

Disaster Risk Reduction in the post-tsunami context



PEOPLE'S REPORT

India, the Maldives,
Sri Lanka & Thailand

**All human beings are born free
and equal in dignity and rights.**

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

contents

1. Introduction	5
2. A review of laws, policies, institutions & plans	7
3. Approach & methodology	13
4. People's voices	17
5. Conclusion	31
Appendices	
1. Sampling criteria and approach	32
2. Suggested questions to facilitate the community consultations	33
3. Names of the organisations involved in the process of the citizens' reports in India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand	34



EVACUATION ROUTE IN THAILAND

chapter one: introduction

The Indian Ocean tsunami of 26th December 2004 was a disaster of unprecedented magnitude. Across the 12 affected countries in Asia and Africa, more than 230,000 people were reported dead or missing, over 2.1 million were displaced and left homeless, and millions of dollars of infrastructure was destroyed. The scale of the devastation presented enormous challenges for disaster response in the context of the evolving concept of disaster management. The growing realisation of the increasing incidence and costs of disasters and their negative impact on development had led to the UN International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction in the 1990s. This culminated in the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005 in Kobe, Japan, coincidentally just weeks after the tsunami. In this World Conference the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 was formulated. The Framework sets five key global priorities with a common outcome: 'the substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries'.

A close look at the priority areas reveals the inherent centrality of people from communities at risk as the primary stakeholders of all disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives. Given this central positioning of people – particularly the vulnerable groups that invariably comprise poor and excluded people – it is imperative to look at the ways in which they have been included in DRR policy and practice as it has evolved. This report covers disaster risk reduction in the tsunami response in the light of the agreed Priorities for Action in the Hyogo Framework. The report is based on the experiences of poor people regarding the integration of disaster risk reduction activities in the tsunami response in India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand. As signatories to the Framework, these countries are obligated to undertake the necessary measures to put the priorities into action.

The tsunami revealed that the countries were not prepared for such a disaster – either with warning systems to alert the population or with the institutions and plans to respond in its aftermath. Since the tsunami in 2004 and after the Kobe conference in 2005, there has been considerable development in the disaster management legislations, policies, institutional arrangements and plans in all four countries to build the national and community resilience for effective disaster risk reduction. In all countries these developments reveal a policy shift to more proactive approaches to disaster management in terms of risk reduction, mitigation and preparedness, and mark a significant departure from what were mostly relief oriented and reactive measures to disasters after they occurred.

This report presents people's experiences and views in terms of whether they feel safer, if their risk to disasters has been reduced, and whether they feel better prepared to cope with future disasters. It also presents their awareness of and relationship with the various government institutions and non-government agencies involved in disaster response and preparedness. This 'People's Report' is based on the work of alliances of 44 organisations and their discussions with 2,954 tsunami-affected people in India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The report attempts to voice some of the concerns from the people's perspective and to bring these to the attention of policy-makers and implementers, and so facilitate their inclusion in the ongoing and proposed initiatives around DRR and resilience building across the nations.

The current policy and programming efforts for disaster risk reduction in the four countries are comprehensive and conform with the HFA priorities. However, there is much that must be done to translate the laws and policies into practice. Even with the new legislation and good intentions and efforts, two and a half years after the tsunami the recovery, particularly for poor and excluded people, is very slow and the attention given in the response to reducing the risk to future disasters has been low.

This introductory chapter is followed by an analysis of the laws, policies, institutions and plans relevant to disaster risk reduction. Chapter 3 describes the approach and methodology used in consulting communities. The experience and perspectives of tsunami-affected women and men in the disaster response, vis-à-vis the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), is documented in Chapter 4. This is followed by the conclusion in Chapter 5.

chapter two: a review of laws, policies, institutions & plans

Key international instruments provide the right to development and security and are binding on India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand who have ratified them. These are the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (ICCPR), and the 1966 International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These provide the legal and political framework for the protection of human rights – for both women and men – and the assurance of dignity and well-being.

The UDHR guarantees the right to life for all people. From the perspective of disasters, the UDHR enshrines the right of every person to social security and the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights (Article 22). Likewise, Article 9 of the ICESCR recognises the rights of individuals to social security and social insurance. The ICESCR enshrines the right to livelihood and development, to be free from hunger, and to an adequate standard of living for individuals and their families, including housing (Article 11). As per Article 3, the governments are obligated to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the present Covenant.

Disasters have a tremendous detrimental impact on efforts at all levels to eradicate global poverty and their impact remains a significant challenge to sustainable development. The delegates at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005 determined to reduce disaster losses of lives and other social, economic and environmental assets worldwide. The Conference provided a unique opportunity to promote a strategic and systematic approach to reducing vulnerabilities and risks to hazards. The Conference formulated the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 which underscored the need for and identified ways of building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters. The Hyogo Declaration affirmed that States have the primary responsibility to protect the people and property on their territory from hazards, and highlighted the necessity of giving high priority to disaster risk reduction in national policy, consistent with their capacities and the resources available to them. It was agreed that strengthening community level capacities to reduce disaster risk at the local level is especially needed, considering that appropriate disaster reduction measures at that level enable communities and individuals to significantly reduce their vulnerability to hazards.



FLOODED TRANSITIONAL SHELTERS IN ERNAVORE, INDIA

The Declaration also recognised the intrinsic relationship between disaster reduction, sustainable development and poverty eradication, among others, and the importance of involving all stakeholders, including governments; regional and international organisations and financial institutions; civil society including non-government organisations and volunteers; the private sector; and the scientific community.

2.1 National laws, policies and institutions

Legislation in the form of Disaster Management Acts was passed in 2005 in India and Sri Lanka. As of October 2007, the Sri Lankan National Disaster Management Policy is in the process of being approved by the National Council and Cabinet Ministers. The Indian draft National Disaster Management Policy, though already formulated, has yet to officially enter the public domain. In the Maldives the draft National Disaster Act is currently with the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) and will be presented to the Parliament for enactment. Thailand's national policy response was an endorsement of the National Civil Defence Plan 2005 and the National Preparedness Policy (in a resolution of the cabinet meeting on 20th December 2005) in order to enhance disaster management.

Each country has established a lead agency for disaster management. In July 2005 the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) was set up in Sri Lanka, which is managed by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights (MDMHR). Under the Sri Lankan Disaster Management Act, the President and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka co-chair the National Council for Disaster Management (NCDM). In addition there is the National Disaster Management Centre under the Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services, which oversees both disaster mitigation and response activities.

In Thailand the National Civil Defence Committee is responsible for formulating policy on disaster management and prevention. The Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM), which is the secretariat of the committee under the Ministry of Interior, has the direct responsibility for disaster management and is the central coordination body amongst different government agencies. At the provincial level, the Provincial Civil Defence Committee is headed by the governor of the province and membership of the committee comprises representatives from various government disaster-related agencies. Under the Civil Defence Act of 1979, the governors are empowered to call different agencies to provide relief in case of major disasters. At the district level, the District Chief Officer heads the District Civil Defence Committee. Headed by the mayor, the Municipal Civil Defence Committee comprises the directors of bureaus and the division of

the municipal office. Each municipality is responsible for civil defence and disaster management. The Tambon (Sub-District) Administrative Organisation (TAO), at the sub-district level, prepares an annual budget for disaster relief and collaborates with the District Disaster Relief Committee for damage investigation and distribution of compensation in the villages.

Under the Ministry of Human Security and Social Development there is a sub-committee of 18 members from Ministry of DDPM, National Disaster Warning Centre, Natural Resource and Environment, Human Security and Social Development, Thai Red Cross, ADPC, academics and NGOs involved in disasters. The Thai DRR People's Report was presented to this committee. Its authority and responsibilities include: developing links and networks between government agencies, people and civil society for disaster-mitigation; and proposing collaboration and disaster-mitigation measures/recommendations to all stakeholders.

In December 2006 the DDPM developed the Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) for Disaster Risk Reduction 2007-2016. And as of October 2007 the DDPM is in the process of final consultation with different stakeholders. A consultative meeting regarding the Thai National Platform for Action is scheduled for late 2007.

India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives have also planned an institutional framework to link the national to provincial to district to local levels. For example, in India the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMA) and District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMA) are being created. To date, the government has not taken any initiative to set up the National Platform for Action as it feels that institutions such as NDMA and NIDM provide the same purpose. However, civil society organisations working on disaster risk reduction have initiated an alliance which aims to promote the development of a National Platform through mainstreaming DRR in development and influencing policies through community-driven practices and partnerships by engaging with policy makers, practitioners, academics and community representatives.

