

PEOPLE'S WATCH-TAMILNADU– TAMIL NADU

TSUNAMI RESPONSE

LAST UPDATE ON 26.9.05

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I. BACKGROUND

People's Watch-Tamilnadu is a human rights organization based in the city of Madurai, India. People's Watch-Tamilnadu has been active in Tsunami related activities since the afternoon of December 26th, specifically in three topic areas: relief, rehabilitation and rehabilitation monitoring, and leadership of the Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Coordination – Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry (TRRC), a consortium of more than 250 local NGOs.

The question must be asked why People's Watch-Tamilnadu decided to partake in all three of the activities mentioned above, when its focus is on the monitoring of human rights. The answer can be found in the argument that in order to discuss human rights and the monitoring of human rights one must first ensure "humanity", and in order to ensure "humanity" one must offer relief and address violations of human rights in the provision of relief. Thus, the driving force behind People's Watch-Tamilnadu Tsunami related activities has been to support those in need, who have actively or inactively been discriminated or excluded from relief. People's Watch-Tamilnadu has been very active in the identification of those who have not received relief and those who are having their rights abused, while addressing special needs that have been overlooked by other players.

Moreover, according to the *National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights* (NCDHR) several instances of discrimination had already occurred: in relief camps Dalits were housed separately and food packets were distributed separately, while food and clothing were given in a discriminatory manner.

Although People's Watch-Tamilnadu had no previous experience in rehabilitation and rehabilitation monitoring it made a decision to support rehabilitation efforts. This decision was based on the fact that People's Watch-Tamilnadu does possess the required infrastructure and knowledge: a vast network of active NGOs and partners in the field and the "know how" of human rights monitoring. At the same time People's Watch-Tamilnadu experience, leadership and infrastructure in the areas hit by the Tsunami led to the decision to accept an active role in the formation of the TRRC and in its related activities.

All these became possible with the leadership and coordination of Mr. M. Louis, who has joined PW-TN just before 3 months to Tsunami. Mr. Louis is a development professional who was absorbed by PW-TN to lead its south Asia regional program on "Right to Sustainable Livelihood and enabling of Social and Political rights", a project initiated by the Sri Lanka based Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies. For his proven abilities within PW-TN and the earlier track record, he was assigned to be the Special coordinator for all of Tsunami Relief and rehabilitation activities and the research program of People's Watch-Tamilnadu, through out Tamilnadu & Pondicherry, without whom otherwise; PW-TN could not have carried out so much of activities. In addition, he also coordinates the activities of TRRC in Tamilnadu & Pondicherry.

II. OVERVIEW

The intention of this document is to provide a review of the various Tsunami related activities People's Watch-Tamilnadu has initiated. These activities include the following:

1. Emergency Relief

Provision of emergency relief to 18,961 families benefiting approximately 1,00,000 persons in Kanyakumari, Thirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Karaikkal, Cuddalore, and Kanchipuram districts.

2. Temporary Shelters

The construction of temporary shelters benefiting approximately 1,500 families in Kanyakumari, Thoothukudi, and Kancheepuram districts

3. Drinking Water Restoration

Assistance in drinking water restoration benefiting approximately 1,500 families in Kancheepuram district

4. Educational Assistance

Educational assistance benefiting approximately 2,000 school children, 150 polytechnic students, and 300 college girls in Kanyakumari and Cuddalore districts

5. Campus Renovation

Assistance to five schools indirectly benefiting approximately 1,500 school children in Kanyakumari district

6. Livelihood Reconstruction

Financial assistance for manufacturing of 5 fiber boats and appropriate fishing nets have been provided to the fishing community in Kameshwaram village of Nagapattinam district, on an agreement that these will be used as common property of the entire village.

Also, PW-TN has been implementing a livelihood rehabilitation program for the non-ocean fishing communities, who happened to be dalits in 5 villages of Thoothukudi district and 17 villages of Kancheepuram district. This program adopts the 'Community Fund' model which facilitates optimal participation of the target communities and owning the efforts. The same model will be expanded to another 28 villages in Kancheepuram district shortly.

