



# Voices of Children

Building Back Better for Children

For every child  
Health, Education, Equality, Protection  
ADVANCE HUMANITY

unicef 



*Drawing by M. Shajan  
Nagapattinam*

**This document is produced by UNICEF with a view to facilitate voices of children so that programmes and interventions are suitably informed by them. We request that the views of children are respected and the information provided in this document is not misused in any way.**

# FOREWORD

Child Participation is one of the four General Principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Participation adds tremendous value to the way UNICEF operates all over the world. UNICEF strives to enable children's participation in determining both what UNICEF does and how the organization operates. At the same time, we acknowledge that Child Participation is a continuously evolving concept and we urge humility and patience amongst stakeholders in dealing with the issue.

On the one year anniversary of Tsunami, UNICEF has assembled voices of a representative group of children sharing their opinions, feelings, hopes and aspirations. Children's opinions were sought in a very positive and comfortable environment in which children were encouraged to look ahead to the future.

We trust that this document will add value to the efforts of those working for child rights and to those active in the overall development sector in the Tsunami affected districts. Stakeholders will be pleased to note the many positive views children have of their involvement. The role played by the District administration comes in for a lot of praise. We are delighted that a significant number of children aspire to be District Collectors in a desire to serve their communities!

We are grateful for the hard work of Ms. Asha Krishnakumar who spent significant time with the children and captured their views in a form that does justice to them.



**Barbara Atherly**

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# INTRODUCTION

"Instead of giving us doles, please help us to help ourselves."

"If Japan can have early warning systems and train people in disaster preparedness, why cannot we?"

"We [fishermen] have never put out our hands to get something from others. But post-Tsunami, we have become beggars. The Tsunami has put back our community by several years. The Government must help us to live with dignity."

"If at all the Government wants to help us, it should focus on children's education. It is in that that our future lies."

"With NGOs pouring in money, many of our [fishermen] men have become lazy and have also started to expect too much."

"The Government is compensating only fishermen. Others have lost as much, or even more."

"President Abdul Kalam is asking us to dream. But when we dream, we dream only of Tsunami. Can the Government help us to dream better?"

These are some of the perceptive, articulate and clear voices of children affected by the Tsunami in Nagapattinam, Cuddalore and Kanyakumari districts of coastal Tamil Nadu.

Child participation is one of the fundamental principles of child rights programme that drives UNICEF. This principle stems from Article 12 of the United Nations Child Rights Convention that emphasises the need for children to be heard and their views and opinions included in any programme directed towards them.

While child participation in a general context is perceived to be viable, in emergencies, the element of child participation tends to get relegated to the backseat. Conscious attempts have to be made to encourage participation of children in designing and implementing meaningful responses to emergencies.

Post-Tsunami, several agencies are doing extensive work on implementing child rights and child protection measures in the affected areas. There are also attempts to facilitate processes and programmes on child participation, building on existing initiatives. In Tamil Nadu, many agencies, including UNICEF, are facilitating the process of setting standards for child participation initiatives.

This report is an exercise to bring to the fore the voices of children in a very direct way and as objectively as possible with absolutely no preparation for children. This is an attempt to capture children's perspectives of their post-Tsunami situation – the damage they have suffered, their feelings, their opinions and criticisms of the relief and rehabilitation work, and their suggestions to improve their future.

Over one month, we interviewed (individually and in groups), transcribed and collated information from over 100 children in the three Tamil Nadu districts.

The experience was truly revealing. Their resilience was amazing. The knowledge and the understanding of the situation that the children had were striking.

We followed a stratified random sampling methodology to identify the children for interview. Taking care to include children across sex, age and geography, we made sure that we covered children in and out of school; children of fishermen, farmers and other occupations; and children who had lost property, siblings and one or both parents in the Tsunami. We covered children from five to 18 years.

Finally, children falling within one or more of the above categories were selected randomly for interview depending on distance, accessibility and willingness of the children to speak.

The children had no preparation and all interviews were done on the spot, in-situ - in their home, schools or rehabilitation centres. Care was taken to get the children to speak as freely as possible without any influence or coaching. To get the views of as many children as possible we conducted, apart from individual interviews, some group interviews as well.

Not all children were forthcoming initially. But after some cajoling, almost all became vocal and articulate. The exercise was enriching as children spoke their minds freely.

