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New technologies: a boon or bane?

Seventeen thousand strong and new houses, each at a cost of Rs. 1.5 - 2.5 lakhs, with no large investments from the state exchequer- what more can dreams be built of? Of course, the area may not be the best choice, or the house may not have the best designs or facilities, but the fact remains that families are trying all known techniques to be one among the chosen fortunate who are slated to own one of these houses. The community may or may not occupy these houses, they may get their young son married off just so that he may also claim eligibility, or they may even change from a joint family to a nuclear one so that the house does not go waste. For all those who lived in thatched huts or colonies, this will be a step up in the social ladder, a process of *sanskritisation*. And for each family that has got a house, there will be many more who bemoan the fact that they were not treated fairly.

What do these new structures mean to Nagapattinam, a district where most houses are tiled or thatched? Where such technologies are fairly new and alien, what will the owners do for extensions? Are there enough skilled construction workers who can support future maintenance? Will this even be affordable for the people who live each day as it comes?

More important, now that the community is aware that the government can afford or access support to compensate victims of natural disasters at this scale, will the state be allowed to revert to its pre- tsunami colony type constructions or low reconstruction compensations? Will the government even be able to provide alternate land, come the next flooding?

New technologies are good - provided they are sustainable and replicable. Although the post- tsunami shelter reconstruction milieu cannot ever be recreated, the demand will certainly continue to exist and non-compliance from the government will be viewed as gross negligence or even deliberate exclusions, to suit the situation.

It's time that the government looked inwards for answers. The richness of our local technologies, traditional structures and indigenous knowledge is not something to be scoffed at – we only need to look at the intricate technologies used in our temples right next door to appreciate this. Some of the *pucca* houses that still remain intact show a beauty that can never be achieved with the mass construction we are doing – despite all our efforts. So the mantra may very well be to promote and encourage owner driven constructions with a large level of awareness creation on safety factors that are non- negotiable. This will encourage in-situ constructions, with the owner responsible, knowledgeable and willing for future maintenance, repairs or even extensions. It is a win- win situation all the way for everybody concerned. So why are we not doing it? ■

Nethilees Times - promises for the future

With the dawn of New Year a new magazine in the disaster-struck district of Nagapattinam was launched, rekindling hopes of the budding generation. Called 'Nethilees Times', the magazine is being published by the children...for the children. The cover page looks like that of a comic book, but the pages inside have serious overtures. Children's Parliament, Mass Trauma Cure Technique are some of the subjects that are being discussed in the magazine. The magazine is a project of Real, one of the NGOs working for the cause of children in Tamil Nadu, which joined the effort of restoring lives in the aftermath of the tsunami in Nagapattinam. The magazine is sponsored by Plan International.



Nethilees Times

'Nethilees' means a group of tiny and tender fish which usually travel in groups. The Children's Clubs operated by REAL in twenty coastal villages of Nagapattinam are functioning under the same name. As these Children's Clubs were also associated with the magazine, they suggested the name Nethilees Times for it. The evolution of such an initiative sprang from the various activities REAL undertook involving children. "We started thinking about giving children some professional support," says Mr. Roche, the Director of REAL in Nagapattinam. "After the tsunami we formed cultural groups to help children in the affected villages through Mass Trauma Cure Technique. There were also other programmes like survey of the tsunami affected villages by children and technical courses on photography known as Photos For Life (PFL). In the process we felt it a good idea to expose them to print media as well."

Presently, there are 1,600 member children ('Nethilees') for Nethilees Times from 20 coastal villages of Nagapattinam who are beneficiaries of three NGOs: Care, Create and REAL. The members are all school students between the age group of 6 to 18 years. All the content in the magazine including the cover page drawing and photos are made by them. The first edition includes features and poems

on tsunami, short stories, riddles, games, reports on PFL and Nethilees Children's Club and pictures and drawings. The idea of the project is to train them run it on their own. However, at present, the staff from REAL helps them in editing and proof reading as well as in selection of the articles. It is not going to be too

long before these children manage at least the pre-press process of the magazine on their own. Out there in their monthly workshop to select the articles, the 'Nethilees' of the editorial team looked a happy bunch. They have high esteem on the magazine. "We feel that the magazine is different. Since, it is produced by children it creates attention and people tend to read it.

