruption and eradication. Support came from the



Top down: Dr Margaret Chan; WHO  
Mr Andrew Jack, FT, moderator  
Dr Nicholas Alipui, UNICEF  
Amb John E. Lange, Gates Foundation  
Ms Joelle Tanguy, GAVI  
Ms Fatima Gailani, Afghan RC  
Photo/Jun Shimizu

Gates Foundation, but is also a result of efforts on all levels,” he explained.

Another challenge is the gap in funding. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative recently announced that 1.3 billion US dollars is needed to reach the goal of eradication by 2012.

Joelle Tanguy of the GAVI Alliance noted that “there is both an unease and excitement, as the clock is ticking. A lot is at stake, but if we can attract new resources, we will feel emboldened, and success will breed success.”

Amb John E. Lange (Ret.) of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, addressed the danger of stopping too soon. “If not finished, resurrection will occur, and it will set a terrible precedent. We must try to get new donors and new funds,” he said, underlining that the Gates Foundation has spent more than USD 8 million during the last decade in the fight against polio.

Afghan Red Crescent President Fatima Gailani stressed that the fight against polio is ongoing. “Unfortunately, Afghanistan belongs to the 1 per cent, where polio is still existent. Not a week goes by without that I’m not approached by parents with children suffering from polio. ‘If only I knew what to do,’ they say.”

“As an auxiliary to the government, namely the Ministry of Health, the clinics of Afghan Red Crescent have during and after war provided service to people in need, but I also see that all stakeholders in the fight against polio need to be better organized. We need to be more targeted.”

On that lesson learned, James Lacy of Rotary International, pointed to international partnerships with government and NGOs, as important tools for people to help themselves.

## IFRC Side Event: “Saving Mothers and Children with Malaria Control: Count Down to the MDGs”

Against the reality of 3.3 billion people at risk of malaria and with nearly 1 million deaths yearly, there was good reason to concur with the key note speaker of the IFRC and Roll Back Malaria (RBM) side event on malaria, Mrs Ban Soon-taek, spouse of the UN Secretary General:

“This is the most important side event of this week,” she said to the approximately 270 attendees, among them First Ladies, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Chief Executive Officers, Ambassadors, heads of agencies, journalists, and other high-level decision-makers.



Dr Shin Young-soo of WHO and Mrs Ban Soon-taek. Photo/Jun Shimizu

“Tackling malaria will bring us closer to achieving the MDGs on children and maternal health, and education.”

SG Bekele Geleta in his introductory remarks addressed the huge task of battling malaria. He highlighted the Red Cross Red Crescent’s work in 2010 alone, reaching more than 20 million beneficiaries with messages on malaria prevention, early treatment and the need for skilled professional care in complicated cases.

Yet, he added that “no single state, organisation, company, or community can meet malaria’s challenges alone. Cooperation and coordination are critical elements to ensure an effective and sustained response to control malaria.”

Providing an example of how partnerships can save lives, Kenya Red Cross was showcased for its prevention work with remote communities, in partnership with the Kenyan Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation, WHO Kenya Program Office, IFRC, CIDA, and Canadian Red Cross.

Kenya Red Cross SG Abbas Gullet explained the country situation: “80 per cent of the 38 million population in Kenya are at risk of being affected by malaria, and 20-30 per cent of all hospital admission is due to malaria. There is a lack of formally trained health workers, and a lack of treatment access. But with simple methods, large results could be achieved within a short period of time.”

By using community volunteers to increase the treatment of children under the age of 5, 82 per cent of reported fever cases were treated within 24 hours, which is a substantial increase. The holistic health approach further leads to mother and child care being addressed through local solutions.

Kenyan Minister of Public Health and Sanitation Beth Mugo underlined the need for a prompt and correct diagnosis, since malaria can kill within 24 hours.

“Trained community health workers play a crucial role, and as the home management programme showed the proportion of children receiving care within 24 hours rose from 9 to 30 per cent.”

Canadian Red Cross SG Conrad Sauvé pointed to the individual volunteer as the cornerstone of success in rolling back malaria. With CAD 47 million, Canadian Red Cross has provided some 7 million nets in 12 campaigns in Africa.

“We also see that the development of these local networks of volunteers has an important multiplier-effect beyond malaria. Not only can we get the nets and the anti-malaria drugs out to where they’re needed, we can also train the



Singer Yvonne Chaka Chaka with SG Bekele Geleta and NY Head of Delegation Marwan Jilani. Photo/Jun Shimizu

same volunteers to assist with other lifesaving interventions such as rapid diagnostic tests, preventative medicine for pregnant mothers, helping families produce clean drinking water, measles and polio vaccinations, treatment for intestinal worms, and vitamin ‘A’ supplements to help protect kids against other childhood illnesses,” he said.

The emcee of the event, RBM Goodwill Ambassador Yvonne Chaka Chaka facilitated a lively gathering. A short version of her documentary “The Motherland Tour – a journey of African women” was also shown.