While in general there were some variations in responses across age, geography and sex, several issues raised by the children were common. For instance, every child seemed happy with the immediate relief work but was critical of the condition of the temporary sheds. All stressed the role of education in the rehabilitation efforts; emphasised the need to continue psychological rehabilitation for some more time; and were sure that they did not need doles but only help to help themselves.

Striking was the positive impact the "Child Care and Education Centres," run by NGOs in the evenings after school as part of the psychological rehabilitation programme, was having on children's well-being. These centres not only provided psychological support, but also helped in bringing out some of their hidden talents and interests such as painting, drawing, poetry-writing and story-telling.

With education generally at a higher level (due to the influence of the Christian missions and also because of the proximity to Kerala, the State with the highest literacy level in the country), children in Kanyakumari stressed more on sustainable livelihood enhancement and jobs, while in Nagapattinam and Cuddalore, the focus was on education and higher studies.

The girls, particularly in the 14-18 age group, were keen on continuing higher education, while boys in the same age group were more concerned about job-oriented training.

Most children of fishermen were keen on moving away from fishing as they felt it was risky and undependable; very few realised the need to move up the value chain such as seafood processing and refrigeration facility. Children of farmers as well as those of other vocations, such as petty shop owners, did not mind continuing in their father's line. However, in general, there was a desire to acquire a skill such as computer application, driving or boat-making.

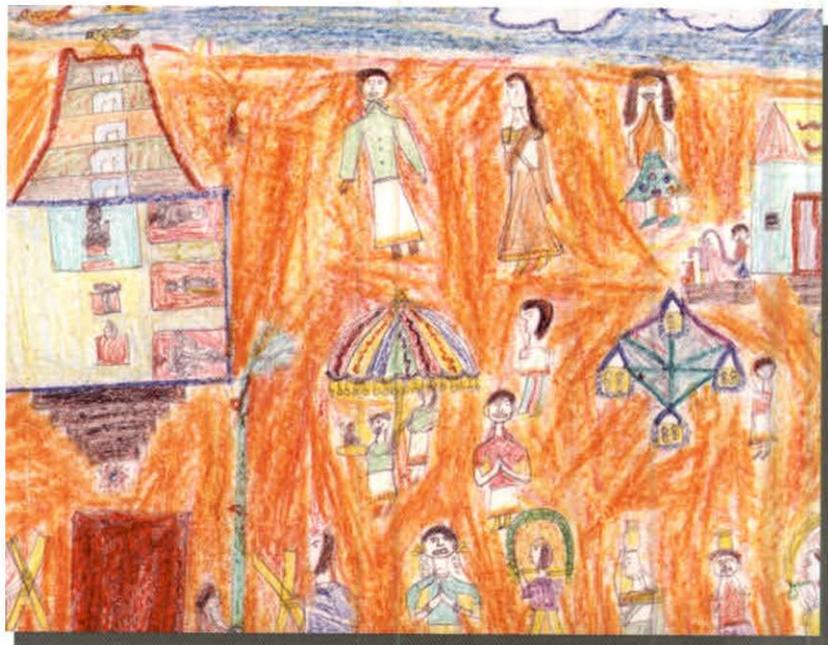
This report opens up a new world view – through the eyes, mind and feeling of children. We hope some of it gets into the programmes for children even at the designing stage, making it 'By the children, Of the children and For the children'.

**Asha Krishnakumar<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Asha Krishnakumar is a journalist, based in Chennai, with over 14 years of experience. She is a recipient of awards such as the 2003 **Kurt Schork Award** in International Journalism given by the Columbia School of Journalism and Reuters, the 2002 **Lorenzo Natali prize** for Excellence in Reporting on Human Rights, Democracy and Development issues in the Asia Pacific region given by the International Federation of Journalists and the European Union, the 2003 **Statesman Rural Reporting Award** and was selected by the **World Health Organization's WASH media award panel** for "Special recognition and Certificate of Appreciation" in 2004.

# Nagapattinam District



*V. Narmadha, Chandirapady*



**B. Dinesh**

*10 years, V standard at Government Middle School,  
Vizundhamavadi, Manalmedu*

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**M**y father, Balaiyan, works at the port and my mother, Suriyakanthi, is a housewife. My elder brother (a year older to me) died in the Tsunami.

Both of us were playing on the sea shore when the wave came. I ran homeward. But my brother was caught in the waves. It happened right in front of me...in a split second... I could do nothing.

