

I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The tsunami which struck the south-eastern coast of India on December 26, 2004, had a long lasting, devastating impact on the fishing communities of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Pondicherry and the Andaman and Nicobar islands. Besides the loss of life and property, it shattered family life, leaving people without homes, possessions and the means to earn a living. According to early estimates by the Indian government, over 230,000 homes were damaged in 1,089 affected villages. Tamil Nadu was the worst sufferer in terms of loss of lives and property. All the 13 coastal districts were affected.

After the initial relief measures were over, when the Government announced the plan of reconstruction of houses for the tsunami victims, especially the fishing community, numerous NGOs and INGOs came forward with their resources. Literally, there was a competition between them to get the green signal from the government to begin their work regarding rehabilitation in the affected villages/hamlets. Sensing the situation, the Government took to the driver's seat dictating the terms of the circumstances. It laid out Memorandum of Understanding for the willing NGOs/INGOs to carry out their activities. The NGOs/INGOs who agreed on the terms of the government were given the responsibilities of certain villages/hamlets.

In the backdrop of such setting, TRRC planned to conduct a study to check out the following;

- ? To look into the nature of alternative locations; including the suitability for construction, access to public services etc. identified by the government to carry out the rehabilitation process
- ? To understand the extent of approval / disapproval of the communities over the new locations and issues arising if any
- ? To examine the state of affairs of housing in new locations and employment opportunities created out of housing reconstruction for the captive workforce
- ? To inform all the stakeholders about the findings and initiate appropriate actions through a process of consultation.

II. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Soon after the disaster, there was a flurry of relief materials flowing from the State as well as numerous NGOs and INGOs. In many cases, the relief was more than necessary at that point of time as immediate means of surviving. Both the State and the Central Government came out with promises of huge bounty of relief and rehabilitation packages to be dispensed among the affected people.

After the temporary relief for disaster victims, it is quite important to plan for rehabilitation and long-term development of disaster-affected areas. Thousands of families are still homeless nearly a year after the Asian tsunami tore into the Tamil Nadu's coastline. With only crude shelter and some immediate provisions from NGOs and Government, the families are out in the open space while many

are still languishing in the temporary shelters, most of which have already given in. The importance of housing was realized by the Government of Tamil Nadu at the early stage of rehabilitation. Consequently, the Government came up with several orders with regard to reconstruction of houses for the tsunami victims. Through a Government Order (G.O.) 25, dated January 13, 2005, orders were issued for construction of houses with all infrastructure facilities to the affected families through public/ private partnership with participation of NGOs, Voluntary agencies, Public sector undertaking, Corporate Houses etc. In continuation of this GO, another GO (GO 26, dated January 13, 2005) was passed in case of construction of Schools, Child welfare Centres, Hospitals, Primary Health Centres, Community Centres, and Vocational Training Centres etc.

According to G.O. 172 (dated March 30, 2005), the Tsunami Housing Reconstruction Programme envisaged the construction of about 1,30,000 concrete houses worth Rs. 1,50,000/- each. The entire programme is likely to cost Rs.1950 crore. However, the official website of the Government of Tamil Nadu states that only 30415 houses have been taken up for construction through NGOs/Corporates as on September 16, 2005. Please see the Annexure for details

(Source: <http://www.tn.gov.in/tsunami/housing.pdf>)

If this is the state of affairs after nine months of the disaster, when is the project going to be completed? When are those disaster-affected people going to have their own houses to live in?

However, in a significant development, the Government issued an Order (GO 172) on March 30, 2005 as a comprehensive housing reconstruction policy. The government intended to resettle most of the tsunami-affected families through this policy. The policy attracted a lot of debate from the NGO world. TRRC, itself engineered a study in this respect, namely, **“People’s Perceptions on G.O.172”**. One of the chief concerns which the study reflected was the fact that it was a tacit policy of the government to forcibly relocate the fishing community away from the coast.