7. Studies and Reports

Have undertaken the following research studies:

- Rapid Impact Assessment Study
- Profiling of Orphan Children and Widows

- Study on Discrimination and Exclusion in State Relief
- Study to understand Peoples' perceptions on G.O. 172
- Study to assess the Vulnerabilities and Livelihood security options of the non-ocean fishing communities affected by Tsunami in Tamilnadu
- Study on, "Housing Reconstruction; People Vs NGOs; Contemporary issues" (*on going*)

8. Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Coordination (TRRC)

Active involvement in the promotion and functioning of TRRC – a state level coordination of more than 250 NGOs

9. Tsunami – Legal Action Committee (TLAC)

Initiated the Tsunami legal aid program named as 'TLAC' covering all of the 13 coastal districts

10. Psycho-Social Counseling for Children

Initiated a psycho-social counseling program for the children in Kanyakumari involving teachers & schools from the Institute of Human Rights Education

III. ACTIVITIES

1. Emergency Relief

On December 26th People's Watch-Tamilnadu office in Madurai was closed for the holiday season. Nevertheless, several team members were in the office while others happened to be holidaying in the coastal areas. As news of the Tsunami poured in, fourteen teams were rapidly assembled to visit the field, observe the damages, and assess the situation. Reports of the findings were immediately sent to People's Watch-Tamilnadu.

Based on the findings from December 27th and 28th People's Watch-Tamilnadu allocated funds to purchase food items and bed sheets, and assembled family kits valued at Rs. 2,500 each for immediate relief. These family kits were then distributed to those in need. People's Watch-Tamilnadu also purchased and distributed rice and clothes. In addition, People's Watch-Tamilnadu staff joined the efforts of helping people reach relief camps, arranging medical assistance, securing safe drinking water, and providing informal counseling and moral support to the people in the relief camps.

On January 2nd People's Watch-Tamilnadu offices reopened and the question of how People's Watch-Tamilnadu should proceed was discussed. People's Watch-Tamilnadu decided to partake in both relief and rehabilitation efforts in an organized fashion. Seeking financial support People's Watch-Tamilnadu approached its existing donors, who agreed to contribute and support the Tsunami relief efforts, thus officially giving a green light to the relief activities.

People's Watch-Tamilnadu contacted local NGOs in all six worst affected districts and requested that these NGOs identify people who had not received the Government relief aid. Government relief was distributed only to those who possessed a family card, excluding all

those who did not have a card. Because Government policy is such that family cards are issued only once in five years many young families do not have family cards.

All those identified by the NGOs were contacted and relief packages were distributed to them based on their needs. These packages included essential items such as rice, utensils, clothes, etc and were valued at Rs. 3,000-5,000 each. Relief materials were purchased by People's Watch-Tamilnadu to ensure identical quality, and packed by volunteers in the Madurai office. In order to avoid confusion lists of eligible people were created and tokens were given to them as a means of identification. Local NGOs initiated the distribution activities on January 6th, efforts which lasted throughout the duration of the month. Because Nagapattinam was the worst hit area and it received most of the international aid attention, People's Watch-Tamilnadu decided to focus its efforts in other districts. Although Karaikkal district was not recognized as a Tsunami-affected district People's Watch-Tamilnadu decided to expand its relief activities and incorporate Karaikkal based on its large *Dalit* population.

In total People's Watch-Tamilnadu provided emergency relief to 18,961 families benefiting approximately 1,00,000 persons in Kanyakumari, Thirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Karaikkal, Cuddalore, and Kanchipuram districts.

Relief work in the office...





... and in the field





2. Temporary Shelters

People's Watch-Tamilnadu was the first organization that supported NGOs in the construction of temporary shelters. Although People's Watch-Tamilnadu was not directly involved in the construction of the temporary shelters it provided local NGOs with the funds to do so. People's Watch-Tamilnadu emphasized the need to incorporate local knowledge and preferences when constructing the shelters: the direction in which a shelter faces, sanitation, the materials used in its construction, and the location of homes in relation to the sea, are all crucial aspects of effective housing rehabilitation. The TRRC advocates the use of owner-driven construction techniques, where each family is instrumental in the rebuilding of its home, in recognition that this is one step toward rebuilding a way of life shaken by the Tsunami.

