

## **Minutes of Permanent Shelter Review Meeting**

**Date:** 19th November 2005, Saturday  
**Time:** 10:45am to 1:30pm  
**Venue:** Mini Conference Hall, Collectorate, Nagapattinam  
**Chaired by:** Mr. J. Radha Krishnan, the District Collector, Nagapattinam  
Mr. Ranvir Prasad, Additional Collector, Relief & Rehabilitation

The meeting was held after a month long gap due to relief work in the recent floods in Nagapattinam district. The District Collector extended a warm welcome to all NGOs. Special Deputy Collector, Mr. Raman and members from NCRC – Mrs. Annie George, Mr. Srinivasan and Mr. Antony Xavier were also present in the meeting.

### **Meeting Agenda:**

The following was the primary agenda of the meeting:

- ★ Plans to commemorate the first anniversary of tsunami by highlighting the activities and achievements of the district administration and the NGOs.
- ★ Need for developing mutual understanding and gaining confidence of the communities.
- ★ Handling the criticisms from the print and electronic media.
- ★ Reviewing the status of permanent shelter construction till date.
- ★ A rapid assessment of the status of temporary shelter.

### **Coordination among the NGOs and handling the media:**

The foremost issue raised by the Collector was about the NGOs criticizing each other. This is paving way for the print media to quote unfavourable news about the progress status in Nagapattinam district after Tsunami. Despite a much synchronized working system and significant development, the facts in the newspapers are false due to open criticizing of one NGO by another.

- It is natural for the affected community to highlight about the benefits not yet received by them than what has reached them. Respecting and fulfilling the needs of community will help gain their goodwill and trust.
- In collector's view, all the NGOs have contributed fairly well towards relief and rehabilitation in the district according to their capacity. But the public will creates an image based on the media information.

- Collector requested NCRC to invite TLAC, TLS and other Legal services NGOs also for such meetings so that transparency can be maintained and the various misconceptions can be cleared.
- The media has stated that 3000 crores of funds have flown into Nagai against an approximate of Rs.500 crores only. To avert such false news, a consolidated statement of all the facts and figures related to financial aspects shall be circulated by the district administration.
  - # Approximately Rs.500 crores is NGOs' contribution.
  - # 190 crores in the government's input so far.
  - # 30 crores is the additional funds that are going to be invested in future projects like port construction, etc.

### **Review of the status of permanent shelter construction:**

Collector asked all NGOs about the progress in permanent shelter construction in the areas allotted to them and the numbers of houses that would be ready by December end.

- Care India has completed foundation work for 65 houses. Earth work done for 200 houses. Approximately 100 houses shall be ready by December end.

In Vanagiri, 20 houses have been completed. Similar progress is expected in all the areas.

Collector quoted that of all the Tsunami affected areas, Cuddalore was the first to start permanent shelter construction and are almost on the verge of completion. In order to have a substantial stand among all, speeding up construction work is very necessary.

An appeal was made to all NGOs that in case they feel that there is lack of sufficient funds with them and bringing in the required manpower, materials and machines is not possible, they shall withdraw so that the government can do the construction out of its quota of 450 houses.

- ★ ADRA could not make it to the meeting but they had sent the report on the construction status. Houses to be constructed are 54 of which Foundation work for 51 houses is over and 3 houses have come up to lintel level. Tentative date of completion is February 15.
- ★ CEE has completed excavation work for 16 houses and 3 more under process. 14 houses construction work as just started and by December end they hope to complete nearly 5 houses.
- ★ Shri Vallabha Foundation also didn't come for the meeting but collector stated that they are progressing fairly well and shall be ready for inauguration by November end or December first week.
- ★ At this point, all the NGOs were requested to keep their donor's visits or foundation stone laying event at the end.

