

Temporary Shelters

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Temporary shelters - searching for a viable option

In the aftermath of the Tsunami, with more than 13,000 families homeless and in relief camps, the immediate requirement was to ensure a place for these affected families to call their own. In a record-breaking time span of a week, all these families were shifted to, what were called, the “temporary shelters”. Built on linear lines, these shelters were made of bitumen, which were considered fire-proof, safe and easy to obtain as well as maintain. The Kumbakonam fire tragedy being fresh in everyone’s minds, local thatching materials were ruled out, as no one wanted to risk having so many houses, in such close proximity, being built of a material that was a fire hazard.

Ten months later, we find that we were over-optimistic about the lead-time required in setting up 17,000 permanent shelters. We were also not fully prepared for the sheer “temporary” nature of the building material used. The material is not amenable to the climatic conditions prevailing in Nagapattinam. It is either too hot during the summer or is getting damp and easily torn during the monsoons- the only two climates largely defining Nagapattinam’s typical weather pattern. The roofs and walls are constantly in need of repairs and the levels of investment, in terms of time, effort and money have been considerable, in trying to keep these shelters habitable.

Thatching is not an option as many small fire incidents have proved later, bitumen is certainly not an option as one scorching summer and one torrential monsoon has proved... then what is...??? Red Mud Plastic is lately seen to be a viable option for roofing as it is fire and water- proof, provided it can withstand the strong winds.

Besides the material, there is also a need to consider the overall design, one that takes into consideration the water, sanitation and drainage requirements, especially in view of the low-lying nature of Nagapattinam lands, one that can accommodate a population of 1000 or 5000 comfortably, hygenically and safely while preserving the dignity and quality of life.

While hind-sight is always twenty-twenty and armchair criticism is easy, what we need today is a viable option for a “temporary” shelter. It is not too late for Nagapattinam. Both the Administration and some helpful NGOs are ready to invest the effort and money in providing a safe haven to the tsunami affected community, especially those who will need to call this their “home” for at least another eight months or more. But what we need is a design.....a model.....a solution..... ■

Tsunami Rehabilitation Information Network - TRINet

The scale of the Tsunami disaster and the consequent response was massive, throwing up large volumes of information and generating a need for an even larger volume of information of various kinds. Resource centres have been established to cater to this need. These include NGO Coordination and Resource Centre (NCRC), Nagapattinam; the Kanniyakumari Rehabilitation Resource Centre (KRRC), Nagercoil; Auroville Tsunami Rehabilitation Knowledge Centre and information centres in Tirunelveli, Tuticorin, Chennai and Kerala set up by the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS).

SIFFS, International Collection in Support of Fisherworkers (ICSF) and Bhoomika Trust established a network of district level resource centres, called TRINet, functioning from Chennai. The primary constituency of TRINet is the district-level information centres that already exists, or may come into existence through the efforts of TRINet. TRINet's information gathering and dissemination roles cover Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, although the primary focus is on Tamil Nadu.

TRINet's activities so far:

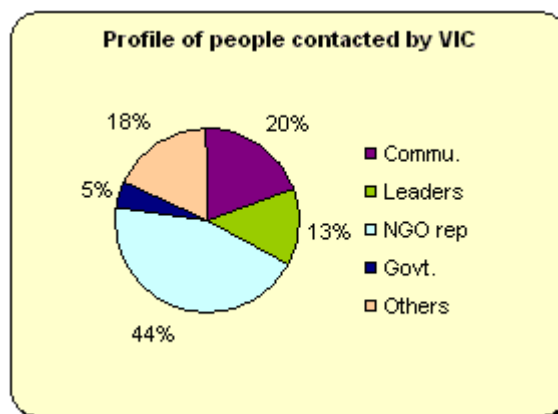
- 1. Newsletter:** Monthly e-newsletter starting from July 2005. Distributed to a mailing list of about 200 currently including NGO, INGO, Government officials and other individuals.
- 2. Weekly News Digest:** A round up of newspaper items on various tsunami rehab related activities. Started from August first week.
- 3. Tamil Newsletter:** Focus on the community, printed version distributed to the affected communities. Beginning October.
- 4. Meeting Reports:** A pioneering service where a report of meetings happening especially in Chennai on various aspects of tsunami rehab is uploaded within a day of the meeting.
- 5. Consultations:** Two consultation meetings so far involving the network members
- 6. Workshop:** Proposed to be held with focus on specific sectors. The first in November, 2005 is on 'Post Tsunami rehab in fishing communities'

