



*Rebuilding Opportunities and
Promoting Equality Increasing and
Strengthening Local Economic,
Social and Environmental Capital*

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Introduction

- ❖ Our intervention
- ❖ Challenges
- ❖ Recommendations



Svaraj's focus

- ❖ Svaraj activity in disaster response is to link disaster and reconstruction through community based approach in the context of sustainable development
- ❖ The process of reconstruction is to integrate and promote gender equality and self-empowerment of women in an effort towards local capacity building of the larger community.



Not “business as usual”

- ❖ *“If we focus only on needs and vulnerabilities, we remain locked in the logic of repetitive responses that fail to nurture the capacities for resilience contained deep within every community. We have talked about building capacity and resilience for decades. It is now time to turn rhetoric into reality...”*
- ❖ Markku Niskala Secretary General Red Cross, World disasters report 2005



Tsunami response – 05

1. immediate relief - food, water and medical aid – team of local volunteers
2. Assessed the rehabilitation/dev needs for community in six villages
3. Decided to work in Cuddalore – second/third most affected district in India - over 500 people killed.



Post Tsunami Work - Villages

- ❖ Thazanguda, Singarathoppu, Akkaraikori, Sothikuppam; Rasapettai and Naicherpettai
- ❖ 83 lives lost of which 54 were female and 29 male. (40 of them were children).
- ❖ Sothikuppam – 21 children and two adults were killed



Our Efforts

- ❖ Village information Centres
 - ❖ Self Help Desk – to help retrieve lost documents;
 - ❖ SHG's and micro credit
 - ❖ Collect, collate and disseminate information
- ❖ Training in IT – increase local capacity
- ❖ Solidarity Fishing
- ❖ Psycho-social support



Village Information Centers

Recognizing the power of information, the objectives of the centers are to provide:

1. villagers access to information about their rights post Tsunami, help trace vital documents; pool local wisdom and knowledge; share information about their villages and the surrounding environment – local population, landmarks, ancestral history, festivals, local culture and celebrations, school results, as well as seven day weather forecast, daily prices for their fish catch and other agricultural products.
2. self help desks - to help the community retrieve essential lost documents and claim their rights and challenge injustices;
3. women and child space

Run by local trained women and managed by SHG's



Information Management and Communication

- ❖ *using grassroots process to build local information and mobilize skills and increase local capacity and use these skills as a social force to enhance efforts in reconstruction of the community*
 - ❖ women of the self-help groups bargain for prices of materials and make the purchase, as well as monitoring the construction of the Centers while gaining new skills.



Education and Training

❖ putting Information and Communication Technology in the hands of women

- ❖ by providing young women training on computers – MS, DTP, etc and languages to access and share information - from around the villages as well as the internet - with women and other community members in the village and beyond*
- ❖ to ensure that women benefit from new employment opportunities to build a better life for themselves, their families and their communities and*



Public awareness

on the wider economic, social, political and environmental issues affecting local life and livelihood.



Not without challenges

- ❖ “The daily news of money and relief materials pouring in raised the expectation of “benefits” from all NGOs that entered into the village. The proud fisher folk who were quite well to do before the tsunami, now in part expected to be supported by external resources”

Svaraj field officers.



What they say about NGO

“The waves may have destroyed much, but there are many who have prospered too. The NGO working in our colony has now moved to RS 15,000 per month rented building while earlier they were working out of a two room house. None of their members use public transport anymore but travel in luxury cars”

SHG member reported in Hindu 26 dec 05.



Challenges

- ❖ Unprecedented influx of funds and other resources – seemed to be used inefficiently!!
- ❖ Lack of co-ordination between the huge influx of NGO's and others
- ❖ Delays in government release of compensation promised
- ❖ Displacement of local governance.
- ❖ Discrimination – gender and caste



Issues to debate

In addition to NGO efforts - need to consider wider Socio-economic, political; cultural and environmental issues -

- ❖ Gender and caste discrimination which continue to divide societies and hamper progress
- ❖ Traditional .v. modern gender roles and responsibilities – how to reconcile
- ❖ Displacement of local governance responsibility to ensure sustainability of efforts
- ❖ Continued support – external - Gujarat earthquake e.g



Issues to debate ...

- ❖ Causes of Disasters – climate changes - environmental degradation
- ❖ In the 90s' average of 300 million people were affected by climate related disasters of which 78 % from South Asia.



Recomendations

❖ Endorse the recommendations made by earlier speakers

In addition Svaraj recommendation

❖ Equal Opportunities Commission – independent body

❖ To help consider and fight gender and caste discrimination

❖ To promote equality of opportunity and a rights based agenda

❖ To carry out gender and caste analysis of local, regional, state and central policy and budget allocation



What they say about the disaster

“The sea and us are family. We may have disputes but eventually we learn to live together”

Fisherman