

Report of the NGO Meeting On Women & Livelihoods

Date: -9th February 2005

Venue: Conference Hall, Nagapattinam Collectorate

Introduction

Tsunami has created a havoc situation where the life, livelihoods, properties and dignity of the coastal communities faced turmoil. Relief initiatives in the first phase were taken effectively that reflected the unique mind set up of humanity. However, in the generalized context of relief and rehabilitation, women, the worst affected section was ignored even though unintentionally. As the existing approach does not give any promises to the affected womenfolk there is an urgent need to re-look the matter.

The Context of Victimisation

How the society looks at women in coastal communities in the context of tsunami is the major issue that found room for discussion. The victims shall be approached as:

- -victims who faced greater burden in tsunami with the physio-socio-cultural distinctions/peculiarities
- who runs the affected families and thus prone to a greater part of stress
- workers who performs an active role in the post-harvest fishery

The Approaches

All these approaches are in one way or other are valid, but in varying degrees. The first approach stresses on better shelter and environment, counseling, and the granting of other amenities. The second one asks the compensation to be distributed through the women and there should be joint title deeds. However there are no deliberate attempts to see the women as workers who were affected worst from many dimensions. As long as we miss this dimension, the major role taken by women is not going to be accepted by government and civil society. The post-harvest fishery is mostly dominated by fisherwomen along with their reproductive services rendered to run the families. The government and civil society should accept this reality. Therefore, the loss of livelihood of women workers in fishery need to be highlighted strongly. To what extent the so called schemes are going to be useful in strengthening the position of women as workers is the major issue in this line. Otherwise, these schemes are going to perish in 3-4 months. This situation must be utilized to establish and enhance the right of women as worker.

Suggestions

- ✓ Identifying women's immediate and long term needs inevitable for better intervention
- ✓ We have to rethink what schemes the government and agencies are going to undertake for the women In case the government/agencies intend to train the women to produce some consumable articles, it should be tuned according to the market environment. Otherwise mere concentration in cottage industries that produce goods having no market is not going to succeed.

- ✓ There is a need to highlight the role of women as worker in the pre and post harvest fishery and demand should put forward to ensure they are being compensated for the loss of their livelihood. Efforts should be chanalised to rebuild their capacity of involving in the in post-harvest fishery again.