



Kalangarai Vilakam

The NCRC newsletter Issue 1 - September, 2005



Enabling wireless communications: The communications tower at the NCRC head office

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Dear friends,

It is now eight months since the Tsunami of 26th December 2004 unleashed death and destruction on the costal communities of nations along the Indian Ocean. The civil society response etched a landmark in history through overwhelming support for the relief and rehabilitation operations. Cooperation and coordination to ensure timely and appropriate support has been a challenge for all of us involved in relief and rehabilitation – the local communities, volunteers, civil society organisations, governments and NGOs.

Taking into account the need for dialogue, information exchange and cooperation, we will be publishing a monthly newsletter for all those engaged in the rebuilding process in Nagapattinam.

Kalangarai Vilakam – the tamil term for "light house" will spotlight our efforts in Nagapattinam and issues therein.

This first issue focuses on the work done by NCRC. In future issues we would like all stakeholders to contribute news updates, NGO snapshots, case-studies and any other articles of interest. In this way, *Kalangarai Vilakam* may itself become a source of information and forum for dialogue for all concerned.

Please give us feedback send us your contributions and queries to info.ncrc@gmail.com
For more information on NCRC please our website at www.ncrc.in.

Annie George CEO, NCRC



About NCRC

On 26 December 2004, nature unleashed one of the worst catastrophes ever that hit the peoples of South Asia. An earthquake measuring 9.0 on the richter scale struck the sea bed off the coast of northern Sumatra, triggering Tsunami waves that wreaked havoc on the coastal regions of the Indian Ocean and claimed around 400,000 lives. On the Indian mainland the waves lashed the southern coast leaving in its ebb around 20,000 persons dead and 3.8 lakh displaced.

Nagapattinam district, in the state of Tamil Nadu, was the worst affected with huge damages to life and property across 80 habitations. It received immense support for relief and rehabilitation from the civil society, channelised and delivered through the government and through a number of national and international NGOs.

The NGO Coordination and Resource Centre (NCRC) was established on 1 January 2005, as a joint initiative of the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS), Social Need Education and Human Awareness (SNEHA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Nagapattinam District Administration. It is a coordinating and facilitating agency, that links the affected communities with aid organisations and the government. Its approach is to encourage people's participation towards sustainable and equitable relief and rehabilitation.

Facilitating relief provision

The immediate relief activities of NCRC included assessing damages and survival needs, coordinating the flow of relief material, placing volunteers and enabling critical and appropriate information flow between all stakeholders - the community, NGOs and the policy makers at state level.

Instituting systems for information flow

With the rehabilitation phase, a closer and more intensive exchange of information at the community level has been established through twelve Village Information Centres (VICs) across Nagapattinam that are facilitated and supported by a Village Facilitation Unit (VFU) at NCRC. The VICs serve as information exchange and access points at the

village level and have proven to be an effective mechanism of reaching out to the local communities.

Taking a sector-specific approach

From the outset, NCRC has taken a sector-specific approach. The identified sectors are: fishing, farming, other livelihoods, vulnerable groups, shelter and psycho-social healthcare. NCRC brings in experts from each sector to assess the situation and provide suggestions and support for action and advocacy. The experts' inputs are shared and disseminated through workshops, meetings, community consultations, technical consultations and other sharing forums.

Advocating with the local government

Advocacy has always been a priority area for NCRC. A steady partnership has been maintained with the District Administration in Nagapattinam by way of NCRC Front Desk at the District Collectorate. In operation since 1 January 2005, this Front Desk has ensured a continuous dialogue at the district level by means of consultation, policy recommendation papers and open forums.

With a wealth of experience in disaster management and relief coordination, NCRC Steering Committee has enabled NCRC to acquire a strategic position in influencing the rehabilitation policy in the region since the early stages. This influence rests upon a foundation of trust and confidence that has been built up with the state, civil society organisations and survivors alike.

The response to the immediate relief needs in the aftermath of the Tsunami has been relatively effective. The challenge ahead consists of maintaining the momentum of rehabilitation work and improving coordination between all agents of change. ■



Connecting people and building networks A community-level approach to information generation and flow

Public participation is critical in disaster management. NCRC empowers communities by imparting skills and initiating mechanisms to ensure active participation by affected communities in the rebuilding process. It has initiated the establishment of information centres at villages, linked to the centre to ensure that communities are integrated in their recovery, rehabilitation and development process in an equitable and sustainable manner. This would also provide stakeholders with sectoral and regional perspective, technical expertise and reliable data and ensure that there is synergy between needs and policy formulation.