TRINet's documents are available for free download from www.trinet.in. To subscribe to TRINet's news alert and newsletter, email info.trinet@gmail.com
Contact persons: Dr. Ahana Lakshmi - 9840740404 and Ms. Shanthi Duraisamy - 9840261240 ■

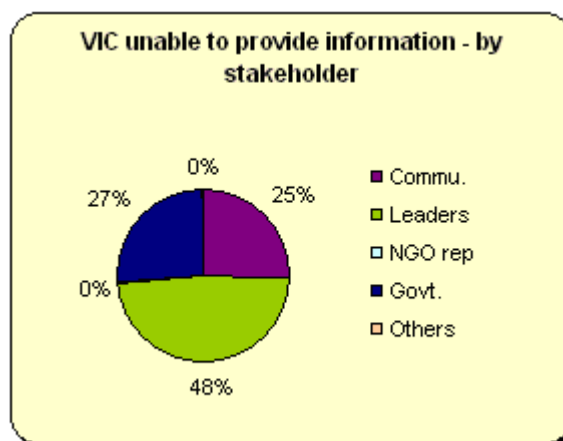
Outreach by Village Information Centres

Village information Centres liaison with the community for field level information generation and exchange. These units are linked to the Village Facilitation Units from which they source information to give the community and pass on that which they get from the community.

- Among the people who contacted VICs, majority were NGO representatives and one fifth were community people



- Type of information sought:
Community: largely on compensation, financial support and pet status.
Leaders: compensation and pet status
NGO representatives: damages
Government: Contacts and programme details



- Most of the information that could not be made available was primarily because it was not available at the VIC (40%) or the VIC was awaiting replies from sources (10%) ■

Business Meet for Post-Tsunami Reconstruction

The effect of the Tsunami on the livelihoods of the people in affected areas of South India is devastating by any measure. Development agencies -both governmental and non-governmental are concerned not only by the affect of the disaster on the fishermen community but also that on other livelihoods linked with the fishing trade at secondary and tertiary levels. Several non-fishing families have also lost their livelihoods and need to be brought into the economic mainstream.

A number of agencies are initiating livelihood restoration and rehabilitation activities to help the people and the local economy. Many agencies are also promoting alternative livelihood opportunities especially for organised groups. One emerging area is the large- scale reconstruction work where alternate livelihoods can be created in the production of building materials and provision of services for reconstruction. Existing and newly established micro and small scale enterprises in the Tsunami affected areas play a critical role in promoting smooth, good quality reconstruction.

Basin South Asia Regional Knowledge Platform (basin-SA) and NGO Coordination and Resource Centre (NCRC) Nagapattinam came together to jointly organise a business meet at Natarajan Damayanthi Higher Secondary School, Nagapattinam on October 22, 2005 to bring together various stakeholders in the reconstruction process, including micro and small scale entrepreneurs, agencies implementing and facilitating reconstruction work, Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), District and State level Government functionaries and technology promoters and providers.

The objective of organising the business meet was to facilitate sharing of innovative entrepreneurial approaches and solutions to post Tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation and to provide a forum for linkage between entrepreneurs and self help groups with financial and technical support agencies and NGO reconstruction projects that are

potential customers. After the presentations on successful entrepreneurial approaches and ideas, the participants interacted with each other in a networking session. Each participating agency/ institution was provided space to present their work to other agencies on a one-to-one basis enabling direct exchange of ideas, offers and requests.

While the turn- out was better than expected, what was clear in the course of the day was that the agencies presently involved in construction have made or are making their own arrangements for the supply of construction materials. The others who have not as yet started are rather doubtful of the quality of the materials made by the noveu – entrepreneurs and their capability to deliver in terms of timeliness, quality and quantity. A few have braved it enough to order for materials to be used in safe areas like the pathways and verandas.



