

# Agenda Setting Newsletter



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## **Catastrophe with high media presence must occur to realize a change**

Media Tenor compares reporting on the Tsunami disaster with the SARS epidemic in April/May two years ago. The Tsunami, triggered by the world's most powerful earthquake in 40 years, has killed upwards of 160,000 people in Asia and Africa; more than half of the deaths were on Sumatra. Our analysis includes affected countries such as Germany, USA and South Africa. In Germany more than 1,000 tourists are missing and 60 are confirmed dead. Coverage of the Tsunami in Germany was featured in 49,7% of all TV news reports. Germany has made one of the largest donations, which reached 8,25 USD per capita. Reporting in the U.S. followed a similar pattern; the Tsunami was featured in 48,1% of TV news coverage on ABC, NBC and CBS. Two thousand Americans are missing and 35 are confirmed dead. The U.S has donated 1,19 dollars per capita. South Africa didn't have as many victims and did not focus on the disaster as much as the other countries mentioned. South Africa has reported 11 people dead and 7 missing. The Tsunami was featured in 24,7% of TV news reports.

The entire world is concentrating on the Tsunami disaster and the development of an alert system in the region. In previous years Tsunamis have affected areas such as Chile, Hawaii, Alaska and Kamchatka, but did not kill as many people. We have always known that a warning system needed to be implemented, but it seems that a catastrophic event with high media presence needed to occur to realize a change. How will the Tsunami disaster affect the other important and necessary projects that had to be postponed because of reallocated funds?

Coverage of the respiratory illness SARS was much lower although it was as threatening to the world. According to the World Health Organization at least 2,671 people have been infected in 18 countries in Asia, Europe, and North America. In the U.S. reporting on SARS was 2% higher than in the German media where TV presence reached 7,4%. In South Africa media reports on SARS represented 5,7% of TV news coverage. Fortunately this illness did not spread globally. After the initial boom there was very little follow-up coverage regarding research developments aimed at predicting the next SARS outbreak.

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Media Tenor Institute for Media Analysis

Tel: +49-228-93444-0  
Fax: +49-228-93444-93  
Kurt Schumacher Str. 2  
D - 53113 Bonn, Germany