Similarly, in Sri Lanka the Disaster Management Centre is currently working on creating district level Disaster Management Centres with District Level DM Coordinators. These coordinators will then work at the local level with Disaster Management Assistants, who will then work with Gram Niladhari (GN) Committees to create voluntary village level Disaster Committees. At the local level, these committees are expected to work with the Disaster Management Coordinators and Assistants, as well as partner organisations, NGOs and Ministry representatives, to create and implement sub-country regional DRR activities. A strategic framework to coordinate disaster management activities was

created in December 2005 entitled the Road Map for Disaster Management. A meeting was facilitated by the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in collaboration with the Disaster Management Centre and UNDP in Sri Lanka in May 2007, which set the stage for setting up the National Disaster Management Coordination Committee.

In the Maldives at a national level, the key components of the organisational framework are the national Disaster Management Council, the Disaster Management Centre, the National Emergency Operations Centre and the Disaster Controller. The National Disaster Management Council has three committees: (i) Mitigation and Prevention Committee, (ii) Preparedness Committee, and Response and (iii) Relief Committee. The plan is to establish five regional (sub-country) disaster management committees and five regional emergency operations centres. The same will be followed at the atoll and island level. In September 2007 during the national consultation on Disaster Risk Reduction, the possibility of setting up a National Platform for DRR involving all the relevant stakeholders was welcomed by various civil society organisation and government ministries. This platform would build on existing national mechanisms such as the national steering committee and take into account the views and activities of all relevant in-country stakeholders.

At the South Asia regional level in 2005 an open-ended regional strategy for disaster reduction in Asia (Asia Partnership) was launched by the UN Inter-Agency Secretariat for International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) and the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre (ADRC) in consultation with the UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

In 1987 the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) initiated a "Regional Study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the Protection and Preservation of Environment". The SAARC Meteorology Research Centre was established in Dhaka in 1995 and the SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre in Male' in 2004. It was only after the tsunami that the association realised the need for a regional disaster policy. Building upon the Hyogo framework, the expert group meeting of Dhaka in November 2006 formulated the document: "Disaster Management in South Asia: A Comprehensive Regional Framework for Action 2006-2015". The emphasis of the framework is on the technical aspects of warning and risk reduction, although it does make reference to the empowerment of the "community at risk particularly women, the poor and the disadvantaged" in its strategic goals and calls for "a community focus with strong emphasis on issues of gender and the disadvantaged

embedded in all programmes". The framework does not emphasise the involvement and participation of community members – especially women – in disaster relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. This framework, as well as the Hyogo Framework for Action, does not address the conflicts and wars that have ravaged South Asian countries.

There are a range of challenges to the effective implementation of disaster risk reduction laws and policies. The recently adopted laws, policies and plans designed for citizens' protection and safety are comprehensive and are largely consistent with the HFA priorities. However, the success of these is dependent on the State maintaining an unambiguous focus on the centrality of communities at risk and particularly poor and excluded people – women, older people, people with disabilities, and people living with HIV and AIDS – whose lives and livelihoods are most susceptible to the impact of disaster. Some of the challenges are listed below:

- As presented in Chapter 4, communities report that **information** about the policies and plans has not been disseminated. Knowledge of the laws and policies and the various institutional arrangements is essential so that people can access the provisions to reduce the disaster risk and assert their rights in disaster response.
- Gaps are evident between the stated objectives and institutional arrangements, and between these and people's experience of their exclusion from **participation** in planning and decision-making processes. From example, Thailand's SNAP notes the "proactive role" of communities for a "people-centred" approach. However, it does not specify people's participation in designing and planning the disaster risk measures. On the contrary, the participation of the citizens specified is in attending training and evacuation exercises. If policies and plans are to be translated into practice, it is fundamental that community-led risk assessment, planning and execution of disaster risk reduction activities be facilitated, and people who are poor and excluded must be firmly at the centre. For this to happen, the necessary mechanisms must be incorporated into the plans and policies.
- There is difficulty in effectively **integrating disaster risk reduction strategies** into development activities anywhere. However, these difficulties are further exacerbated in regions of **war and displacement**. In Sri Lanka, tsunami-affected people consulted in the east of the country, where war has been ongoing for two and a half decades, clearly stated that the conflict was the greatest hazard in their lives. Conflict and concomitant insecurity impacts on the planning

and implementation of policies on DRR. Although war is a crucial factor in causing and aggravating risk and suffering, conflict does not feature in the Hyogo Framework for Action, and consequently the necessary policies and strategies are omitted.

- Multiple agencies with overlapping mandates and lack of clarity in roles results in both duplication and gaps. Added to that, in the tsunami context, was the uncoordinated activities of non-state actors. Policies that promote **coordination** are evident but marshalling the will and commitment to coordinate is a major challenge in disaster management. What is crucial in coordination mechanisms is guaranteeing the centrality of poor and excluded people and their institutions in the decision-making process.
- Further to this, although coordination in sharing information, experience and expertise with I/NGOs and other civil society organisations is frequently written in codes of conduct and other documents, in practice it remains elusive. This invariably results in a lack of synergy which drains away the possibility of building effective disaster-preparedness and response.
- In the existing frameworks there are a lack of mechanisms to bind intervening agencies to be **accountable** to the communities they work with regarding the way in which the resources are used. Currently the emphasis to only be accountable to the donors and governments is inadequate for efficacy of the resource use on the ground.



TSUNAMI-DESTROYED HOUSE IN SRI LANKA

chapter three: approach & methodology

The international people's report is based on the four country People's Reports from India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

3.1 Principles

The approach and methodology used in the process of bringing out the four country reports was based on the following principles:

- analysis is primarily informed and led by the experience of tsunami-affected people – particularly those who are poor and excluded – at the community level;
- the primary understanding is that human rights are core and that it is the State's responsibility to ensure affected people – regardless of their ethnicity, gender, religion or socio-economic status – enjoy their rights;
- the right to information is fundamental if people are to know and claim their rights and actively participate in decision-making;
- alliances of the tsunami-affected poor people and their institutions and allies will be formed to collectively engage with the policy-making/implementing institutions to realise their rights;
- discussions with tsunami-affected poor people will not simply extract information, but collectivise knowledge, analysis, bargaining power and voice, concurrent with poor people claiming their rights.

3.2 Focus

The discussions sought to explore the following key issues: people's reflection on their own institutions – their experience of disaster response, feelings of safety and preparedness for future disasters; people's awareness of and relationship with the various government institutions and non-government agencies involved in disaster response and preparedness; the situation regarding early warning systems; and the extent to which people's underlying risks to disaster has been reduced.

3.3 Coverage and sampling

Across the four countries, 2,954 tsunami-affected men and women were consulted through focus group discussions and individual interviews conducted by 44 organisations in 81 villages, islands and settlements. The sampling criteria and approach are described in Appendix 1, and the names of the organisations involved in the individual country processes are provided in Appendix 3.

Table 1: Community consultations - coverage and sample size

Country	No. of villages	No. of participants in focus group discussions	Key informant interviews	TOTAL	No. of organisations involved
India	31 communities (10 in A&N Islands, 21 in 5 districts in TN)	1608 (952 women, 656 men)	50	1,658	7
Maldives	13 islands in 4 atolls	157 (99 women, 58 men)	13	170	10
Sri Lanka	30 villages 5 districts	761 (484 women, 277 men)	60	821	11
Thailand	7 communities in 3 provinces	190 (88 women, 102 men)	115	305	16
Total	81	2,716	238	2,954	44

3.4 Methods and analysis

In each country, prior to the community consultations, a workshop was held with the facilitators to build a common understanding of the disaster-related laws and policies and the impact of disasters on poor and excluded people. The process, guidelines and suggested discussion questions (see Appendix 2) were designed to facilitate affected community members' analysis of hazards and disaster risk reduction, and to understand people's views and issues about DRR.

The consultations were a two-way process of sharing and learning which involved presenting the contents of HFA and country-specific laws and policies to people in a manner that helped them understand the State's obligations on the one hand and their rightful claims vis-à-vis ongoing State action around DRR on the other. It was envisaged that community consultations would also create an opportunity to facilitate communities and groups in seeing the gaps that need to be addressed in order to create safer lives and livelihoods for them and their communities. For example, in Thailand a people's alliance was formed which prepared its charter of demands and presented it to the Deputy Prime Minister. Facilitators will continue to work with consulted communities to develop community-based disaster risk reduction plans.

The information generated through the community consultative process was documented by members of the facilitation team. These notes were later shared with many of the communities for building collective knowledge, understanding and verification. Cluster sharing sessions of the facilitators were held in each district with the community consultation facilitators to compile and analyse the documented information. These district level compilations were then synthesised into the national 'People's Report'. The term 'People's Report' is used to indicate that it is the culmination of a process which has engaged members of the alliance and community representatives in its production.

3.5 Process

The following activities were conducted, using an iterative process:

- assessment of the policy environment and actors involved;
- alliance-building with organisations, movements and activists concerned with DRR;
- development of communication strategies and appropriate materials to inform the community of the rights and entitlements of people to disaster risk reduction measures;
- community awareness raising on hazards, reducing risk and their right to live in a safe community and have access to disaster risk reduction strategies;
- generating information for policy intervention through the formulation of the People's Report and a national alliance leading to advocacy work.

