

NGO Profile - OfERR Organization for Eelam Refugee Rehabilitation

OfERR, a non-profit, non political service organization, was founded in 1984, with the main objective of assisting and rendering relief to Tamil refugees who fled Ceylon due to the ethnic conflict and settled in India.

The December 2004 Tsunami which caused colossal loss to life and property to the inhabitants of **Nagapattinam, Kanniyakumary** and **Cuddalore** districts, uprooted them from their routine life and left a trail of profound human tragedy.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Psychosocial support

With the main objective of improving and sustaining the physical and mental health status of the 17,263 people in the 3 districts, OfERR started to provide psychosocial support to the community, from the acute phase, immediately after the disaster, extending for several months and beyond, until the community was rehabilitated both physically and psychologically.

Through family visits, OfERR's para-counselors hold community meetings and individual counseling to help the people to regain their self-esteem.

Women's empowerment

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are set up in villages to motivate women to engage in income generation programs such as tailoring, spirulina cultivation etc. OfERR also provides women's empowerment training and helps promote sales of their products.

Medical and healthcare

The health workers at the camps are trained in preventive healthcare. Handbills are given out and posters are put up in the villages to increase awareness on clean water sanitation and communicable diseases. First aid kits are periodically provided in these villages through the health workers.

Education program

The organization maintains close contact with principals and teachers and also conducts meetings with parents to ensure that students attend school

regularly. Students' associations at the school and village levels are formed to motivate and support one another. OfERR also conducts awareness programs, coaching & nursery classes, sports meets and distributes sports material to the children.



Offering shelter and psychosocial support

Capacity building

The Tamil refugees are also given training in computer knowledge, personality development, spoken English, home gardening etc.

Provision of basic facilities

With the assistance of **ECHO** (European Commission Humanitarian Aid Organization) and NGOs like **Christian Aid** and **Dan Church Aid**, OfERR has provided 3364 temporary shelters with proper water and sanitation facilities in 26 villages in 3 districts. Thatched roofs, kitchen extension with smokeless Chula, plinth work, tar sheet replacements, fire buckets to extinguish fire, shelves, fans, toilets and bathrooms were provided. Solar streetlights, earth fillings, channel drainage, syntex water tanks and roads were also

built. 53 community centers with solar lights and solar lamps were put up in the villages.

Despite various challenges to their services such as high expectations of the people, expectations of material help, duplication aspect of the intervention, etc., OfERR's experience with Tamil refugees in the past 21 years has enabled them to efficiently help those affected by the tsunami.

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Right to Information

“*Payanpaduthuvom payanpaduthuvom Thagaval Urimai Sathathai payanpaduthuvom*” (let’s utilize, let’s utilize the right to information) was one of the slogans used during a campaign to bring awareness on ‘Right to Information Act 2005. The campaign was organized in Kollidam block of Nagapattinam by the Village Information Centre of NCRC. A rally was held on 24 and 25 July 2006 with the help of 20 volunteers, which covered 13 villages over a distance of 38 kilometers and a time of 22 hours.

Meetings were organized at central places in the villages and pamphlets distributed. Traditional songs were sung to pull crowds to the rally.

The slogans used during the campaign were very catchy and simple and the messages were delivered in simple and interesting way. Some slogans used to beckon the crowds were “*Vellattum Vellattum Thagaval Urimai Sattam Vellattum* (triumph triumph, let the right to information triumph); “*Thagaval Ketpathu Ovovuruvarin Urimai Agum*” (to ask for information is everyone’s right); “*Thagaval Kodupathu Arasangathin kadamai agum*” (it is the duty of the government to give information).

The community was given guidance on the kind of information they could seek, how to write the applications for getting the information, whom to approach, etc. Their queries were also clarified. ■



Events roundup - July

248 houses handed over in Keechankuppam

6 July, 2006

Seva Bharathi handed over 248 houses to the tsunami affected community of Keechankuppam. At a function at Keechankuppam, Swamiji Gautamananda Swamikal, Ramakrishna Ashram Chennai, presented a model to PO-DRDA signifying the hand over. Mr. Mohan Bhagat, RSS National Coordinator, and Shankar Dhatwagi of Seva Bharathi were also present on the occasion.

Meeting on Agriculture with NGOs

4 and 8 July, 2006

NCRC organized two meetings on agriculture. The first meeting reviewed the current activities in agriculture sector and planned activities for the second season. Planning for the national workshop on disaster preparedness and for NGO exhibits at the workshop were also on the agenda. Responsibilities on collection of information were handed out.

The second meeting took stock of the status of exhibits and the modalities of information collection for the workshop. It was decided to hold a meeting on July 18, 2006 to consolidate the information.

Children Core Group Meeting

6 July, 2006

The Children core group met to discuss:

Teachers’ training programme

- Evaluation of workshop on Children Parliament
- Mobilizing fund towards education of 1000 poor students
- Bank account for children educational fund
- Appointment with District Collector
- Having children in the core group
- Handing accounts over to Finance Committee
- Meeting with MLAs
- Applications seeking help

14 representatives from 10 NGOs participated in the meeting.