The film highlights the challenges and successes in maternal and child health on the African continent, and demonstrates how the empowerment of women is at the heart of the development goals, particularly the ones focused on poverty, health and education.

## “Young People Driving the MDGs”

On 22 September, UNFPA, International Planned Parenthood Foundation (IPPF) and the Inter-Agency Network for Youth Development, in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN organized a side event entitled “1.8 Billion Strong: Young people driving the MDGs.”

Around 100 participants were welcomed by IPPF Deputy Director of Public Affairs Maria Antonieta Alcalde, who highlighted that many MDG targets and

indicators directly relate to young people's health and development.

The panel made the case for prioritizing and investing in young people so as to accelerate progress on the MDGs. Social investments in young people's education, health and employment can enable countries to build a strong economic base, thereby reversing inter-generational poverty, especially in countries undergoing demographic transition.

Such investments, if timely and gender-equal can also help countries achieve other MDGs, such as universalizing education, promoting gender equality, reducing maternal mortality and reversing the rising tide of HIV.

## Global Strategy on Women's and Children's Health

The much anticipated launch of the UNSG's Global Strategy on Women's and Children's Health drew an impressive crowd, attesting to the interest this subject has gained under the SG's leadership.

The Strategy represents a roadmap for coordinated action, including required funding and policy changes, in order to prevent the deaths of more than 15 million children under five, the deaths of 740,000 women from pregnancy and childbirth complications, and the prevention of 33 million unwanted pregnancies between 2011 and 2015.

In his introduction of the Strategy, UNSG Ban called for broad partnerships in realizing the Strategy, while emphasizing that "Piecemeal approaches yield piecemeal results."

In one session the Global Strategy attracted pledges of over USD 40 billion over a period of 5 years.

Commitments came from governments, private sector, foundations, and high-profile individuals alike. Among the

donors was the Gates foundation pledging USD 1.5 billion, while Carlos Slim and his foundation each pledged 50 million.

## Financing the Health MDGs

The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria organized a side event entitled "Champions of Global Health: Financing the Health MDGs," gathering around 250 participants.

UNSG Ban Ki-moon provided key statistics to achieve the health MDGs: USD 26 to 46 billion for MDGs 4 and 5 or USD 28 to 50 billion to reach universal coverage targets.

French Minister for Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner, highlighted the role played by France in the creation of the Global Fund and other mechanisms such as UNITAID. Also mentioned was that all public and private efforts to achieve the health MDGs will not be enough if we don't consider additional innovative financing mechanisms, such as a currency transaction levy of 0.005 per cent on financial transactions, he said.

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## UN General Assembly Calls for Strengthened Emergency Relief for Devastating Floods in Pakistan

The UNGA met in plenary on 19 August (World Humanitarian Day) to express its full solidarity with the Pakistani people and pledge support for relief and recovery efforts following the unprecedented flooding.

Addressing the assembly, UNSG Ban Ki-moon, who had recently returned from Pakistan, said the disaster "is like few the world has ever seen," comparing its scale to the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004), the Kashmir earthquake (2005), Cyclone

Nargis (2008) and the Haiti earthquake (2010) combined.

In a resolution<sup>4</sup> adopted by consensus, the UNGA urged "the international community, in particular donor countries, international financial institutions and relevant international organizations, as well as the private sector and civil society, to extend full support and assistance to the Government of Pakistan in its efforts to mitigate the adverse impacts of the floods and to meet the medium- and long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction needs."

One month later, on 17 September, the UN launched its largest-ever disaster appeal for flood response in Pakistan. The Revised Pakistan Floods Emergency Response Plan appeals for over USD 2 billion to provide aid for up to 14 million people over a 12-month period. The appeal includes 483 projects to be carried out by 15 UN bodies, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and 156 national and international NGOs.

## USG/ERC Takes up Her Post

Valerie Amos took over the post of Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator on 7 September, replacing Sir John Holmes.

She spent her first days on the job in Pakistan, surveying the ongoing relief effort and meeting with government officials, representatives of the local authorities and members of the humanitarian community.

Amos comes to her new role from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and was most recently the UK's High Commissioner to Australia. She has held various high-level government positions, including as cabinet minister with

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<sup>4</sup> A/RES/64/294 "Strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the wake of devastating floods in Pakistan"

responsibility for international development.



USG/ERC. Valerie Amos, at a brief on Pakistan. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

## The Emmy Awards 2010

On 27 September, the Annual News and Documentary Emmy Awards took place in New York in the presence of 1,000 journalists.

This year, IFRC together with Thomson Reuters Foundation and Mediastorm, were nominated for an Emmy Award in the category of “New Approach to News & Documentary Programming: Current News Coverage” for the tsunami multimedia production “Surviving the tsunami: Stories of Hope.”

The nomination was a tremendous recognition for a project which set out to reflect how widely and profoundly the tsunami affected the lives of four people, all from different walks of life and different parts of the world.



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