*Mr. Ranvir Prasad, Additional Collector
(Relief and Rehabilitation)*

One of the solutions could be to have a network of these entrepreneurs with a common sales outlet- this will help in ensuring availability of adequate quantities whenever required. They could also display their quality standards with reliable lab- test results. Constant visibility in the right platforms is also another of the requirements. To this effect, NCRC is planning to have decentralised events of this nature in the various affected blocks of Nagapattinam where large- scale construction is envisaged in the near future. ■



The exhibition in progress

Weatherproofing of temporary shelters

With the onset of the monsoon in the district, the District Administration had requested the NGOs to focus on the structure, drainage, drinking water, anganwadis and health in all the temporary shelters. While inaugurating the workshop on Strengthening Systems for Weather Proofing of Temporary Shelter with special focus on the water and sanitation aspects, Dr. J. Radhakrishnan, District Collector stated that while the government had finished acquiring most lands for permanent shelter and was desirous of relocating the affected families from temporary to permanent shelters before the next monsoon, the reasonable estimate for total relocation of the affected families would be 6 to 8 months. In the meantime, the condition of the temporary shelters needed constant upgradation, "be it in terms of flooring, roofing or common facilities like toilets and drinking water would be the areas requiring critical attention."

Mr. Ranvir Prasad, Additional Collector, Relief and Rehabilitation, while addressing on the role of administration said that TWAD, the Electricity Board and Health department are doing its best to gear up for the monsoon. He highlighted that the departments would concentrate on:

- Ensuring the adequacy and quality of the drinking water supplied
- Solid and liquid waste management, and
- Supply of electricity

Dhan Foundation, UNICEF, Oxfam, Real-Plan, Tata and OfERR expressed their willingness to associate with the district administration in making the temporary shelters safe and habitable during the monsoons.

On the same day, in a follow-up meeting held at the office of the Project Officer (PO) DRDA, to discuss sectoral requirements and get a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both the NGOs and the Government, the following issues were taken up to be discussed in greater detail:

Sanitation

The NGOs in charge of sanitation at the temporary shelters (58 in number) reiterated their commitment to repair toilets, which were in a dilapidated condition. The Government stated that they would ensure the clearing of the sludge from these toilets regularly. However, the Government required assistance in ensuring this by the way of provision of sludge removal lorries and hoses. *Real Plan* offered assistance in hiring of these vehicles for a period of 4 - 6 months, provided the Government gave their actual requirements. *EXNORA*, through *USAID* assistance, offered support with the cleaning kits and disinfectants required for a similar time period based on the actual requirement as detailed by the PO, DRDA. Other than *UNICEF*, all other NGOs also agreed to help with provision of water at these toilets in their own areas of operation. All NGOs agreed to involve the community in maintenance aspects. *AWAKES* assured the group that they would

undertake sensitization of the community wherever required.

Bathing areas

As there are no bathing areas in almost all temporary shelters, either due to lack of planning or due to its physical deterioration, women use the toilets for bathing, thereby flooding the septic tanks in a very short time. Although provision of bathing areas was seen to be a priority, some of the NGOs were unable to help as their programme budget did not cater to this requirement. Other NGOs assured that they would get back after checking up on their prior commitments

Drinking Water

All NGOs spoke about the lack or inadequacy of the drinking water that was being supplied at the temporary shelters. The government agreed that they would speak to the Executive Engineer of TWAD Board to ensure adequate and timely water supply.

Drainage

Drainage was seen to be a problem in many of the temporary shelters. The Government took on the responsibility of provision of adequate drainage facilities. *OfERR* agreed to assist the Government in the provision of these facilities. Despite all these, the Government officials present were of the opinion that if the rainfall exceeded the normal, most of these shelters would require emergency measures for drainage. They requested the NGOs to assist by providing diesel engines, pumps, motors, hoses and tarpaulin. The NGOs requested the Government to provide them with a proposal of all their requirements at the earliest so that they could revert to their decision makers and funders for their approval.