**Feelings**

I am very scared of water. I miss my brother very much. We used to play, read and help mother together. Now, I am left doing all these things by myself.

Most times, I feel very sad. I am not able to study. My brother's body is always in front of my eyes. I think I am psychologically severely affected. Can't I be normal again?

Now I know what to do if a Tsunami comes again. I will run to a higher place.

**Future**

I want to study and earn a lot of money. But, first, I should concentrate and study.

We need a computer in the school so that we can learn, and play.

My teachers are very good. They help me in getting over my pain.

I am sure soon I will get better and do well.



*R. Kuppuraj, Chandirapady*

**S. Dinakar, 11 years &  
S. Divakar, 10 years - brothers; both in V standard  
at Vizundhamavadi Government Middle School**



**O**ur father, R. Selvaraj, had a petty shop in the Andaman Island. Our mother, S. Banumathy, is a housewife.

### Damage

We lost our house...everything...in the Tsunami. First, there was an earthquake, at around 6-30 a.m. and then came the waves. We did not understand it at first. By the time we realised what was happening it was too late. My brother and I clung on to a tree and escaped.

We came away to India to our grandparents' house in Vizundhamavadi (also a coastal village) as we had nothing in the Andamans as a fallback. Moreover, we were very scared.

Our father has just gone back to Andaman to see if he can get some compensation for the house and shop we lost. But as he was not there during the enumeration of losses, he has written that he may not get any compensation.

### Future

Most important is to bring some happiness to the Tsunami-affected. We want to study well and do something useful for the people. If the Government or an NGO can give us a computer – either for our school or our village – we can learn a lot.

While I want to become a Collector so that I can help people during calamities the way we are helped now, I want my brother (Divakar) to become a lawyer to uphold law. My brother wants to get into the army. But I think it is too risky.



R. Prasad, Nagapattinam

I want to go back to Andaman as I miss all my friends very much. But my brother is too scared to go there. He wants to stay here.

The government must also plant a lot of stress along the shoreline to provide protection from high waves. We also need good early warning systems.



**A. Malathi**

10 years, V standard at Vizundhamavadi  
Government Middle School

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**M**y father, Arumugam, is a farmer. My mother, Malarkodi, died four months after the Tsunami (she committed suicide due to depression). I have an elder brother studying in VIII standard.

**Damage**

My brother and I were injured. My grandmother was caught in the waves but was fortunately washed ashore after a few hours. She was injured severely and had to undergo treatment for several months. Now, she takes care of us.

My father lost heavily. His paddy crop was ruined. The land has also become very saline.

**Future**

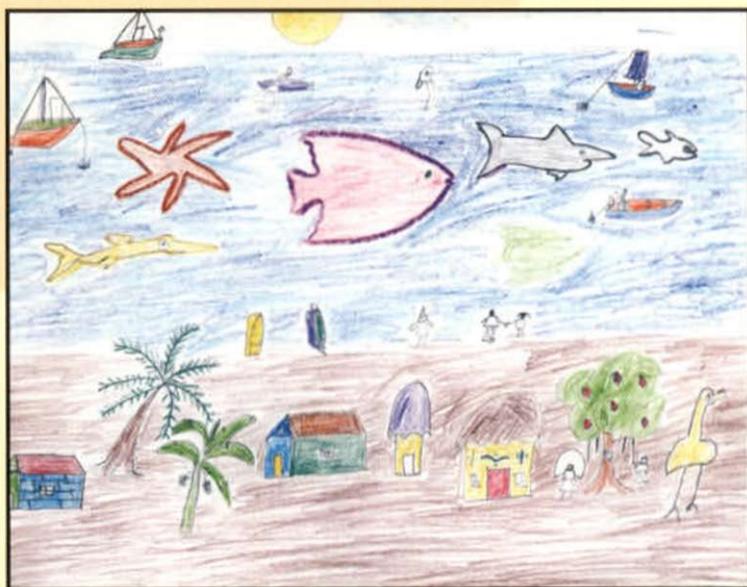
I want to study well. I am confident I will.

**Suggestions**

We need protection from the fury of the sea.

While fishermen were given compensation, farmers were not. They were only given some fertilizer, seeds and inputs.

The Government must also think of compensating people other than fisherfolk who were also affected by the Tsunami.