What information centres do:

The village information centres (VICs):

- Collect information from the communities on details of damages, compensations, allotment of houses, etc. at the village level and provide them information on support and services available.
- Provide information to NCRC and other stakeholders on what is happening on field.
- Reach out to communities in backward and vulnerable areas to ensure that they have access to support and that their needs are accounted for in the rehabilitation process.
- Coordinate with support organisations and service provides on where support and services are required.
- Follow-up on petitions and assist in grievance handling.

The Village Facilitation Unit (VFU) is the managing and coordinating unit. It links sectoral units, information exchange and communication (IEC) unit, support organisations and VICs to ensure smooth information flow. It ensures that information is used effectively and timely actions are initiated.

The information centres are connected through wireless network and information is updated every day, which will also be accessible by the district administration.

How VICs are structured

Currently NCRC runs and supports 12 Village Information Centres (VICs) across the district.

Each VIC covers 5–6 villages and is managed by a team of two coordinators, one male and one female. The teams are carefully selected with one member from within the community and the other, a professional social worker or social science graduate. This ensures a gender balance and provides internal, community-based and external perspectives.

These are located in the following villages: Vedaranyam, Kodiyakarai, Thiruvengadu, Akkur Mukkuttu, Vettaikaran Iruppu, Velankanni, Pushpavanam, Pudhupattinam, Tharangambadi, Nagapattinam, Dharmakulam, Thirumalaivasal

A glimpse into the Vedaranyam VIC

The VIC in the small market town of Vedaranyam has been in operation for the past two months. It is a small office having shelves that carry housing brochures, reports and leaflets. At one side there is a computer linked to the web. The main table has six notebooks, one for each of the 6 Tsunami-affected villages in the Taluk.

On a typical day, the daily flow of visitors to this VIC begins at around 8am. Representatives of NGOs come to update the VIC on the progress of their work and any issues that have arisen, or to check up on any new information related to village needs. The VIC is a meeting point for villagers, farmers, labourers, salt-pan workers, both men and women. They have a variety of needs, from formulation of petitions to the government, to assistance in their livelihoods. With each visitor, the two-person VIC team is there to talk, listen, help and follow-up on issues that need coordination with other agencies.

The VIC team also regularly goes out into the field to reach out to proactively reach out to communities and assess the field level situations and update information. Amongst the regular visitors to the VIC are also representatives from NCRC, who come to take first-hand, field-level stock of support and information requirements.



The Sectoral Spotlights

The Fisheries Sector

Fishing in the Indian Ocean has always played a major role in the lives of its coastal communities. After the Tsunami struck, NCRC saw the need not only to coordinate the immediate relief effort, but to do this in close partnership with an organisation closely associated with the fishing communities. SIFFS, the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies has been working with the South Indian fishing communities for 25 years. SIFFS is a supporter of the artisanal fishing sector, protecting and enhancing the livelihoods of traditional fishermen. Amongst their many initiatives SIFFS has set up a system of fish marketing, which fixes the price of the fish, provides credit, promotes saving schemes and insurance plans, all of which offer financial security for the fisher folk. Other initiatives include boat-building, fixing prices and quality of boats made in the region, distributing outboard motors and providing support for the post harvest industry such as ice plants.



Venturing out in new boats

In the wake of the Tsunami, the fishing communities were overwhelmed with relief support provided by NGOs, such as boats, nets and Kattumarams. Because of the large NGO presence, the risk of duplication and overlap was high. Also boat owners now found themselves without crew and some crew members became boat owners, upsetting the existing worker-owner dynamics. Some of the indiscriminate short–term relief efforts led to an upheaval in the delicate system of social relations within the fishing communities.

As part of the desire to develop an understanding of the fishing communities, NCRC invited members of SIFFS to give lectures and share their experiences and knowledge of fishing as a unique source of livelihood and way of life. SIFFS now encourages fishermen to participate in the rebuilding of their own lives, their houses and their livelihoods.

The Agriculture Sector

Farmers in Nagapattinam have always suffered from irregular rainfall patterns, cyclones, high sea surges and drought. Farmers often have to seek relief year upon year. This year, however, their troubles were of a different nature. As well as the most evident problems of loss of crops, the Tsunami rendered vast cultivated lands saline and/or sand/mud-cast making it unsuitable for immediate crop cultivation. Sources of irrigation such as ponds and drainage channels were also silted and salinated due to the Tsunami waters.