Conclusion

The initial drawbacks of knee-jerk responses should now be studied carefully and long term solutions sought. The problems seem to fall into the two major categories of technical and operational. The drainage, appropriate toilets for areas with high water tables, factoring of bathing spaces with liquid and solid waste management systems – all fall into the category of appropriate technology development while adequacy and quality of water supplied, power supply etc. fall into the category of setting up and operationalising of adequate, fool-proof systems.

While the district administration is willing and capable of dealing with the frequent floods and cyclones that are almost an annual occurrence in Nagapattinam, this double whammy of tsunami and floods is more than what they can handle without adequate help. The public-private partnership that saw smooth sailing in tsunami relief activities should also be equally active and effective in helping the district administration deal with whatever else the capricious gods have in mind to test the resilience of the affected thousands. ■ T L ouis Profilius V aldaris, IEC Unit, NCRC

Building hopes

Forty year-old Chinnayaan and father of two adolescent children displays the enthusiasm of a child as he looks over the house design laid before him for making a selection. At a contact programme organized at Chinnangudi as part of the settlement study conducted by SIFFS (South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies) before starting its housing project, Chinnayan shared his thoughts on the house that he would like built. He says, "I have opted for a model that resembles my house that was destroyed in the tsunami. A closed veranda and a separate *pooja* room are what I look forward to see in my house".

Chinnayaan is not an isolated case that voices such desire in the village. Having undergone through physically and mentally exacting circumstances after the tsunami, many villagers like Chinnayaan are trying to bury their grief and are pining hopes on their future. Says Chinnayaan, "I lost two of my dear friends and my house was completely destroyed, but I have my children to take care of".

The villagers are now in a position to put forward their dwelling choices, thanks to the participatory model of housing construction adopted by SIFFS. SIFFS policy vis-à-vis shelter is that every building should be liveable and hence has to be according to the wishes and aspirations of the dwellers. The enthusiasm notwithstanding, the lingering memory of the sufferings that they have undergone comes to light when Chinnayaan says, "I would like to have a house that can withstand a future tsunami".

Jeeva Jayadas. SIFFS ■

Permanent shelter status in Nagai district

The analysis on the permanent shelter status as on October 31, indicates that out of the 18,236 units allotted, construction activities have been started in close to 60% of the units. In the remaining units work has not started. Among the units where construction has begun, 4% units are nearing completion and in 57% units earthwork has been completed.



Construction has not started in 30% of units because of various reasons including land not having been allotted, land being affected by rains and delays in pre-construction planning of NGOs.

Out of 303.125 hectares of land required for construction of dwelling units, 80% has been acquired by the government and the balance area is yet to be acquired. ■

Some publications available at NCRC

- 2005, **World disasters Report, focus on information in disasters**, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- 2005, M Louis, **Tsunami Housing is still a dream?** Tsunami Relief vs Rehabilitation Coordination (TRRC) and Tsunami Legal Action Committee (TLAC)
- 2005, **Accountability Overdue - Learnings Form Participatory Engagement with the Tsunami Affected**, PRAXIS Institute for Participatory Practices
- Oct 2005, **Tamil Nadu Tsunami Resource Centre Newsletter**

Appraising Post-Tsunami Interventions in Fisheries

The study conducted by Thaddeus Koriya of NCRC against the backdrop of post-tsunami interventions of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the fisheries sector of Nagapattinam, examines the issue of distribution of fishing assets, the post-tsunami fishery situation and status of different working groups along with the social dynamics in fishing hamlets.

The study covers a sample of four villages – Tharangambadi, Nambiyar Nagar, Akkarapettai and Arcottuthurai – that were chosen based on the dominance of traditional or mechanized fishing.

Information was collected through individual and focus group discussions with the various individuals/groups like fishermen, fishermen's Panchayats, women fish vendors, commission agents and merchants, and Civil Society Organizations.



