

A 72-foot painting by children at the Collectorate as a part of commemorative event organised by the District Collectorate

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The year ahead...

The whole world and their cameras are here, in villages unheard and unknown of before 26 December 2004, to judge and critique the efforts put in by the living millions in rebuilding their lives, brick by painful brick. We have only good things to show and tell....we are justifiably proud of what we have been able to recoup from the devastation that rocked this little town.

The first year anniversary is over and safely behind us. The NGOs will now slowly start their return exodus looking for other areas that require their help and support. Does that mean that rehabilitation efforts in Nagapattinam are complete, the people back in their own homes, and the fields ripe for their harvest? Does that mean that natural disasters are a thing of the past, and even if they do reoccur, the Nagai populace is ready to face them? Although we may laud the progress we have achieved in reclaiming our losses and our livelihoods, we are miles away from declaring Nagapattinam rehabilitated.

What does the next year mean to us? What does this mean in the fisheries sector, where whatever can be given has already been given? How are the imbalances created going to be sorted out? How are the recreated social structures going to stand the test of time? Have the women got a fair hearing and adequate support to continue with what they were doing pre-tsunami? Have all those who deserved safe houses got them, either retrofitted or at least the land for new ones?

The curtain has come down on one phase of rehabilitation but its opening on the next phase reveals more that needs to be done. Now is the time to introspect on the actions already taken by us, their results, the gaps and then take serious decisions on what remains to be done and, more importantly, how to do it.

Let our motto be "and to harm none...." Let us be more pragmatic in our approach. Let us take some time to understand the long-term implications of whatever we are going to embark on... and start only if we are fully confident that the ripple effects of this action will not turn into another Tsunami. ■

Commemorative events to mark one year of Tsunami

Inauguration of a Memorial Park

A memorial park in the District Collectorate was inaugurated on 26 December, 2005. It has sculptures with a clock and a boat. At the centre of the park is an Ashok Pillar, recovered from the tsunami devastated Nagapattinam. There are also 6065 decorative plants in memory of the 6065 persons who lost their lives in the district.

Wreaths were placed at the tsunami memorial theme park at the New Beach in Nagapattinam, and also at the place of mass burial of tsunami victims at Nambiyar Nagar, Akkarapettai and Velankanni. A silent march was taken out at Seruthur near Velankanni.

A Government-NGO meet was organized in the evening at the Collectorate to acknowledge the work done by NGOs towards relief and rehabilitation. Most of officials and the NGOs working in Nagapattinam participated in the meeting. ■



The Memorial Statue at the Memorial Park



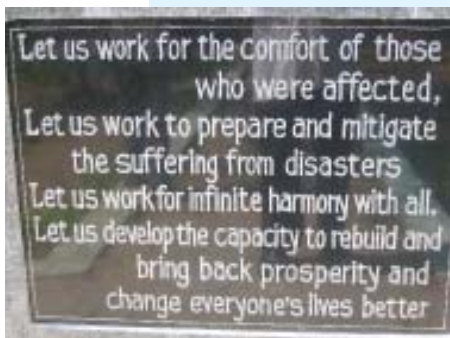
The Ashoka Pillar at the Memorial Park



The Memorial Lamp



Inscriptions on the Memorial Statue



Inscriptions on the Memorial Statue

Children should be seen not shown.....

Publicity is good but at what and whose cost? Children who were unfortunate enough to have lost one or both parents, had to pay the price this time.....

To mark the first anniversary of the Tsunami, these children were brought to the memorial erected in the memory of those who had lost their lives and asked to offer flowers and prayers, all this in the glaring lights of the media. The only sounds to be heard were the heart-rending sobs of the grieving children and the dissonant clicks of the cameras going berserk trying to immortalize the grief of these children on celluloid. ■

Nagapattinam - A Resurgence



Dr. J Radhakrishnan inaugurates a stall at the commemorative exhibition

To commemorate one year Tsunami anniversary solidarity programme, an Exhibition-cum-cultural event was organised by the NGO Coordination and Resource Centre (NCRC) on 23 – 24 December 2005 at Avari Thidal (Near New Bus Stand).

The exhibition was inaugurated by the District Collector Dr. J Radhakrishnan IAS. Mr. R Jeevanandam, MLA, Nagapattinam; Mr. Ranvir Prasad, IAS, Additional Collector (Relief and Rehabilitation); and Mr. K.A Abdul Rahuff,

Superintendent of Police, Nagapattinam were the chief guests at the function.