The Government went ahead with the policy of relocating people living on the coast (primarily the fishermen community). In order to protect coastal population from future disasters, a number of households either affected by the tsunami or unaffected but living in unsafe locations needed to be relocated. In addition, the government suggested that it would strictly implement the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification, the principal legislation governing land use along India’s coasts.

Even if the Government has come up with several Orders, the distress of the people still continues. There were reports of people suffering without permanent shelter and forced eviction without suitable alternatives made available to them. The forcible relocation was stayed by the Madras High Court in an interim injunction after the TRRC filed a writ petition. Improper allocation of land also gave rise to many problems. Under such circumstances, it had become very important to look into all these intricacies arising out of the housing reconstruction process.

III. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is intended to highlight some of the crucial issues that have come up in the course of the reconstruction process. The study will help to inform the outer world about the state of affairs related to the progress of the work, the problems of the people who are going to be relocated and the response of the government. The report will also include few case studies. The study will provide a platform for debate and consultation on the issue. It would also work as an eye opener for the NGOs and the INGOs encouraging them to rethink on facilitating community participation.

IV. GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE OF THE STUDY

Although, the government of TamilNadu has declared 13 districts as affected by Tsunami, it was only 9 districts, where the study was conducted.

These districts were:

- ? Chennai
- ? Thiruvallur
- ? Kanjipuram
- ? Villupuram
- ? Cudallore
- ? Nagapattinam
- ? Tuticorin
- ? Kanyakumari
- ? Thirunelveli

V. MAJOR FINDINGS:

General information:

The study was carried out in 42 blocks of the nine coastal districts. These included 208 panchayats in which 267 villages and 227 hamlets were considered. Of the 171,710 families studied in these villages and hamlets, majority of them belong to the fishing community (74.27%). The number of families is highest in Nagapattinam (33570) followed by Kanyakumari district (32392). Thirunelveli holds the least number of families (5779). Kanyakumari district has the highest share (24.23%) of the fishing community among all the districts, followed by Nagapattinam (17.94%).

Impact of tsunami on housing:

The data reveal an anomaly in the number of houses affected vs. the number of houses registered for compensation.

What are the factors responsible for such anomaly?

What has been the impact of such anomalies on the interests of the communities involved?

It was not only the human lives that suffered due to tsunami, the residents of the coastal areas also incurred huge loss in terms of their property. Prior to tsunami, there were 163137 houses existing in those villages and hamlets. These houses were comprised of concrete houses (31.27%), tiled ones (28.50%) and huts (40.23%). Tsunami caused complete as well as partial damage to the houses in these areas. The total number of houses damaged was 55309 (33.90%), out of which 56.23% were fully damaged and 43.77% partially damaged. 64.32% of the houses in the Nagapattinam district were affected. Moreover, most of the affected houses in the district were fully damaged (68.80%). Kanyakumari was the second most affected district in terms of total number of damaged houses. Though number of houses affected was relatively less in the districts of Kanjipuram, Chennai and Villupuram but they suffered a higher degree of loss individually (63.55%, 33.24% and 28.01% respectively of the total number of houses existed in the respective districts). Overall, of the total affected houses in the districts, fully damaged houses (56.23%) were more than partly damaged houses.

Nagapattinam had a share of 21.51% (highest) of the total houses prior to tsunami, its share in the damaged houses is 40.81%. Kanyakumari's share in the number of houses before the disaster among all the districts was 16.16% while it comprises 12.80% of the total damaged houses.

