

Annex I: SOCIAL IMPACT

A. Introduction

1. This annex addresses the social impact of the tsunami, which caused massive destruction and casualties in the coastal regions of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Pondicherry. It is based on field visits to the worst hit areas of Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu; Kollam and Alappuzha districts of Kerala; Pondicherry and Karaikal. Team members met with government officials at the state and district levels, funding agencies and NGOs working in the affected areas, and with affected people themselves.

B. Damage Overview

2. The tsunami waves struck the mainland with a height of three to 10 meters and penetrated 300 m to 3 km inland, affecting approximately 2,260 km of coastline with varying intensity. The largest number of villages impacted was in Tamil Nadu (376), followed by Andhra Pradesh (301), Kerala (187) and Pondicherry (33). The disaster devastated communities with its high toll of human lives, injuries, family networks, homes and livelihoods. There are long term consequences for families torn by death or disability of members, and for widows, single parents and their children, orphans, children separated from their families, the elderly and the disabled. In all the tsunami-affected states and union territories, more women and children have died than men. The majority of those affected on the coast were fisherfolk who suffered the most damage in terms of housing and livelihoods with loss of dwelling units, household assets, and productive assets like boats and nets.

Shelter and Livelihoods

3. Overall, more than 150,000 houses have been fully or partially damaged¹². Of these, nearly 80 percent of the families belong to fishing communities, and 70% of them lived in *kachcha* (temporary and lightweight) structures.

4. Immediately after the disaster, displaced people moved to relief camps provided by the government and NGOs. They will soon be shifted to temporary shelters until permanent housing can be built. People currently occupying schools and other public buildings will need to be relocated first to enable resumption of public services. Meanwhile, those in camps need to be protected from health, sanitation and environmental hazards, and women and girls in particular face a lack of privacy.

5. The disaster hit hardest the livelihoods of those that were already poor, affecting directly or indirectly nearly 645,000 households¹³. Fishermen, farmers, landless and casual laborers, small businesses and micro-enterprises, and other categories of workers in the informal sector have been badly hit. Disruptions in sources of supplies and markets have led to loss of income and employment, especially for women who played a big role, for example, in the cleaning, drying and selling of fish, besides the making of rope, shell-craft and pickles. This vulnerable group has a preponderance of scheduled castes and tribes.

¹² For state-wise breakup of loss of housing refer to Annex IV.

¹³ For state wise breakup of loss of livelihood refer Annex VIII. Data does not include Pondicherry.

6. The vulnerability of these communities is accentuated by their indebtedness to big merchants and informal money lenders with whom many had current borrowings, lack of access to markets and credit, absence of social security nets, and socio-political marginalization.

7. Conversations with fishermen revealed that even those who were in a position to repair their boats were not going back to sea as they were prevented by local community leaders who feared they would then become ineligible for government compensation. The community also felt that the sudden demand for boats combined with lack of skills and non-availability of raw material would delay the process of replacement or repair.

8. For households depending on agriculture, horticulture and aquaculture, especially small and marginal farmers and agricultural laborers, saline water intrusion has destroyed standing crops while damaging the land for at least a couple of seasons. These and related households have also suffered from the loss of other productive assets, especially livestock.¹⁴.

Orphans, Female-headed Households and Single Parents

9. A large number of children are left without their parents and this category requires special protection both immediately and continuing into the medium and long term. The respective state governments have for now declared special compensation and care programs for orphaned children and adolescents. Similarly, female-headed households present a particular vulnerability as the women have to deal with their own psycho-social distress, loss of livelihood and the care of their dependents. Discussion with the communities revealed that many female-headed households were not included in the relief beneficiary lists, and care should be taken to ensure they are not left out of rehabilitation schemes. At the same time, the loss of the male head or income earner increases the family's economic vulnerability and significantly reducing its coping ability. Single-parent households will therefore also need to be enumerated and provided special support.

Legal Aspects

10. A large number of affected households had been living on government land and technically were encroachers, which may complicate the process of housing rehabilitation. This situation was more pronounced in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. Other than this, many legal owners have lost their property documents.

