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Sustaining livelihoods

Having sustained heavy damages on lives and properties in the tsunami, the post rehabilitation efforts in Nagapattinam have since seen restoration of most of the damaged property. All the boats, and then some have been replaced, most of the salinated and sand cast land has been reclaimed and cultivation begun, and most of the houses will be completed by next year. All that remains is the restoration of other livelihoods apart from fishing and agriculture. The restoration of other livelihoods primarily focused on employment generation through cash for work programs and other small-scale activities -mostly focusing on "skill building" - that lacked the foresight to generate sustainable long-term income generation.

When we think of sustainable livelihoods for the communities in Nagapattinam, what should be the ideal way of viewing this? What should be our approach? What should Nagapattinam have? What can Nagapattinam carry- safely and sustainably? Should we be thinking of skill upgrading, taking into consideration the indigenous skills and traditional markets, or should we be experimenting with activities that are alien to the community? Have we actually looked into what people require, are comfortable with, and is remunerative enough?

New ventures may sometimes correspond with the regional milieu; for instance cultivating *Jatropha* would be an easier alternative for a community that is predominantly agriculture based. On the other hand bringing in ideas that are untried by the local community, providing them with handholding support for a short period and then leaving them to fend for themselves would be unwise.

Even when we do take up traditional activities like horticulture or livestock like milch animals, can we not walk that extra mile and also provide the forward and backward linkages that will look at the initiative in its entirety rather than disconnected ventures made in an ad- hoc manner? Can we not work on this together so that we not only give milch animals but also ensure that a milk route is available that will absorb and provide an ensured market for all the milk that will be produced. When we give mango saplings or cashew saplings, can we also not think of building up producers' cooperatives that can link up with either upcountry markets or at least with agro- based food processing centres that will ensure not only a continuous offtake but also better prices?

Let not our investments get washed away in the sands of time... ■

National Workshop on Disaster Preparedness in Agriculture

NCRC and Concern World Wide organized a two day National Workshop on 03rd and 04th of August on disaster preparedness on agriculture in Nagapattinam.

The workshop was organized to highlight the vulnerability of farming community in Nagapattinam to disasters and to come out with recommendations and plans for reducing the vulnerabilities with experiences drawn from across the other vulnerable states like Assam and Orissa.

In the Inaugural session, Mr. Vinod Chandra Menon, member – National Disaster Management Authority, made a presentation on “New Initiatives in Disaster Management in India”. He said disaster preparedness could be split into two phases – Pre-disaster preparedness and prevention (mitigation), and the post-disaster phase which includes response, rehabilitation and recovery. Advanced countries teach us that if we are strong in the pre-disaster preparedness, losses are much lower. However, in India we work mostly on the post-disaster issues and are relief-centric, focusing on relief, rescue, rehabilitation and recovery. It is necessary to change over to a new disaster management paradigm stressing on strengthening prevention, mitigation and preparedness, while consolidating emergency response. For a country of over one billion people, with many states constantly facing some disaster or the other, it is necessary for disaster preparedness to become part of the culture for it to be effective.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is the apex body for disaster management in the country set up as part of the Government of India's decision to put in place necessary institutional mechanisms for drawing up and monitoring the implementation of disaster management plans; ensuring measures for prevention and mitigation of disasters; and for undertaking a holistic, coordinated and prompt response to any disaster situation. The NDMA is responsible for making the plans and policies

for disaster management, including approval of plans prepared by the ministries and departments of the government in accordance with the National Disaster Management Plan as well as guidelines to be followed by the state authorities in drawing up state plans.

Disaster management committees are proposed at the state and district levels to prepare disaster management plans. In addition, a National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) with the strength of 8 battalions has also been earmarked. National and state level NGO task forces on disaster management have been set up. Core groups to study the available early warning instrumentation as well as to prepare policies and guidelines have been set up. In the next few months a much more consolidated effort is expected to be seen with a series of policies and guidelines with regard to management of these disasters.



Releasing the research report on agriculture

The Disaster Management Bill, 2005 was passed in the winter session of both houses of Parliament for streamlining the institutional mechanisms for disaster management in India. NDMA visualizes a three tier training infrastructure – at the national, regional and operational levels. The national level facility will also help in training of personnel from ASEAN and SAARC countries.

In his presidential address Mr Tenkasi S. Jawahar, IAS, District Collector, said: Nagapattinam today, has got access to the world's best talent, financial resources and technical expertise and this should be used optimally. Making use of these resources, approaches, strategies and institutional mechanisms need be set up to prepare ourselves for facing disasters. The District Administration works in close accord with the NGOs and along with participation of the people to ensure we are adequately equipped to face natural disasters.