Comparing the total number of houses affected and the number of houses registered with the government for compensation, a huge difference could be found in majority of the districts. This difference was observed in two ways- in some districts, the houses registered for compensation have outnumbered the houses affected, while in the other districts, it is the other way round i.e. the affected houses are much more in number than the houses registered with the government for compensation. For example, in Kanjipuram, 5738 houses were affected in total whereas 7141 houses have been registered for compensation. Similarly, in Thirunelveli, 728 houses were recorded as affected and the total number of registered houses is more than three times the number of houses affected. On the other hand, Kanyakumari has 7075 affected houses and only 1789 houses have been registered for compensation; in Villupuram, out of 3744 affected houses, 1679 are registered. Same is the case with some other districts. The field study points towards several factors that are responsible for these two paradoxical phenomena. *First*, in certain areas, the government has decided to vacate the whole area and shift the people to a safer place irrespective of the fact that some houses in the area might not have been affected due to tsunami. In that case, these unaffected houses have also been registered with the government for which in certain cases, the registered houses have outnumbered the affected houses. *Second*, in certain areas, the government has not taken any initiative for registration, for which the number of affected houses is more than the registered ones. *Third*, some families are not willing to move away from the shore and therefore reluctant to get their houses registered. *Fourth*, in Kanyakumari and Tuticorin districts, people belonging to minority groups such as Pentecost christians, Muslims, Dalits etc. were deprived of getting their houses registered with the government. *Fifth*, in

some districts e.g. Kanyakumari, regarding affected houses, the government officials relied on the information provided only by the parish council. The list was not a complete one and only included people favourable to the council. *Finally*, in certain districts, only the houses of fishermen community were registered, whereas in certain other cases, partial damage to houses were not considered for registration. Such factors made a difference so far as the affected houses and number of registered houses in these districts are concerned.

Only a handful of people were lucky to receive their due share but a vast majority of them are left in a precarious situation, primarily due to inefficient and insensitive handling of the situation by the government.

Land Allocation for Housing:

The government has failed to keep the promises made through G.O. 172. In many districts, the new locations were not suitable for housing.

What have been the consequences for such improper land allocation?

In Thazhaguda, Cuddalore, construction work had remained stagnant due to the discriminatory attitude of the government officials and fishermen panchayat representatives. They showed utter carelessness in choosing the beneficiaries which led to chaotic situations.

In the first stage of land allocation, although 250 families registered as having lost their houses, the government gave priority to those victims who had resided within 200 meters of the coast, allocating private land from the chemical factory, TANFAC, to build 118 houses. Government was not ready to allocate land for 132 houses as the priority was to relocate the people living within 200 meters. In fact, the district administration insisted that those who have lost their homes buy the TANFAC land themselves. Two women were given only temporary shelter and were denied permanent houses at TANFAC. Another 43 families living within 200 meters of the shore have filed a petition to the government of Tamil Nadu as well as the district administration, stating that they were willfully left out of the government land allocation. They have demanded compensation and an allocation of land for housing.

In Kanyakumari District government has identified a salt pan area (Kalimar) for construction of permanent houses for three villages namely Colechel, Simon Colony and Maramadi, but people doubt on the stability of the houses to be constructed in this location.

In spite of the fact that those coastal districts incurred a huge loss both in terms of lives and property but the response of the government is far less than satisfactory. Though 45791 houses were registered with the government for compensation, government sanctioned only 34445 houses. So far the allocation of land is concerned, till September 27, 2005 while land was allotted for 164 villages; allotment was yet to be done for 181

more villages. In case of the land allotment to new locations, the best progress has been done in the

district of Thirunelveli, where land allocation for 6 villages have been done, leaving only one. On the other hand, the progress in all other districts is agonizing. Thiruvallur is at the bottom of the list, where

In Muttom, Kanyakumari, both the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS) and the Spanish organization Intervida are constructing 48 houses in-situ in Muttom itself, while Intervida alone is constructing another 64 houses in James Nagar. Victims are satisfied with the in situ construction; however, they have expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the land allotted for new housing in James Nagar. James Nagar is 2 km away from the coast, separating the residents from their own fellow communities and as well their source of livelihood: fishing. Furthermore, residents fear clashes with their new neighbors in Kadiapattinam, where James Nagar is located. Because of their opposition to the new location, they disturbed initial reconstruction efforts for five days, until the Collector, Tahsildar, and Special collector for the Tsunami firmly stated that work should continue. Housing beneficiaries for the James Nagar location have yet to be identified because of general opposition to the location. Thus while the housing project is scheduled for completion before December 2005, the housing contractors will simply be turning over the house keys to the government.

