

**Minutes of the Collector's Meeting with the NGOs
Held on 22nd April 05 in the Mini-Conference Hall
Collectorate of Nagapattinam**

This meeting was a part of the weekly scheduled meetings held by the Collector with the NGOs working in Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation. The meeting started at 6.45 pm and was presided over by the District Collector, Addl. Collector, Dy. Collector.

Due to an unavoidable delay, the Collector joined the meeting later. The Sub-Collector opened the meeting.

Opening Remarks of the Addl- Collector

- a. The village allocation meetings with the NGOs have been initiated and one-to-one meetings have been conducted with about 19 NGOs
- b. Provisional direct allotments have been possible in areas where there is no multiplicity of NGOs applying for the same village. In cases of more than one NGO applying for the same village, allotment has been done based on factors like the presence of the NGO in the village, both pre- and post- tsunami, confirmed funding, etc.
- c. The NGOs, who have been provisionally allotted villages, will have to show a bank balance, at least partially in keeping with the volume of work undertaken
- d. All the temporary shelters, which have been affected by the recent inclement weather, will have to be refurbished by the NGOs and materials like tarpaulins provided for continued protection.
- e. Signatures of the beneficiaries will have to be obtained, wherever protective materials have been provided, to dissuade the community from accessing such resources on a regular basis.
- f. Care should be taken to completely remove old shelters wherever new temporary shelters have been built as replacement. Otherwise, the old shelters can be used as a claim for another permanent shelter

Opening Remarks by the Collector

- a. Land allocation for permanent shelters is emerging as, both, a financial as well as a social issue
- b. Additional demand on the Government for permanent shelters, through breaking up of joint families, and tenants occupying temporary shelters only to justify their claims for permanent shelters, is vitiating the complexity of the process
- c. Giving in to such demands through provision of assets to ineligible beneficiaries has the potential to lead to social tension
- d. As provision of land is becoming difficult, especially in areas closer to towns, the community should be encouraged to adopt "in-situ" construction.
- e. Although there was a survey done earlier, due to emerging need for more detailed data, a survey is being initiated by the Distt. Admn. A clearer picture of the partially and fully damaged houses within the specific zones will be available after the completion of the same
- f. Meanwhile, the NGO should engage in a dialogue with the community on rebuilding of their houses in the original sites
- g. However, there should not be undue haste to start construction of the permanent shelters. Lessons learnt from the lack of proper planning and hasty

work in the construction of temporary shelters should guide the planning process for the permanent shelters.

- h. While recognising the committed and humanitarian approach of each NGO who has come in to Nagapattinam to help the affected, there was also a general request to them not to generalise issues based on isolated events. This is akin to trivialising the devastating effect that the tsunami had on the populace of Nagapattinam. The entire administration is committed to helping all the affected and will be willing to revisit cases of suspected negligence if identified and brought to their notice.

Points of general discussion

1. When an NGO made an impassioned plea for being allowed to take up construction of permanent shelters in a village that has already been allotted to another NGO, the Collector stated that this decision was not based on a comparative analysis of the work done by the different NGOs but on simple logistics of equitable apportionment between all NGOs interested in constructing permanent shelters.

2. This discussion led to the services being offered by various NGOs and a critique on the actual needs of the community as against what was being offered. Most NGOs opined that services offered to the community should be based on their actual need, taking into account the sustainability of these services rather than on merely instant gratification. The Collector concurred with this view and cautioned the NGOs against creation of a dependency syndrome in the community. The Collector also informed the NGOs about the “Food for Work” programme that was available to engage the community in meaningful supportive roles while ensuring their food security.

3. With the heating up of discussions on the levels and soundness of the services provided by the different NGOs, the Collector forcefully stated that NGOs were here to rebuild a badly affected community and not to bad mouth each other. However good the NGO, a game of one-upmanship would only negate all their good efforts and that such activities would be viewed very seriously by the administration as well the NGO community.

4. On a discussion on the scope of framing the minimum services as well as the maximum services possible in the construction of permanent shelters, the Collector unequivocally stated that Rs. 1.5 lakhs would be the maximum ceiling limit on the services that can be provided in the construction of the permanent shelter. The minimum services to be provided have already been listed in the MoU.

The meeting came to a close by 7.30 pm with the Collector thanking the NGOs for their continuing support.