3.6 Constraints

There were a number of constraints which influenced the way in which the process was carried out. These included the limited timeframe; the challenges involved in putting the principles into practice and grappling with different approaches and methodologies; the goal of the report being a by-product of the overall process rather than the end product; and the generation of organic links between the micro and macro levels.



VENN DIAGRAM, THE MALDIVES

chapter four: people's voices

The Hyogo Priorities for Action provided the framework to discuss and analyse affected people's experience of disaster preparedness, reduction and response. Women and men from tsunami-affected communities consulted across India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand share common concerns about their personal safety and security on the one hand and ideas for better infrastructure and institutional support on the other.

HFA 1: DRR as a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation

People reported that their neighbours and local groups were the first to assist after a disaster, followed by community-based organisations and NGOs. As is evident from the narratives of people from tsunami-affected communities from all the four countries, they relied more on their neighbours, people from their village and community institutions such as self help groups, Mahila Mandals (Women's Council), tribal councils, mothers' unions, youth clubs, sports clubs and so on for support during emergencies. NGOs, government agencies and international organisations came later.

When the tsunami came it was the Tamil people from the neighbouring village who alerted us. When we were starving it was they who gave us food and consoled us. Even though we fight each other, it was they who came to our rescue when we were in a difficult situation.

Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

We have confidence only in the youth club within the village.

South Andamans, India

Many people said that, for example, youth groups, properly organised, would be best able to help after a disaster. People also recognised the importance of women in disaster response. Not only because they are the ones at home with children and older people but also because the women did not look to outsiders to support them – rather they were the first to respond – doing whatever they could do.

In all countries, many of the people consulted expressed their disappointment with government officials' response to the disaster. In this regard some people said that government officials did not go to the people, rather the people had to go the officials to get support and help.

No government official came to our village. Even though we went up to local government and asked for help they ignored us. In the end we approached Divisional Secretariat. He handed over our village to international NGOs. After a few days, they stopped coming to our village. All had forgotten our village.

Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

In Thailand, seven out of 10 participants consulted stated that they could not rely on the Government to provide them safety. They had encountered many incidents which led to loss of confidence and trust in the Government.

We cannot wait any more for the Government to guarantee us safety. We have to protect ourselves.

Namkem, Thailand

Across all 31 communities consulted in India, community members stated that it was the local government (*Panchayat*) that held the resources to carry out disaster reduction activities. Consulted people felt that the police, departments of fisheries, agriculture, veterinary, social welfare and primary health centres are the various government institutions which should be of help when there is a disaster. However, their experience following the tsunami was that these institutions did not provide much assistance beyond the relief phase.

The Government, both local and state, has not prioritised disaster risk reduction work and will not in the future either.

Government Official, Tamil Nadu, India

In general across all the four countries, there is a clear disconnection between government initiatives and people's awareness of them. Consultations indicated that people did not know where to access information. Despite considerable activity and organisation at the national and state/provincial level, most of those consulted did not know about or feel connected to the relevant institution(s) at the local level. In India, for example, the affected people consulted by and large were not aware of the National Disaster Management Act or the institutional arrangements such as the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) or District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) being put in place.

Similarly people on the islands in the Maldives, and in rural Thailand and Sri Lanka, generally did not know about the institutional arrangements and their government's commitment to reducing disaster risk – so they did not

know what to expect from these institutions in terms of reducing the disaster risk in their lives. Consulted inhabitants of the islands in the Maldives did not feel that there was any institution – either government or non-government – at island or atoll level which could ensure their safety in the event of a disaster.

The above reveals serious gaps in information sharing with people on the one hand and engaging them in participatory planning to reduce their risk on the other.

Why are we not informed of the new disaster policy? We are the first ones who will be at risk if disaster occurs, and the policy will affect us if implemented.

Koh Korkhao, Thailand

In India, civil society organisations working on disaster risk reduction have initiated an alliance to mainstream DRR in development and to influence policies through community-driven practices and partnerships and engagement with policy-makers, practitioners, academics and community representatives.

The Thailand DRR Alliance is a network of communities, local governmental units, non-government organisations and schools that has recently been established in Thailand with the objective of knowledge sharing and providing related support services to at-risk communities. The network aims to influence the Government so that its response meets people's needs by ensuring the people's participation in planning and decision-making on disaster management, as well as in development projects implemented in their respective communities.

Summary

In all the four countries, DRR as a national priority is reflected in the legislative, policy and institutional initiatives of the respective governments. However:

- local groups are the first to respond at the time of disaster;
- the linkages between national and local levels are yet to be strengthened;
- people are not informed about the institutions and their respective roles.

HFA 2: Identify, assess, and monitor disaster risk and enhance early warning

In all countries people said that currently **radio and television are the main sources of information** about impending hazards such as cyclones, floods and other hazards that they may face. However, communication through television and radio does not guarantee that everyone will be reached. Poorer people reported not having access to such news channels throughout the day due to the nature of their livelihood or lack of electricity in the house. They hear news through neighbours or through the mosque or temple. This indicates that the basis for a workable early warning system must recognise and link informal with formal mechanisms.

In some places people expressed concern with the State's reliance on technical rather than community-based warning systems. For example, their traditional early warning systems and practices – such as the ringing of bells in temples and churches, announcements from mosques, beating of drums – have been largely ignored.

The temple bell is the only early warning we have in our village. Sometimes soldiers in the Special Task Force camp fire warning shots into air.

Ampara, Sri Lanka

While there have been *ad hoc* activities, there is **no comprehensive early warning system in place** in most of the consulted tsunami-affected communities. And where one did exist, people were not confident that it worked. When the tsunami hit, lack of effective early warning was one of the major factors contributing to the magnitude of disaster.

None of us knew anything about a tsunami when it occurred in 2004. Had we been informed in time, we could have escaped to a safe place. We got information about the tsunami in Indonesia in 2006 through the radio and TV and were alert. Our family has now already identified a safe place to go to.

Person with physical disability, Andamans, India

An early warning system needs to be introduced in the village... Every year cyclones come and go, but the local and state governments take no safety measures. They are not bothered about our lives as they get their pay whether they give us protection or not.

Widow, Tamil Nadu, India

In mid-October 2007 the Indian National Early Warning System for Tsunami and Storm Surges in the Indian Ocean was inaugurated in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. This system will issue alerts within 13 minutes of an earthquake. How the communities at risk will get

this information is not yet clear. While people from some villages in Tamil Nadu reported improvement in community early warning systems, for example, in the form of a public address system being put in place, generally – and particularly in the context of villages in Andaman and Nicobar Islands – community-based early warning systems have yet to be evolved and put into operation. In many of these villages what exists currently is the sharing of information by word of mouth.

In Sri Lanka, some Sinhalese communities living close to the police or army camps said that they rely on the Forces for information. This is not in practice in the Tamil-speaking areas, where people are not from the same ethnic group as the majority of police and soldiers.

Thailand was the first country among those affected by the 2004 tsunami to install the Deep-Ocean Assessment and Reporting of Tsunamis (DART II) system in the Indian Ocean and 76 warning towers have been established in disaster-prone areas. However, in the consultations people said that they do not really trust these warning towers since they have never heard the alarms since they were installed a year after tsunami. After the warning system and tower test on 25th July 2007, villagers at Namkem gave their feedback to the Governor regarding the very low volume of the alarm tower in their community.

In the Maldives, residents and schools state that there are no warning systems in place and feel that in the event of an emergency, resources are not available at the island and atoll level. Even in the case of fire there are no alarms or detectors to provide warning. As there are no warning systems installed, mock drills cannot be implemented. Communities received no prior warning of the tsunami and were only aware of impending disaster as they saw the large tidal surges approaching.

During the 2004 tsunami, there was no warning, and we did not know until the waves came in, but in September [2007] we received the warning from the island office and through radio and television.

Laamu Atoll, the Maldives

The tsunami alert on 12th September 2007 indicated that much work has yet to be done. People received the news through television and radio but there was confusion about what they were to do. This is illustrated in the following description of what happened in some places in Thailand.

In Thailand the National Disaster Warning Centre (NDWC) decided not to issue an early tsunami alert after the 8.4 magnitude earthquake off the west coast of Indonesia's Sumatra Island on Wednesday evening, 12th September, because it predicted the quake, which struck about 6.10pm, would not cause giant waves in Thailand. The NDWC made a broadcast three hours later telling people there was no cause for alarm. However, people received the news through other foreign news channels which announced that waves could reach Phuket after 10pm and Phang Nga around 10.30pm. After hearing these warnings many people in the six Andaman coastal provinces rushed to high places for safety and spent the night there. Many later questioned the NDWC's warning system, which they said seemed relatively slow and there was confusion among people who did not know whether or not there would be a tsunami. An official at the NDWC stated they were alert to earthquakes in the Pacific Ocean around the clock, and would tell people to evacuate if their province was at risk. However, too many warnings would only panic people and have a bad impact on tourism.