land is allotted only for 9 villages while allotment for 35 is still pending. In 37 villages constructions are to be done at their original locations. Though G.O. 172 limits 3

Land allocation for a single village is being done in different location. This will bring changes in their existing social structure.

cents for rural and one and half cents for urban areas for each house, 20 villages have been allotted space less than 3 cents. This has happened primarily due to the reason that the government has not provided the NGOs/INGOs enough land to build the required number of houses. Consequently, the NGOs/INGOs have been compelled to build smaller houses to accommodate the people. In majority of the cases (71.35%), the specification of 3 cents has been maintained but in 16.96% of cases, surprisingly more than 3 cents have been allotted. However, it

is not a rosy picture at all. Actually, in many cases the government has allotted plenty of wasteland to start reconstruction. The NGOs/INGOs themselves have purchased land in many areas for reconstruction work.

As a whole, it can be said that government has denied people the right to housing, even to the extent agreed by it through registration. Nine months after the disaster, land has not been allotted to the people in most of the cases, let alone the construction to start. Even the allocation itself has lots of anomalies and is not beneficial to the people. It definitely cuts a sorry figure so far land allocation for housing is concerned.

INGO withdrawal
EFICORE an INGO who came forward for the construction of permanent houses have withdrawn itself as the construction in the salt pan area would be risky and expensive.

Access to Sources of Livelihood and Public Services:

The government has overlooked many important aspects associated with the coastal communities while relocating them.

To what extent is the relocation policy going to affect the various interests of the communities?

From a comparative picture of the old and the new location with regard to changes in the distances from coast, sources of livelihood and public services, the following observations can be made. The data here are confined to the villages for which land has been allocated. Further, the distance is categorized as below 200 m, 200 – 500 m, 500 – 1000 m and above 1000 m.

In certain locations, the land identified for the construction of permanent houses is a waste land, so no facilities are available near to the location.

In Tuticorin, vast majority of the land belongs to the Port Trust (Central government land) so the land identified for construction of permanent houses is very far off.

In the case of distance from the coast, 93 villages were within 200 m while in the case of new location, only 14 villages will be within 200 m. On the other hand, in the category of above 1000 m, the number of villages has increased from 8 to 47. The proximity to the shore is a very important factor so far as the livelihood of the fishing community is concerned. The above figures show that the possibility of huge change in the habitation of the fishermen is definitely going to have an adverse impact on them.

Similarly, in case of distance within 200m from the bus stop, there is a decrease of 43.75% of the number of villages. In case of distance up to 500m from the school, the decrease in the number of villages is 34.38%; 51.85% decrease is recorded in case of distance from the government hospital/PHC/PH up to 500m. In case of distance in the range of 500-1000m from the fisheries department office, the decrease is 88.64%; in case of distance up to 500m from the main bank, the decrease is 38.46%. There is a decrease of 32.73% in case of distance from Church/Temple/Mosque in the range up to 500m. However, in the case of distance from graveyard/burial ground in the range of above 1000m, an increase of 34.7% is recorded. So far as the distance from the fish market up to 500m is concerned, the decrease is 44.44%. Finally, in case of distance from main agricultural fields, in the range of 500-1000m, the decrease is 38.46%.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the number of villages within the shorter distances from various public utility services has decreased which leads to the conclusion that most of the villages will move to further distances once the houses are constructed in the new locations. This gives an idea that apart from the possibility of their livelihood activities being disrupted, the accessibility of many public utility services will also be affected.

Thus the data show that the policy of the government of relocating the coastal communities has not only affected their access to the shore; it has also more indirectly affected their livelihoods by limiting access to public services.

New Locations – Approval/Disapproval by Communities:

On a whole, a high percentage of people have agreed to the new location in spite of the fact that they would face varied problems. There is high probability that the new houses may not be used for the purpose for which it is constructed.