Mitigating the problems has proven to be more difficult than originally foreseen. Firstly, the NGO response to the agricultural sector was less rapid than the fisheries sector, and did not begin until the end of the relief phase. Secondly, the relief and rehabilitation package issued by the government was uniform for all the land affected. However, the extent and type of damage varied from location to location, requiring different types of interventions. There were also differing opinions and perspectives regarding the reclamation process and sequencing of activities.

The Agriculture Support Unit of NCRC conducts regular district and Taluk-level meetings and training workshops with farmers, NGOs and the District Agriculture authorities to deal with the issues at hand. Their main objectives are:

- to promote a sense of a common purpose between all actors,
- to facilitate dialogue between NGOs, the government and the communities,
- to provide needs-based technical support and capacity building to NGOs,
- to carry forward outcomes as advocacy points to the District Administration or to the appropriate level.



Reclaiming lost land

The meetings and workshops organised by the unit ensure that the farmers' needs are met by NGO resources and that the help available is not duplicated, but distributed evenly amongst all. The unit has also undertaken field visits, training workshops and has interacted with individual farmers, farmers' SHGs, NGOs and the various District Line Departments concerned. A core group of five NGOs working in the agricultural field has been constituted by NCRC to represent a comprehensive agricultural package for advocacy to the District Administration. This has entailed a reassessment of the damage in order to finalise the costing and budget needed for the reclamation package for the entire affected area.

Shelter

Permanent shelter is one of the critical areas of the rehabilitation intervention and requires attention from all stakeholders. Despite the number of discussions and consultations that have taken place, it still remains a complicated issue – such as location of shelters, design of shelters, identification of land, process of allocation of land, etc. This requires close cooperation between the government and NCRC.

80 habitations in Nagapattinam have been affected, with many houses being either fully or partly washed away. Among the five affected taluks of the district, Nagapattinam town, Tharangambadi and Sirkali are the worst affected, with majority of the habitations washed away. The total number of houses required according to a government survey is 17,421 and the land needed amounts to 297.83 hectares.

It is proving a difficult task to find suitable locations that take both the livelihoods and shelter needs of the communities into consideration. This needs

careful negotiation between land owners, governments and the communities themselves. The amount of land already acquired (recorded until 27 July 2005) is 200.813 hectares, a little over two thirds of the total requirement. This delay in land acquisition further delays the shelter construction and overall rehabilitation process. There is also an ongoing debate about the impact of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) on the reconstruction process, highlighting the delicate balancing act between community needs and coastal safety.

NCRC had already organised meetings with the chief stakeholders on land acquisition for permanent shelter. The government has so far sanctioned the acquisition and registration of approximately 10 acres of land and the district administration is awaiting another 20 acres for approval of the project. The outcome of these meetings was to give priority to the conversion of all *kutcha* houses to *pucca* houses, to encourage insitu construction wherever feasible and possible, to avoid the demolition of partially damaged *pucca* houses and to prevent ownership of multiple houses or duplication within the reconstruction programme.

There are also plans to involve local communities as much as possible in the reconstruction of permanent shelters in the district. Firstly, this will comprise of assessing the existing availability of labour and then harnessing and training the local labour force for the reconstruction process.

NCRC emphasises the importance of interaction with the community, taking into account their views and needs and urges NGOs to ensure community participation throughout the entire process of reconstruction.



A home destroyed



Lives on hold in temporary shelters

The nightmare was over. The waves broke and rolled back and the fields started to drain, but as the waters receded the full extent of the destruction was laid bare. Death was in the air. Dozens of bodies littered the beach where just the previous day the morning's catch had been. As the days passed, the dozens became hundreds. Hundreds became thousands.

But the nightmare was over. Homes would be rebuilt. Life would go on. But it was not to be. Eight months down, there are still many people scraping out an existence living in temporary shelters...

The village of Pandagasalai is situated near the town of Nagoore, beside the Vettar, a small river which opens to the Indian Ocean. Its inhabitants are of a single caste – 'Parayan' – a Dalit group. These are poor people, predominantly daily wage labourers, who took comfort and security in their community and their village, which was their home.

The wave washed away their comfort and security. When the tsunami hit the coast the water poured through the river mouth and destroyed most of the houses in the village. Now the nearly one hundred families of Pandagasalai are living in confines of the temporary shelters of Nagapattinam, beside the main road leading to the Collector's office. Here they are beset with problems, mostly resulting from serious deficiencies in the design of their temporary shelters.