In total, People's Watch-Tamilnadu provided financial support to local NGOs for the construction of an estimated 1,500 temporary shelters in Kanyakumari, Thoothukudi, and Kancheepuram districts.

In addition, from January to March 2005, People's Watch-Tamilnadu monitored the Government led rehabilitation activities. These rehabilitation monitoring activities consisted of bi-weekly visits to all affected costal villages from Kanyakumari to Kollamcode (on the Kerala border). In many cases People's Watch-Tamilnadu identified that many temporary shelters were not constructed according to standards, that electricity and running water were not available, and that sanitation facilities were not in place. Moreover, the construction materials of many temporary shelters are inappropriate to the current weather conditions, i.e. shelters are extremely hot and cannot withstand even four hours of consecutive rain. People's Watch-Tamilnadu has expressed the need to ensure that temporary shelter construction follows specific regulations regarding safety, durability, and size.

Temporary shelters



3. Drinking Water Restoration

Periyannemeli Panchayat in Kancheepuram district has a population of 1,500 families that were affected by the Tsunami. Their primary source of livelihood is inland and backwater fishing – both which were affected by the Tsunami. Besides the the Panchayat well the only source of drinking water was filled with sand by the Tsunami. This well crisis has left the people in Panchayat searching for drinking water.

During a People's Watch-Tamilnadu visit to Panchayat, representatives from this community had discussed the issue with the People's Watch-Tamilnadu staff and People's Watch-Tamilnadu immediately agreed to provide the funding required deepening and expanding the well. The complete project is estimated to cost a total of Rs. 450,000. People's Watch-Tamilnadu contributed Rs. 100,000, while other sources contributed Rs. 250,000, the people themselves contributed a total of Rs. 50,000, and the remaining Rs. 50,000 were received in sweat equity. The work on the well is currently in progress and is scheduled to be completed by the end of March.

4. Educational Assistance

People's Watch-Tamilnadu has provided ongoing support to school children and students by purchasing school books and uniforms, advocating for special consideration of those affected by the Tsunami, and identifying students who did not receive government funding for school supplies.

Kanyakumari district provides two examples of People's Watch-Tamilnadu educational assistance activities. People's Watch-Tamilnadu- agreed to fund a proposal for students in the Polytechnic from Nagarcoil City. The Polytechnic faculty had identified 56 students most in need, and submitted a proposal to assist these students. This proposal included the distribution of food materials, bus charges, tuition fees, and exam fees. In another college in Nagarcoil City People's Watch-Tamilnadugave two full sets of clothes to 120 children.

In total People's Watch-Tamilnadu has benefited approximately 2,000 school children, 150 polytechnic students, and 300 college girls in Kanyakumari and Cuddalore districts.

Educational assistance



5. Campus Renovation

In the aftermath of the Tsunami dead bodies were placed in nearby schools. Once the bodies were removed Tsunami survivors were asked to reside in the schools for the duration of one month while the temporary shelters were being constructed. By the middle of February classes had resumed in all these schools however their physical condition was not very good. Five of the missionary schools wrote a proposal to get the schools repainted and submitted their proposal to People's Watch-Tamilnadu. People's Watch-Tamilnadu agreed to fund the project. The painting was initiated in the beginning of March and was completed by the end of March.

This funding for campus renovation of six schools indirectly benefited approximately 1,500 school children in Kanyakumari district.

Names of the schools benefited;

1. St. Francis Primary & High school, Nagercoil
2. St. Antony's Higher Secondary school, Kanyakumari
3. St. Jude Thaddaeus Primary & Higher Secondary School, Pallam

4. All Saints Primary Schools, Muttom
5. St. Mary's Higher Secondary school, Colachel
6. St. Thomas Primary & Nursery school, Chinnamuttom



6. Livelihood Reconstruction

For reasons of many Organizations expressing willingness to help in providing boats and kattamarans for the fishing communities and for the complexity attached with this activity, People's Watch-tamilnadu has decided not to venture into this, instead wanting to focus on rebuilding the livelihoods of the marginalized and vulnerable communities. However, since a unique proposal has come from the fishermen of Kameshwaram village, Nagapattinam district, PW-TN processed it further. The fishermen from this village asked only for 5 boats that would be sufficient for them to restore their livelihoods, if they use them collectively. PW-TN thought that this type of collective approach should be encouraged, so that it provides a model for the rest. Boats manufactured on this arrangement were handed over to the community on 13 March 2005.

