

Remote Sensing Community's Response to Tsunami Event

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Beginning on second week after the December 26, 2004 tsunami event, the authors began investigating the remote sensing community's response and effectiveness from a variety of user perspectives related to in-the-field humanitarian relief workers. While significant improvements have been made towards the availability of satellite data for disasters over the past few years, there was a distinct lack of field map products produced and delivered to humanitarian workers. A situation still exists in the US and the UN community where the lack of clear lines of communication prevented awareness of licensing agreements with commercial firms with a resultant bottleneck of requests and orders for duplicate imagery. Additionally, the existence of outlet servers for downloading available imagery, both before and after the event, was not established by the UN and US agencies by the end of the third week from the disaster. Lack of national cooperation hampered the situation by not sharing base map and aerial photographs that have proved to be critical in assessment and logistics of first responders. Results of field interviews throughout the globe, damage site inspections in Thailand, and international web-monitoring and list serve participation have demonstrated that an order of magnitude in improvements can be made with the advance of a few simple protocols and effective placement of technological infrastructural investments amongst a sophisticated community with three-decades of experience and knowledge in the use of satellite data and information for humankind. The authors present these perspectives to assist in future response capacity.