The exhibition was hosted by 42 Tsunami affected panchayats of Nagapattinam District. Each panchayat had a stall where they showcased the history, traditions, culture, and socio-economic profile unique to their villages. A snap shot on the damages, relief and rehabilitation work being undertaken by the government, NGOs and other individuals/organisations was also displayed.

A cultural programme based on traditional folk art forms of Nagapattinam was held on both evenings. Traditional dances like Karagattam, Gummiyattam, Parayattam, Vedarattam, performed by the affected community and professional artists were the highlights of this event. ■



Showcasing culture



From the mouth of puppets

Rosy makes them laugh and learn - A puppet show by UNICEF

“Saada Kadha Venamo, Bhayangaramana Kadha Venamo” (Would you like to hear a usual story or frightening story) - Rosy asked the little ones who gathered around her, eager to listen to what she is going to say. The students from Natarajan and Damayanthi Primary School, Nagapattinam were treated to some fun and laughs during a puppet show organized by UNICEF team during the commemorative

exhibition organized by NCRC on 23-24 December 2005. The story told by the puppet was interspersed with messages highlighting the need for the right values, attitude and practices, especially hygiene related. ■

A safe and clean environment - A street play by Koothu Pattarai

A sarcastic drama by "Koothu pattarai" – a Chennai based team focused on the unhygienic practices and habits existing among people that make them vulnerable to diseases. This was also performed at the exhibition. ■



Koothu Pattarai

Making information accessible: Touch screen at the District Collectorate



A touching moment - Dr. J Radhakrishnan IAS inaugurating the touch screen at the Collectorate

The District Collector, Dr. J Radhakrishnan IAS 'touched' open a touch screen information system for the public at the District Collectorate, Nagapattinam on 21 December 2005. The touch screen, located at the foyer of the Collectorate provides vital information on Tsunami damages and rehabilitation efforts, various publications and studies, and statistics related to Tsunami relief and rehabilitation. This information is available in Tamil and English. The initial interest shown by the public is encouraging. Photographs relating to relief and rehabilitation seem to be the most popular information accessed till date. ■

Alaimakal - building lives ...and brands

“ Though the Tsunami has wreaked havoc on our lives, it also has given us an opportunity to explore new avenues for livelihoods ”

– an SHG member from Nalliyanthottam village in Nagapattinam

Penguin, a Self-Help Group (SHG), had been in operation before the Tsunami. It was a group of 15-20 women from the fisher folk community who were engaged in salt trading for post-harvest fish processing. The Tsunami waves washed away a full load of salt, resulting in huge losses to the group.

For a few months the SHG members were out of work, and lived on the compensation given by the government. They were uncertain about what the future held in store for them. It was during this difficult period that a few nuns from the DMI – Daughters of Mary Immaculate, an NGO working in Nagapattinam, informed them about "Makileerthittam", a scheme of the Women Development Centre of the District Rural Development Authority, by which women were given support to form SHGs. With the help of the nuns and a soft loan from the bank, the women began engaging in small trades like vegetables and ice

cream vending, retailing ready-made clothes purchased from wholesalers, hollow brick making and tailoring. The products are popular under the brand name "Alaimakal" (the daughter of the waves). The monthly saving of each member has grown to Rs.100-125 per week, which is more than their pre-tsunami enterprise fetched.



Alaimakal products for sale

Apart from work the women also discuss issues of their community such as, electricity, garbage disposal, hygiene etc., and bring these to the attention of concerned authorities. The women aspire to develop their small business into a big garment industry that would provide opportunities to other women in need.

These high quality SHG products were put on display during the commemorative exhibition organized by NCRC in Nagapattinam on 23rd and 24th of December 2005. ■

A New Place

December 20, 2005 was another unforgettable incident in the life of Samanthanpettai villagers when Matha Amithananthamayi Math handed over 340 houses in 'Puthu Nagar' to the affected families.

Prior to the Tsunami, except the 10 dalit families who lived in thatched shelters, the villagers lived in colony of houses by the sea. After the devastation, they moved to the discomfort of temporary shelters near the Collectorate.



The archway to Puthu Nagar

resembles a township has facilities like street lights, drainage, spacious streets and a beautiful entrance with huge archway and a meadow. Still under construction is a marriage hall, a pre-KG school, and a garbage disposer.



