

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide. Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;

And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying, And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

John Masefield (1878-1967) - Sea Fever

ALMOST a month since one of the greatest natural disasters in living memory and the death toll is still rising. The latest figure having reached almost the quarter of a million mark, 226,500 people according to the newspapers. Hundreds of small villages, towns and communities were not only devastated by the tsunami in South Asia but in some



cases totally eradicated. You wouldn't even know that some of these places ever existed. But then you don't need me to tell you about the hundreds of thousands of people that have lost their lives or those who are left homeless, orphaned, injured and mentally scarred and traumatised for life by the extent of the destruction caused by the tsunami. We have all been privy to the heart wrenching visions of people too grief stricken to speak or parents trying to find signs of their children under the masses of rubble, children searching desolately for their families and trucks carrying the bodies recovered from the debris waiting to be buried in mass graves.

But something rather remarkable has happened in the wake of this tragedy. People all around the world have tuned into the plight of the victims of the tsunami disaster and dug into their pockets and given as much or as little as they could afford in the hope that their money would alleviate some of the suffering of the people in the affected areas. Oxfam alone raised £45 million worldwide. That is truly a staggering amount. In fact in the UK,

A Wave of Compassion

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which is unprecedented. In the first week of the appeal almost £76 million was raised by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), the umbrella charity group that includes organisations such as the Red Cross and Save the Children. So far people in the UK have donated more than £100 million.

In many cases the contributions have come from the unlikeliest of places. Children around Britain have sold or auctioned their Christmas presents to raise money for the appeal or donated their pocket money, pensioners have handed in their weekly benefits, teenagers have stood with their red charity buckets collecting money from the general public, and the list goes on. People have been donating money