In Chennai, many tsunami victims remain in temporary shelters while housing reconstruction work has not been taken up. Even though they may have begun preparations for reconstruction, such organizations as Action Aid, DonBosco, Udavi, Karunalaya and CCRD continue to wait for the government to sign Memoranda of Understanding so that they can legally begin their work.

Furthermore, victims in Chennai are often not in favour of the land allocated to them. According to Ms. Sundari, special Tahsildar for Tsunami R & R at the collectorate in Chennai, the government has allotted Kargil Nagar as the new housing location for those in northern slum areas and Kannaki Nagar for those in southern slum areas. Northern residents have stated that because Kargil Nagar is in a low-land area, during rainy season, excessive water will collect in this area. Some said that while they may go reside in the new area, they are not willing to give up their old land to the government because they wish to keep their boats and fishing supplies near to the shore. Those in southern slum areas have stated that because Kannaki Nagar is notorious for criminality, they are not willing to move to the new area for fear of a lack of security for women and others. However, Ms. Sundari asserted that, despite petitions for alternative housing locations, there is no other land available in Chennai.

The post-tsunami housing locations are generally situated away from traditional village land. Only 46 villages have in-situ constructions compared to 166 villages for which new locations have been allocated. In a survey of communities in those 166 villages on their approval of the new locations, 74.7% of the villages do find the new housing locations acceptable. However, this statistical representation of the will of the people does not tell the whole story. The qualitative data reveal that the people are not going to relinquish their property in the old locations, as was also projected in the earlier study on **“People’s perceptions on G.O. 172”**. *Secondly*, these people are going to get houses free of cost which they will acquire as an additional property. *Thirdly*, the property will act as an income generating means as the

In Ennur Chinakuppam village of Thiruvallur District, half of the population is willing to shift to the new location but the rest are not in favour, so if this happens the unity among the fishermen could be affected.

Certain villages face the problem of a change in the panchayat, parish and for other basic facilities they need to depend on a new village.

new houses can be given out for rent. *Finally*, in future when the families of the fishing community will grow, they can use those houses.

Among those who do not approve of the new locations have suggested alternative locations, 45% have suggested a housing location on government land, while 55% have suggested a location on private land.

Out of 167 new locations identified for reconstruction, people have disapproved of as many as 42 locations. 17 locations in Nagapattinam alone have been disapproved of.

Thus, among those villages moved to new housing locations, the majority of them find the new locations acceptable. However, it is not because the new location is suitable for them, but they have some other interests involved.

In Muttom of Kanyakumari district, people have gone to the extent of attempting to manhandle the NGO staff who tried to begin the construction in a place called James Nagar-Chivanthaman which was not acceptable to the people.

Housing reconstruction:

The data reveal that in most of the places, the construction is just in its nascent stage.

In such a state of affair, the question arises as to how the government is going to fulfill its commitment?

As it has been already noticed that the number of houses sanctioned is much less than the number of houses affected or even registered, progress of work for the sanctioned houses do not put a decent show either. Construction of only 29.01% of the total sanctioned houses has started so far in 89 locations. Construction in the districts of Chennai and Thiruvallur is yet to see the light of the day. In most of the cases (84.31%), the carpet area of the houses is between 300 to 400 square feet; while in some cases (10.78%), it is less than 300 square feet. This is due to inadequate allocation of land by the government. There are very few instances where the houses have a carpet area beyond 400 square feet. Land for the houses has to be acquired and purchased by the government. According to G.O. 172, the value of the houses to be built is to be 1.5 lakh.

In Puthukuppam, Cuddalore, in a separate incident, owners of the land allotted for housing reconstruction asked the Village Panchayat for a rate closer to the market value than the amount sanctioned. In response, the Panchayat requested Rs. 2500 from each beneficiary to pay the owners. One resident, Mr. Puthupattan, demurred arguing that it was illegal to collect money from the beneficiaries. He has in turn been castigated by the community and Panchayat.

Four villages namely Vaniakudi (each family had to pay Rs. 22,000), Kurumbanai, Enayam (village committee paid Rs. 615,000) and Periyavilai in Kanyakumari District have paid to purchase the land which was the responsibility of the government.