In the introductory session Mr V Vivekanandan, Steering Committee Member, NCRC made a presentation on “Tsunami Rehabilitation in Nagapattinam – with special focus on agriculture”. Following this, Sri S. Ranganathan, General Secretary, Tamil Nadu Cauvery

Delta Farmers' Welfare Association" gave an overview on Agriculture in Cauvery delta and disasters"

Ms Annie George, CEO, NCRC presented the results of NCRC facilitated study on vulnerabilities of Tsunami Affected Farming Area of Nagapattinam".

The technical session on Tsunami/salination saw presentations on 'post tsunami agriculture livelihood restoration: a district-level coordination effort' by Mr GM Chandra Mohan, Sector Head, Agriculture, NCRC; "Reclamation and Re-construction of Tsunami affected Agricultural Villages in Nagapattinam District of Tamil Nadu" by Ms Revathy, Executive Director, Tamil Nadu Organic Farmers' Movement; "Vulnerability Mapping: An Application of GIS, GPS and Remote Sensing for Demarcating Flood Zones" by Dr Rani Senthamarai, Lecturer, Presidency College, Chennai and "Tsunami – its Impact on Soil Quality and Reclamation Strategies" by Dr A. Baskar, Professor and Head, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru College of Agriculture and Research Institute, Karaikal

In the second technical session on flood, Mr. PG Diwakar, Head, Regional Remote Sensing Service Centre, ISRO, Bangalore made a presentation on "Disaster Preparedness – Space Technology and Tools"; Dr AK Patra, National Institute of Mushroom and Biological Sciences, Orissa on success stories from Orissa, Ms Bhuvaneshwari, Covenant Centre for Development, Nagapattinam on 'reviving traditional drainage systems', Mr Jayachandran, Joint Director of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture, Chennai, on agriculture department's experience with the farming community , and Mr Ravindranath, Rural Volunteers Centre, Assam on success stories from Assam.

The final technical session on other disasters- Drought/cyclone saw presentations by Mr Oswald Quintal, Team Leader, Kudumbam, Thiruchirapalli; Dr TR Shanmugham, Prof of Agricultural Economics, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore on 'preparedness in agriculture with respect to drought in India' and by Mr Shriji Kurup, Centre for Environment and Education, Karaikal on 'understanding vulnerability for coastal agrarian communities'.

Panel discussions of experts following each technical session highlighted the major issues and came out with suggestions and recommendations and ways forward. Towards the end of the workshop, Mr. V Vivekanandan, Steering Committee Member, NCRC

presented the consolidated suggestions and recommendations of the workshop.

In the closing session, Mr. CV Sankar, Officer on Special Duty, Relief and Rehabilitation, Government of Tamilnadu, released the research study report conducted by NCRC titled "Understanding Vulnerability of Agricultural Communities to frequent Disasters and Coping Mechanisms -A sample study of Tsunami affected agricultural villages in Nagapattinam district" and the copies were received by Mr Tenkasi S. Jawahar, District Collector. In his address, the collector said that the state government had immensely benefited from the insights brought in by NCRC and the organizations in the rehabilitation programme. Mr. Jawahar started by saying "all has been said and now all will be done". The District Administration would extend full cooperation in getting all things done.



An exhibition highlighting the farming practices and the rehabilitation efforts in Nagapattinam by NGOs post tsunami was also organised as a part of the workshop.

Recommendations:

To sum up, Mr. Vivekanadan, steering committee member, NCRC, presented the recommendations of the workshop evolved through the discussions. He began the presentation highlighting the need to recognize that agriculture in Nagapattinam is affected almost every year by floods, drought or cyclone with the tsunami being just one more disaster. There are many chronic problems in agriculture involving salinity, loss of soil fertility, non maintenance/disappearance of irrigation and drainage channels, etc. He also noted that disaster preparedness cannot be divorced from

the development of sustainable and remunerative agriculture.

The recommendations highlighted the need to:

Increasing water harvesting and water recharging structures, construction of check dams, maintenance of traditional water bodies; protecting farms from salt water coming from the sea during storm surges, high waves, etc.; bio shields, sand dunes, etc.; promoting traditional green manure cover; increasing organic matter in soil; adopting organic practices; Identifying and revival of traditional drainage and irrigation channels; tackling issues of encroachments; regulation of ground water extraction.

