

An analysis of lifestyle of the dwellers in Siribopura tsunami housing scheme in Hambantota

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Tsunami hit Sri Lanka on the 26th of December, 2004 and devastated the Eastern and Southern part of the Island, killing over 40,000 people. It was estimated that the total affected population exceeded one million and the cost of damages caused summed up nearly to LKR 234 billion. A substantial change in coastal structure and its environment, and variation in livelihood conditions of the people were observed. Hambantota district is one of the most affected district, with a loss of 27,522 lives, 5,706 families and 1,689 dwellings. Further, 1,680 families have been displaced in the Hambantota divisional Secretariat Division. This study was designed with the prime objective of investigating and analyzing the adaptability of lifestyle and livelihood conditions of the inhabitants of Siribopura tsunami housing scheme in terms of socio-economic and environmental perspective. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire survey and interviews. Ten per cent of the total samples of households were selected randomly. Secondary data were extracted from previous literature, research reports and documents available with District/Divisional Secretariats of Hambantota. The collected data were analyzed to evaluate the loss of lives, dwellings, livelihood sources, social welfare and environmental conditions of the Siribopura households, comparing both pre and post Tsunami situations. Accordingly, 55.5% of the dwellers or the 500 rescued families, who live in the Hambantota town, Galwala, Karagam Lewaya and Alokapura have been re-settled in the Siribopura tsunami housing scheme while 44.5% had gone missing or is dead. Out of the total affected population, age-wise analysis shows 48.62% of children and gender wise analysis shows 76.9% of female population had lost their lives. Prior to the Tsunami, the average family size was 7 members and 80-90% families live jointly; but subsequent to the disaster, the family size had reduced to 4 members and 90% of families dwell as single families in the individual houses provided under the housing scheme. In addition, dwellers of Siribopura previously lived in the Hambantota town area, possessing an average of below 10 perches land. They had easy access to fulfill their daily needs and to earn livelihood. Unfortunately after tsunami, each family was only provided a house with 1-2 rooms with 20 perch land area. Further, the coastal buffer zone has extended up to 4.5km from the shore, which had caused a hindrance to the smooth living condition of the people. Tsunami is inevitable event as it is a natural disaster, but we could mitigate its risk level with the implementation of viable disaster risk reduction measures, preparedness, and continuous public education and awareness programs. The results reveal that the children and women are highly victimized and therefore more attention should be paid to them, in terms of education and awareness.

Keywords: Tsunami, livelihood, dwellings, natural hazard and risk reduction

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