Bangkok Post, 14th September 2007

Reports from communities indicate that although there was no alarm from the NDWC, communities

in the risk areas organised themselves to evacuate to higher ground. For example, in Namkem village which is 50 metres from the shore in Phang Nga Province, the community-based volunteer Search and Rescue Team announced to villagers to leave the shoreline and stay at the safe sites (school and temple). Namkem has a community radio system and loudspeakers have been installed in the community. On Muk Island, the loudspeaker at the mosque is used to make announcements and a women leader said villagers had helped each other to evacuate to a hill. A group of men guarded the shore and kept watch of the houses in case of burglary.

These examples reveal that although the NDWC did not turn on the alarm system, people ran for their lives. Villagers at Namkem said they could not wait for the alarm to ring because firstly, they are unsure the warning system is properly functional; secondly, all of them have already experienced the loss of loved ones and property; and thirdly, they are not confident that the Government will respond in time and with accurate and updated information.

"Whether or not the tsunami happens, first and foremost we must be alert and safe."

Namkem, Thailand

Early warning testimony: an INGO coordinator's view

I was in conflict-ridden Jaffna, Sri Lanka, in October 2005. People living in temporary shelters there told me how panicked they were by the earthquake in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India, in July 2005. While no warning was issued by the Sri Lankan Government, they had heard the news from the Indian Tamil television channels they watch regularly. In November in the Maldives, I met a group of community leaders from 16 islands who were skeptical about the effectiveness of a warning as there is no high building or place to take shelter on the island. A group of women in Tamil Nadu, India, stated: "Nobody explained why the tsunami did not happen after warnings were issued on the night of 26 March."

These people's voices remind me of the huge challenges and unpredictability in accessing warning information. The geo-political context, whether it is conflict or scattered islands in the Maldives, intersects with factors such as local occupations, patterns of migration and levels of education to determine people's ability to access information. How they act on that information is determined by the level of investment in disaster preparedness for individuals, households and institutions.

While the technical ability to predict a tsunami is a precondition of disaster reduction, the foundations of disaster reduction lie elsewhere. We have a legal and moral obligation to act together. There are inspiring examples such as Bangladesh and Cuba which show us that a safer world is possible.

HFA 3: Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels

This priority for action was not specifically included in the community consultations. However, some relevant information regarding people's perceptions about what makes them safe/unsafe, as well as some initiatives in Thailand to integrate safety awareness issues into the school curriculum, are included here.

Some attributes of what people feel are necessary for them to feel safe emerged in the discussions and are mentioned briefly. Consultations in India, for example, indicated that there is now an increased level of concern and **awareness of safety issues** among the women and men from affected communities.

We are now located at a relatively safer place since our house is being constructed at a distance from the sea and on elevated land. Still we are preparing ourselves at the family level to save ourselves from any future disaster. We shall maintain a bag at all times that will contain all the basic things such as food, clothes, important documents, drinking water and milk for young children, which can be carried when we need to run away to save our lives.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

Many of them mentioned the poor **quality of the building materials** used in temporary and permanent shelters as a major safety concern, as well as the **building design**. In the Maldives, nine out of 10 people consulted said they did not feel as safe as before the tsunami. This is because they are still living in the same buildings that were damaged by the tsunami, which have been further eroded by salt from the seawater since then. In many cases, the foundations were severely damaged. The protective walls surrounding the dwellings were destroyed by the waves and have yet to be rebuilt. As a result, there is now no protection from even small tidal waves and flooding, so people feel less secure.

Similarly in Sri Lanka, one in every four people felt that they were not safe as their house was not in good condition.

We are currently living in a neighbour's house. That is also not safe to live in. We do not know when this house will break because it was affected by the tsunami.

Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

Because of the tsunami our shelters are not safe because the walls are deteriorating. Very soon it will collapse.

The Maldives

In the Maldives, school teachers and students also do not feel that their buildings provide safety from hazards. However a few houses and buildings have been rebuilt with concrete beams and columns fixed into them. In the event of future disasters the people stated that they do not have a safe place to go as there is no high land on the islands. As passage out of the islands is also not easy due to undeveloped harbours, people feel that they may not be able to escape easily should there be another disaster.

Our village is prone to strong winds, storms, earthquakes, tsunamis and droughts. The Government should construct a wall on the seashore to control the waves and install a system to ensure that timely information about the danger of any disaster is given to the people.

Nicobar Islands, India

The impact of disasters on the **means of livelihood and modes of production** was also a concern. For example, the president of a *Mahalir Sangam* (women's group) in Thamothirapatinam, Sri Lanka, said that cyclones are the most frequent disaster they face in their village and that since their boats and nets are left near the seashore these get damaged extensively.

In Sri Lanka, all the people consulted in Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts said that **war** was the greatest threat to their safety. In the Maldives **drugs** were consistently perceived to be a serious threat to the safety of communities.

School safety programmes and curriculum development

School teachers from six schools in Trang Province, southern Thailand, have prepared a comprehensive disaster and preparedness curriculum for Grades 1 - 9 for the purpose of integrating safety awareness issues into schools. The Ministry of Education is encouraging schools to develop their own curriculum according to local necessity and appropriateness which would in turn contribute to the national curriculum. Experienced community people are involved as resource persons to share their knowledge of the sea and natural warning signals with students. Students are encouraged to undertake research that helps them understand the relationship between disasters and the ecology of their community. The findings of the action research and interviews led by the youth group will be incorporated into the school curriculum.

In the Maldives, civil society organisations are working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders to help schools, parents, teachers and the community to be prepared for natural disasters and emergencies.

A story of a school safety

"I know where to go if the wave attacks us again. My mum said, 'Run up to the hill and wait for me there'. We would meet up there."

10 year-old girl on Muk Island, Trang Province, Thailand

Muk Island, Trang Province, is home to 2,900 people comprising about 500 families. They are predominately Muslim fisher folk who depend entirely on small-scale fisheries, rubber plantations, local tourism operations and small trading.

Students on Muk Island experienced the tsunami on 26th December 2004 which left the island severely wrecked. Thirty-one houses were completely destroyed, 50 needed to be repaired, 46 boats were completely damaged and 36 partly ruined. Fortunately no one died.

Mr. Sumit Samhuay, the principal of Muk Island School, who also leads a team for curriculum development on disasters, said: "The curricula we developed includes not only tsunami but floods, landslides and storms which are potential risks on the island."

Besides the disaster curricula, Muk Island School has practised an evacuation drill. Parents were asked to acknowledge the authority of the school management in an evacuation in order to avoid a chaotic situation.



HFA 4: Reduce the underlying risk factors

The underlying cause of vulnerability raised in the consultations places poverty and powerlessness at the centre. Poor people – and particularly among them women, people with disabilities and older people – are the most affected by disasters. People’s experiences as described in the preceding sections indicates that the interventions of agencies tend to be *ad hoc* in addressing their core issues. Almost three years after the tsunami, consultations with poor people suggest that their pre-existing poverty and in turn their vulnerabilities, are largely unchanged. Poor people’s ownership of coastal land and access to the sea is being threatened; poor and excluded people’s livelihoods have not been “built back better” or diversified; and women are not safe from violence against them. However, there are also positive examples of communities organising themselves to reduce their risk to disasters.

In the areas where the consultations took place, people identified the **multiple hazards** they had faced in the past. These commonly included tsunami, floods, war/riots, rough seas, cyclones, sea erosion, droughts and communicable diseases. This is depicted in the Hazard Map in Figure 1 (see below).

Post-tsunami **housing** has yielded mixed responses from poor people. Some feel much safer while most do not and are concerned with poor quality and **relocation** issues. However, others are still waiting for a permanent house.

The house given to us is beautiful but we do not live in it as we fear the tsunami and we don’t know if it will stand or not. The previous house was bigger but only the pillars remain.

Thailand

We do not have a permanent house, nor have we been given a sufficient amount of money to build the house, nor do we have deeds for land entitlement.

Colombo, Sri Lanka

Public infrastructure, such as educational institutions, community halls and religious buildings such as temples, mosques and churches, is regarded by people as safe shelter in times of disaster, but it has been noted that a majority of these are not disaster resilient. The protection given by buildings in the Maldives is of particular concern as there is no high ground. In some cases the foundations for schools were elevated.

In Sri Lanka, people emphasised the importance of proper infrastructure, such as roads, culverts, drainage, water channels and bridges, in saving lives.

We all are Sri Lankan – we all have rights like others. But there are no sea walls on the shore to protect us in Thirukkivil. In Galle and Matara, sea walls were built within a few months.