Also, PW-TN has been implementing a livelihood rehabilitation program for the non-ocean fishing communities, who happened to be dalits in 5 villages of Thoothukudi district and 17 villages of Kancheepuram district. This program adopts the 'Community Fund' model which facilitates optimal participation of the target communities and

owning the efforts. The same model will be expanded to another 28 villages in Kancheepuram district shortly.

7. Studies and Reports

PW-TN on behalf of TRRC has completed the following three studies and respective reports:

▪ Rapid Impact Assessment Study

This study was conducted on January 5th and 6th in nine coastal districts. A total of 262 villages were surveyed covering almost 170,000 families and 680,000 people. The study objective was to examine the impact of the Tsunami on the lives of the affected communities with a focus on material goods lost.

This study was designed and carried out by the TRRC. A draft report was released on January 10th at Trichy during the TRRC State Coordination Meeting and provided a baseline for TRRC's planning of relief and rehabilitation activities.

Selected results are presented below:

- More than 10,000 people had died and an estimated 9,000 people were seriously injured
- Of the three districts Nagapattinam was the worst affected with almost 4% of the population assumed dead
- More women (and children) lost their lives in the Tsunami when compared with men
- More than 88,000 houses and 65,000 boats or catamarans were lost; domestic property was lost in more than 31,000 houses.
- All four zones greatly depend on fishing as their main source of livelihood

▪ Profiling of Orphan Children and Widows

This study was conducted between January 15th and 24th in three coastal districts - Cuddalore, Kanyakumari, and Nagapattinam – and covered a total of 89 villages. The study objective was to profile the widows and orphans in the Tsunami-affected areas.

Selected results are presented below:

- A total of 3,769 widows and 377 orphans were identified
- All three districts had a relatively high number of widows and orphans prior to the Tsunami (3,350 and 297 respectively)
- Most of the new widows were identified in Nagapattinam

- Widows who did not receive government compensation were more commonly found in Cuddalore and Kanyakumari
- Religion did not seem to play a role in the distribution of relief
- There is a possibility that pre-Tsunami widows have been discriminated against and as such have not received relief
- The local communities have mechanisms in place to care for the widows and the orphans

The report concluded that compensation provided to widows and orphans should be monitored in addition to the wellbeing of orphans.

▪ **Study on Discrimination and Exclusion in State Relief**

This study was conducted between February 7th and 13th in selected villages in the nine coastal districts surveyed in the January Rapid Impact Assessment. The study objective was to identify people and communities discriminated against or excluded from state relief and submit this list to the Government for re-consideration.

Selected results are presented below:

- A total of 7,797 people were eligible for relief but were discriminated or excluded from relief
- Most of those identified (47%) were from Kancheepuram district
- Caste based discrimination was the most common, followed by occupation and religion based discrimination

8. Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Coordination (TRRC)

(An exclusive report on TRRC is available, on request)

The Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Coordination – Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry (TRRC) – was first conceptualized on December 31st, 2004 and established on January 3rd, 2005. The TRRC began as the collaborative effort of some 90 individuals, and has now expanded to incorporate more than 250 NGOs.

During its conception Mr. Henri Tiphagne was approached by other activists and personally asked to provide his leadership as TRRC State Convenor as well as People’s Watch-Tamilnadu professional support to TRRC activities. People’s Watch-Tamilnadu was among the very few NGOs that had immediate access to the affected communities through its local network of NGOs. As People’s Watch-Tamilnadu had already engaged in some relief activities and collaborated with its partners it felt that the TRRC was indeed the need of the hour without which the affected communities would not receive access to available resources

in time. The final decision to join TRRC was made in People's Watch-Tamilnadu office, Madurai.