The recommendations focused on:

The need for short term crop varieties that suits drought/flood conditions; importance of alternative cropping pattern, reduce mono cropping, promote integrated farming (livestock, fodder, tree crops and pisciculture); promotion of locally managed seed banks with appropriate infrastructure provided by Govt./NGOs; understanding local systems of seed exchange and purchase, plan for seed support, develop data base of seed producing farmers and agro ecological matching of seeds; use of salt resistant varieties; local traditional varieties, traditional varieties from elsewhere in India; use of satellite images for disaster preparedness offers great possibilities; GIS, data bases, flood simulation models, etc will help; need to make this information available in public domain; use of flood resistant varieties that existed locally or those used in other states like Assam in similar conditions of floods and salinity.

The recommendations points to the importance of:

Organizing farmers for forward and backward linkages; promoting community based organisations for disaster preparedness; farmer participation and involvement in all programmes (including local rainfall recording); integrated farming systems and integrated nutrient management; department of agriculture—NGO cooperation in providing extension services; village knowledge centres.

The recommendations also noted that

Shrimp farms and agriculture lands cannot co-exist; need to protect agriculture from salination of ground water; Low external input agriculture will reduce farmer vulnerabilities, ensure soil fertility and reduce losses at times of disasters. ■

On the feet for a feet of land

“*Vendum Vendum uzavaruku Nilam Vendum*” (Needed, needed, every peasant needs some land) is the slogan that was said aloud throughout the *pathayatra* (march) organized by Ekta Parishad, an NGO working for the tsunami affected in Nagapattinam towards listening to the grievances of farmers in the Gandhian way!

The procession commenced on 25th August from Keezhaiyur, Sirkali Taluk reached Nagapattinam on 29th August. During the five days, the participants – the volunteers of Ekta Parishad from across the globe and the local folk – visited 30 villages and listened to the problems of the villagers which were heartening. “I witnessed extreme poverty in the villages. All through the march I reflected upon the origins of poverty and possible solutions for the same,” confessed Ms. Anis a participant from France. The volunteers received loads of grievances from the villagers. “We will be presenting the grievances to the Chief Minister and the Governor of Tamil Nadu in the first week of September,” said Mr. C. Murugaiyan, the district coordinator for Nagapattinam, Ekta Parishad.



The Ekta Praishad Pathayathra

The ‘*Pathayathra*’ organized in Nagapattinam is a continuation of the one which was started by Ekta Parishad in Vaigar Nagar, Chattisgarh in 1991. Mr. Raja Gopal, the National Leader for Ekta Parishad talking on the occasion, sounded positive about getting land for landless through a process of redistribution. Ekta Parishad wanted to achieve it through a non-violent method. He also informed the gathering about the upcoming ‘Jana Desh 2007’ a rally of 25,000 farmers on the highways of Gwalior to Delhi that would be organized by Ekta Parishad on 2nd October 2007. Mr. Rajagopal hoped that the march would prompt the government to initiate dialoguing with the community to distribute land to the landless. ■

Magalir Manadu (Women's convention)

Daughters of Mary Immaculate (DMI) and Christian Workers Movement (CWM) jointly organized a rally followed by a conference for women on 26th August 2006 to emphasize the need for Women Empowerment. The rally started from the new bus stand passed by the old bus stand, bazaar, star theatre, Anna Sillai and came back to the new bus stand. The rally was a part of the campaign demanding women's rights. Their demands included:

- Passing of 33 percent seat reservation Bill for women in the parliament
- To provide reservation to dalit Christian as provided for the other dalits
- Immediately implement the assured reservations for the weaker sections
- Give joint ownership to the wives of the farmers who would get land (through the Landless Farmer Scheme).



Flagging off the DMI rally

At a function organized at the end of the rally they handed over these demands to Shri. Mathivannan – diary development minister who was the chief guest of the function.