A new house in Puthu Nagar

On December 20, 2005, all the village households got a house to call their own. The housing complex which

Each house has a main hall, *pooja* room, kitchen and a toilet. Most families moved in to their new houses on the day after the inauguration.

There are still a few glitches to overcome at the colony. Presently there is no running water and the people share the water from tanks that cater to two rows (18 houses) each. However, there are plans afoot to construct a water tank in less than 5 months. Public transport to the complex is also infrequent. All-in-all the people of 'Puthu Nagar' are satisfied and proud of their new dwellings. A sense of gratitude is reflected in their eyes and smiles.

“ We are very grateful to *Sami (Matha Amrithanatha Mayi)*. We have all the facilities in the new structure. As this is a huge help, we would remain grateful for ever.”

- Raja, from Samanthanpettai ■

Forever Grateful

Mohan, a bereaved person had not imagined that the last rites of his son who got washed away in the Tsunami would be done with due reverence to the deceased. "What I had to do as a father you have done", the grieving father told the villagers with gratitude.

This heart touching incident happened in the village of Vettaikaranirippu in Nagapattinam. No deaths were reported from this village, but 18-20 bodies washed in from other places. The villagers along with the NGOs took photographs of the bodies and performed the last rites.

Mr. Mohan, who hails from Karur district, lost his wife and children to the Tsunami waves while he was in Velankanni, attending a Christmas function. He found his wife's and daughter's body but was not able to find his son's body. After one month he came to know from the police station, where he had lodged a complaint, that his son's body had been buried in Vettakaranirippu. He went to that area, and paid homage to his son in the presence of the villagers.

What I had to do as a father you have done

He built a memorial at that place, to mark the first anniversary of the Tsunami. As a token of gratitude he pledged the compensation of Rs. 6 lakh (2 each for the deceased) that he got from the government towards the purchase of an ambulance, a mortuary van and a freezer unit for the local hospital in Karur. He also plans to contribute towards the education of the children of Vettaikaranirippu village. Mr. Mohan, an engineer by profession, will be visiting Nagapattinam quite often as he is planning to associate himself with permanent shelter construction in Nagapattinam. ■



A memorial for Mr. Mohan's family

The Fisherman's Point of View

There has been a feeling among the fisher folk that the interventions for them are not in keeping with their felt needs. This has been accentuated by the fact that despite years of efforts to improve their conditions, not much has changed. In this context, NCRC facilitated a range of consultations with the fishermen and the NGOs to arrive at a long term perspective. These consultations reviewed the current scenario in the fishing villages of Nagapattinam; explored the possibilities to form a core group with common interest and concerns over the developments happening in the sector; discussed the needs and challenges which the sector faces presently and the measures to ensure that the interventions are contextual and community driven.

The discussions emphasized the need for a shift from immediate activities to long term programmes, such as improvements in fishing technologies including deep sea fishing, post harvest technologies, better marketing facilities, competitive prices for exports, social security for the community, etc.

A Core Group of fishermen representing selected villages from Kodyamplalam in the North to Kodiakarai in the south was formed to carry forward these activities. It was decided to co-opt representatives from other villages for future consultations. The core group members asserted that this group will keep itself away from the village politics, party politics and other issues but pledged to work towards a better future for the fishermen community in Nagapattinam. ■

Vision Agriculture

With most of the immediate and short term activities nearing completion, the agriculture sector is all geared up to have a long term vision covering a wide range of activities that are sustainable and includes, inter alia, a critical component of research too.

“Conserve, maintain and improve” will be the buzz word wherein the focus will be on conserving as well as improving soil fertility and improving crop productivity and farm income. A simple farming system incorporating horticulture, tree plantations and animal husbandry will be evolved. This would help the farmers overcome their excessive dependence on a single system i.e. on field crops. The new system will be self-sustaining as each farming system will help sustain the other and vice versa. For instance, tree plantations will serve as cattle fodder and cattle dung as manure to all plantations and crops. Emphasis will also be given to diversification of crops, crop rotation etc., within the existing crop system. Action research will be undertaken concurrently to validate the field activities and find solutions to persisting problems. The modalities of the research activities are being worked out.

Towards this end, a technical consultative meeting was held at Hotel Tamizhakam on 13 December 2005.

