

Aiming for integrated intervention

These recommendations were made at the ICSF's Chennai workshop on post-tsunami rehabilitation

The past year has seen considerable mobilization of aid and diverse interventions towards relief and rehabilitation of tsunami-affected populations in Asia, including fishing communities, who are considered among the worst affected.

A little over a year after the tsunami and after taking stock of interventions aimed at rehabilitating fishing communities, we—organizations that have been working with fishing communities for a considerable period of time in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand and India—wish to emphasize aspects that need to be integrated into the ongoing interventions of governments, multilateral agencies and NGOs.

Land and shelter

1. It is important to urgently resolve issues still hindering completion of permanent housing as part of tsunami rehabilitation, particularly issues of land allocation, after paying special attention to the problems of tenants and the homeless. Where communities decide to relocate, rights to vacated coastal lands should remain vested with the community.

2. Housing sites for fishery-dependent tsunami victims should be located at a convenient distance from areas where fishing communities store fishing equipment, access fishing grounds and dry fish. It is important to ensure common quality standards, use of locally available material and technology, proper habitat planning, basic amenities, equity and the involvement of the fishing community in the reconstruction process.

3. Titles to houses built as part of tsunami rehabilitation should be provided, and should be in the joint names of the woman and the man of the household.

Quality of rehabilitation assistance

4. Tsunami rehabilitation programmes should adopt a broader coastal development approach, and should aim to improve the quality of life and livelihood of coastal communities, including those not directly affected by the tsunami. Particular attention should be paid to historically marginalized communities and victims of conflict.

5. Governments should put in place mechanisms for the maintenance of public utilities provided by donors/NGOs as part of tsunami relief/rehabilitation programmes.

6. Mechanisms for maintaining community assets created post-tsunami, such as auction halls and fish drying and processing facilities, should be assessed, and, where lacking or inadequate, should be established, in participation with communities.

7. Transparent, single-window mechanisms should be set up to register complaints about the quality of the tsunami rehabilitation that has been delivered, as, for example, poor housing and poor-quality boats. Such complaints should be addressed in a timely manner.

8. Regional and other imbalances in the provision of tsunami rehabilitation assistance should be assessed, and equity in access to aid, ensured.

9. Mechanisms for co-ordination of tsunami rehabilitation at different levels, and between various actors, should be established/strengthened. Government-NGO partnerships for co-ordination of tsunami rehabilitation should be fostered.

10. Mechanisms to promote accountability of the different actors



involved in tsunami rehabilitation—governments, NGOs and others—should be established.

Local institutions

11. Under tsunami rehabilitation, local and traditional institutions should be strengthened, after assessing their roles, potentials and limitations. A coherent and sensitive strategy should be developed to work with them and to strengthen them in the long run.

Protection and restoration of coastal habitats

12. Protection and restoration of coastal habitats and biodiversity should be undertaken on a priority basis and should not be confined to tsunami-affected areas. It is necessary to implement/put in place measures to regulate activities that can pollute, degrade or otherwise harm the coastal environment and its capacity to protect coastal communities from future natural disasters.

13. Habitat restoration programmes in tsunami-affected areas should be undertaken in participatory ways, and should not lead to alienation of communities from coastal lands. The focus of coastal afforestation programmes, such as shelter belts, should be on native, indigenous species, and on building local awareness about their importance.

Fisheries management

14. A scientific assessment to improve understanding about the possible impact of the tsunami on fishery resources and habitats should be undertaken in affected and unaffected areas. There is, for example, reason to believe that even some “unaffected” areas are facing problems of high tides and waves after the tsunami.

15. Further construction and distribution of small-scale fishing vessels as part of tsunami rehabilitation should be undertaken only if there is clear evidence that there has been a shortfall in replacing vessels in particular regions. Where affected persons have not received vessels in a situation of oversupply, mechanisms to provide replacements should be established without further addition to the fishing fleet.

16. Efforts should be made to ensure that appropriate and selective fishing gear compatible with the status of fishery resources are distributed under tsunami rehabilitation programmes.

17. Diversification of fishing activities to target offshore fishery resources as part of tsunami rehabilitation should be undertaken only if there is evidence of resource availability and financial viability of such fishing operations.

18. Replacement of fishing vessels lost to the tsunami that have habitually been targeting fishery resources in the waters of neighbouring countries should be done only after due consultation with stakeholders to lay down conditions of access to such fishery resources.

19. Brackishwater aquaculture and mariculture should be promoted as an alternative source of employment in tsunami-affected areas only after addressing concerns of environmental and social sustainability.

20. Systems for effective registration of craft, gear, engines and fishers should be established to streamline post-tsunami rehabilitation of the fisheries sector and, where appropriate, governments should establish such systems in co-operation with relevant local institutions and NGOs.

21. Participatory programmes to improve and strengthen management regimes for the conservation of fishery resources and protection of fish habitats should be undertaken in the context of post-tsunami rehabilitation programmes. Failures on this account in the past underline the need for greater co-operation amongst fishing communities, departments of fisheries, fishworker organizations, NGOs and scientists.

Sea safety

22. Safety of fishing vessels and fishing operations should be given greater attention under tsunami rehabilitation programmes. Setting standards for boatbuilding and developing awareness among fishers about safety aspects need to be undertaken on a priority basis. Fishers should be imparted sufficient training in basic sea safety in accordance with the draft revised FAO/ ILO/ IMO Fishing Vessel Safety Code and Voluntary Guidelines.

Post-harvest operations in fisheries

23. Tsunami-rehabilitation programmes to support the post-harvest sector should promote labour-intensive, locally appropriate, low-cost technologies of fish processing. The establishment of cold chains should ensure that they benefit, and not displace, the small-scale fish processors and traders.

Insurance, compensation and social security

24. Vessel and crew insurance should be made mandatory for all fishing operations at affordable premia. Social security schemes in tsunami-affected countries, including accident benefit schemes for fishing and other coastal communities, should be developed to enhance long-term resilience and to ensure rapid recovery from disasters. The experiences of State-run systems, commercially run systems and community-managed systems need to be reviewed, to develop systems appropriate to the social, economic and legal environment of each country affected by the tsunami.

Census of fishing communities

25. A periodic census of men and women involved in fishing and fishery-related activities, including migrant fishers, should be undertaken on a priority basis

to facilitate proper enumeration and effective compensation during natural calamities, such as a tsunami.

Disaster preparedness

26. Programmes to enhance community-based disaster preparedness and training should be initiated/continued.

Women in fisheries

27. Women of fishing communities engaged in fisheries operations (fishing, marketing processing, etc.) should be recognized as workers in their own right. Tsunami rehabilitation programmes should be tailored to meet their requirements and should aim to improve women's livelihoods, conditions of work, access to resources and social security.

Diversification of livelihood options

28. The quality of education and opportunities for skill development should be enhanced to enable diversification of the livelihood options of tsunami-affected fishing communities. 3

These recommendations were presented at ICSF's "Regional Workshop on Post-Tsunami Rehabilitation of Fishing Communities and Fisheries-based Livelihoods", held in Chennai on 18 and 19 January 2006. The complete Proceedings can be downloaded from <http://www.icsf.net/jsp/english/pubPages/proceedings/pros08.jsp>.