These temporary shelters are made almost entirely of metal and get unbearably hot during the day. There is no ventilation. People go out of their way to avoid going into the shelters during daylight hours. Aside from the structural shortcomings of the shelters, another obvious source of difficulty is its actual location. A low lying area, inundated with sewage and rain water from the surrounding neighbourhoods, it is a natural breeding ground for mosquitoes. While there have been attempts by the government to improve the situation – pumping out standing water and use of insecticides – these have met with moderate success, and have tended to address symptoms rather than underlying causes of the problems. Sanitation is virtually non-existent; open defecation the norm. There have been reports of fever and other health problems amongst children.

The lack of proper drainage is a serious problem which will only get worse in the coming monsoon. Without it, the shelters are likely to be flooded or even washed away. Temporary shelters by their very nature are not designed to withstand the deluge of water that the monsoon will unleash

In the mean-time there is also a serious lack of water for drinking, cooking and cleaning. The shelter is supposed to be supplied with drinking water by tankers; however they often do not bring enough water and sometimes do not turn up at all. When they do, the water usually ends up in huge plastic containers without any shade – meaning hot water for thirsty people.

The odds are stacked against this community and others residing in similar conditions. Despite all this, they go on living, they go on fighting. They are hoping that some day soon this nightmare will finally be over.



Restoring Livelihoods

The Tsunami sunk people's livelihoods. Livelihoods lost include those of fisherfolk, farmers, petty shop owners, vegetable and fish vendors, carpenters, merchants and labourers. A first round of discussions with select NGOs has taken place to bring the affected informal labour force within the relief and rehabilitation process and to understand the extent and categories of livelihoods affected. However, it may take time to arrive at a clear understanding of the extent to which all livelihoods have been affected. There are currently over

100 NGOs listed to be working in the livelihoods sector in Nagapattinam.

Within the next few months, NCRC plans to up-date the list of NGOs working in the livelihoods sector and compile a list of the interventions by each of these NGOs. Another objective is to establish links with institutions that have already shown viable alternative livelihoods (based on examples such as the Kundrakudi Village Development Programme).

Livelihoods lost

Direct fishing

- Traditional Fish workers (kattumaram & FRP boats)
- Mechanised fish workers (workers on trawlers)

Fishery related occupations

- Head-load fish vendors (buy from the beach and sell retail in markets, streets and domestic households)
- ▶ Cycle-load fish vendors (buy from the beach sell retail in village market places)
- ▶ Stall-based stationary retailers (buy from the beach and sell through stalls they own in fish markets)
- Dry fish vendors (buy fish from the beach during gluts, dry and sell them later)
- Fish merchants (procure fish by employing others and take it into wholesale markets further away and export)
- Commission agents
- ▶ Fish companies (doing the same functions of the merchants) –sometimes the word 'fish merchants' and 'companies' are used synonymously by the local people
- Fish procurer women (operating between the fishermen who landed the fish and the merchants who transport fish further away and receive commission for the fish they procure)
- ▶ Loading and unloading workers (men employed by the fish company owners to load and unload fish into mini-lorries)
- ▶ Ice plant owners
- Ice plant workers
- Drivers of mini-lorries / autos
- Boat carpenters

Agriculture

- Landless labourers
- Marginal and small farmers
- Large-scale farmers

Saltpans

- Small-scale salt manufacturers
- Saltpan lessees
- Saltpan workers

Small businesses on the seashore

- ▶ Food / snack stalls / tea stalls
- Vegetable vendors
- Basket-weavers
- Sea-shell workers

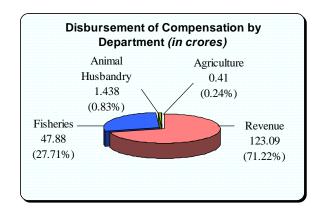


Salt-pan worker



Government Compensation

The awarding of government compensation to both survivors and bereaved in any disaster situation, man-made or natural, has always been an issue of contention. Following extensive damage assessment, the state government has disbursed a total amount of **Rs. 172.824 crores** by the revenue, fisheries, animal husbandry and agricultural departments as relief and compensation (excluding the initial relief amount spent before 31 January 2005). This relief compensation is outlined below.



Revenue Department

The revenue department has disbursed a total of **Rs. 123.09 crores** as relief and compensation for loss of life, major injury, housing damage, construction of temporary shelter, loss of wages, supply of relief material and distribution of household utensils.