P. Gobu, Nagapattinam

**P. Sabarinathan**

9 years, IV standard at Government  
Middle School, Akkaraipettai



**Damage**

**M**y father, Palanivel, and mother, Parvathi, died in the Tsunami. I now live with my paternal grandmother. My elder sister lives with my uncle in the next village and is studying in VI standard there.

**Feelings**

My father died in the first wave itself. I was saved by my neighbours and was moved from one place to another.

My mother was taken away by the third wave. I saw her body in the evening. But we never got my father's body.

I miss my parents. I want them back. But I know they will never come back.

**Future**

I wish someone would tell us before such big waves strike us.



T. Shantha, Chandirapady

I want to study well and become a computer engineer because my mother wanted me to be one. I have never seen a computer...I do not even know how it looks.

If we get a computer in our school or in our village, I will train on it and fulfill my mother's wish.

I am very scared to sleep. I get nightmares. I want to play with friends all the time so that I feel better.



At the Vizundhamavadi Government Higher Secondary School, we conducted four individual interviews and one group interview with 13 students

**U. Kavitha**

*13 years, IX standard at Government Higher Secondary School, Vizundhamavadi*

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**M**y father, Utharapathy, is a fisherman and my mother, Tamilarasi, sells fish. My father had two boats. I have four brothers and two sisters. All my three elder brothers are married and live independently. The other brother and one of my younger sisters discontinued studies after VI standard due to poverty.

**Damage**

Two of my brother's children died in the Tsunami. We were able to get the body of only one of them.

My mother was severely injured as she got caught between two boats. She is yet to recover. She was an in-patient at the Thanjavur Hospital for over two months.

Our house was washed away. One of the boats was damaged and the other washed away. But it was recovered and repaired.

We moved to a temporary shed one month after the Tsunami. But the condition of the shed was so bad that we moved back to our half-damaged house.

My father is back fishing. But the catch has dwindled as has the income. We have lost terribly. Our already fragile existence has become precarious.

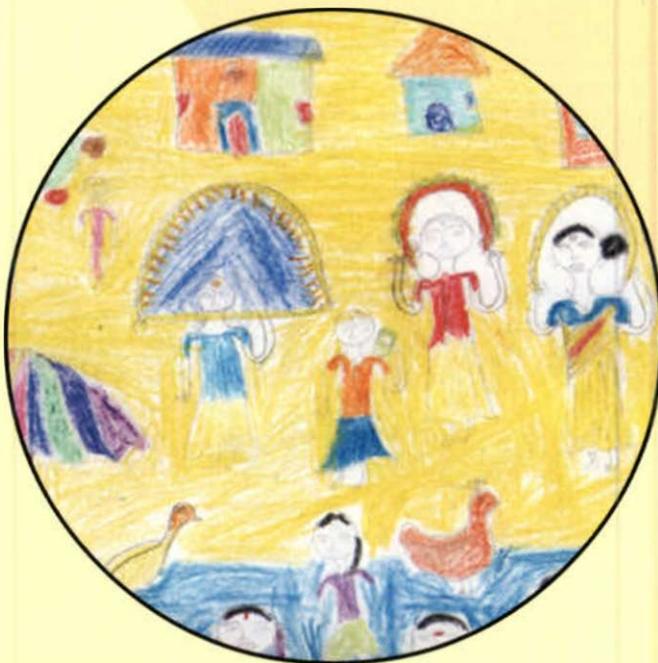
**Future**

1. We are petrified of water. We have no choice but to continue living on the coast as we are sea-dependent. We know nothing else.
2. We need good warning systems.
3. Trees along the shoreline will help stop the waves from entering our villages.



*V. Narmadha, Nagapattinam*

4. A wall or stone piles along the shoreline will also help mitigate the damage caused by the Tsunami.
5. Sanitation is very poor now. Particularly after the torrential rains...sewage water entered our house. A good drainage system is a must.
6. Good, usable toilets close to our house are badly needed. Now we walk quite a distance to answer nature's call and that too after sunset or before sunrise.
7. Girls and women are particularly vulnerable. We have lot of stomach problems. We also suffer sexual harassment.
8. I want to study well and become a teacher. My brother also wants to do higher studies. We need help such as good transportation to schools and fee-waiver.
9. We have to pay Rs. 1,200 to Rs. 2,000 every term for XI standard. This amount not many of us can afford. It is worse for families with more than one child.
10. Livelihood support and enhancement for our parents will certainly help us to continue with studies.
11. Most of us want to study well. If only we get an opportunity...