We also feel happy that our own

articles are published in the magazine," says a 13 year Nethilee. It is also significant to note how these little ones manage their time after spending long hours in school and tuition. "We do it in our free time. When some happenings strike me, I ponder over it and try to write a story," says Ms. Rabetha of Ariyanattutheru. Each Nethilee writes an average of three articles every month and reach the REAL office in Palpannaicherry through the village coordinators. As a result there are already piled up articles in the files that can feed six editions.

We do it in our free time. When some happenings strike me, I ponder over it and try to write a story.

- Rabetha of Ariyanattutheru

Speaking on the future of the magazine Mr. Roche remarks that the magazine may take any shape: "At the moment we are focusing on providing opportunity, valuing talents of children and integrating them to achieve the best of their potentiality. We are going to organise input sessions where we would introduce the multiple disciplines of the print

media." At the moment the 1500 copies are distributed among the twenty villages REAL is working with and among NGOs and well wishers. An idea to collect Rs.1 per copy is in the anvil.

In the world of print media, a community publication of this kind is a remarkable initiative, considering the future growth and opportunities of these Nethilees and formation of the future citizens of the developing India. ■

P. Buruslin Mento

Quenching thirst - safe drinking water

Access to safe drinking water is increasingly becoming a matter of serious concern among the rural masses. The situation gets worsened as the available water resources are getting polluted by unscrupulous actions of humans. Many studies have highlighted that the ground water and surface water are getting contaminated at dangerous levels.

Though Nagapattinam district is blessed with plenty of water sources, it figures in the list of contaminated ground water sources released by the ministry of water resources, India. It has got more salinity that makes the ground water unfit for direct consumption. Realising the need for safe drinking water facility in the district, the Thirumalai Charity Trust - one of the many NGOs working for restoring livelihoods post-tsunami in Nagapattinam - has set up a water treatment plant that works on 'Reverse Osmosis' method. Through this process, dissolved materials in the water are separated from the water.



Water treatment plant

"We have set up five Reverse Osmosis plants in the district so far. They are in Akkarapettai, Chandrapadi, Nambiyar Nagar, Kuttiyandiyur and Nagore Pattinacherry," says Mr. V.R. Kumar, Programme Coordinator, Thirumalai Charity Trust.

Each plant produces 1500 litres of water everyday ensuring access to at least 20 litres of water per family. Each family has been given a 'card' for the management of water resources. The card is valid for two months. It records the dispatch of water to the family. The quality of water is very good and is used solely for drinking. The charity has followed the regulations set by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in producing safe drinking water by manufacturing water of quality 60 PPM (parts per

million). The lesser the number of PPM, better the quality of water (as per WHO's standards, the permissible level of PPM content in potable water is between 0 and 500)

"The plant has been considered a blessing by the villagers as earlier they had been consuming the municipal water of quality 300 – 750 PPM," says Mr. Kumar of Thirumalai Charity Trust. The water is also sent for testing every fortnight to both the lab at Thirumalai Charity Trust in Chennai and Tamil Nadu Water Supply & Drainage (TWAD) Board.

Each plant costs around Rs. 25 lakh for the initial establishment. In addition, Rs. 1500 is spent on maintenance every month. Thirumalai Charity Trust, through the funders, meets the initial expense of the plant. The district administration gives allowances for monthly maintenance. A nominal amount of one rupee is also being collected per pot towards future maintenance of the plant.

With a view to long term maintenance of the plant, Thirumalai Charity Trust has initiated formation of Drinking Water Safety & Maintenance Committee consisting nine members, including 7 persons from the village panchayat and 2 from the charity itself. "We are trying to teach the villagers operation and maintenance of the plant, so that they can manage it on their own once we leave," says Mr. Poovanan, the Plant Incharge. Once Thirumalai Charity Trust leaves Nagapattinam, the plant will be handed over to the people through the district administration.

The efforts made by the NGOs like that of the Thirumalai Charity Trust in ensuring the health and hygiene of the people in the region are laudable. The good news is that the charity is also planning to construct three more plants in the district ■



Queuing up for drinking water

Safeguarding our children

Just like they say that by giving water to the thirsty, one is sure to get blessings from the almighty, there is something about children that makes everyone feel that there is no gift on earth that rivals the sweet and grateful smile of a child. As Matha Amrithanandamayi says, "there is a mother in everybody...man or woman," and so it is but natural that in the wake of a calamity almost everyone would instinctively see to the welfare of a child.