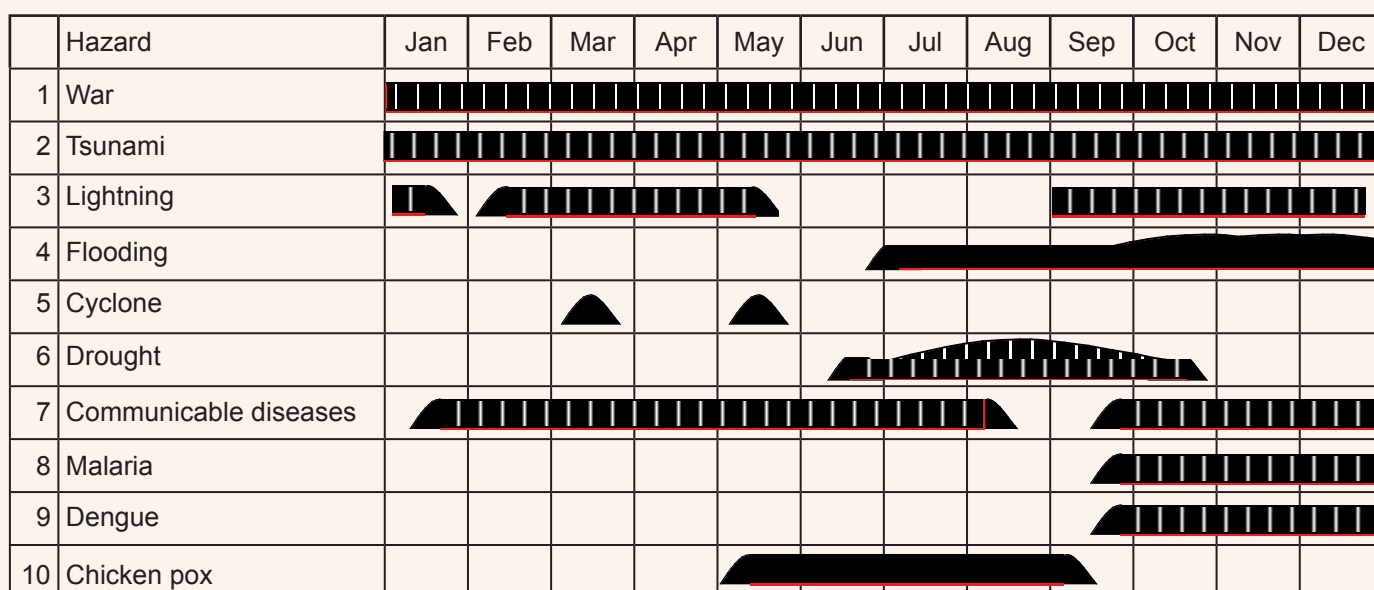
Ampara, Sri Lanka

In discussions concerning their livelihoods, fisher folk in all countries consistently expressed the need for infrastructure such as landing sites and harbours to secure their boats. In India there are instances where communities have filed petitions with the local government demanding the construction of such infrastructure.

If I were the president of this Panchayat I would give preference to building a jetty as this would take care of our livelihood issues which are very much related to our security and poverty.

Tamil Nadu, India

Figure 1: Compiled hazard map (Sri Lanka)



Poor tsunami-affected people consulted across the four countries stated that certain “**development activities**” undertaken by their government were actually increasing their vulnerability. For example, at four of the consultation sites in Tamil Nadu, India, the people were under pressure from the Government to shift their residence away from the coast, and their eligibility for government housing support was conditional on this. As most of the residents are fisher folk, moving away from the coast would adversely impact their livelihood, thereby making them more vulnerable.

Kallamozhi [relocation site] is another name for a graveyard. Instead of relocating us there it is better to bury all 105 families alive in the soil.

Tamil Nadu, India

Similarly, in Thailand community members felt that higher priority is being given by the Government to tourism than to their livelihood and security. Five out of seven community consultations revealed that mega-development projects or exclusive tourism developments have been proposed by the Government in the affected areas under the post-tsunami recovery programme. For example, in Koh Korkhao an international airport is to be constructed in response to the increasing number of foreign tourists. People said that hoteliers and land investors – with facilitation by local government officials – were able to capture mangroves and beaches for these “development” activities. They stated that these will not only increase coastal erosion but will also affect the livelihoods of the poorest fishers in particular, whose livelihoods are totally dependent on coastal resources.

The government only thinks of tourism promotion. But if there is no assurance of safety, the tourists will not come.

Koh Korkhao, Thailand

Tsunami-affected people consulted also observed that mangroves and other forms of **environmental protection** which reduce risk had received limited recognition and investment. Communities consulted in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India expressed the urgent need to revive the mangrove plantations destroyed by the tsunami as they stated that it provided protection for the communities. In Sri Lanka people reported that mangrove planting is taking place in some areas of Batticaloa and Ampara Districts.

We want mangroves to be planted at the sea side to protect our life and livelihoods from tsunami devastation.

Panama North, Sri Lanka

Securing one’s livelihood against risk was a key issue put forward by poor people. As already mentioned above, one of the most serious threats to the livelihoods of fisher folk was their eviction from the coast and thus source of their sea-based livelihoods. People living in relocation sites constantly stated that access to and the cost of transport was a severe problem.

The impact of the disaster on our livelihood has got us into debt and never-ending poverty. We wish we had alternatives to support ourselves during these hard times.

Tamil Nadu, India

Planting mangroves to prevent land grabbing by investors and to reduce disaster risk

In Namkem, Thailand, communities are planting and expanding the mangrove forest in order to occupy the beach lands and wetlands. The planting is justified as mangroves will increase safety by preventing tidal waves and strong winds. Many research studies indicate that mangrove forests saved many lives in the 2004 tsunami. In addition, mangroves are a nursery source for fisheries and are important to fish yields. Through this planting activity the community can prevent encroachment on beach land by private land investors. To do so they have strategised co-management of the coastal resources with local government agencies in the name of environmental conservation and the claim of community rights over the forests.

They plan to promote community-based tourism that integrates coastal resource management and the uniqueness of the fisher communities’ livelihoods rather than allowing independent government intervention. The community plan is for young people to take the lead in an environmental conservation campaign. The participation of women in an income generation programme under the tourism development plan has also been put forward. All of the above contribute to risk reduction measures for the community.

The temporary shelter was built in a flood-prone area. We lost our shelter again in floods and a fire. Again we were shifted – to Kargil Nagar. There is no work, no food to feed our children, so I sold my kidney and got a small amount. Again I was exploited as they did not give me the promised amount. Now I am suffering due to heavy abdominal pain. I cannot do any more work.

Chennai, India

Consultations indicated that **social protection measures** such as pension schemes for the most vulnerable and insurance of assets have patchy coverage. In some places, people have adopted various risk reduction mechanisms. For example, on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India, communities are registering and insuring their boats and livestock. However in Tamil Nadu this practice is uncommon due to both people's lack of awareness and their inability to pay insurance premiums. Similarly in Sri Lanka, only four people per 100 had insured their livelihood, primarily because they are poor and therefore do not have money to pay for insurance. Many others stated that they were not even aware about insurance schemes, which was also the case in the Maldives. There were some instances in the Maldives where the underlying risks of disaster have increased since the tsunami. For example, the small amount of agricultural land belonging to island communities was degraded by the tsunami.

Savings, micro-credit and supplementary income generation programmes are the risk reducing mechanisms used by some communities consulted in Thailand. One example is on Muk Island where, because some men are traumatised and fish less often, women are collectively starting income-generation activities to supplement the family income. In Namken more than six out of 10 people consulted were members of the community-based savings and micro-credit groups. By regulating their savings, allocating mutual benefits and ensuring participatory management of resources, this group provides safeguards against natural disasters. In many instances, the communities have used their own capital to fund community development projects.

Discussions with many poor and excluded people, such as Dalits and Irulas in India and Moken in Thailand, indicated that they were **discriminated** against when compensation was provided.

Fisher folk took all the relief and nothing was given to us because we [Irulas] are too few in number.

Tamil Nadu, India

In Moken communities, as many are not recognised as Thai citizens, the government support provided to them was minimal. One example of this was that construction of safety measures such as warning towers, evacuation

route signboards and temporary shelters in their area have been ignored by the Government.

The Government appears biased to us. They install the warning towers and signposts for evacuation routes only in the places crowded with tourists, but not in our poor daily-wage income earners community.

Tab Tawan, Thailand

In a series of community consultations with women in India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand, women described the structural discrimination they had faced in terms of their access to things such as information, participation in decision-making processes, compensation, assistance to restore their livelihoods, land tenure and housing. In addition to this structural violence against them, many of the women consulted also reported an increase in physical, sexual and emotional violence.