*K. Thenmozhi, Chandirapady*



**S. Aishwarya**

13 years, VIII standard at Government Higher Secondary School, Vizundhamavadi

**M**y father, Shanmugam, had a vegetable shop in the Andamans. My mother, Shanti, is a housewife. I have a younger sister, who is in VI standard.

We all escaped providentially. I and my sister held on to a tree and escaped. Our house and shop were washed away. Our school in the Andaman is almost in ruins.

We came here to live with my grandmother on January 19.

We got no compensation for all the loss as we do not have a "Tsunami certificate" given by the Andaman Administration. My father wants to go back and get it. But we are all very scared to go back.

We were studying in English medium in Andaman. But here it is Tamil medium. We find it very difficult to cope. But I am sure we will get used to it. This is better than going back.

We miss our friends very much.

**Future**

We need good early warning systems. Disaster preparedness, I realise, is non-existent. People living along the coast and whose lives depend on the sea must be taught some life-saving skills and also educated on dealing with such calamities. Hopefully, the Government will wake up now.

The relief work was very good. But what can compensate lost lives?



G Sharmila, Chandirapady

**P. Kalaimani**

16 years, IX standard at Government Higher  
Secondary School Vizundhamavadi



**M**y father, Palanisamy, is a fisherman and mother, Anjammal, a housewife. I have two brothers – one elder and the other younger – and three sisters. Two sisters are married and my elder brother goes fishing with my father.

**Damage**

Our house, boat, nets...everything was washed away. Luckily, we all escaped, though hurt.

We now live in temporary sheds. The conditions are impossible in the shed. It became unbearably hot in summer so they put thatches on top of the asbestos roof. But this has made the sheds fire-prone. Several sheds have brunt down.

When it rains the sheds leak and water, including sewage, enters our sheds. Life is miserable.

Sanitation is very poor. We get only saline, brackish water. Toilets are so poorly constructed and maintained that it is impossible to use them. Women and girls are put to untold misery because of this.

**Future**

The Government should give priority to our education.



R.S. Monisha, Nagapattinam

We need fee-waiver, good transportation to school and free books as well.

I want to get into the police department and help people.

I am sure I will study well and come up in life.

Some confidence and a lot of hope are what keep us going...



**S. Jayanthi**

*16 years, XI standard at Government Higher Secondary School, Vizundhamavadi*

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**M**y father, Selvaraj, is a farmer and mother, Nagavalli, a housewife. I have one brother in IX standard.

**Damage**

A tree fell on my father's leg and he was in hospital for several months. He is better now. My mother was also injured and is unable to walk now.

We lost the crop as the Tsunami covered our farms with black mud. We cleared our land of this muck. The Government helped us to test the soil and also gave us seeds to sow again. But, now, the crop has been lost in the heavy rains. We seem to be perpetually targeted by nature.

The soil is also ruined... it has turned saline. We do not know how long it will take for the soil to become better.

**Future**

We need good early warning systems.

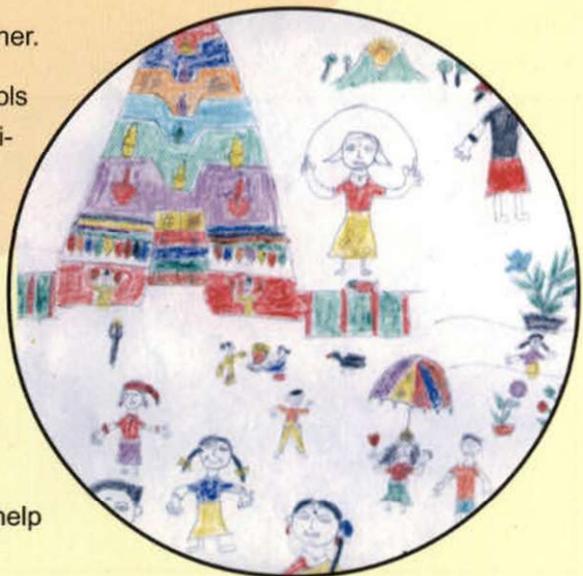
I want to study well and become a teacher.

The Government issued a GO that schools should not collect fees from the Tsunami-affected children. But this is generally not followed.

In fact, if fees are waived, even for XI and XII standards, for some more years it will be of great help to us.

I am confident that with such help, we will do much better.

We do not want doles. Only help us to help ourselves.