However good the intentions, there are certain ground rules that one must follow before taking on the responsibility of looking after the welfare of an innocent child. Is there adequate space for the child to run around and utilise their apparently inexhaustible energy in a safe manner? Is the building adequately lit and well ventilated? Is the building child friendly and safe? Are there any fire hazards? Is there enough space for the children to play, study, sleep or even colour pictures? Are there safe and user-friendly toilets that the child feels comfortable using? Are the caregivers loving, accommodating and non-threatening in their approach? These tiny minds soak up everything like a sponge and so we need to be extra careful about attitudes, behaviour and value systems of the caregivers and others who are most associated with the children.

It is with the welfare of the children at heart that the state has mandated that only registered institutions can take care of these little children - either part time or full- time. Despite the precautions taken, there seem to be more unregistered child-care institutions than registered ones, and this is a post- tsunami phenomenon. Unfortunately, some of the non-registered institutions have been established by us, NGOs, in our zeal and commitment to help. We may not have known or understood the implications and the enormous responsibility related to child-care. Let us not wait to learn the hard way through an accident or a disaster. Heaven forbid anything on the lines of the Kumbakonam tragedy taking place here just because we were not aware of the rules.

Let not anything mar the innocent smile of the child – we must help, but meaningfully. Let us conform to the rules set up by those who have had the knowledge and the wisdom- the state. Let us start by applying for a registration and let us follow-up by ensuring the physical conditions required for the healthy development of a child. Let us jointly mould a bright, happy and contented child. ■

Accessing livelihoods

Relocation from an original dwelling site is always a matter of concern. It becomes more distressing when the inhabitants are dependant on the local resources for their livelihood. Post-tsunami, in Nagapattinam, people were forced to relocate owing to varied reasons like government norms on house construction in CRZ, or availability of land for construction. Fear of staying close to the sea also drove them to opt for a 'safer' inland location, without enough thought on how this relocation would affect their life in days to come.



Dependent on the sea for livelihood

The fishermen communities have been the worst sufferers when it comes to relocation as their vocation is entirely dependant on the sea. Since they anchor the boats and fishing equipments near the coast, living in close proximity helps monitor their assets. Thus the communities, who had moved to their new houses around 500-800 m from their original habitation, are finding it difficult to keep the assets properly. During the night they leave boats and nets at the sea shore to the vagaries of nature. A few men spend the night in the kutcha structures around the place, to guard the equipments. However, they are unable to take all the assets to a safe location when high waves lash the shore. "My boats were damaged when waves lashed on the shore strongly" since I was away I could not protect it – one of the fishermen in samanthanpettai laments.

Does this indicate that rehabilitation, not relocation should be the guiding principle of post-disaster reconstruction?

(This article has been written based on a quick study on one of the locations where fishermen moved out of their original habitation and stay at a place around 800m off the shore) ■

NGO profile- REAL PLAN

Rural Education and Action for Liberation (REAL) was established to provide relief activities undertaken in Vedasandur taluk, Dindigul District Tamilnadu during the floods in 1977. Development work initiated during the flood continues till now, 28 years later in Dindigul District. The experiences and knowledge gained during the 1977 floods, with special attention to children and women have been shared with other areas deserving relief package in different locations from time to time. Personnel from REAL headed the relief team of Tamil Nadu during the Gulbarga (Karnataka) earthquake. REAL is also involved in development activities with a focus on helping children realise their full potential and building a society which respects the rights and dignity of all living being. REAL has been one of the long-term partner organisation of WATER AID India and TROCAIRE, Ireland.

The expertise and experience in the field of relief and rehabilitation activities and the organisation commitment towards addressing the needs of the affected people have allowed REAL to play a vital role in the Tsunami affected communities in Nagapattinam District.

Tsunami Response

REAL's tsunami response has been in collaboration with Centre for Awareness and Rural Education (CARE) - Tiruchirapally, and Centre for Rural Energy and Appropriate Technology Extension (CREATE) - Nagapattinam. Together they have formed a network, "**Tsunami Relief and rehabilitation Team (T-ReART)**". The network works in 40 coastal villages affected by Tsunami in Nagapattinam District. In Nagapattinam REAL works directly in 20 villages and through its partners it promotes Tsunami response services in 10 villages of Sirkazhi and Vedharanyam blocks. Financial support is provided by **Plan International**

Relief Phase:

In the relief phase a team of NGOs co-coordinated by REAL took up many relief activities immediately after the Tsunami. Relief materials were mobilised from different parts of Tamilnadu and were distributed to the most affected communities in the interior villages of Nagapattinam District. With valuable support from Plan International, REAL and its network partners involved in the relief activities such as:

- Building of temporary shelters
- Water and sanitation facilities
- Health facilities and distribution of medicines
- Distribution of cooking utensils

- Provision of mats, blankets and pillows
- Provision of personal hygiene materials
- Trauma counselling for Tsunami victims.
- Cleaning the villages and schools

Rehabilitation phase:

- Construction of permanent shelters – 376 units
- Providing Heat Resistance materials in 2000 Temporary shelters
- Repairing / restoration of existing water supply systems; drinking water provision for the Buffer zone community
- Renovation and Reconstruction of school buildings; distribution of education materials.
- Establishment of Childcare centres in 20 villages; Counseling services for Children and Women



- Health care services to women under Anti natal and Post natal care
- Support to orphan/vulnerable children.
- Disaster Preparedness camps for the community / volunteers
- Distribution of boats, nets and engines to fisher men
- Provision of fish solar drier units, fish storage ice box and fish storage and processing units
- Land Reclamation and livelihood support to the buffer zone community (on allied agri-based activities)

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Studying the effects of shrimp farms

The burgeoning number of shrimp farms in Nagapattinam is increasingly becoming a cause of serious concern. Previous studies conducted on the effects of shrimp farms send danger signal to the livelihoods of the people living in the surrounding area.

The social, economic, environmental implications of shrimp farms are having a cascading effect on the lives as generations of livelihood are being affected. Shrimp farming contaminates the drinking water which reduces ease of access to drinking water. The communities in the coastal areas have to fetch water from far away places and this reduces the time they can put in for work. This prompted community based organisations to campaign against the shrimp farms and the Supreme Court, while hearing a public interest litigation, passed a judgment that shrimp farms should not be allowed within 500m High Tide Line and the existing farms should be flattened. However shrimp farming continues unabated. Even though the farms contribute to the coffers of the owners, the livelihood of the local



community that is affected is a matter of grave concern.

In this context, NCRC conducted a pilot study to look into 'how livelihoods are being affected' because of shrimp farming. While quoting references from the previous studies done in this regard, the study analyses the cost and benefits of shrimp farming against agriculture. Mudaliakanty, Gramathumedu, Vettaikaranirippu, Vilunthamavadi, Chandrapadi, Chavadikuppam, Pudukuppam, Chinnakottaimedu habitations were covered for the study.

The following are some excerpts from the study:

- Shrimp farming provides less livelihood opportunity to the vulnerable groups such as Agricultural labourers and farmers; less number of labourers, who are mostly from outside, are being employed in shrimp farms.
- A large extent of the agriculture land is being converted to shrimp farms. As more shrimp farms are established quality of adjoining land decreases and farmers are compelled to sell their land for shrimp farming and seek alternate livelihood options.
- Though the shrimp farming is a profitable business as compared to agriculture, the benefits are taken away by a limited number of people who are mostly outsiders; sidelining a labour intensive agriculture which is often referred to as subsistence occupation. (Refer table)

Type of activity	No. of Labourers	No. of days	Cost for Labour in Rs	Cost of Investment In Rs (including labour cost)	Benefits in Rs (approx)	Profit to the farmer
Agriculture	118	14	9015	14390	17820	3430
Shrimp Farming	37	142	33500	218400	3,45,000	126600

In agriculture, by investing one rupee the farmer is getting 19.2 paise as returns, while in shrimp farming, by investing one rupee the shrimp owner is getting 36.7 paise as profit. More labourers are getting employed in agriculture while fewer labourers, who are from outside, work in shrimp farms.

- Shrimp farming has increased vulnerability of the poor; many agricultural labourers migrate to other cities and town in search of employment and they lost their livelihood assets such as land and livestock.
- Women labourers who are not able to migrate to other places struggle to subsist on a reduced income.
- The market rate for the prawn had gone down considerably with the mushrooming of shrimp farms in Nagapattinam; slashing the income and opportunities of the fishing community too.

Events roundup - Feb, March

- Shrimp farming has also had an impact on the environment. In places having these farms the survival rate of casuarinas trees and saplings was 50 Percent lesser than places not having shrimp farms. The effluent discharged to the estuaries and creeks not only pollute the water but affect the shrimp and fisheries resources too. The effluents and chemicals create stress on the shrimps and other aquatic species for their regeneration and reproduction.
- Though there is no specific incidence of illness because of the presence of shrimp farms in the studied villages, the effects on the environment and the livelihoods have an indirect impact on the health of the people.