The purpose of TRRC is to organize state level consultations on state-civil society partnership, monitoring of human rights, and the status of Tsunami-affected children. Its three main objectives are to coordinate the relief stage of the work, coordinate the immediate and long term rehabilitation efforts, and monitor the efforts of the Government in this regard. Community participation is a key consideration as is the responsibility to communicate the views and the demands of the communities to the Government. The Gujarat experience has encouraged TRRC to strongly promote information sharing and coordination as essential for effective and efficient relief and rehabilitation.

Given its history, priorities, and broad-based membership, the TRRC performs needs assessment, monitoring, and policy advocacy in a variety of sectors that include children, women, *Dalit*, *Adivasi*, and minority concerns; health, trauma counseling, and community support systems; direct relief, housing, and capacity-building; livelihood rehabilitation; and resource-monitoring and environmental impact studies.

To date TRRC has led five state level consultations and initiated many Tsunami-related studies, three of which were discussed earlier in this report. Altogether, TRRC's outlook and activities have been deliberately framed to provide not only the necessities of life, but also what is required in order to begin rehabilitation and move away from relief.

The TRRC secretariat is located in People's Watch-Tamilnadu, and small, field offices, have been established in cooperation with local NGOs. The secretariat not only coordinates all of the TRRC activities but also acts as a center where most of the volunteers and other visitors and researchers come and receive updates on the events and the immediate needs of the different villages. Moreover, the TRRC website is an integral part of the People's Watch-Tamilnadu website.

TRRC has established a productive working relationship with its local partners and communicates with them on a weekly basis. Additional, ongoing activities include conducting meetings with the District Collector, and the distribution of notices, invitations for meetings, and newsletters.

TRRC intends to continue its work in monitoring relief and rehabilitation work, research, and policy advocacy related to the rehabilitation process. Finally, the TRRC will work to strengthen community-based reconstruction efforts.

TRRC meetings



9. Tsunami – Legal Action Committee (TLAC)

By the middle of January many Tsunami affected people had not yet received relief. Moreover, experience has shown that many groups who were eligible for relief and rehabilitation fail to receive appropriate support. Many human rights organizations, including People's Watch-Tamilnadu, felt that the Government holds the responsibility to compensate these people and as such identified the need for a policy level, legal aid intervention that would reach out to those affected in all 13 coastal districts.

On February 6th People's Watch-Tamilnadu organized a meeting in Madurai to discuss different courses of action on the district level and propose a comprehensive course of action for state level intervention. JANVIKAS, a sister organization from Gujarat state which was very active during the Gujarat earthquake, was glad to share its experiences with People's Watch-Tamilnadu and sent its representatives to the meeting. Other NGOs, including TRRC, also participated. The meeting resulted in the establishment of the Tsunami – Legal Action Committee (TLAC) as a partnership of three key organizations: Human Rights Law Network (Chennai), the Society for Community Organization (SOCO) Trust (Madurai), and People's Watch-Tamilnadu. (It was decided that TLAC would be based in People's Watch-Tamilnadu.

Recruitment the TLAC staff was completed by the end of February followed by an initial 2-day workshop to integrate the diverse group of young lawyers, experienced judges and students. It was determined that the headquarters and secretary would be in People's Watch-Tamilnadu, Madurai, with four zonal offices in Chennai, Caddalore, Kanyakumari, and Naggapatinam.

TLAC felt a strong need that complaints be received from the affected people in local settings and that claims be settled immediately. Public litigation and court hearing would be chosen as a course of action at times when the state would be unwilling to cooperate. In addition, TLAC will try to highlight areas that the Government has failed to address.

TLAC began its field activities on March 7th when local NGOs were contacted and the worst-hit villages were identified. Using publicity and propaganda people were informed of the legal activities and the opportunity to submit their claim. Field camps open for the duration of 30 days were established in villages, with each camp covering up to 10 villages from the surrounding area. After receiving the complaint TLAC recesses and classifies them, and an action is initiated within 10 days. At the present time complaints are being received and addressed on a rolling basis; to-date TLAC has received more than 10,000 complains from all four zones.

