

Only two days after the tsunami struck, the LIF chartered a flight in order to conduct a damage assessment of Aceh's west coast. Without any guidance or prior information, the LIF assessment team flew to Singkil. From there, seeing that the area was spared, the plane headed north along the coast and it soon became obvious that this was ground zero, the most devastated of all areas. The mission stopped at Calang due to bad light, but even recognising that they were at Calang required precise knowledge of the local landscape. There was nothing left of the town and the only sign of life was a small group of survivors that had managed to run for higher ground and who waved desperately at the plane, as it circled over what once had been a prosperous town. The information gathered from this mission proved invaluable; the video footage was given to CNN and ITV who then broadcast it to the world. This LIF footage allowed the world to see that the west coast of Aceh was indeed the worst affected of all areas and must have been an essential tool for all groups, large and small, planning their recovery strategies.

The LIF was there when the tsunami hit Banda Aceh, fortunately, the LIF office withstood the impact and no staff were killed. Unfortunately however, family members and friends of LIF staff were counted among the victims. Two car loads of critical supplies (water, fuel and generators) were immediately sent from Medan to Banda Aceh. Although small, these supplies saved lives and gave the LIF time to organise further, more substantial deliveries. Within a week after the tsunami, the LIF and Pompiers sans Frontiers had established a camp for IDP at Lhok Nga, home to desperate survivors, struggling to survive in the tsunami's aftermath. This was a first of many initiatives (distribution of relief materials including aquaboxes in Aceh and Nias and clean water in Aceh).

Further degradation to the LE will ultimately result in a decline in agricultural production and industrial output.