

carnage. I understood immediately why even the likes of Colin Powell and Kofi Annan were shocked upon seeing it. Imagine standing on Rideau Street in Ottawa and seeing nothing but flattened buildings and houses south down Bank Street, Alta Vista, east beyond Beacon Hill and West beyond Island Park, debris piled everywhere, newly formed ponds of brackish water dotting the landscape, twisted wreckages of cars improbably perched on top of the skeletal remains of the few buildings left standing. Imagine then the same scene continued all the way to Toronto with entire towns on the way erased from the map. That would give you some idea of the scope and scale.

4. I still saw body parts in one area, the stench was overwhelming, and the fly and mosquito populations have grown to a point where disease has to be a real concern, though apparently under control for the moment. The destruction stretches all the way to the mountains, some ten kilometres in the distance. I talked to one young man in front of a pile of rubble that had once been his home. His story, a typical one, was of being blasted end-over-end by the wave and carried several kilometres into town, surviving only by some miracle. The other five members of his family are all gone and he is walking in a daze with no idea what to do next. There were many others like him.
5. My last stop of day one was at Acting Governor Abubakar's home (recall that the real Governor is up on corruption charges). His office was too damaged to receive visitors. He himself lost two brothers. His Deputy, who was taking notes, lost his youngest son of 14 years. Yet, no time for grieving, these are the men in charge at the front. I got from this meeting two impressions: the Acting Governor seems impatient with the pace of planning from Jakarta; and he wants foreign partners to take on sectoral recovery planning. He said that, so far, the Germans had taken on the task of planning for the reconstruction of the health system. The Malaysians had taken on education. He talked about the need for 50,000 houses and wondered if Canada would be able to play a part in this. I pointed out the need for a land use and urban plan from the government, so that everyone would know where to place the houses, schools, hospitals and other infrastructure. A fair point, he admitted.
6. I was scrummed in Bahasa by TVRI on leaving the last meeting and was able to convey our basic messages. Hopefully, that will help make our presence and contribution here better known. We are not very visible otherwise, especially compared to others. I think we can take some comfort, however, from knowing that, not only are we the seventh largest donor, but we were among the first that had a development Minister visit Aceh and are now among the very first to establish an Embassy presence here. Other nationals will be watching this closely and may follow our lead.