

Tsunami Annual Report-2007

Beyond Recovery:
Empowerment and Mobilization through Community Development



margin to mainstream

Swyam Shikshan Prayog

Self education for empowerment

Tel: 91-22-907586, 26771132

Email: sspindia@vsnl.net

Website: www.sspindia.org

INTRODUCTION

On December, 26, 2004 a series of earthquakes in the Bay of Bengal (the strongest reaching 8.9 on the Richter scale) caused a succession of giant tsunami tidal waves of 3 to 10 meters in height. These tidal waves hit the southern and eastern coastal areas of India and penetrated inland up to 3 km, causing extensive damage to more than 2000 km of inhabited coastal zones. In Tamil Nadu alone, 7,983 deaths were reported across 12 coastal districts. Government reports estimate that over 10,880 people lost their lives.

The poorest and most vulnerable communities especially in rural areas were impacted the hardest; it took a toll of human lives, uprooted families, wrecked homes and livelihoods, and injured over 6,913 people causing countless disabilities. There are long-term consequences for families torn by death, disability, or separation (over 5,792 were reported missing). Women and children suffered the most damage from the tsunami in terms of housing and livelihoods.

SSP Involvement

SSP became involved in the disaster response in January 2005. As it provided its first relief activities, it developed connections on the ground with locals and established permanent offices in the Cuddalore and Mayavaram districts. Its target regions became the Nagapattinam and Cuddalore districts, two of the three most affected districts in Tamil Nadu.

SSP programs have worked to create leadership positions for women, build facilities in affected villages for community use, provide access to clean water, facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges, organize informational campaigns, conduct health camps with local partners, provide counseling to address the psychosocial consequences of the disaster and open opportunities for new livelihood activities.

Arogya Sakhis for Health Awareness and Action (ASHAA)

The ASHAA program began in 2005. ASHAA groups are organized at the village level and are comprised fully of women volunteers. To be a



member one must have a genuine interest in improving community health. ASHAA groups work with community members, NGOs and village leadership to mobilize health and sanitation efforts and initiate community-minded projects. ASHAA groups were organized with the intent of addressing important community subjects such as environmental sanitation, personal hygiene, and awareness on the use of community toilets and the practice of open defecation.

The following report outlines the activities and accomplishments of ASHAA in 2007. The areas in which ASHAA has focused its efforts are:

- HEALTH
- STRENGTHENING ASHAA
- WATER & SANITATION
- LIVELIHOOD
- DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
- CONSTRUCTION

HEALTH

Village Check Ups

Access to health care is a primary concern in rural areas. ASHAA members have taken initiative by organizing health check-up camps in villages for a fee of Rs. 30/person. Villagers can get doctor advice and basic medical tests such as urine,



BP, HB. Health check-up participants are given health cards with their case history, prescription, and follow-up advice. Patients requiring additional treatment are sent to receive further care. ASHAA members assist health workers before and during the camps with logistical needs.

ASHAA members negotiated with Cuddalore Vivekananda Medical laboratories to decrease testing fees from Rs. 40 to Rs. 10. Health Camp

fees cover doctor and lab technician expenses. Remaining funds are deposited into an ASHAA-established health fund account.

PIMS Camp

During village level health check ups, doctors refer some patients to government or private hospitals, but either people cannot afford private medical care or they have negative perceptions about government health services and therefore do not seek appropriate medical care. ASHAA in conjunction with SSP approached the Pondicherry Institute of Medical Science (PIMS) to obtain free and discounted medical services for those referred through ASHAA health camps. PIMS and SSP jointly arranged a specialized medical camp which provides free services such as transportation, minor surgeries, medication, and hospitalization.

Working with Primary Health Centers

ASHAA group members are jointly working with Primary Health Centers (PHCs) to improve relations. The health department has appointed a staff nurse for every 5000 villagers. Nurses are required to live in the village where they are appointed. In case of emergency, the nurse is expected to respond with first aid and further care. However, nurses are not willing to live in rural areas so they are available weekly at the most. Because of this obstacle, ASHAA members decided to work with village health nurses (VHNs) to reduce such problems. Now the VHNs inform ASHAA members of their visit so that village members are prepared and can identify needy

patients in a timely manner and offer support. ASHAA members also work in school health programs with VHNs. Through this cooperation, ASHAA members hope to better utilize existing government health services and reduce household health expenditures.

