

## Sound waves

### **Tsunami news**

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Abhilasha Ojha / New Delhi July 1, 2006

A group of film directors, photographers, sound engineers and producers have joined hands to restore the music destroyed by the tsunami.

The 2004 tsunami may have come and gone, but its destruction still echoes. What got washed away in the calamity were not just homes, lives and families. Music too was drowned out.

While funds are raised for tsunami-affected areas even today, what hasn't gathered momentum is the magnitude of damage done to the folk artistes in many of these regions.

The big wave took with it folk instruments that you and I haven't even heard of besides songs that were written records of what was sung by folk artistes. In short, the tsunami dismembered a part of local culture that was otherwise kept alive through music.

As we speak with Sonya Mazumdar of Chennai-based Earth Sync Records, she introduces us to this hard-hitting reality of the tsunami. "It's obviously not foremost on most people's minds. In a bid to restore and rebuild villages, we've rarely stopped to think about the art forms that vanished forever because of the tsunami."

A group of nine like-minded people along with Mazumdar got together to give birth to the Laya Project. Laya, a Sanskrit word that means "fusion or union of song, dance and music", was the vision of photographers, film directors, sound engineers, musicians and producers who teamed together from Canada, the Netherlands, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Israel and India.

"The idea," says Mazumdar, "was really to create a world music project to assist in the long-term rehabilitation of the communities in the tsunami disaster regions of Asia."

The project, which started in early 2005, completed its first phase in December, exactly one year after the tsunami, and included a CD and DVD compilation that showcased a visual and musical journey through the tsunami-affected regions.

"It wasn't easy. We were always hard-pressed for funds and that's why we kept coming back to our work to honour our commitments. The minute we felt we had adequate funds, we would head back to shoot and film in the tsunami-affected areas," says Mazumdar.

None of the members involved with the project backed out, and after concerted efforts they were ready to show the world what they had filmed, taped and heard from the local inhabitants affected by the tsunami.

Though Mazumdar is tight-lipped about the funds, she asserts that every rupee has been used to repair and procure folk instruments, musicians and to create music festivals and performing arts in the coastal regions.

In fact, one of the first things done by the team was to procure musical instruments for the local community.

This was essential since sound engineers and musicians were recording in make-shift studios in the midst of all the destruction created by the tsunami. The songs were then mixed and mastered at Clementine Studios in Chennai, also a part of Earth Sync Records that produced the entire Laya Project in association with Boo Films of Malaysia.

“Earth Sync label is a fairly young company, started specifically to promote ethnic music,” stresses Mazumdar, adding, “Laya is our first big project and there are 2-3 more projects in the pipeline.”

A month ago, musician Shubha Mudgal stepped forward to distribute another unique musical travelogue by Laya on her website, [www.underscorerecords.com](http://www.underscorerecords.com).

The CD has music sung by fishermen of coastal Tamil Nadu besides other coastal regions. While the first phase of Laya journeyed through tsunami-affected countries including Sri Lanka, Thailand and India, the project now continues its research in the Maldives and Malaysia with the aim of releasing a more comprehensive double-disc set.

“This project was done with so much conviction that I willingly associated with it,” says Mudgal, who is distributing the Laya Project CD and DVD set at Rs 900. “We’re targeting corporate sales and of the 6,000 units that we produced, we’ve moved 3,000 units already,” says Mazumdar.

A special website, [www.layaproject.com](http://www.layaproject.com), is continuously updated with information, photographs, audio tracks and film clips.

“Music is the spine of any village and around it rest so many legends and stories,” says Mazumdar. Thanks to Laya, some of these tsunami affected regions have found a new beat and a new song to sing.

Source:

<http://www.business-standard.com/lifeleisure/storypage.php?leftnm=5&subLeft=2&chklogin=N&auto=96734&tab=r>