The DMI handed over sewing machines, ice boxes and cash of Rs.5000 to repair the damaged houses. The event took place in the compound near the New Bus Stand, Nagapattinam. About 2000 women participated in the rally and in the function. Shri. A.K.S. Vijayan, member of Parliament – Nagapattinam, Shri. V. Marimuthu, M.L.A., Shri. Amaramurthy, M.L.A and Shri. Sivashankar, M.L.A. also participated in the event. ■

GO 127 & 248 - Extending educational help for the Tsunami affected

அறிவிப்பு

மாண்புமிகு பரந்தேவன் குமார் பரதேவன்ஜிதரன் மணியா,
 மாண்புமிகு-தேய்வன அமைச்சர், கல்வி, கல்விக்கல்வி, கல்வி அமைச்சர்
 புதுச்சேரி, புதுச்சேரி : 26/08/2006
 புதுச்சேரி, புதுச்சேரி : 2006 ஆம் : 02/08/2006

■ 2004-2005 - விவசாய அமைச்சர் அறிவித்த கல்விக்கல்வி அமைச்சர்
 இந்த கல்விக்கல்வி (2004-2005) தொடர்பு நிதியை
 பரந்தேவன் குமார் அறிவிக்க கல்விக்கல்வி அமைச்சர் அறிவிக்க
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■ இந்த அமைச்சர் அமைச்சர் அமைச்சர் அமைச்சர் அமைச்சர்
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■ 2004-2005 அமைச்சர் அமைச்சர் அமைச்சர் அமைச்சர் அமைச்சர்
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விவசாயக்கல்விக்கல்வி அமைச்சர்
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The Government Order, GO 33 that exempts tsunami affected students from paying educational fees to schools/institutions has been extended to another year following request from the community as well as government and non-governmental bodies working in the affected districts. The new orders – GO 127 and 248 – provide concessions of special tuition and examination fees for the tsunami affected students who were eligible for the same during the last academic year. The scheme would be applicable to all the government, government-aided and matriculations schools as well as in all the arts and science and engineering colleges (both government and private), universities and poly techniques.

Soon after the order was announced, NCRC and the children's core group held a planning meeting on effective dissemination of the scheme. The core group decided to print large posters and display them at different locations in the district. AVVAI village welfare society, an NGO representing the core group will take care of the expenses for printing the posters. The core group has also decided to request all the NGOs working in Nagapattinam to help students get reimbursement from schools for the fees paid before the announcement of the scheme. ■

NGO Profile - Vanavil Trust

NGO Profile: Vanavil Trust

Vanavil Trust was registered in Nagapattinam in May 2005 for the education of tsunami affected children. It runs a special school in MGR Nagar that caters to seventy children from *Aadiyans* and *Narikuravars* communities, all of whom are first generation learners and more than 90 percent first time school goers.

These children were earlier into begging and hawking. Knowing that it would be a tough task to keep these children inspired within an educational framework, Vanavil employs different tactics to motivate, and inspire these children.

Focus areas

Education:

Vanavil believes that every child has got the right to learn and decide what she/he wants to do in their life. Academics along with art (visual and performing) and theatre are taught to them.

Awareness:

The organization works on creating awareness against begging, alcoholism, domestic violence and child marriage by raising questions through the children and dialoguing with the adults.

Livelihood:

The livelihood programmes of Vanavil help the parents to start income generating activities. A revolving credit in plastic business for men and training programs for women in tailoring and other job skills are under way.

Vanavil School

The Vanavil School is an attempt to stop the children from begging. By incorporating fun and play with lessons, the school creates an atmosphere of being together. It is a fun school; it does not have rigid periods, strict timetables. The teaching is done through games; subjects are taught using a set of teaching aids. Cartoons, animated stories and educational videos are used as tools for learning. Computer is used to teach arithmetic, grammar etc.

The children are taken out for study tours. They go to beaches and other learning centres like the planetarium enabling them to explore the world and learn through experience. Art is an inseparable part of Vanavil School. Apart from the regular art hours the school organizes performances of these arts periodically.

The children are involved in the upkeep of the school - be it cleaning up the ground next to the school or their own living quarters – thus making them responsible citizens .

After a year of grassroots level activities and knowing the communities, the Vanavil Trust realized the need to have a residential school for giving the children improved quality education environment on a long term basis. Towards achieving this Vanavil plans to build "Friends of Vanavil" network with its existing supporters and also by involving new supporters. 'Friends of Vanavil' will sponsor the children and give moral support to make them feel special and realize that there are people who really care for them.