- ★ CASA is waiting for clearing of temporary shelters by SNEHA is under going and further construction work will began. Collector said that he would soon meet SNEHA's local volunteers to solve few other issues related to shelter construction.
- ★ CASA also raised the contradiction in the numbers of houses allotted to them by the government as the requirement is more in the location. The Additional Collector, Mr. Ranvir Prasad suggested that the organisation should proceed with construction work and verification about the numbers can be done in the due course.
- ★ Lutheran World Services (LWS) which has been allotted 193 houses in Thirumullaivasal. 85 in-situ houses work has began and by December end 50 houses are expected to be ready.
- ★ TMSSS progress in Savadikuppam is very disappointing. The organisation has taken a large chunk of allotment, i.e., 3000 houses (which is more than the total houses - 2500 in Cuddalore district) but not much of material mobilization or visible constructional progress is seen. They have been instructed to rework their action plans to speed up the work and finish work at the earliest.
- ★ The required number of contractors has been fixed up but due to revised guidelines for deep foundation the work has to be restarted. However, a better execution of funds, contractors and labour has to take place.
- ★ Each organisation might be progressing quite well but when the district administration well be assessed, overall progress will be analysed which is not so remarkable.
- ★ GGF is in the process of getting approval on the quality of construction materials from Chidambaram Annamalai University. The community has also chosen five *natars* to as the monitoring team to verify the quality issues.
- ★ It was suggested that apart from outside testing and monitoring, GGF should set up an internal monitoring team which can have a constant close watch while construction is under progress. Nearly 19 houses in Kadaikaddu are expected to be ready by December.
- ★ In Poompuhar, SEVAI is involved in bar bending work for nearly 100 houses. Reinforcement work for the houses has also been started.

The collector expressed his concern over land acquisition problems at any locations and suggested that quickest alternative in the neighbourhood or in a far away place has to be kept ready.

- ★ RDT have committed to make ready at least 50 houses in Tharangambadi and Chinnameedu by December end.
- ★ SIFFS shall surely succeed in the long run but then working on model houses for so long is not remarkable.

- ★ In situ housing has to be promoted but the community will not keep quiet for very long if new site construction is not started. The problem will become acute when the community is approached directly and they give negative statements.

Collector highlighted that many NGOs are giving too many alternatives to the community making the situation too 'romantic' and complex. Based on his 13 years of experience in public life, collector quoted that the people's attitude will be reluctant and they keep spinning us on and off. To avoid such a dilemmatic situation, it is important to prove ourselves by doing visual progress than oral commitments. The fishermen community's proximity to sea is vital and hence they should be given houses as closer possible to the sea. Other communities shall not be given too many options.

*Elections are approaching and at that time people tend to display their anger which will adversely affect the district administration as well as the NGOs' image.* On the other hand, it is noted that at an average four or five fire accidents occur every year in the district and reducing the risk of loss of lives and property is by ensuring easy access to services like fire engines in the new construction locations. The fire accident in one of the temporary shelters during Diwali has to be a lesson for all of us. Repeated accidents will lead to depression and stress will be increased among the communities as well as the NGOs.

- ★ In order to vacate people from temporary shelters and clear up the shelters, it is necessary to quickly build alternative shelter and permanent shelters.
- ★ Collector also stressed on one very sensitive issue. Constant progress should also take place in shelter construction for the vulnerable (dalit) community like in Veppancherry.
- ★ EFICOR is facing problem in progressing with work due to water logging and stagnation on the approach road to construction sites. Transporting materials and labour to the sites is very difficult due to this.
- ★ The collector said a temporary road shall be laid very soon but he doubted the organisation's capacity. Hence, he gave an option to reduce the numbers of houses and thereby invest the available funds on limited yet qualitative construction.
- ★ In perumalpettai, CASA is facing the same water logging problem and also the delay in getting the land sketch for nearly two and half acres land from the VO is a hurdle in construction progress.
- ★ OXFAM stated that they have acquired sufficient funds for construction. The work shall begin immediately after land allotted to them.
- ★ Holy cross has been allotted land very recently and therefore work is yet to begin. The collector asked them to develop mutual understanding with community by giving them only

true hopes that can be fulfilled. Lot of activities has to be carried out simultaneously like clearing up of land, area marking, preparation of layout and design, etc.

All the NGOs were expected to discuss all the issues openly in such official meetings itself so that absolute transparency and immediate solutions can be obtained.