*G. Saranya, Chandrapady*

Interview with a group of 13 students from the Government Higher Secondary School, Vizundhamavadi

*Left to Right:*  
**K. Manimegalai,  
V. Krishnaveni,  
V. Gomathi,  
R. Kalaiselvi,  
S. Elamathi, M.  
Sasikala, M. Chitra,  
B. Jayuanthi,  
N. Bharathi, N. Vanaja,  
R. Radha, A.Saranya,  
S.Jayanthi.**



## **Damage**

**W**e all belong to farming families. We all lost heavily in the Tsunami. The standing crop was lost and the soil has been damaged by salt water intrusion and sand depositions.

Our fathers have put a lot of fertilizers that the Government experts gave, and re-sowed the land with government-provided seeds. We have to wait and see what happens. But with the heavy rains, even this crop is lost.

With salt intrusion into our land, we do not know how badly the soil is affected. Our livelihood depends on land. Now since that is affected our future seems bleak.

### **Relief & Compensation**

The relief work was good.

The Government did not give us any compensation as it did for the fishermen.

## **Future**

1. We do not want to leave our land. We need to keep rejuvenating it till it becomes better. We also need to find out what crops are suitable for this land now.
2. The government should not only help us in this but also rehabilitate us. It should provide us with loans, insurance and so on – at least for some time.
3. We are all terribly scared now. We have suffered heavy losses. Worse, we have seen death and destruction all around us – of bodies floating, of goats and cows lying dead and dead children being pulled out from under the debris. It is not easy to get over these images. It will take a long time, if at all.

We need sustained psychological rehabilitation. Classes in dance, music, painting and so on will help us to recover from the trauma of the Tsunami.



We met three children in one group of 260 temporary sheds at Akkaraipettai. There are totally 800 temporary sheds in the area.

**Ajit Kumar**

*11 years, V standard at Panchayat Union Elementary School, Akkaraipettai*

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**M**y father, A. Kanakaraj, is a fisherman and mother, K. Revathi, is a NYK (Nehru Yuva Kendra) volunteer. I have an elder brother who goes fishing with father. My father had a fibre boat. We were in Keechankuppam, in my grandmother's house, when the Tsunami struck.

**Damage**

Our house was totally damaged. The whole area looked like a graveyard. It was eerie. I saw debris from houses flying like rockets, transformer bursting and people screaming for help. I started running to a higher ground, almost by instinct.

We had four different nets to catch different types of fish. Now we have only one. Thus, our catch has dwindled and with it our income.

The fear of water is also very high here.

Our lives lie totally ruined. It will never be the same again.

**Relief & Rehabilitation**

Relief was good. But the temporary sheds are very poor. Apart from it being further away from school, the sanitation is poor, mosquitoes swarm us all the time. The walls of the tents are common, so there is no privacy and children are just unable to study here.

**Future**

I want to study well and become a Collector in order to help those affected by calamities. But the government should give us a fee-waiver at least till we complete high school (XII standard). I am confident of studying well.

I want to get away from fishing as it is scary and unpredictable.



*N. Chandrakala, Nagapattinam*

**N. Vinu**

*14 years, VIII standard at St. Anthony Lourdes  
Middle School, Akkaraipettai*



**M**y father, K. Nagamuthu, is a fisherman who works on a daily wage basis. My mother, N. Anjamma, is a housewife. I have four sisters and a brother.

### Damage

Water entered our home and pulled all of us out. My mother, father and brother were out-of-town. Two of our cousins, who were staying with us, were washed away.

My elder sister Vijaya broke her leg as a part of our neighbour's wall fell on her leg. She was severely injured. She was in the hospital for more than two months.

### Relief

The relief work was good. But the quality of rice given was very poor. Sometimes, it was hardly edible.

How long can we rely on relief? We need rehabilitation and livelihood enhancement.

My father is so scared of the sea that he hardly goes fishing. My mother buys and sells fish and with the pittance that she makes we all make do.

### Problems

We are all in the temporary sheds now.

Seven of us are in the 10ft x 10ft shed. It is too cramped and feels like being in a jail.

There is no facility to have bath or to play.

School is also at a distance from here. We are unable to study here. We feel miserable.

We are waiting for permanent houses.



*T. Susmitha, Nagapattinam*

### Future

We need long-term psychological rehabilitation and help with education.

To reduce the damage, it is important to have good warning systems and information.

