

"Lessons learnt from tsunami", Centre for Development Studies, 10th August 2006, Kerala, India

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Abstract:

As disasters emerge on a regular basis in the world today, a significant section of the world population are being killed or displaced. It is evident that children, women and elderly become more vulnerable among the displaced. Affected people lose not only their loved ones but also their shelter and livelihood. Therefore, governments, non-governmental organizations, communities and individuals are very much concerned with how they could prevent future disasters as well as how the affected communities can be assisted to re-build their lives. My own experience with disaster-affected communities suggests that appropriate consultation of the affected communities is crucial in order to understand their needs and requirements which in turn helps to devise efficient and effective relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction mechanisms. As I was heavily involved in various consultative processes during the immediate post-tsunami period in Sri Lanka, I intend to share that experience with those who are interested because most occasions I had to deviate from the existing text-book methodologies and devise appropriate consultative techniques. Major issues encountered during the post-tsunami relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction are as follows: distribution of relief and selection of the recipients; orphans/single parent families and elderly; non-participatory housing construction; over-concentration on the fishery sector; local political interference; show-offs; lack of concentration on the interior who lived on the riverbanks; religious rivalry; social stigma; negligence of the social classes; and importance of the quick readiness to support the victims. This presentation shows the lessons learnt from the tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka and hence, I expect that this presentation will help those who intend to investigate about desires, behaviours and activities of the disaster-affected communities.