Shelter construction progress review

7, 14, 21, 28 July, 2006

In the shelter review meetings the District Collector reviewed the progress of construction of permanent shelters in the district - NGO wise. He asked the NGOs to accelerate the construction progress taking into account of the impending monsoon. He also cited the fire accident in Thethi temporary shelter and said that the relocation of people to marriage halls could raise many social as well as livelihood issues in the

community. He said that in order to avoid further complications, the affected people need permanent shelters at least before the second anniversary of the tsunami. The quality of construction was emphasized upon. A total of 25 NGOs participated across all the meetings.

Expert consultations on shelter reconstruction survey

11 July, 2006

The Government of Tamilnadu, UNDP and Tamilnadu Tsunami Resource Centre (TNTRC) organized a meeting on consultation and dissemination on the post tsunami shelter reconstruction survey conducted by UNDP, NCRC and Hunnarshala. The meeting, held in Chennai, was attended by representatives from the UN, the government, NCRC and TNTRC. The meeting discussed the findings, identified gaps, suggested additions and clarifications. The study will be modified based on the deliberations at the meeting and disseminated to all concerned.

Addressing the grievances of fishermen

14 July, 2006

In a meeting called for by the District Collector, fishermen from around 15 villages shared their grievances. The District Collector responded to their problems by directing them to the concerned officials. The Tahsildar attending to tsunami related cases was directed to look in to the problems.

Issues put forward by the fishermen included:

- Distribution of ID card for fishermen
- Reinstalling separate bus service for women fish vendors
- Clearance of death compensation at the earliest
- Deposit of tsunami orphaned money to the account of the guardian
- Technical problems in en-cashing the cheques given by the government in the second phase ■

Book Review

Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami: Synthesis Report

By John Telford and John Cosgrave
Contributing author: Rachel Houghton
Published by the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC)
London, July 2006

This Synthesis Report is the outcome of an international collaborative process involving over 40 humanitarian and development cooperation agencies. Individuals involved have come primarily from the evaluation departments of UN agencies, multi- and bilateral donors, as well as non-governmental organizations, the Red Cross Movement and a number of research groups.

A week after the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, a number of members of ALNAP – the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in humanitarian action – began to discuss how to coordinate evaluations of the tsunami response. A consultative interagency and donor meeting was subsequently convened in Geneva on 23 February 2005. Those present were interested in maximizing learning from the tsunami response through thematic joint evaluation. They identified five key areas for investigation: coordination; needs assessment; the impact of the international response on local and national capacities, links between relief, rehabilitation and longer term development (LRRD); and the funding response. Most of the agencies present at that meeting subsequently formed the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC), and management of each thematic area was set up with the evaluation departments of interested TEC agencies forming a series of Steering Committees that provided the necessary oversight for each of the studies.

This synthesis is based on these five thematic studies, each undertaken by one or more independent evaluation team/s. The evaluations involved in-depth country case-studies, beneficiary surveys and extensive consultations with stakeholders. The report also benefits from a wealth of secondary sources produced on the tsunami response.

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Book Review

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 2006 UNICEF



The State of the World's Children 2006 report focuses on excluded and invisible children who lack access to essential services, protection and participation.

The report give a brief on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the broader aims of the Millennium Declaration and how this would transform the lives of millions of children, escape extreme poverty and malnutrition, gain access to safe water and decent sanitation facilities and complete primary schooling.

It observes that, though some regions and countries have fallen behind, the goals can still be met. The Member States of the United Nations are committed to meeting the MDGs and have coalesced around a set of key initiatives to accelerate progress. Putting these initiatives into practice will demand renewed commitment to the Millennium agenda and additional resources. It will also require a much stronger focus on reaching those children currently excluded from essential services and denied protection and participation. Unless many more of these children are reached, several of the MDGs – particularly the goal on universal primary education – will simply not be met on time or in full.

The report says that the children who are hardest to reach include those living in the poorest countries and most deprived communities; children facing discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, disability or membership of an indigenous group; children caught up in armed conflict or affected by HIV/AIDS; and children who lack a formal identity, who suffer child protection abuses or who are not treated as children. These children, the factors that exclude them and make them invisible, and the actions that those responsible for their well-being must take to safeguard and include them are the focus of *The State of the World's Children 2006*.

A companion CD-ROM with exclusive multimedia features is also available with the report. **The CD-ROM includes:**

- Eight profiles of excluded children from around the world with video, text, audio interviews and related information
- A selection of feature stories
- Downloadable maps, charts, graphs and photographs
- A photo essay
- Interviews with UNICEF experts
- Lucy and the world of invisible children– a children's story
- Statistical tables
- DevInfo, an easily accessible database of indicators for monitoring progress on global and national commitments to human development especially adapted for The State of the World's Children 2006
- Press materials
- The State of the World's Children 2006
- Abridged interactive version (HTML)
- Full text version (PDF)

For getting a copy of this book and CD please write to :

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