Resettlement

11. In order to protect coastal populations from future disasters in areas identified as vulnerable, a number of households either affected by the tsunami or unaffected but living in unsafe locations, might have to be relocated. This issue is compounded by the current discussion in government about implementing the Coastal Zone Regulations (CRZ); this decision will have significant implications for the scale and scope of relocation and resettlement. If CRZ is implemented strictly, the scale of resettlement could increase multifold. Discussions with affected households, community leaders and district officials indicate that relocation should not only be viewed in the context of disaster prevention but

¹⁴ See Annex VI on Agriculture and Livestock.

also in relation to its impact on livelihoods. The need for fishing communities to be near the sea is an obvious example. A recurrent feedback from fishermen interviewed was: “*We cannot live far away from the sea; we keep a watch on the tide and decide when we can fish. If we go far away how will we survive?*”

12. A detailed assessment needs to be carried out for every vulnerable village in close consultation with the affected communities with special attention on the marginal among them, NGOs and local governments (panchayats) to understand their needs, priorities, options, site preferences, and impacts of any decision. Conversations with affected persons in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Pondicherry revealed that most of those who had lost their homes wanted to be return to the same location; if it was necessary to move, it should be no more than 800 m to 1 km from the existing location. Fishermen spoke of no more than 500 m. In either case, they would like to rebuild their homes to better standards than before, and fishing communities would like additional facilities such as boatsheds and stores. Those in Kerala mentioned that land availability would be a problem as most villages are between the sea and the backwaters.

13. Displaced households with legal title were of the opinion that if they had to relocate, the government should provide them the new land with title, while allowing them to retain the rights to their original property. While this is anecdotal feedback, important issues are raised. The most important is that the impact of relocation on livelihoods should not increase vulnerability and thus defeat the very purpose of the relocation.

C. Reconstruction Strategy

14. Immediate and medium-term recovery and reconstruction, particularly related to temporary shelter, housing, livelihoods, legal aspects, protection of women and children, education, health, drinking water, civic services, community participation and safeguard issues will require incorporation of a number of social issues and needs.

(a) Shelter and Relocation of Affected and Displaced Households

15. The immediate need is the provision of livable temporary shelters for displaced people. The temporary shelters already in place turn into furnaces during the day, making it difficult for the families to stay indoors. This will worsen as summer peaks. Privacy is a major issue, especially women and children. Adequate and properly maintained water and sanitation facilities and solid waste management systems need to be in place. Restoration of educational, mother and childcare, and health facilities in the affected areas is an urgent necessity.

16. In the short-term, households in temporary shelters should return to permanent housing on the principle that *relocation should be avoided unless it is clear that: (a) staying in the same place is unsafe; and (b) the villagers clearly express a preference to shift to a new location.* A transparent and participatory approach involving the communities will be key to assess their options, and then to plan and implement their decision.

17. In the medium to long term, households whose structures were not damaged but who are known to be staying in a risk-prone area need to be consulted extensively about their choices and

options, and assisted in selection of relocation sites and reconstruction of houses whether they opt for self-relocation or as a group. New construction and repair of existing sea-walls wherever feasible can also be thought as long term prevention measure. Community disaster and risk prevention and management training can also be provided to all households living along the coast¹⁵.

(b) Livelihoods

18. Discussions were held with different affected groups to identify their livelihood needs and priorities. Almost all fisher households, especially men, wanted to go back to fishing. Women were more open to undertake training for alternate income generation activities. Small and marginal farmers and agricultural laborers felt they should be compensated for their losses, and support be provided to help them restore damaged land and get back to their livelihood as soon as possible. Others who lost productive assets, small shops and livestock also expressed the need for compensation. Households who had taken loans to purchase these assets or residential units felt the loans should be waived.

For a detailed discussion on restoring livelihoods, see Annex VIII.