The study identifies that the total number of Fibre Reinforced Plastic (FRP) boats has increased more than twofold, while the number of Kattumarams reduced by less than half. It also observes a one fifth reduction in mechanized boats, the reason being the belief of some owners that replacement of mechanized boats wouldn't be profitable. The total fishing investment has increased in three hamlets, by an average of one crore, while it has come down in Nambiyar Nagar which is mainly due to the conflict between the trawl owners and labourers that led to feelings of insecurity among the owners. A separate calculation of the net worth of pre and post- tsunami traditional fishing assets shows that there is an additional investment of Rs. 6.728 crores in these four villages.

The asset distribution process is unstructured, resulting in many of the FRP units not getting adequate sets of different fishing nets to enable them to venture into the sea through the different seasons.

The available data shows that there is a decrease in the total and per unit catch of the FRP units and the number of trips they used to operate.

A majority of the labourers became co-owners of FRP boats in the post tsunami relief and rehab process with the result the old owners, in traditional fishing villages like Tharangambadi, are now facing difficulty in getting labourers to do fishing.

Traditional Fishermen Panchayats played an arbitrator's role in distribution of fishing assets, by taking over the custody of the fishing units that were given to the hamlets and redistributing them among the fishermen using their own formula derived from their ethical and traditional values and culture, which could sometimes seem unjustifiable to an outsider.

The distribution of fishing units has become a cardinal point of internal conflicts in many hamlets. The conflicts worked either explicitly wherever the strengths of the opponents were at par or high enough to challenge the existing Panchayat or implicitly wherever it wasn't. In a few hamlets, the Panchayats in

existence were overthrown due to this conflict in asset distribution, whereas in some other hamlets a new consensus formula was worked out that incorporated the representatives of opponent groups.

So while the asset distribution, on the one hand, helped in re-constituting the traditional Panchayats through the incorporation of representatives from common people, rather than exclusively from the wealthy and traditional power holders, on the other, it has divided the community more than ever before and weakened their powers.

The interest of the post-harvest area was largely ignored in the rush for fishing asset distribution. A large number of women who are involved in fish vending, the merchants and commission agents and others who depended upon fishing, albeit indirectly, fall into this category.

The spirit of Government-CSO partnership which envisaged complementary role in renewal of fishing assets was bypassed from both sides, partly due to pressure tactics the traditional Panchayats played, and otherwise due to the hurry of the CSOs to distribute the boats and finish their projects.

The increasing number of FRP boats brought for repair being reported from many fishing hamlets on the one hand exposes the low quality of newly given boats, while showing disproportionate power combination between the engines used and the capacity of the boats to absorb the increased vibrations.

The distribution of fishing assets, while showing the increasing concern of the Civil Society Organizations and Donors, exposes the flaws in deriving consensus among them for a more sustainable approach. The study, without a doubt, makes it clear that indiscriminate asset creation in fishery will not help the target community, but will do more harm to their livelihood, tradition and culture. This fact should be an eye opener for all who want to be involved in the rehabilitation of fishing communities, especially when the community has an organic link with its sources of livelihood and practices that go along with the organic link. It is not just good intentions, but close understanding of the situation that makes the interventions meaningful.

Disclaimer: Since the study was done based upon information collected from four fishing hamlets only, the issues sometimes may not be exposed in real representative terms ■

NGO Profile: TMSSS

Thanjavur Multipurpose Social Service Society is one of the social service organizations of the Diocese of Thanjavur. It was established in 1968. Initially, the society focused mainly on charity and welfare activities but gradually, based on needs, its activities shifted to awareness generation, organization and community development programmes. The vision of the society is to enable the economically and culturally backward and socially and politically disadvantaged groups to achieve their integral growth through an integrated participatory approach towards total human development and establishment of a just society.

The Tsunami that hit the Tamilnadu sea coast on 26 December 2004 left thousands of people dead and rendered more than a lakh homeless, causing tremendous damage and destruction of their properties and, more specially, to their only hope of livelihood – boats and nets and in some cases agricultural land. TMSSS (Thanjavur) and Pudukottai



Multipurpose Social Service Society (PMSSS) on hearing the news rushed to the field and got into action with the assistance of more than 700 volunteers from various parishes in the diocese of Thanjavur.