At least the deaths could have been avoided with timely and proper information.



We have suffered enough. Please help us to move forward and look at the future with some hope.

**J. Nirosha**

*15 years, IX standard, Government Higher Secondary School, Akkaraipettai*

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**M**y father, Jalendiran, is a fisherman on a daily wage. My mother, Jaya, is a house wife. My brother (13) died in the Tsunami. We could not even get his body.

**Damage**

Everything we had is gone – my brother, our house and all other things.

My father does not venture into the sea. He just puts out his net close to the shore.

**Feeling**

If only we had an early warning we could have saved my brother. Life is never going to be the same again for me without my brother.

**Relief & Rehabilitation**

The relief was good. But the temporary sheds are pathetic. No toilets or place to bathe. It is extremely difficult for girls here.

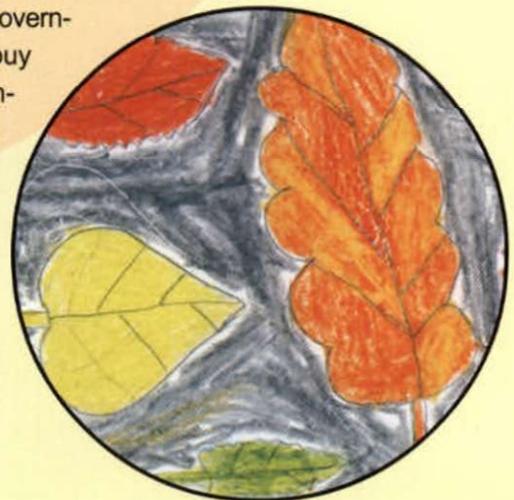
**Future**

I want to study well and become a teacher. But studies, especially XI and XII standard, are expensive. I hope the government waives our fees. Even now, we have to buy books. We are unable to afford it. The Government should give us free books. That will reduce the burden for our parents considerably.

We need sustained and continuous psychological rehabilitation to recover from the trauma we have suffered.

Whatever the relief and rehabilitation, can I get my brother back? The Government must understand the value of every life.

If only we had been warned...



*K. Mangayarkarasi, Chandirapady*

We went to the ITI camp where there are 206 temporary shelters

**R. Omsri**

14 years, VIII standard at the Government High School



**M**y father, Rathnavel, is a fisherman who goes fishing on a daily wage basis. My mother, Nagavalli, and my younger sister (7 years) died in the Tsunami.

I have two brothers.

**Damage**

I lost my mother and sister. Our house and all our belongings are also gone.

**Relief & Rehabilitation**

The relief work was good. We are in temporary sheds now. It is in a miserable condition. Toilets are horrible. The drainage is poor and they overflow. The bathrooms are unusable. You can imagine our plight, especially of girls and women.

Getting drinking water is also a problem here.

We want a permanent house. The Government has given the land. But the private trust that is to construct our houses has not even begun work.

**Problems**

We are now scared of the sea. My father hardly goes fishing because we are at a distance from the sea. Though it is 1 km as the bird flies, one has to take a circuitous route by road. Leaving by 3 a.m. is very difficult. The fish catch has also fallen.

**Future**

We need early warning systems and disaster management training, given the risk we face everyday living near the sea and being dependent on it.



K. Arulvel, Nagapattinam

We need livelihood enhancement and security. But crucial is education for children. Most of us here want to study well and get away from fishing.

I want to become a doctor. I know it is very difficult to get a seat. But I am going to put all the effort possible. The Government should waive our fees till we complete XII standard. It should also reserve seats for us in higher studies. Investing in children's future is what will last long.

We interviewed a group of five boys (17-18 years) in the second stretch of the ITI camp, which has 624 temporary sheds. All of them had dropped out of school after the Tsunami.



*Left to Right:*

**P. Jagabar Sheikh  
Allahudin, H. Shahul  
Hameed, G. Sadik  
Basha, S. Haja Jafar  
and S. Bawa Baharudin**

**E**very one of these five boys had lost at least one family member to the Tsunami. Sadiq Basha lost eight family members, including his father. But as his father's body was not found, no compensation was given.

### **Damage**

We have all suffered irreversible damage. Nothing can replace the loss of lives. But life has to go on.

Rains and damage are not new to us but this time we were caught unawares and the devastation was severe.

We were also caught by a grove on one side, a fishing colony on the second and a park on the third side. So, escape was very difficult.