- ★ Mata Amritanandamayi Math suggested that temporary leveling and mud filling can be done on the approach road by the NGOs themselves till a fresh road is ready.
- ★ Voluntariat is also ready with sufficient funds to complete the allotted houses. The main problem is again the approach road which makes it difficult to access and transport materials to the new sites. The organisation is ready to lay the road on its own with the due permission of the administration. The collector immediately told them to proceed and wait for no approval or sanction.
- ★ The Special Deputy Collector was requested to kindly develop a single window system for accessing the entire data related to permanent shelter construction. Any minutest detail or information related to construction should be made available to all concerned parties with ease.
- ★ Temporary shelters in all areas have to be simultaneously cleared. It was decided that acquisition of land and street clearance in places like Palpanicherry, Aryanatuthiru, and Melapattinacherry has to be done without any further delay.
- ★ *IID is working in an area where there is community level construction work also going on. This is leading to a misconception that the organisation will fund its own project as well the community project. Collector instructed IID to stay away from getting involved into any negotiations. The district administration will take measures to rectify the confusion.*
- ★ M.A.Math reported that they have completed excavation work in majority of the places allotted to them besides areas where construction is close to completion. The organisation has laid foundation for construction in Railadi Street after clear approval and allocation from the district administration but the community is under the notion that the government is going to do construction in that area. This issue has to be sorted out.

The collector stated that Madathukuppam and few other areas are very sensitive – the government will handle the rehabilitation work. The community has been constantly criticizing the work done by all of us and giving a negative picture to outsiders and the media approaching them. They are a very violent and aggressive community where incidents like a man drinking and killing his own wife and children has occurred.

While discussing this, the Collector mentioned about the recent feature article published by Outlook magazine. They have tarnished the image of the district administration and the NGOs in Nagapattinam to the maximum possible despite our sincere efforts in developmental reconstruction. It is very disheartening to see such Hippocratic act performed by the media and hence an immediate rejoinder has been sent to the editor by the Collectorate. The NGOs are also requested to come up with a joint rejoinder to unravel the truth over the false news being spread. Such incidents are taking place due to casual statements being given to the media by individuals from various groups. They openly criticize the other NGOs which is not a healthy sign.

- ★ RCPDS/SPEECH is doing significant progress in all the areas allotted to them. They requested the collector to help sort out a small issue related to Kumbakonam Housing unit.
- ★ Jamaat-e-islami hind is also showed good progress in Siladi. But they too are facing problem due to improper approach road. Immediate measures have to taken to overcome the problem and proceed with construction.
- ★ M.A. Math's construction is fully ready in Samanthanpettai and arrangements to shift the community into the new houses are being made. As for the inauguration, they are waiting to get dates from their 'amma' as the community itself wants her to come and hence the tentative date would be December 15. The necessary formalities to hand over the project to the government will be done by November end. Also, construction work in Akkaraipettai is come up to lintel level for 24 houses.
- ★ In Nambiyar Nagar, World Vision had to stop work due to water logging and also fear among the community as the new land is in a low lying area. On the other hand, 21 in-situ houses will be tentatively ready in December.
- ★ It was disappointing to find no visual progress in Selur by YMCA. The finalization of plot allotment to individuals has been done recently only and the organisation promises to start work very soon.
- ★ Seva Bharathi is progressing quite well with construction in Keechankuppam.
- ★ Tata Relief Committee is also showing constant progress in the neighbouring village. i.e., Akkaraipettai. It was stated that 50 beneficiaries visited the construction sites and felt satisfied on seeing the progress in the work for their new houses. The Collector has requested the Additional Collector to make a personal visit, in the coming week to all the areas where there are land acquisition issues and do the final negotiation.
- ★ Collector requested all NGOs to do constant progress in areas where houses are being built for Dalits so that no more criticism from the community or media as to ignorance of the vulnerable comes up.

- ★ PDA has been provided with alternative land for construction and they have jointly working with DRDA which constructing 185 houses in P.R.Puram. In North Vilandamavadi, there is a slight confusion with the location of toilet entrance in the new houses. PDA is decided for an entrance below the staircase and approval from the community is awaited. Other NGOs like TMSS and DPG have designed the entrance for the toilets from within the house which will occupy more space. The collector suggested that all the NGOs carry out a common model for house construction so that no discriminatory feeling rises.
- ★ CASA has come up with an alternative to overcome the land problem, that too with full approval from the community. Construction of double storey houses has been proposed with the same space and layout.