Between 26 and 31 December 2004, the society actively worked for the people of Nagapattinam i.e., provided first-aid to the injured and wounded, provided the last rite to the dead, fed around 10,000 affected people sheltered in various relief camps. Responding to the changing needs the TMSSS for the past ten months is engaged in providing various support and services in:

- Putting up Temporary shelters in 11 villages for 4000 people
- Trauma counseling for affected families around 2166
- Tuition classes for children in temporary shelters
- Skill training to Tsunami affected girls
- Educational help to 2000 students
- Providing 100 Fibre boats to the fisherfolk
- Fishing nets for 100 families
- Deepening and desilting of ponds in the villages
- Cash for work, food for work programmes
- Forming self help group
- Planned to construct 3500 permanent houses

CONTACT TMSSS at:

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E mail: tajmsss@rediffmail.com

14, Annai Illam, Perumal Sannathi St, Nagapattinam.
Phone/Fax: 04365 - 221720,
E mail: tmsstanjore_tsunami@rediffmail.com ■

Airing information



In its "Uzhavum Vazhvum" (farming and living) programme, on 28 October, 2005, Karaikal All India Radio had broadcast a discussion with Mr. **Chandra Mohan** of NCRC on the damages

caused and reclamation work being done in the Tsunami affected areas of Nagapattinam vis-a-vis agriculture.

Chandra Mohan described the damages as 6 types which include: Loss of standing crop; sand/Mud casting on the agricultural lands; salination of cultivable lands; silting of farm ponds on individual farmers' land; silting of common ponds; silting of irrigation/drainage channels on common lands

He noted that 22 NGOs are working in the district to reclaim agricultural lands affected. NCRC, which has been setup to co-ordinate activities of NGOs working for Tsunami rehabilitation work, evoked interest in NGOs to work for agricultural reclamation initially and through several meetings a package of 12 activities were evolved for implementation. The NGOs were also linked to donor agencies for financial support.

The 12 activities were broadly discussed under three heads: the immediate activities (those involving mechanical or engineering works), short-term activities (focussing on adding organic matter to the soil and selection of appropriate seeds) and long-term activities (which enables sustainability). He explained the 'why' and 'what' aspects of all these activities. ■

News Maker



Siva Manimekalai is at it again, this time for solving the much media-hyped internal labour – trawler owner dispute. Aged 53, she has been spreading brotherhood and peace among the villagers for a decade as a Panchayat President of Poompuhar. Her tenure as a president had seen Poompuhar get new roads, water tank, housing, better water and sanitation and health.

Born as the only child of a fisherman, Siva Perumal, she took care of a family legal dispute at the age of 25. Later she was actively involved in the Congress Party and became a social activist.

She has been lauded by the community for her commendable work before and after the Tsunami. She has received a number of honours including that by CESVI, an International NGO, in Bergamo, Italy, for the invaluable work on field and precious support in spreading the values of international solidarity; by Shri. T.N. Chaturvedi, Governor of Karnataka; by All India Veerashaiva Mahasabha Federation of Basavabalaga, Mysore; and Jagadguru Sri Shivarathiri Deshikendra Mahaswamigalu Veerasimhasana Mutt, Suttur, Srikshehtra.

She vows to do service to the community especially to the people of Poompuhar, and make the village as a model to the nation.

She can be contacted at 9443872870

T Louis Profillious Valdaris, IEC Unit, NCRC ■

Contribute to Kalangarai Vilakkam

This

newsletter is a forum for sharing and exchanging information on tsunami rehabilitation efforts and information in Nagapattinam. We invite all stakeholders to contribute to the newsletter. You can submit NGO profiles, case-studies, contribute news items, photographs, good practice in interventions, book reviews, list of publications or any other article of interest.

Please send your contributions to:

Kalangari Vilakam, NGO Coordination and Resource Centre

- Room No. 313, District Collectorate, Nagapattinam, Ph: 04365 252547

- No. 31, South Palannaichery, Mahalakshmi Nagar, Nagapattinam, Ph: 04365 252618/252681

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