But the study reveals that most of the houses (70.69%) are within the range of 1 and 1.5 lakh. Another picture which came out is that the fact that 25.86% of the houses value more than 1.5 lakh. It is mainly because the NGOs or INGOs, which are responsible in the construction of the houses, have dished out huge sum of money for better quality of houses. In some places in Kanyakumari district, as the government failed to get suitable land for housing, people had to spend extra money to get proper

land. The reason for such phenomenon was due to the high market value of the land which the government never agreed to pay.

In Cudallore a village named Akaraikori people were not in favour of moving to the newley constructed houses but the government is nearing completion with the construction.

The opinions of the communities which are going to be relocated also bear a lot of importance. So the housing proposal needs to be discussed with them by the implementing NGOs/INGOs. But in reality the proposals had not been discussed with a considerable portion (35.46%) of the communities. 36.88% of the communities

has expressed dissatisfaction on the proposals. Even in many cases, where people have expressed satisfaction have other elements involved. The fishermen communities in many places have openly stated that they are not willing to move away from the coast to the new locations and they will never relinquish their existing ownerships but they are not objecting towards the new locations because they will be able to acquire these houses free of cost. Among all the districts, in Nagapattinam majority of the communities has neither been discussed nor are they satisfied with the proposals, in spite of the fact that it was the worst affected district.

The reconstruction of the houses in most of the districts is only in the initial stages. In majority of the cases the houses for which construction has begun is not according to the standards specified by the government. The importance of the opinion of the people who are going to live in the new locations has not been given any sort of priority and the government has acted arbitrarily. It is a clear failure on the part of the government to provide proper lands and housing to the affected people which have given rise to messy situations.

Employment in Housing Reconstruction:

The NGOs/INGOs hardly consulted with the community regarding involving them in the reconstruction process. They engaged labourers according to their convenience.

Once the reconstruction process has started, lots of employment opportunities have come up at the reconstruction sites. Normally in such cases of catastrophes, the people of the affected community are engaged in the reconstruction process to provide immediate livelihood on temporary terms. While tsunami has deprived thousands of people of their regular livelihood, the reconstruction process would open a lot of opportunities for these people but the study shows things taking place in the other way. The data reveal that only 2.22% of the total persons employed are from the same affected village, 1.85% from the neighboring fishing villages, 31.83% from neighboring non-fishing villages, while 88.42% are outsiders. In the district of Kanjipuram, almost all the labourers (93.82%) are from outside. Though fishermen communities are not skilled in construction work, but various semi-skilled works involved in the construction process can easily be allotted to those people. Even 56.25% of the fishing communities have shown their willingness to get involved in the construction. However, the NGOs and INGOs, responsible to carry

In Puthukuppam, Cuddalore, Amirthanandamayi Math has been the organization responsible for conducting housing reconstruction work. While followers of Amirthananthamayi Math from Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, as well as followers from other countries have been involved in construction, those residing in the hamlet have not been allowed to participate in the work. In addition, the Fishing Panchayat has not permitted other organizations to become involved in reconstruction work, and Mutt has correspondingly threatened to leave if other organizations get involved in such work.

Apart from that, the Math has put up the symbols of Mata Amirthanandamayi Math in all the houses built by it. One Christian family who was allotted such a house objected to it and refused to take possession.

out the reconstruction work in different areas had delegated the task to various independent contractors, who hired people according to their convenience. In the whole process, the fishing community was ignored completely.

The engagement of the fishing community in the reconstruction process is negligible. Already crippled in economic terms due to the disaster, such alienation has served a death blow to them. Although considerable portion of them were willing to participate in the construction work, but their case has not been considered with much attention.

VI. CONCLUSION:

The study reflects on various issues and perspectives associated with the reconstruction process. It emphasizes on facilitating community participation. The report of the study will be placed for a consultation with various NGOs and INGOs scheduled to be held in Chennai on October 20, 2005 to decide further course of action.