Compensation for the loss of life accounted for almost 28% of the total expenditure by the department. The death toll within Nagapattinam stands at **6,065** (not including the 9 people belonging to the district who died in other districts). Of these, 4,792 have been compensated, whereas 1,273 are still awaiting compensation. The number of death cases reported to the PMNRF (Prime Minister's Natural Relief Fund) lies at 3,965, against the 2,104 awarded compensation. A further complication and delay is on account of bodies that have not been recovered and are hence declared missing.

Revenue Department -Category	Amount
of Compensation	(crores)
Relief for loss of life	47.92
Relief for housing damage	19.62
Relief for loss of wages	14.53
Second phase of relief	
(Feb.Mar.Apr,May)	36.06
Relief for loss of limbs / eyes	0.04
Relief for serious injury	0.78
Trunk box,stove,silver kudam	1.60
Temporary accommodation	1.54
Unforeseen relief expenditure	1.00

Fisheries

The fisheries department has disbursed compensation to the tune of **Rs. 47.88 crores.** Of this, Rs. 27.33 crores was divided amongst the artisan sector (5,812 kattumarams, 1,746 FRP boats, 1,419 outboard motors and 13,172 nets) with Rs. 20.55 crores to the mechanised sector (677 trawl boats). Although a total of 17,034 fishermen have benefited from the compensation package, there has been no mention of the compensation to be provided for the loss of assets to industries linked to fishing, such as ice plants, fish vending equipment (crates, boxes, fish stock etc) and other assets.

Animal Husbandry

A considerable number of livestock (cross-bred Milch, graded Murrah, calves & draught animals, sheep and goats and poultry) that helped many families to sustain their livelihoods was lost as a result of the tsunami. **Rs. 1.438 crores** has thus far been disbursed through the animal husbandry department, compensating loss of livestock to 11,899 beneficiaries. The largest proportion of compensation was awarded to those who kept sheep and goats (66.06% of the total compensation) and to those with cross-bred Milch (29.49%).

Agriculture

The accuracy of the primary damage assessment in this sector has caused contention and confusion amongst experts, the district administration, NGOs and civil society. **Rs. 41 lakhs** have been distributed to compensate the damages to agriculture thus far, which is indicative of a gross underestimation of the real extent of the damage.



The sum of Rs.1000/ha for rain-fed and Rs.2500/ha for irrigated agricultural land sanctioned for land reclamation must also be reviewed. For the loss of standing crops, each farmer received Rs.4000. 6,071 farmers have already received compensations.

It is imperative that all actors in the relief and rehabilitation process review and monitor the use that compensation is being put to. Furthermore, the long-term livelihoods needs should also consistently be monitored, with careful attention to areas that have been placed at a disadvantage as a result of poor or insufficient compensation. In this way, compensation should be regarded not only as a means of helping people to withstand the ill-effects of disaster, but most importantly, to resume a normal and dignified life. \blacksquare



Surveying the damage

NGO Snapshot

SNEHA Social Need Education and Human Awareness

Sneha has over 20 years' experience of working with the fishing communities along the coastline of Nagapattinam, with particular emphasis on the lives of women and children. In the aftermath of the Tsunami it was SNEHA who cast a beacon of light on the plight of the fishing community's most vulnerable. In the 50 villages in which SNEHA works, over 60% of the victims of the tidal wave were women and children.

The impact of the tsunami on women in the fishing communities is easily overlooked. Although the most visibly affected were the fishermen who had lost their primary means of livelihood, women and children also suffered their own losses – insulated boxes, containers and baskets, fishing accessories and cattle. Their children have also lost their schoolbooks, bags and in some cases, even their schools. This demands particular attention. Women are not only the primary caregivers in the family, but also labourers in the markets – pillars of both family and community life. Yet the importance of their roles is sorely underestimated.

SNEHA recognises the role of women and their power to implement social change, and has already undertaken awareness, training, healthcare and development campaigns as well as implementing government programmes with their 485 SHGs, women's Sanghams and co-operatives. School enrolment has seen an increase in the past few years and with the help of international donors, the number of pre-schools has increased from 18 to 32, catering for the educational development of 1,100 children. SNEHA has also overseen the formation of the new concept of children's panchayats. Together with NGOs such as the Psycho Trust, SNEHA closely monitored post-Tsunami traumatic stress. Psychological rehabilitation has been started through songs, dance, story-telling, counseling and cultural yathras.