PHC Nurse Visits

PHC Nurses now make three visits per month to villages and provide treatment to pregnant women, the elderly and young children. They also distribute vitamin A tablets, iron tablets, and vaccinations.

PHC Events

ASHAA members are actively involved in Outreach Services (ORS) with PHCs to distribute free tablets, identify pregnant women, distribute Tuberculosis tablets, and other village level programs organized by government health centers. The Cuddalore health department PHCs held awareness days throughout a 2 week period for ASHAA members in areas such as viral fever.

Local Governments Promote Awareness

Awareness programs were held for girls on health education and personal hygiene related to girls and pregnancy. They discussed the benefits of traditional food and its importance in the present scenario. They are planning to conduct a food mela to promote the traditional food habits. They also conducted awareness programs for people with disabilities. In this program they discussed discrimination and how it can be prevented.

School Awareness Programs



In Sonankuppam, ASHAA members organized check up camps in local schools. The purpose of this program is to create sanitation and environmental awareness among school children. Staff from the Primary Health Centers (PHC) and health inspectors presented and promoted the importance of personal hygiene, health related issues, and water and sanitation. They asked the children to think of themselves as models for the community and seek out ways to mobilize their villages.

Food Mela

The aim of this program is to create awareness about traditional food systems and habit among the ASHAA members. Rural communities have changed their food habits due to the influence of television advertisements, cinema, and the increasing availability of multinational products. The food mela in Sonakuppam reintroduced adolescent and middle age women to the health benefits of traditional food items. As a result, many women began to grow their own vegetable gardens.

Herbal Medicines and Kitchen Gardens

Herbal Medicine usage is traditional and popular in Tamil Nadu. ASHAA members are trained to use traditional herbal medicines and low cost traditional healthy foods to improve quality of life. By using these medicines, doctor visits and usage of medicines are reduced as



well as saving on transportation cost. Herbal Medicine was provided by Gram Mulike Company Limited (GMCL). Consultants visited the villages and gave a lecture and Demo to ASHAA members about the kitchen herbal garden and preparation of the medicine at house level for 2 days. The women sell the medicines in their village, creating awareness of eco-medicines, planting herbal gardens in every house etc.

STRENGTHENING ASHAA

Training and Sustainability

ASHAA members are trained by cluster workers to encourage self reliance and sustainability. These skills involve event organization, record keeping, working with health care professionals, fee collection, etc. Trainers are from various sectors such as Government Welfare Schemes, Solid waste management, preparation and unitization of

Effective Micro Organism (EM) solution, and ASHAA. Special training programs are geared towards new village ASHAA groups to better understand ASHAA's functions.

Making Improvements

ASHAA members have made significant programmatic improvements such as conducting camps with specialist doctors, and moving camps from the village level to the cluster level. Monthly evaluations help to determine need for future health camps. Resulting decisions are as follows:

- ASHAA members should contribute:
 - Rs.10 for annual fees
 - Rs.20 for monthly saving
 - Rs.10 for health check-ups
- ASHAA members should target their SHGs to increase ASHAA membership
- ASHAA committee members should participate in cluster level meetings

Cluster meeting

Twice monthly, ASHAA members meet at the cluster level. Each group selects three participants to attend cluster meeting to share experience and knowledge. Often community members and professionals are invited to contribute at these meetings. Regularly discussed issues are:

- Village level health check up and its follow-up
- Health fund contribution
- Enrolment of new ASHAA members
- Working with school children

- PIMS camp
- Community Trainers
- Poompukar meeting
- Village level checkups
- New government health initiatives
- Vegetable gardens

Institution Building

To increase ASHAA membership and scale up their activities, community mobilization campaigns are now taking place in many villages during health checkups to spread awareness about the need and benefits of ASHAA.

Future Goals for Health Needs

SSP is looking towards future improvement on health resources in the following areas:

- Promotion trainings and teams
- Creating a monthly activities calendar
- Access to health care
- Exposure visits
- Organizing Food Melas
- Promotion of nutrimix products
- Follow up and record maintenance

ASHAA Newsletter



In May, ASHAA began a community newsletter that is distributed to ASHAA villages in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam districts. This has become an empowerment tool for the writers and creators of the newsletter as well as an effective

form of disseminating information about ASHAA and strengthening its presence in communities.