As a woman, I was neglected in the disaster relief and rehabilitation activities of the Government. No official spoke to me about this disaster and its impact on me.

Tamil Nadu, India

In many places poor and excluded people have **limited or no access to resources** and they said that the people who have political or economic influence and who can deal with the officials got the support. The people who are familiar with the NGOs also benefited. Across the communities in the Maldives, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand people stated that **political party affiliations** influenced, for example, the selection of the 'beneficiaries' with the supporters of the parties getting houses and the affected people missing out.

Some people said that they **could not make any complaint about the denial or abuse** they experienced. Although they are not happy, they stated they do not want to make any complaints or allegations because if they do so, they believe they will either be ignored by the officials or that these officials will take some revenge on them in the future. Many people who are poor, women and those belonging to excluded groups said that they could not approach the government officials because if they went to their offices they were ignored or insulted. Their experience is that the officials are not ready to listen to them.

Lack of information regarding government policies and guidelines concerned with compensation, housing etc. was also stated to be a problem for people, as they did not know what was happening, what they were entitled to, or how to reduce their risk to disasters.

We are not informed about what development projects are happening in our village. We have to find out on our own. Nobody tells us anything.

Fishers at Koh Korkhao, Thailand

Summary

It is evident that the tsunami response has been undertaken as a set of interventions generally in isolation from the mainstream development processes. The aim to integrate disaster risk reduction into disaster response is largely not manifested in practice. In some cases the initiated development processes appear to have used the tsunami as an opportunity to prioritise commercial interests over affected people's interests. If resilience is to be strengthened in the context of disaster response, and risks reduced, the following were identified as key issues:

- housing which is secure and in locations which provide access to people's livelihoods;
- securing or diversifying livelihoods;
- implementing social protection measures;
- respecting people's right to their land on the coast;
- building appropriate infrastructure;
- undertaking environmental protection measures;
- respecting people's right to information so they are able to claim their entitlements;
- ensuring the protection of women's rights and implementation of mechanisms to prevent violence against them;
- ensuring transparency and accountability in, for example, the preparation of beneficiary lists;
- establishing effective grievance mechanisms.

HFA 5: Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

Most of the communities consulted reported that neither they nor their institutions had, or have, the necessary information, disaster preparedness plans, resources or the skills to respond to a disaster. The tsunami warning on 12th September 2007 revealed the lack of preparedness. In many places the community-based institutions were not in place. People did not have plans and did not know where to go or what to take with them. Some people ran towards the sea to see if the tsunami was really coming. It was also evident that resources have not percolated down from the national to the local level to meet exigencies.

It was recognised by people throughout the consultations that disasters are a part of their lives and that information, skills and contingency plans are needed. People asked for government and NGO support to prepare themselves and their communities. However, across the four countries, people expressed their dissatisfaction with their respective government institutions – in general – in helping them to be better prepared for future disasters. As a result, people have started their own initiatives in preparedness. For example, women in Thailand are preparing themselves at the household and community levels.

The meeting is the matter of men. We do not know what they do for disaster management affairs... but we women must be ready if the disaster strikes... We keep important documents in a disaster [plastic] bag and put medicines and some dry food stuffs for 2-3 days... I tell my children to run up to the hill and wait for me over there. I repeat to them, don't come and seek for me at home.

Koh Muk, Thailand

I heard about the tsunami waves from people and then escaped to a safe location which saved my life... Now I know about the tsunami and I know it can occur again which is why I keep all the necessary items like clothes, documents, food etc. ready in a bag, which I can carry while running to a safe place.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

In the communities many people emphasised the importance of acquiring the **skills** that will improve their chances of survival should a disaster strike again. Some initiatives have been undertaken by both government and non-government organisations to introduce and upgrade the life-saving skills of women and men from vulnerable communities. For example women in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been trained in swimming, boating, fishing, search and rescue, and first aid.

We need training on how to develop disaster preparedness plans and how to build disaster resilient houses as this village is vulnerable to earthquakes and cyclones. We need first aid and search and rescue skills, especially to prevent people from drowning.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands, India

In Sri Lanka, six out of 10 people consulted said that they did not have the skills – in search and rescue, first aid etc. – and would like to learn. In Trincomalee District, women said that they would like to learn to climb trees and swim so that could they could save their children and families when men go out to work. Similarly, many Maldivians consulted stated that swimming, first aid, stress management and fire fighting were the necessary skills to cope with disasters. Out of 13 villages, 11 stated

that safety education had begun by way of swimming programmes, first aid and fire fighting courses at both the school and community level. Despite these initiatives, people feel that they are not adequately prepared because trained people may not always be available to assist as they may be away or working in another place during the time of hazard or disaster. This issue was also raised in Sri Lanka.

A trained rescue team was in existence earlier and most of them were young people. However, as they have now left the village for jobs it is almost non-functional.

Godana, Kirinda, Sri Lanka

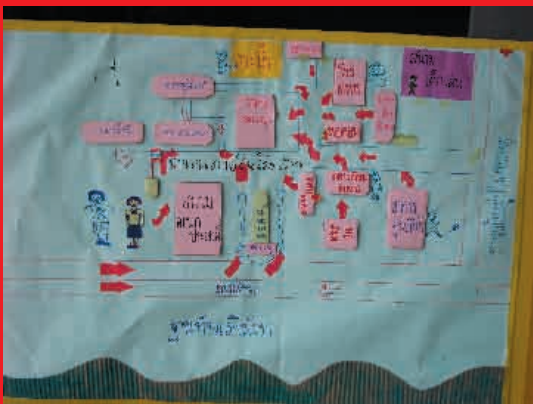
The creation of **task forces** for disaster management at the village level has been undertaken in many multi-hazard-prone districts in India. These task forces comprise women and men from the community who are trained in search, rescue and first aid. Cadres at the community level have had psychosocial training to help affected women, men, and youth cope with the trauma caused by disasters. However, along with the impartation of skills, community members also recognised the need

for an ongoing process to upgrade knowledge and regular practice of acquired skills if these are to be sustainable.

There is no rehearsal of the evacuation drill on this island. The Government called us to attend the evacuation exercise only once – on the mainland last year. That's it! I am not confident the warning tower is working. Since it was installed last year I have never seen anyone coming here to check it. I heard that the alarms in some towers did not work when turned on. Who knows, here also it may be not working?

Koh Muk Island, Thailand

Across all four countries, community members were either not aware of or not satisfied with the **contingency plans** for disaster risk reduction. In Thailand, people in general complained that they were not involved in the planning and preparedness programmes of the government. Community consultations on Muk Island revealed that government officials had placed evacuation signposts without their participation. This resulted in signposts directing people to the coast rather than to high land.



Community Action for Disaster Preparedness

In Thailand the Government has accepted the importance of community-based disaster management action plans and has also conducted this process in some villages. However, discussions with the affected people indicate that the plans were actually made by the government officials without the genuine involvement of the people – who have no knowledge of them and have not seen them.

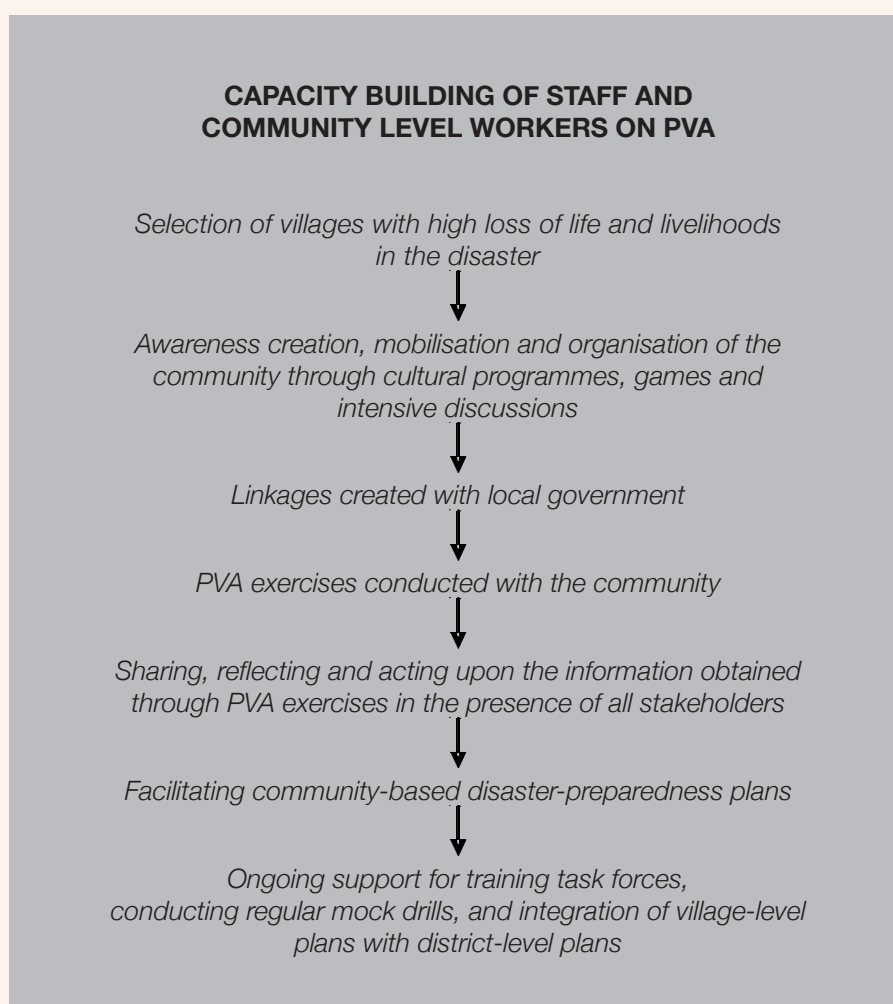
By comparison, members of Namkem community sought the support of NGOs for search and rescue volunteer training; disaster management development (village mapping, hazard and risk mapping, vulnerability and resource mapping, etc); and evacuation drill exercises. People feel that developing their own action plans is very important so that they are fully prepared to face disasters in their village. The community-based action plan on DRR has the following activities:

- Training of search and rescue volunteers;
- Community survey and database development: vulnerable groups (older people, pregnant women, children, people with disabilities, Moken, Burmese migrants), and resources available in community;
- Vulnerability mapping;
- Risk and safe route mapping;
- Temporary shelters;
- Community radio system;
- Disaster awareness and education for migrant workers and children; school safety;
- Participatory action research on local wisdom of disaster early warning;
- Mangrove reforestation to provide shelter from tidal waves and wind.

Building Disaster Resilient Communities: A participatory approach to disaster reduction in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Communities in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have, with the assistance of NGOs, been able to develop their disaster reduction plans. Participatory Vulnerability Analysis (PVA) is a tool used to develop a community-based disaster preparedness mechanism at the village level.

The most vulnerable members of society – women, children, people with disabilities and older people – are encouraged to be a part of this planning process. PVA is the facilitation of community identification of the hazards, their vulnerabilities, the resources available in the village and the formulation and implementation of a disaster-preparedness plan in order to build resilience.



During a PVA exercise in Teetop Village in Car Nicobar, it was mentioned that the village's water supply had collapsed due to the tsunami. The government supply of water was totally inadequate. It supplied 3,000 litres of water every two days for a population of 570 people.

The PVA helped the community to mobilise and act on the issue. They sent a formal letter to the Government stating the problem and demanding a sufficient quantity of water.

This collective effort bore fruit when the Government understood the gravity of the situation and increased the water supply.

I don't know which government unit came to install the posts. They came without informing me or anybody here. The people on the island know which direction to run if the tidal wave attacks again. I am worried about the tourists or visitors who are not familiar with the place. They would run to death if they follow these directions.

Muk Island, Thailand

In Sri Lanka people stated that though they could manage small-scale disasters, a collective plan was required to handle large-scale ones. In six out of the 10 villages consulted in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, community contingency plans were prepared with the assistance of NGOs and not the Government. In Tamil Nadu, contingency plans have yet to be developed by either the Government or NGOs in any of the villages consulted. Similarly in the Maldives, people stated that schools and communities are not prepared for disasters and there are no contingency plans in place.

There was a unanimous view among the various communities across all the four countries that having **better communication facilities and accessibility to safe places and institutions** would help them be better prepared to face future disasters. In the Maldives, community members stated that they were not prepared for a disaster as they did not have the infrastructure.

In summary, the communities consulted reported that:

- They do not have the necessary information, disaster preparedness plans, or the skills to respond.
- Meaningful participation of community members is essential if contingency plans are to be relevant to the protection of themselves and their community
- Accessibility of institutions, safe places and better communication facilities are key in helping communities become more resilient.

Some interventions that have been effective in reducing risk, preparing for disaster, and respecting, promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of poor and excluded people

- Organising – at local, district, state/province, national level and regional levels – with linkages that can bring the concerns of the local to the national/regional level and amplify the voices of poor and excluded people so that governments and international institutions are held accountable. For example, networks on violence against women in disasters to influence policies and practices to eliminate violence.
- Providing information in local languages about laws and policies so that people know their rights to resources, services and protection.
- Forming and/or strengthening community organisations and ensuring the involvement and leadership of women.
- Taking sides with poor and excluded people in all aspects of disasters.
- Analysing poverty, vulnerability, impact of the disaster and response programmes to ensure that poor and excluded people – particularly women – are at the centre.
- Facilitating community analysis regarding access to and control over resources and strategies to improve/develop alternative livelihoods.
- Cooperating with others to work collectively to bring about change.



WOMEN LEARN NEW LIFE SAVING SKILLS IN INDIA

chapter five: conclusion

If the fundamental goal of disaster risk reduction is to ensure the safety of people's lives and livelihoods, then people must be at the centre. In a disaster it is the people who are poor and excluded who are most affected – among them women, children, people with disabilities, older people and people living with HIV and AIDS. The four countries included in this report now have legislative and institutional frameworks for undertaking disaster management activities that include risk reduction and preparedness measures. The governments have demonstrated a commitment to DRR through the formulation, and to some extent, the operationalisation of plans at the national level.

Though many initiatives are underway, it is clear from the people's experiences and views documented in the previous chapter that HFA priorities have yet to be operationalised in disaster risk reduction work on the ground. Almost three years after the tsunami, people's consultations suggest that their pre-existing poverty, and so too their vulnerabilities, are largely unchanged. Disasters should be seen as a failure of development because (i) poverty makes people vulnerable, (ii) development programmes have not taken into account measures to mitigate the risk of hazards, and (iii) development activities themselves can create vulnerability, as in the case of promoting economic or tourism development over the rights and needs of poor people and their livelihoods.

The interventions of agencies have tended to be *ad hoc* in addressing the core issues of people who are poor and excluded. People by and large have more faith in community institutions compared to government agencies. However, most of the communities consulted reported that neither they nor their institutions have the necessary information, disaster preparedness plans, nor the skills to respond. The tsunami warning on 12th September 2007 indicated the widespread lack of preparedness.

The key issues that emerged from the community consultations include the need to:

- facilitate people's access to information;
- create and strengthen institutional mechanisms for communications, safety and social security;
- support community-led institutions and planning processes;
- ensure the participation of local people in decision-making processes;
- facilitate linkages between people's institutions and service providers;
- ensure linkages between people's village level plans with the district/provincial/national disaster management plans of the government;
- strengthen the capacity of communities including building and training task forces;
- provide the necessary financial resources e.g. for the development of infrastructure;
- establish skilled, responsive, informed and equipped government agencies from local to national level.

Political recognition and will is required to provide the necessary resources so that DRR can be integrated in all development processes and projects, particularly those related to poor and excluded communities. Policies formulated at provincial and national level must ensure the centrality of people and uphold their participation in decision-making processes; the protection of their lives and livelihoods; decentralisation; and equitable resource allocation.

appendix 1 **Sampling criteria and approach**

The selection of villages for community consultation was based on the following: (i) the degree of disaster impact on life, livelihood and habitat; (ii) the presence of various vulnerable groups; (iii) the presence of alliance members in tsunami-affected communities.

In each country, sampling was purposive to include poor and socially excluded people as well as people from different ethnic groups. In India, consultations were carried out in the state of Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. A total of **1,608** people participated in the consultation process carried out in 21 villages in five districts of Tamil Nadu and in 10 villages on the two islands of Andaman and Nicobar. Two hundred and sixty tribal people, 275 Dalits and 284 people from the most “backward classes” were consulted. In the Maldives, the process was conducted on 13 islands of the four Atolls of Laamu, Raa, Baa and Gaaf Alif covering **157** people. In Sri Lanka, 30 consultations were carried out in five districts covering **761** people. These included 133 Muslims, 243 Sinhalese and 313 Tamils. In Thailand, a total **190** people were covered through seven consultations in the provinces of Trang, Phang Nga and Krabi. Moken and Burmese migrants were consulted as they are among the most vulnerable tsunami-affected populations in Thailand who do not have Thai citizenship and consequently face discrimination.

The consultations included focused group discussions, participatory exercises and key informant interviews. In all four countries participatory exercises included:

- participatory resource mapping aimed at mapping out resources/institutions available in the village that could be of use during times of disaster;
- Venn diagrams to help understand the power dynamics at the local level particularly in terms of social and community structures, resources/institutions and relationships;
- Hazard mapping.

The people who facilitated the community consultations in each country were trained by members of the alliance so that there was a common understanding of the purpose, approach, method and desired outcomes of the consultations. The information collected from the discussions/interviews/participatory exercises was later collated and analysed by a core group and then the country level People’s Report was compiled.