### **Discussion on the status of Temporary shelter and its recent assessment:**

With the help of its Villages Information Centers and the NGOs working in various villages, NCRC has carried out a survey on the status of the various temporary shelters after the recent floods and a rapid assessment report on the same has been formulated. The primary issues related to the same were discussed with the Collector.

- ★ There has been too many mishaps happening in temporary shelter due to thatch roofs and heavy linkage has been faced during the heavy rains. Thereby it has been proposed to replace the roof with red mud plastering in all the temporary shelters.
- ★ Removal of unused and unhygienic toilets is to be done at the earliest by the NGOs working in the respective areas.
- ★ Fulfilling the need for new temporary shelters due to removal of the present ones either for permanent shelter construction or due to poor conditions, has to take place.
- ★ In places where it is not very mandatory to relocate temporary shelters shall be avoided. The community is used to staying in poorer conditions than the present and hence they shall continue staying on there till the permanent construction is over.
- ★ OXFAM, in collaboration with NCRC, has initiated to carry out activities to improve health, hygiene and sanitation conditions in the temporary shelters. They are already working in Kilamuvarkarai and melamuvarkarai with the help of SEVAI.
- ★ Mr. Srinivasan from NCRC, who is dealing with Temporary shelter sector, has been requested to provide a close supervision for implementation of Red mud roof so that risk of fire accidents is reduced. NCRC has to also ensure implementation of hygiene and health related programmes in the temporary shelters.

### **Planning for commemoration of one year of Tsunami:**

Collector instructed all the NGOs to come together and work out an effective action plan to highlight the social development and progress that has been done in various sectors after the colossal destruction in the district due to Tsunami.

- ★ The Children's day celebrations to be held on November 26 shall be the curtain raiser for planning out the methods to highlight the contribution made to the community.
- ★ The government has planned for constructing a memorial park costing 1.75lakhs in Pushpovanam taluk. Planning for a new beach Amrut park is also under process.
- ★ Nearly 65 memorial pillars shall be erected across the district to pay homage to the ones who lost their lives in the Tsunami.
- ★ In addition to all this, inauguration of orphanages, new bridges, fishing land platforms, school complex, community hall, etc shall be done just before 26 December this year.
- ★ Mrs. Annie George of NCRC suggested a week long exhibition of all the activities done by the administration and NGOs can be held in the Collectorate. It was also proposed that a Navadhanya Festival can be conducted just before 26 December 2005. She also told that apart from distribution of tangible items like boats, engines, houses, etc NGOs have also imparted lot of skill training which should also be highlighted.
- ★ The NGOs working in each village can collectively put up a brief about their activities on a huge board at the entrance of the village. This would work as a one shot preview for outsiders and the media of the remarkable contributions made by the NGOs.
- ★ The collector informed that major newspapers in the country will surely bring out supplements on the first year of Tsunami and hence all NGOs are free to highlight the positive changes made by them in the district.
- ★ In this context, CASA stated that the community in their area has requested not to disturb them at from morning to noon as they will be busy carrying out rituals and pujas for the beloved ones lost in Tsunami. Same would be the case in all the affected areas and hence any plans shall be scheduled only after noon.
- ★ District administration suggested the NGOs to come up with small vinyl boards which shall have details about the good work done by the organisations throughout the year. The government seal will be attested on those boards as a sign of certification.
- ★ The Collector also told that a team from BBC world and CNN are going to come to capture the good work done jointly by the district administration and the civil bodies for restoring lives of the communities. The district administration itself shall take the media on a district tour covering each village so that none of the efforts are left out as well as chances of false news can be avoided.



Before the meeting came to a closure, the collector stated that he has highest faith in all the NGOs and appreciated the overall progress done in the district. He was also happy that so far no religious bifurcation has occurred in the district. He requested the NGOs to work with more enthusiasm and vigor towards the developmental reconstruction of Nagapattinam district.

He reminded the need to take the community into full confidence for smooth functioning of all the activities. The community has to be convinced that it is only rumours that rehabilitation work will come to a close by December 31 and that the collector will leave the district very soon.

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