SNEHA's 40 strong team strives to raise awareness of the problems that arise within the local communities. ■



Information Exchange and Communication

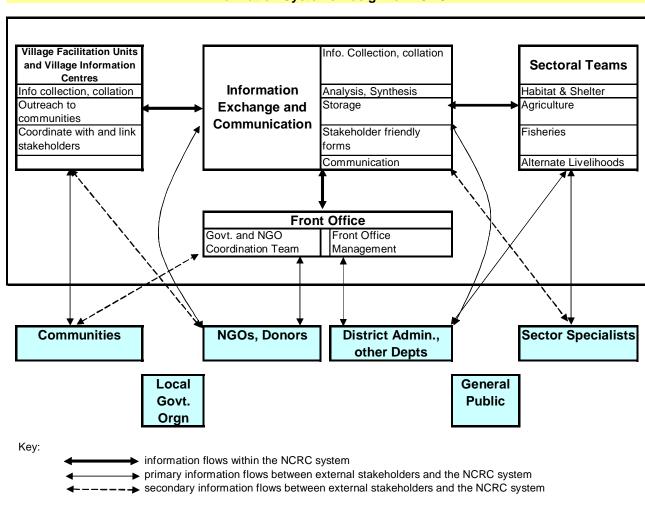
One of NCRC's primary roles is to enable information exchange and communication between all stakeholders involved in relief and rehabilitation initiatives. Based on a detailed needs assessment, in collaboration with Catalyst Management services of Bangalore, it has designed an information system to provide information on current initiatives and to be a knowledge bank of learning for handling future disasters in and outside the country.

The purpose of the information system is to generate and communicate stakeholder friendly information to enable effective planning, monitoring and learning to improve the effectiveness of current and future relief and rehabilitation programs in disaster management

The community, NGOs and donors, the district administration and other departments and sector specialists are the users and suppliers of information to the system.

- Core to the system is the Information Exchange and Communication (IEC) department at NCRC. This department manages the information by engaging in its collection, collation, synthesis, analysis, and ensuring its access and communication through stakeholder friendly structures.
- The Village Information Centres liaison with the community for field level information generation and exchange and Village Facilitation Units manage the coordination and linking between village information centres, sectoral units and IEC.
- The Front Office is located at the Collectorate and provides vital data from the field to NGOs and the district administration, ensuring that adequate support and attentions get focused towards priority areas and communities.
- The Sectoral teams interact with IEC and the district administration to identify sector-specific needs, information and support of the community.

Information Systems Design for NCRC





Information sharing at NCRC is based on stakeholders information needs to ensure that it is relevant and useful. It a two-way process, that includes collection of information and also of feeding it back to the community in a relevant form. This enables greater transparency in rehabilitation processes, and provides information to promote immediate decisions and actions. It also promotes sharing and learning among stakeholders.

The system uses communication channels and media that are is simple and relevant and uses the available technology to the optimum. In order to handle large quantum of data and ensure regular

updation and wide coverage of information dissemination, IEC employs technology through computer based interactive system, website, etc. It has also set-up a wireless intranet communication system wherein the data server at IEC is connected to 12 VIC. The data gets updated at the source and this is then readily available to all stakeholders. This system will soon be extended to the collectorate so that updated, online information is available for decision making.

IEC also publishes data and information for dissemination to a wider audience.

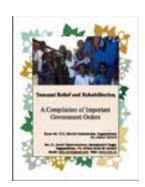
Some Publications at NCRC



Title: Snapshot of damages due to Tsunami: Villageswise in Nagapattinam district (available in English and Tamil versions

Year: 2005

Publisher: NCRC



Title: Tsunami relief and rehabilitation - A compilation of important Government Orders (available in English and Tamil)

Year: 2005

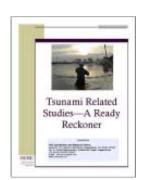
Publisher: NCRC



Title: Village level people's plans - relaities, aspirations, challenges (available for different villages)

Year: 2005

Publisher: Praxis



Title: Tsunami related studies: a ready reckoner

Year: 2005

Publisher: NCRC



Contribute to Kalangarai Vilakam

This newsletter is a forum for sharing and exchanging information on tsunami rehabilitation efforts and information in Nagapattinam. We invite all stakeholders to contribute to the newsletter. You can submit NGO profiles, case-studies, contribute news items, photographs, good practice in interventions, book reviews, list of publications or any other article of interest.

Please send your contributions to:

Kalangari Vilakam

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Photo Gallery



Thruvengadu VIC inauguration



Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, Chairperson, National Commission on Farmers, visits NCRC



Inauguration of the NCRC information system at collectorate intra-net

Kalangarai Vilakam is an NCRC publication, developed purely for information purposes. The information contained herein has been collated from various sources and NCRC is not responsible for its accuracy or any actions taken based thereon.