Although different areas will emerge as TLAC progresses with its work several needs have already been identified:

- The need to assist people in filing a First Information Report (FIR) for missing people.
- There has been a problem in providing compensation to families of missing persons as by Government Order (GO) compensation can be received only if the family has been successful in identifying the body.
- Although there have been numerous GOs they do not cover all affected populations, such as widows.

- While in theory GOs defined many people as eligible for compensation, in practice lists of those eligible were incomplete and many did not receive relief funds.
- People have been asked to pay for their electricity bills when they don't even have enough food to eat.
- In order to be eligible for health benefits people must provide evidence of hospitalization for at least 7 consecutive days, however even if the injury was severe in reality most people were discharged after only 3 days and as such are not eligible.
- The forced eviction of coastal communities' inland, especially around Chennai, in the name of safety (i.e. the possibility of a recurring Tsunami).

TLAC 2-day workshop



10. Psycho-Social Counseling for Children (primary level)

After the Tsunami, children from affected areas were identified to be in distress due to the Tsunami. Children were affected at various levels, but in general demonstrated one of the following three groups of symptoms:

- Those in a state of shock, not reacting and/or speaking
- Those who reacted in an outburst when talking about the sea; spoke loudly and harshly
- Those who were always crying

In January People's Watch-Tamilnadu decided to conduct a training on 27.01.2005 for teachers to enable them to address the special needs of these children. The training was announced in various schools in both Tsunami-affected and non-affected areas, and 60 teachers showed up for this training. Ms. Arthi Rajarathinam, a trained psychologist, was invited from Salem to conduct this training. As many of the teachers were themselves Tsunami victims this training was an opportunity to address their needs as well.

On 09.02.2005 a core group of teachers interested in psycho-social counseling was formed with a primary aim of working with children affected by the Tsunami. Activities would include the provision of immediate psycho-social support. It was also agreed that once the work in the Tsunami affected areas will be completed, the same teachers will be given further training to become school counselors as well.

The positive feedback from the activities discussed above resulted in the expansion of this psycho-social initiative. Ms. Arthi Rajarathinam conducted visits in schools throughout the region to meet and speak with the children and teachers. Sessions were conducted involving various therapy techniques, including playing games to reduce the fear of sea and disaster and empower the children.

It was also decided to conduct a 10-day counseling program in the Tsunami affected areas during the holidays when the children will not have school and therefore will be more likely to slip into depression or anxiety. This counseling program will focus on seven severely affected villages and will begin on April 22nd. A second round of training is scheduled for May 2nd, while visits, evaluations and feedback will be conducted throughout May.

The key to the initiation and success of this program is the active involvement of the teachers who have been associating with the Human Rights Education Program of People's Watch-Tamilnadu.

PEOPLE'S WATCH - TAMILNADU
TSUNAMI - FUND POSITION AS ON 10.05.2005

Sl.No.	PARTNERS	Grant received	Expenses	Balance
1	MISEREOR	1,542,996.00	1,542,996.00	-
2	DCA	13,046,720.14	11,054,530.31	1,992,189.83
3	BREAD FOR THE WORLD	990,000.00	990,000.00	-
4	U.U.S.C	4,358,936.00	105,451.95	4,253,484.05
5	CCFD	1,140,000.00	1,140,000.00	-
6	CORDAID - TRRC	425,500.00	309,902.57	115,597.43
7	CORDAID - RELIEF (Rs.38,84000/-)	3,074,500.00	2,925,284.03	149,215.97
8	FNST - RELIEF	-	139,530.30	(139,530.30)
9	FNST - COUNSELLING	-	80,000.00	(80,000.00)
10	FFIA	157,300.00	125,800.00	31,500.00
11	EDM	140,000.00	-	140,000.00
12	TLAC - CHRISTIAN AID		34,517.98	(34,517.98)
13	TLAC - ACTION AID	500,000.00	571,074.11	(71,074.11)
14	TLAC - PLAN INTERNATIONAL		40,104.86	(40,104.86)
15	TLAC - MISEREOR		90,652.00	(90,652.00)
16	TLAC - CORDAID		94,817.38	(94,817.38)
	TOTAL	25,375,952.14	19,244,661.49	6,131,290.65

Grant Received for Tsunami Relief as on 17.03.2005