Representatives from various research institutes like MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai; Tamil Nadu Rice Research Institute, Thanjavur; Soil Saline Research Centre, Trichy; Pandit Jawaharlal College of Agriculture, Karaikal; and from development agencies and donor agencies, and farmer representatives participated in the meeting. More meetings are planned in the month of January as a follow up of this consultative meeting.



Technical consultation meet



Consultation with farmers

The community's involvement will be the key to all the processes. This involves involvement not only in the planning and implementation processes but also contributing to the venture in cash or kind.

A series of capacity building exercises targeting the NGOs and the farmers are also being planned during the lean season i.e., from February to May. The training would also cover 'disaster preparedness' in addition to topics related to agriculture. ■

NGO Profile - Rural Development Trust

Rural Development Trust, popularly known as RDT, was established in 1969 in Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh by Father Vincent Ferrer and Mrs. Annie Ferrer, who are its Executive Director and Program Director respectively. RDT is a secular, social, voluntary organisation working since 1969 with dalits, tribals, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups. It has an integrated development approach, strictly following the Dharma and Mission of the organisation.

The organisation evolved various programmes with the intention of achieving integrated development in 1550 villages covering 2,00,000 families. Children's education, women's empowerment, community health with special emphasis on mother and child, medical care, watershed development, community based rehabilitation for the disabled, construction of permanent houses etc., are some of the activities currently being undertaken by RDT.

Response to Tsunami

Relief

RDT responded immediately to the Tsunami by sending a team of doctors, nurses, social workers and managerial staff under the leadership of Mr. Manchoferrer, the Associate Programme Director. The base camp established at Nagapattinam on 28 December 2005 took up relief measures covering 10,277 families in 46 villages of Nagapattinam and Karaikal District.

Rehabilitation

Towards rehabilitating the affected, boats, nets, engines and ice boxes were distributed to the affected fishermen families helping them resume their livelihoods.

Reconstruction

RDT has begun the construction of permanent earthquake and tsunami resistant houses for 411 families in 4 villages i.e., Thazhampettai, Vepancherry and Chinnamedu of Nagai District and Vettaikaraveedu of Karaikal District. It is also constructing school buildings and plans to lay the internal roads in the villages and provide drinking water facility.



Permanent shelter construction by RDT

Other livelihoods

The people of Vepancherry village who belong to Dalit Community do not have stable sources of income. So, with a view to provide them with a suitable income generating source, the organisation decided to give the community milch cows. It

held a wide range of consultations with Animal Husbandry Department about the breed that would be suitable to the local conditions. It also dialogued with the community on issues like fodder, milk marketing prospects etc. and prepared the list of beneficiaries. Shortly, a team comprising of a Veterinary Doctor and peoples' representatives will start procuring the animals and distributing them to the selected beneficiaries.

RDT strongly subscribes to the belief that 'Service to Humanity is Service to God' and feels that it is critical to express solidarity to the sufferers of disasters by helping them resume a dignified livelihood.

Contact RDT at:

18, Main Road,

Nambiyar Nagar,

Nagapattinam - 611001

Ph: 043655-247192

email: rdt_nagai2005@yahoo.co.in ■

Publications launched



'Lest We Forget' - - - A Year After - The Nagapattinam Experience

Publisher: District Administration, Nagapattinam

About: This book released on 26th December tries to bring out the various facets of recovery in a snapshot form by covering the relief, restoration and rehabilitation phase as we approach the Tsunami Anniversary. The snapshot details and photos depict the status immediately after tsunami and the current status, as also the relief measures in all the areas affected by Tsunami to give an overall picture throughout the district

Price: Rs. 300

Tsunami-Road to Recovery

Publisher: District Administration, Nagapattinam

About: This book unveils the changing face of Nagapattinam with pictures showing the situation soon after Tsunami and now.

Price: Rs. 250

Disaster Management

Publisher: District Administration, Nagapattinam

About: This book gives comprehensive information, block wise, on the institutions in Nagapattinam that could be contacted in the event of disasters.

Price: Rs. 175

Women Reborn.....Survivors of Tsunami – Part I

Publisher: International Association for Human Values, Bangalore, India

About: This booklet is about women who in the midst of tragedy demonstrate the courage and will to live to the fullest. It provides testimonies of women who have been transformed after having undergone the trauma and relief workshops conducted by IAHV and also shares the experience of women who are volunteering their services throughout the rehabilitation process. ■

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 Vilakkam, NGO Coordination and Resource Centre

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

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

Email: info.ncrc@gmail.com; Website: www.ncrc.in

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