

Minutes of the Collector's Meeting with the NGOs
Held on 29th April 2005 in the 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 7 pm and was presided over by the District Collector.

The Collector informed that the district administration was assessing the availability of land and its viability for construction of the permanent shelters.

- Initial assessments revealed that purchase of land for relocation was becoming a very expensive venture and that there were bound to be social conflicts, especially in Nagapattinam, as land close to earlier habitations was sparse. Purchase of land in Nagapattinam town alone was accounting for about Rs. 200 Cr. in land price.
- Construction activities, in areas where the community was willing for “in-situ” construction, could be initiated immediately so that the other community members could also be encouraged to undertake repair and reconstruction in-situ. Tata Relief Committee representative informed the Collector that about 300 families in Akkaraipettai had given in writing that they would be interested in rebuilding their homes in-situ.
- NGOs could point out the delays envisaged in identification and procurement of land to the community and suggest reconstruction/ in- situ construction as a better alternative.
- Demands from the community were confusing organizations to such an extent that if NGOs work based on the recommendations of the community there are bound to be social tensions and unrest that will not be pleasant to deal with. NGOs need to show maturity while undertaking permanent shelter reconstruction.
- There was a request from the community to NGOs to built extra houses on the land that would be given as a contribution from the community. The Collector was of the opinion that this would cause social tension amidst other neighbouring communities.
- The Government is yet to allot land to the NGOs to construct houses for the affected people as sites for relocation are still being reviewed. In some cases the shelters will be built on the “porompok” lands. This land will be naturalized in the name of the incumbent and pattas will be issued in the same persons name.
- Some house owners who had tenants staying in their premises had got more than one temporary shelter and through this were trying to press for more than one permanent shelter. The collector made it clear that the priority will be to compensate actual loss.
- The collector suggested that where ever there was a doubt about property loss it may be wise to take photographs of the area along with the damages of the neighbouring houses and the neighbours present in the original location.
- Some house owners had more than one of their homes damaged during the tsunami and in such cases only one of their houses will be reconstructed. **Other houses?**
- Some organisations had purchased the land for construction of houses, however it's important to look at whether the land is safe for the building of permanent shelter and matters of elevation needs to be taken into account when land is being considered for

shelters. TRC clarified that they had bought land in low lying areas but they were building the homes in such a manner that there will be built up elevation.

- The Collector said that it was important that the fishermen get back to their livelihoods at the earliest as there was an unhealthy dependency that was growing among affected families.
- Some organizations had helped communities get fishing gears and boats and this was instrumental in many of the fisherfolk getting back to the sea. The Collector shared that in the south of Tamilnadu in districts like Thirunelveli fisher men have been back to sea and now are catching fish worth even Rs.15000 daily. So it's an example that needs to be shared to motivate the fishermen to get back to their fishing livelihoods.
- Rs. 40 crores has been distributed to about 20,000 affected fisher folk of Nagapattinam by the Government through the Fisheries Department. Of this amount very few persons had actually en-cashed the compensation to obtain assets. Most of the fisher folk are indefinitely postponing the purchase of their lost assets as they were trying their best to maximize on the support of the NGO's. This was also causing the delay of commencement of full fledged fisheries operations in the coast.
- The Collector emphasized that there needs to be consistency in the delivery of livelihoods support across the coast as some of the organizations were compensating loss of boats by getting the damaged boats and giving them the new boats while some organizations were creating new user groups of non owner and this may lead to unsustainability in the fisheries related livelihoods.
- NCRC also needs to review its consistency in the delivery of livelihoods support as SIFFS which is a part of the NCRC has been seen to offer support to other agencies in contravention to the norms that were suggested by the NCRC.

The Collector opened the floor to the participating organizations to raise issues that needed clarification from the district administration. The following was the content of the discussions that followed.

- There needs to be a gradual discontinuation of relief supplies like milk and groceries that used to be provided in the earlier days as the affected people were resuming normal living and the continuation of such relief may delay normalization processes.
- The Collector commended the setting up of desalination plants in Akkaraipettai and certain other villages. He suggested that more organizations could deploy their funds into such ventures that will prove to be a long term benefit for the coastal communities.
- Government has not decided to make sea-wall across the seashore as this would lead to various complications in the coast. Some fisher folk had come to the collector to ask for further details.
- The Collector had requested those NGOs that are interested could be involved in cleaning of the Beaches as a project that could give a new face to the affected areas.
- The building of a memorial in the Nagapattinam Beach as a memorial to those who had died because of the killer wave was suggested. A representative from the NCRC informed the floor that the project was being planned and those agencies that are interested in partnering in the process could get in touch with the NCRC.

- The Collector requested the agencies to communicate those activities that are happening in the smaller villages which don't seem to be getting any attention from the media. He made himself and the other senior representatives of the District Administration available to initiate any such activities that could communicate what was happening in these villages to the media. It was also suggested that there be updates of activities of various organizations across the coast and the NCRC could coordinate the same so that these could be communicated to the media.
- The Collector shared about how the father of a victim of the fire accident in Kumbakonam had approached him for a job in the construction work. He had directed the man to the NCRC. He felt it was important that such victims be helped if they were willing to be employed in such work.
- The Sub-Collector, Mr. Uma Nath who served with distinction during the emergency situation in Nagapattinam post tsunami was to join in the Department of Finance, Government of Tamil Nadu. The Collector expressed his gratitude to the Sub-Collectors for his able support rendered to the District Administration. He wished him all the best in his new assignment.

The meeting got over by 8 pm with the Collector emphasizing the need to initiate reconstruction processes wherever the communities are willing to rebuild in-situ. He thanked the NGOs for their continued support and cooperation.