WATER & SANITATION

Community Based Solid Waste Management Program

ASHAA members have successfully begun community based solid waste management in many villages. Now they are planning to take over the existing solid waste management sheds which were under the control of District Rural Development Authority (DRDA). They will implement this program through local SHGs with recently approved loans to be used for vermin culture. SSP is approaching the district ADB (Asian Development Bank) officials for financial help.

Promotion of Effective Microorganisms (EM) Technology

Effective Micro Organism (EM) is an eco-friendly product, which is used for ecological management of solid and liquid wastes. SSP in partnership with AuroAnnam (an Auroville Initiative) launched an EM marketing campaign in Cuddalore to help SHG members set up their own EM marketing enterprises with a focus on hotels, marriage halls, restaurants, public toilets, schools, and institutions as primary target market. ASHAA members from Akkaraigori, Sonangkuppam and Singarathoppu are using EM product to clean their house, surroundings and for effective in composing to decay the waste faster, remove the bad smell and flies, etc.

Community Water Testing



The aim of this program is to develop community trainers in various sectors as experts to teach other communities. Four women were selected to promote a community-led water test program. Members from different villages completed the two days water test training program in the Cuddalore office. This joint effort by SSP and FERAL enabled team members to conduct water testing without external help.

Exposure visits

SSP organized awareness visits for ASHAA members in Cuddalore to view solid waste management sheds and ECOSAN toilets. Issues of sanitation and personal hygiene were emphasized during the exposure visit through orientations and demonstrations. ASHAA groups have shared their experiences with others. As a result, villages have expressed interest in starting vermin compost units and ECOSAN toilets.

A recent exposure visit to Center for Environment and Agriculture Development (CEAD) in Thalalakuppam helped women

understand the process and business potential of vermi compost. The participating women received loans from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to start their businesses.

Eco Sanitation Toilet Construction

Two houses were selected to construct ECOSAN toilets in Samiyarpettai and Pudukuppam. The beneficiary is asked to contribute Rs. 1500 and manual labor for the toilet construction.

Vermi Compost



ASHAA members are already successfully running Vermicompost businesses in Sinagarthoppu village, each member can get Rs.150 to 300 per month out of this initiative. The group also opened Bank account to create a common fund to sustain the programme.

Due to their success, Nochikadu village ASHAA members have obtained ADB (Asian Development Bank) loans Rs.35,000 to start vermicompost business. They also received training from CEAD (Centre for Environment and Agriculture Development). Now the group has

engaged in construction; after 6 months the group will be eligible to get loans Rs.1.5 lakh to 2.5 lakh from ADB through DRDA.

The FERAL (Foundation for Ecological Research Advocacy and Learning) and CEAD helped us to develop Singarathoopu SWM model.

LIVELIHOODS

Retail Marketing



Women in SHG villages are being trained to learn the business of marketing. Entrepreneurs have taken up initiatives to sell SUCBICSHA (and SHG owned company in Kerala) products like soap, coconut jam, and tender coconut essence, in 20 villages in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam districts. When promoting retail market business, women often use meetings to distribute their products. AHSAA plans to setup a retail market in Indra Nagar community centre.

Enterprise Startup Fund

Enterprise Startup Funds are disbursed to women who are engaged in livelihood activities such as Aggarbathi making, Herbal

Medicine, EM production and marketing and sea shell production.

Aggarbathi Making

Rolling, scenting and packing are the main components of Aggarbathi training. A monitoring team of master trainers was formed to supervise training activities and ensure high quality products. These trainers supervise the production, local market integration, and improving skills. The selection of trainers was based on interest and willingness to invest in a small business. These women were encouraged to form activity groups, and open bank accounts.

Women who went through training were provided with raw materials and a wooden plank to practice Aggarbathi rolling. The women groups selected their leader according to the performance. This leader was given the task of



monitoring the performance of the members on daily basis. In Panchankuppam and Thennampattinam women's groups have been formed and started the production as a model for other villagers. They have had successful production and have decided to expand their market.

Seashell Production Training

Cuddalore is the main hub for seashell materials so women from Pudukkuppam village are encouraged to take up sea shell craft making. The availability of cheap raw materials creates an advantage for this program. In Pudukkuppam village, women were trained for Sea Shell production with the technical assistance of Anpalayam, an NGO based in Pondicherry. They were provided market linkages, exposure visits, and quality evaluation techniques. Many SHGs are producing seashell products not in large scale but to cater the need for the local market. They are also in negotiation with Poempuhar fishermen federation to sell their products. The products are having market at tourist centers and shops.

