

Report of the NGO Meeting On Shelter- Temporary and Permanent

Date:-6th February 2005

Venue: Conference Hall, Nagapattinam Collectorate

Introduction

Shelter being the core issue in the rehabilitation process, the group felt the need of handling it more carefully. Therefore discussions were guided in a way first to build maximum clarity over the issue before moving directly into policy guidelines. Already there are meetings of NGO and community representatives across the south that has gone through the issue of shelter. The main focus of all these discussions was land for permanent shelter construction. A census organized by district administration seeking people's preference on the location of permanent shelter is on and is expected to finish in a short period. As the introduction and presentation was over, the meeting moved on to the topic of shelter location and shelter design.

Shelter Location

The idea of relocation of fisherfolk from 0-500 m has invited mixed response from different corners. Government wants to use this opportunity to enhance the safety precautions so as to prevent future shocks. The concerns arise here is-what will happen to the land if it is left over by the fisherfolk. The options here are:

- The land remains under the public domain and shall be used by fishermen for resting, public gathering, equipment keeping etc.
- The private lobbies intrudes and occupies the land resulting into the alienation of fisherfolk from their working site
- Public establishments like parks (some form of industry?) comes to the place

Moreover, there are places where there is no possibility of moving away from the beach due to the unavailability of land. Kanyakumari experiences such a situation where in, at many places, even if people want to move away from beach, there is no adjacent land available for the rehabilitation purpose. Even though the situation is different in Nagapattinam, the concerns of people remain the same. There is a need to compile a list of all villages documenting what people prefer regarding the location of rehabilitation is concerned. This listing shall be done at least twice, one at present (when people are emotionally charged and are more in favour of moving away) and two after a month when the feelings are captured in a changed environment.

Shelter Design

In shelter design, there should be a consensus whether the designs would largely be determined by the government or donors or the communities will get the chance to reveal their aspirations taking into account of the peculiarities of the local geography. As local geographical features are concerned, there is information available with many groups, and there is further need to understand the local needs. In this context, before starting the construction process, it is necessary to assimilate the geography and socio-cultural peculiarities of the concerned communities that will provide a clear idea of the situation. Substantial dialogues with the communities are essential where the communities should be allowed to choose from different

designs, the one they like. The construction of houses should be according to the internationally accepted standards. The issue of sanitation needs to be looked into as an integral part of the shelters. The state of temporary shelters, a lion's share of which is not coming up to the standards and not at all suitable in summer should be an eye opener. They were built ignoring the fact that people are going to live for a longer periods than expected.

Recommendations:

- ✓ There should be a common consensus between the government and the agencies regarding the site allocation and design of permanent shelters.
 - ✓ Wherever people are willing to move away, government can provide alternate sites.
 - ✓ Wherever people don't want to move away, government should not forcibly move them out and try to rehabilitate in another place-the fact that Coastal Regulation Zone Notification (CRZN) give exemption to traditional fishing communities should be accepted here
 - ✓ In case where the situation is dangerous, the whole process of community consultation should be followed to ensure mutual trust
 - ✓ The issue of sanitation needs to be looked into as an integrated part of shelters.
 - ✓ Finally, in order to compile the field response towards this issue, there should be a quick response collection from all villages regarding the land of shelter construction as the NGOs have close rapport there.
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