(c) Women, children and disabled

19. Priority needs to be given to uniting separated children with their families. Orphans need to be provided with culturally sensitive care options, and psycho-social support and legal protection. Awareness raising and training on child rights and child protection should be carried out with relevant stakeholders. Female-headed households and disabled persons should also be provided with psycho-social support, livelihood restoration, and legal protection on matters related to property and inheritance rights and child custody. Vulnerable groups that cannot immediately undertake economic activities need to be assisted through targeted social transfers and social protection measures.

(d) Legal Issues

20. Restoration of lost property records is an urgent need, with special assistance to the poor, widows and orphans. Particular attention needs to be paid to children's inheritance rights, and identifying legal guardians. Any new housing should be jointly registered in the names of both husband and wife.

(e) Safeguarding against secondary displacement or other negative impacts of the reconstruction effort

21. Secondary displacement and resettlement should be avoided where possible, and assistance should be given to enable people to rebuild their homes to better standards in their old location. This would also minimize the need for new land acquisition, which may displace those whose land is acquired. As a general principle, to the extent possible, relocation should be avoided. Where it is unavoidable, the following need to be kept in mind:

¹⁵ See also Annex XI on Coastal Protection and Annex XII on Hazard Risk Management.

- Where temporary relocation is unavoidable, such shelters should be built on government land wherever possible.
- If permanent housing is to be constructed in new sites, the affected population should be given financial and technical support to choose locations and housing based on their own preferences.
- If acquisition of private property is unavoidable, the government should assist in purchasing the necessary land as far as possible through the principle of willing seller - willing buyer, rather than resorting to land acquisition under law.
- If land acquisition and secondary displacement become unavoidable, a social assessment process involving all stakeholders should be undertaken and those affected should be compensated and resettled through best practice procedures.

(f) *Community Consultation and Participation*

22. Local communities will need to be actively involved in planning, decision-making and implementation in most sectors if reconstruction and recovery is to be successful. Experience with disaster reconstruction all over the world has shown that community participation is in fact a fundamental requirement that helps in the following manner:

- *Reducing trauma*
Trauma and depression are not always visible immediately after a disaster but may occur weeks or months later. Active involvement in work and participation in community affairs can reduce psychological problems.
- *Appropriate solutions, equity and ownership*
Involving communities in needs assessments and decisions on choices helps ensure appropriate solutions as well as giving socially disadvantaged sections a voice. Participatory mechanisms have the potential to iron out inequalities without exacerbating social tensions. Community participation in decisions on school and health center locations, and water supply and sanitation infrastructure, for example, would ensure better access, increase utilization, and give users a stake in their repair and maintenance. Moreover, using local resources and labor fosters a greater sense of ownership while reducing dependency on relief and handouts.
- *Transparency and accountability*
Disaster reconstruction involves the flow of large sums of money within a short period to a large number of people. Targeting, transparency and accountability become key. The more decentralized the process, the less the scope for irregularities and corruption. Communities should be involved in identifying beneficiaries, reviewing damage assessment reports, monitoring the progress of reconstruction, verifying transfers of material and cash (ideally made only in public settings), and certifying accounts and records which should be publicly displayed.

Partnerships between Government, Donors, NGOs, and Community Organizations

23. Involving communities in their own reconstruction and rehabilitation will require a well-coordinated effort between government, NGOs, aid agencies, commercial organizations and existing

community institutions, including panchayats. External partners need to ensure that they do not undermine the drive and initiative of the communities, that local leadership, as well as poor, vulnerable and marginalized sections participate, and to be mindful of the communities' dignity, traditions and practices. Collaboration among these agencies was excellent during the relief phase. This effort needs to be carried into the recovery and reconstruction. Not only must physical activities be coordinated, but all must follow common technical and finishing standards and harmonized policies. Only a continuous two-way communication and dialogue interface between the communities, external partners, and the government will ensure this.

Monitoring and Grievance Redress

24. An effective, accessible monitoring and grievance redress mechanism must be established, and the public should be informed of their right to redress and of the procedures to invoke it.