The community consultation process aimed to:

- provide information to community members about the government’s obligations with respect to DRR;
- facilitate community discussion and analysis of their experience and perspectives in relation to HFA priorities for Action;
- gather poor people’s perspectives to influence policies and practices at all levels – community, district/atoll, national and international.

appendix 2 Suggested questions to facilitate the community consultations

Related to HFA priority 1: Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.

- 1.0 Do you feel safer now than before the tsunami? (i.e. less safe/safer/same) Why or why not?
- 1.1. Is your house giving you a feeling of safety from these hazards?
- 1.2. Where will you go if there is another disaster? (discuss the different options)
- 1.3. Is there somewhere safe to go?
- 1.4. What skills do you think is needed to mitigate the impact of hazards at community/GN level?
- 1.5. Do you/the community have these skills now?
- 1.6. Which institution(s) assisted or did not assist you after the tsunami? (e.g. local government officials, police, military, health personnel, NGOs, CBOs, religious organisations etc.)
- 1.7. Did the institution(s) meet your expectation for help?
- 1.8. Did the institution(s) have women staff/multi-ethnic staff/able to speak your language?
- 1.9. Which institution(s) do you feel confident will help if there is another disaster? (e.g. local government police, military, health personnel, NGOs, CBOs, religious organisations, etc.)
- 1.10 Who holds the resources to carry out the disaster preparedness/response/mitigation?
- 1.11 What help did you get from within your community itself? (e.g. youth clubs, women's groups, vigilance committees – include discussion on exclusion)
- 1.12 Are there any institutions (government and non-government) **now** at the village level/district level to ensure your safety if there is a disaster?

Ask women/PWD/single women/very poor/elderly/people from minority ethnic groups/lower "caste"/religious groups the following:

- 1.13 Are you part of these institutions? Were you consulted? Do you have information about them?
- 1.14 Are there any other affiliations which influence who gets assistance or which impact on your safety?
- 1.15 How does the information flow to and from the village re early warning, response etc.?
- 1.16 How can your community be better prepared to respond to a disaster? (note recommendations)

Related to HFA priority 2: Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.

- 2.0 What is the early warning system for each of these hazards?
- 2.1 How soon did you get the warning about the tsunami? Cyclone, landslide, flood etc. (see hazard list)

- 2.2 Does it work? Has there been a trial? Is it tested to make sure the early warning system still functions?
- 2.3 What are your traditional early warning and communication systems?

HFA priority 3 was not a focus in the consultations.

Related to HFA priority 4: Reduce the underlying risk factors.

- 3.0 Based on what happened to you during the tsunami and thinking about what you lost, what are you doing now that will reduce your risk?
- 3.1 Do you have more assets now than before the tsunami e.g. house, boat, land?
- 3.2 What is the threat of losing these assets again?
- 3.3 Is your house more resistant to disaster than before?
- 3.4 Did you have your national identity card before?
- 3.5 Do you have it now?
- 3.6 If not, how are you trying to get it?
- 3.7 Are you eligible for any social security schemes?
- 3.8 Are you receiving it?
- 3.9 Do you feel that your livelihood is more secure than prior to the tsunami?
- 3.10 What have you done to make it so?
- 3.11 If your livelihood is insecure, what are the reasons for this?
- 3.12 Have you taken up any form of insurance? E.g. for your boat, livestock etc.?
- 3.13. Do you have house? If yes, is it adequate? If no, why not?

Ask women, PWD, older people i.e. people without power, the following:

- 3.15 Do you have title to your land?
- 3.16 As a woman, do you feel that the risk of violence against you has increased OR decreased OR stayed at the same level?

Related to HFA priority 5: Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

- 4.0 Is the community prepared for disaster now?
- 4.1 Have any community institutions/groups been set up at the community level for disaster preparedness?
- 4.2 Does your community have any contingency plans in the event of a disaster?
- 4.3 What are your demands or recommendations to the Government so that you will feel safer?

appendix 3 Names of the organisations involved in the process of the people's reports in India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand

3.1 India

No.	Organisation	Location
1.	Arunodhaya	Thiruvallur, Tamil Nadu
2.	ATWT (Annai Theresa Welfare Trust)	Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu
3.	IRWO (Integrated Rural Welfare Organisation)	Ramanthapuram, Tamil Nadu
4.	ITWWS (Iruva Tribal Women's Welfare Society)	Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu
5.	SNEHA (Social Need Education and Human Awareness)	Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu
6.	VESA (Village Educational Service Association)	Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu
7.	ActionAid National Tsunami Response Programme	Chennai, Tamil Nadu, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

3.2 Maldives

No.	Organisation	Location
1.	Nilandhoo Islanders Development Society	Nilandhoo, Gaaf Alif
2.	MIDYA	Maamendhoo, Gaaf Alif
3.	Mathimaradhoo Zuvaanunge Jamiyya	Gan, Laamu
4.	Women's Development Committee	Dhabidhoo, Laamu
5.	Goidhoo Zuvaanunge Jamiyya	Goidhoo, Baa
6.	Kendhoo Zuvaanunge Gulhun	Kendhoo, Baa
7.	Feyli	Eydhafushi, Baa
8.	Wadinge Ekuveri Jamiyya	Alifushi, Raa
9.	Club Youth Star	Ungoofaaru, Raa
10.	Care Society	Male'

3.3 Sri Lanka

No.	Organisation	Location
1.	Social Welfare Economic and Industrial Development Organisation (SWIDO Vision)	Ampara District, Eastern Province
2.	Member of Young Social Workers (MOYS)	Ampara District, Eastern Province
3.	Ruhunu Rural Women's Organisation (RRW)	Hambantota District, Southern Province
4.	Economic, Education and Fostering Assistance Foundation (EEFA)	Hambantota District, Southern Province
5.	Walawe Kantha Maha Sangamaya (WKMS)	Hambantota District, Southern Province
6.	Movement for National Land and Agriculture Reform (MONLAR)	Colombo District, Western Province
7.	Sinhala Tamil Rural Women Network (STRWN)	Trincomalee District, Eastern Province
8.	Women and Child Care Organisation (WACCO)	Trincomalee District, Eastern Province
9.	Multi Ethnic Community Development Association (MECDA)	Trincomalee District, Eastern Province
10.	Al-Inzaniya Social Community Union (Al-Inzaniya)	Batticaloa District, Eastern Province
11.	ActionAid International - Sri Lanka	Colombo

3.4 Thailand

No.	Organisation	Location
1.	Coordination Centre of Ban Namkem	Ban Namkem, Phang Nga Province
2.	Tambon (Sub-District) Administration Organisation – Bangmueng TAO	Bangmueng, Phang Nga Province
3.	Tambon (Sub-District) Administration Organisation – Kukkak TAO	Kukkak, Phang Nga Province
4.	Tambon (Sub-District) Administration Organisation – Koh Korkhao TAO	Koh Korkhao, Phang Nga Province
5.	Tambon (Sub-District) Administration Organisation – Koh Libong TAO	Koh Libong, Trang Province
6.	District Office – Takuapa	Phang Nga Province
7.	District Office – Kantang	Trang Province
8.	Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation – Phang Nga	Phang Nga Province
9.	Raksthai Foundation (Care International)	Maenangkhaio, Phang Nga Province
10.	Foundation for Children	Nakornpathom Province
11.	Duang Prateep Foundation	Phang Nga Province
12.	International Organisation for Migration	Ban Namkem Health Office, Phang Nga Province
13.	Bright Smiling World	Don Muang, Bangkok
14.	Mirror Foundation	Ratchatawee, Bangkok
15.	Sustainable Development Foundation	Wangthonglang, Bangkok
16.	ActionAid International - Thailand Programme	Bangplad, Bangkok

India

Solidarity for Asserting Rights of Coastal Community (SARCC)
c/o 78 Jacob Street
Melaramanputhur, Nagercoil
Kanyakumari District
Tamil Nadu
Tel: +91(0) 46 52 22 2424/22 2345

The Maldives

Care Society
Fiyaathoshimagu
Male'
Tel: +96 (0) 33 25547
Email: info@caresociety.org.mv

Sri Lanka

The Green Movement of Sri Lanka
9, 1st Lane
Wanatha Road
Gangodawila, Nugegoda
Tel: +94 (0) 11 551 6511
Email: office@greensl.net

Thailand

i) Coordination Centre of Ban Namken Community
Ban Namkem, Bangmueng
Takuapa District
Phang Nga Province 82190
Tel: +66 (0) 89 650 7805
Email: maitreejong@yahoo.com

ii) The Mirror Foundation
41 Lertpanya Building
9th Floor, Room No. 907
Sri Ayutthaya Road
Phayatai, Ratchatawee
Bangkok 10400
Tel: +66 (0) 2 642 7991/ 642 7992 ext. 18
Email: sombat@bannok.com