Coir Making Training

Since SSP is working in farmers' villages, we have identified few products that are suitable for farming communities. Coir making is one of the options for women. Women have formed activity groups and started the production. They have identified the local markets in which to sell their products. Now they will expand the activity into neighboring villages to create a good base in coir production.

Sharing Trade Techniques

Attendees: 20

ASHAA members organized a gathering of fish vending women group in Akkarai Gori to share the Poempuhar fish vending women's

federation experiences with the Cuddalore community

Exhibition

An Exhibition was held in Thiruvankadu where products including coir, seashell, shop, agarbathi and EM were displayed.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Computer course for women

Information and communication technologies are very important for coastal communities because of recent Government/NGOs initiatives to set up digitalized early warning system along the coastal belt. SSP is planning to arrange computer education for women at the village level. The community centers will act as hub of this activity.

Rose and SSP Community Task Force Training

SSP Nagapattinam team conducted a



Task Force Training with the help of ROSE in Keelamooverkarai. The Keelamooverkarai team and SSP team trained 100 people from two villages. The Task Force Training is geared to assist villages in need post disaster. Each participating village will have a task force so that aid can

be distributed as quickly as possible in the event of a disaster.

Every Task Force Team consists of 5 sub teams. Villagers were trained on the structure and functions of each team.

- 1) Warning Team
- 2) Rescue Team
- 3) First Aid Team
- 4) Relief Team
- 5) Monitoring Team

Mutual Learning Opportunities

As part of the study tour, 20 Bachelor of Social Work students from the Madurai Institute of Social Work visited SSP and discussed actions taken towards tsunami and disaster relief.

Workshop on Micro Insurance

SSP organized a two-day workshop on Micro Insurance in Pune to discuss the following:

1. Join with Government Health committees
2. Study existing insurance product in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam
3. Strengthen and standardize current health activities
4. Improve documentation
5. Increase clientele
6. Form relationships with clinics and hospitals

National Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction (NADRR)

Tamil Nadu SSP representatives attended the two-day workshop in November, 2007 which launched NADRR. The event focused on sharing lessons and building

partnerships to scale up community-led disaster reduction initiatives.

CONSTRUCTION



Women's Community Centers

Having a physical space in the village gives power to women to share their thoughts, intervene in day-to-day affairs, participate in local governance, and address basic issues in the village. The construction of such centers a product of community consultation. They were directly involved in the process of designing, getting land, usage of centre, monitoring the construction etc. In Cuddalore districts two community centre constructions are going on at Indiranagar and Swamiyarpettai. Following the completion of our recent construction project in Indira Nagar, the Electrical board (EB) finalized details to prepare for handover to the community.



ACTIVITES SUMMARY

PARTNERSHIPS

ACTIVITY	2006	2007
Health Check-Up Camp beneficiaries	1136	1478
Patients receiving advanced treatments	21	30
PIMS Camp beneficiaries	427	537
School Awareness Program beneficiaries	254	600
School Check-Up Camp beneficiaries	320	471
ORS Camp beneficiaries	872	1100
ASHAA members	262	460
Annamalai University Hospital, Chidambaram, Cuddalore		
Pondicherry Institute of Medical Science (PIMS).		
Community Based Health Mutual Fund: CARE India		
Eco Pro -Auroville		
Centre for Environment and Agriculture Development (CEAD)- Pondicherry		
Vivekanada medical laboratory - Cuddalore -1		

Media advocacy - Documentation on exchanges and dialogues with local government.

Meeting held with Tamil Nadu Tsunami Rehabilitation Centre, Chennai, NGO Coordination Council, Nagapattinam on how to improve the information, documentation and dissemination in a coordinated way.

Attended workshops organized by NCRC, CCD, Oxfam and other NGOs for the last two years.

Regular meeting with Cuddalore Collector on SSP work update and government permission for various programs. Meetings were held in Mayavaram with Collector Radhakrishnan on disaster safety technology promotion, temporary shelter improvement, and suggestion for permanent housing.

LEARNING AND ADVOCACY

Educational materials - booklets and newsletters covering issues of rehabilitation and best practices

Tsunami Update publishes regularly to keep abreast the development initiatives in tsunami rehabilitation.

Posters have been circulated on Disaster Safe Technology on house construction. Photo exhibition of various health programs and exchange visits in various villages.