The study suggests the following to mitigate the impacts of shrimp farming on the livelihoods of the local community:

- Strict enforcement of government policies are required to control illegal shrimp farming activities.
- The NGOs should focus on providing capacity building for agricultural labourers enabling them taking up alternate livelihoods.
- Advocacy efforts should be strengthened through campaigning, Legal assistance and education to the affected people towards protecting their rights.
- Better management practices and afforestation would reduce the environmental impacts of the shrimp farming.

(This article is based on a pilot study conducted by Mr. Daniel Sunder Raj of NCRC. Since the study findings are not validated, the observations cannot be taken as final) ■

Elected representatives of the Tsunami hit Panchayat- Alapad in Kerala visits Nagai **9 February, 2006**

Elected representatives of the Tsunami hit Panchayat-Alapad in Kerala visited Nagapattinam on 9th and 10th of February 2006 to have an exposure on the rehabilitation activities in Nagapattinam. After having an introductory session in NCRC, the members visited Akkarapettai and Keechankuppam areas of Nagai and interacted with both the traditional as well as elected Panchayat representatives there.

Students of St. Joseph's college Trichy visits Nagai **Mid-February**

Masters of Social Work Students of St. Joseph's college Trichy, along with their professors, came for a four day exposure visit to Nagai during mid-February. During these four days they had interaction with the NGOs, community, district administration and NCRC.

Core group meeting of NGOs **6 February, 2006**

The members of the core group committee representing NGOs working with children in Nagapattinam, met at the NCRC front office in the Collectorate to discuss on how to effectively spend the unspent amount collected during Children's day celebration. The discussion concluded with a decision to use the amount towards educating school students who cannot afford the education fee. Translating the Prime Minister's Child Assistance Scheme in to some plan of action was also deliberated in the meeting.

ADB's livelihood support workshop **8 February, 2006**

A workshop on livelihood support by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) was organised by NCRC at the Main Conference Hall, Collectorate on the 8th February. Resource persons from ADB presented the details of schemes available under the Tsunami Emergency Assistance (sector) Project (TEAP) for improving livelihoods. NGOs were invited to submit their project proposals and the guidelines for developing the proposal was discussed in detail. The workshop also included a model project proposal development activity.

Shelter review Meetings**6, 13, 17 and 27 February, 2006**

In order to assess the development in constructing permanent houses, a shelter review meetings were called on by the Collector with the coordination of NCRC on Friday 06th, 13th, 17th and 27th of February 2006. The Block Development Officers (BDOs) from the respective blocks also participated in the meeting. Almost all the NGOs involved in construction in the district participated in the meetings. The meetings assessed the progress of shelter construction in Nagai as well as assessed the required time span in completing constructions for permanent shelters in the district.

Agriculture Review Meeting**24 February, 2006**

NCRC organized a review meeting with NGOs working on agriculture related activities in the district. The scope of the meeting was to report and review

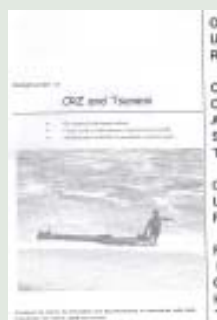
the activities of the last two months and plan for the second year. Around 12 NGOs participated in the meeting. All, except three agreed to continue the reclamation work for another one year. In the planning session, community participation in all activities of the NGOs related to agriculture and capacity building measures were highlighted. It was also decided to plan for integrated farming system as part of the project in the second year.

District Level Workshop on Child Protection**30 March, 2006**

A district level workshop on child protection was organised jointly by NCRC and Save the Children at Nagapattinam on 30.03.2006. The workshop, held to have more understanding of issues in the field, was as a precursor to holding discussions with the government officials in Nagapattinam on the issues related to children in Nagapattinam.

Resources update**Government Orders Related to Relief and Rehabilitation of Tsunami Affected Areas and Communities – Volume II**

Compiled by NCRC, the publication contains the government orders related to Tsunami relief and rehabilitation as on December 2005. This is being circulated free of cost by NCRC. Contact NCRC at the address

**Back grounder on CRZ and Tsunami**

Produced by Centre for Education and Documentation in association with A&D, Foundation de France, ISED and Praxis, the book analyses various aspects of Coastal Regulation Zone in the context of Tsunami attack. This is being circulated free of cost, write to CED, No.7, 8th Main, 3rd Phase, Domlur 2nd stage, Bangalore- 560071, Ph: 080 25353397

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