Achievements

Vanavil has assessed that:

- Eighty percent of their students want to study further
- Most of the regular students have improved communication and identification skills.
- Violent behavior in some children has come down drastically.
- Sixty percent of the parents whole-heartedly support the school's effort
- Levels of awareness on begging, alcoholism have risen.
- Community awareness and practices on health issues (malnutrition, pregnancy) has improved.
- Many of the community members now understand the issues related to early marriage

Future plans

Vanavil feels that a lot more has to be done and are committing themselves to:

- Improving the academic capabilities of the children
- Stopping begging totally
- Convincing all the families about the need for education of their children

Contact Vanavil Trust at,

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Events Roundup - August

Karam offers roof for Tsunami Victims

10th August 2006

Karam – A Coimbatore based NGO handed over 80 permanent houses for the Tsunami survivors of Kameshwaram village near Nagapattinam. During the function, the collector, Tenkasi S. Jawahar also mentioned that about 53011 Tsunami affected persons had been provided relief and rehabilitation assistance worth Rs.186 Crore in the district and nearly 18000 permanent houses are being constructed by as many as 51 NGOs”.

Houses for Victims

15th August 2006

40 permanent houses constructed by the Rotary District 2980 for the Tsunami victims in Naagapattinam were handed over by Mr. William B. Boyd, president Rotary International. The Collector Tenkasi S.Jawahar received the keys.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar hands over houses for Tsunami Survivors

18th August 2006

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, spiritual leader and founder of the Art of Living Foundation (ALF) handed over the keys of permanent houses to 60 Tsunami affected families of Periyamanickapangu near Porayar in Nagapattinam District. The houses were constructed at a cost of Rs1.65 Crores by ALF and its sister organisation, the International Association for Human Values (IAHV).

Assessing temporary shelters ahead of monsoon

24th August 2006

The District Collector convened a meeting for his officials comprising District Revenue Officer (DRO), Tahsildars, Revenue Divisional Officers (RDO) and others to take stock of the status of temporary shelters across the district. It was decided to either dismantle the shelters to which the permanent shelters are due or make necessary repair works before the start of the monsoon.

Shelter construction review meetings

18th, 25th August 2006

The District Administration organised two meetings to review and to take stock the shelter progress which was held the Main Conference Hall at the Collectorate. Around 16 NGOs who were yet to start construction of

permanent shelters attended the first meeting. 19 NGOs attended the meeting on 25th August 2006. The meetings emphasised quality in constructing of the houses. A call to identify and mainstream the NGOs that construct permanent houses without signing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the district administration was also given.

Agriculture Core Group meeting on disaster preparedness

21st August 2006

A brain storming session of the Agriculture Core Group comprising selected NGOs working in agriculture was held at Tharangambadi on 21st August. The core group discussed the major recommendations evolved during the National Workshop to finalise and formulate an action plan to implement these. Decisions like mapping water bodies across the district, empowering tsunami affected farmers to better apply packages, revisiting reclamation achievements and long term practices among others were taken in the meeting.

Matha Amrithananthamayi Math handed over 284 houses

26th, 27th August 2006

Mata Amritanandamayi Math handed over 120 permanent shelters to the tsunami affected families in Railadikuppam (Nagore) and 164 in Thideerkuppam (Akkaraipetai).The 120 houses given in Railadikuppam were built in partnership with CARE INDIA, whereas, the houses in Thideerkuppam were realised with the partnership of CROIX ROUGE FRANCAISE. Swami Ramakrishnananda Puri, Trustee of the math presided over both the ceremonies. The District Collector, Member of Legislative Assembly, Municipal Chairpersons, Project Officer, District Rural Development Agency, Municipal commissioner of Nagapattinam and other officials from government and representatives of NGOs graced the occasions.



District level farmers and NGOs meet 29th August 2006

A meeting of NGOs and tsunami affected farmers in the district was organized by NCRC. The meeting evaluated the package of the government on land reform and how best to utilize the remaining amount in the current and the final year of the scheme. The



farmers, along with the NGOs also discussed if there was a possibility of revising the resolutions already submitted to the government towards the scheme. However, the Joint Director who joined the discussion later declined the possibility stating time limit as the main concern. The farmers who attended the meeting were mostly the representatives of farmer SHGs across the district.

Ensuring the Quality of permanent shelters 30th August 2006

Disaster Management and Mitigation Department of Revenue Administration of Tamil Nadu government commissioned Prof. Shantha Kumar, Co-author of 'Technical manual for disaster preparedness' to assess the quality of construction of permanent shelters in Nagapattinam district. The professor visited the sites on 29th August and gave a training programme on quality construction to the consultant engineers as well as engineers working for NGOs at the mini conference Hall in the Collectorate on 30th August. ■

New Look NCRC Website

The NCRC website is redesigned now with a different lay out and more information. Apart from information about NCRC, the website provides information related to relief and rehabilitation in Nagapattinam with the latest updates. It also provides links to related websites and networks. Please visit us at www.ncrc.in.



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