For fishermen it was the fishing harbour that saved them from further devastation.

We were given compensation for lost lives (for only the bodies found). But no money can compensate our grief of the loss of our dear ones.

### **Relief & Rehabilitation**

Relief was good. The local mosque helped us a lot with relief. Some NGOs too did good work.

But the temporary sheds are miserable. We are waiting to go to permanent houses that are being constructed.

### **Future**

We need early warning systems and training in disaster preparedness.

Though unsure of the future we are quite optimistic that we can do well with some help.

We want help in terms of providing us training in some vocation, loans to set up petty shops or start a small enterprise or agency.

We want help to help ourselves.

We went to the Government-run Annai Sathya orphanage at Kadambadi that houses over 95 children with either both parents or one parent lost in the Tsunami. Here we did independent interviews with two children and then a group interview with 10.

**K. Dinesh**

12 years, V standard at the  
Government School



**M**y father, Kasirajan, died in the Tsunami. My mother, Pavalakodi, is in a temporary shed at Anbaiyanagar.

My younger sister (in III standard) is here with me in the orphanage and my elder brother is with a relative in another village.

### Damage

My father was just back from fishing with my elder brother in his catamaran and was tying the nets when the Tsunami struck. He got caught in the nets and died.

I escaped with my brother, sister and mother with the waves hoisting us onto a tree. The waves crested some of the tallest coconut tree in the village. The waves were black and huge.

Our house, catamaran...everything we had were washed away.

### Relief & Rehabilitation

Relief was good. I am very happy here at the orphanage. It is nice to be with other children. I learn a lot.

I also paint and learn karate. I am enjoying it here.

### Future



I do not want to go back to fishing. Not only because I am scared of water but also because it is risky and unpredictable.

I want to become an engineer. I will work very hard to come up in life. I do not want to regret later in life. I urge the Government to help children like me to study as much as we wish. Help with fee waiver, better transportation facility and reservation in higher studies will be very useful. It is good to be here. But I miss my father very much. He used to buy me whatever I asked. I know I can never get back my father. I will study well and make my mother proud.

K. Sathyapriya, Chandirapady



**R. Rani**

13 years, IX standard at Velipalayam Natarajan  
Damayanthi Higher Secondary School

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**M**y father, P. Ravi, died in the Tsunami. My mother, Kalaiveni, stays in a temporary shed near Velankanni.

I have five sisters. Three are here (in VII, V and III standard) and two (one in II standard and the other just 2 years old) are with my mother.

My father used to sell coconuts in Velankanni church. That fateful day he went early as it was a Sunday. He was caught in the waves.

**Rehabilitation**

We are in this orphanage the last five months. It is very good here.

I am happier here than at home. I learn karate, dancing and singing. I sleep on a mattress and read under a tube light.

I have lots of friends here. We are all fond of one another.

**Future**

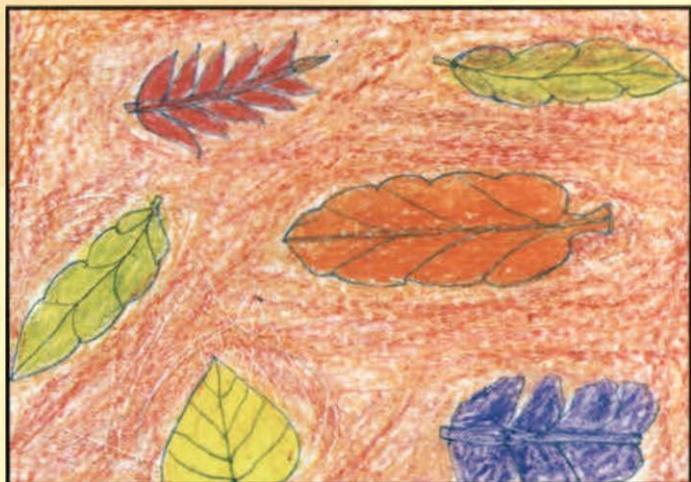
I want to become a teacher so that I can help children see the world through me just like how my teachers are helping me now.

S. Suriyakala (Nagapattinam District Social Welfare Officer in-charge of the orphanage) is like a mother to us and the Collector (J. Radha krishnan) is like our father.

They are very nice to us. They come here and spend time with us. It makes a lot of difference to us.

I am sure they will take care of my studies.

My mother wants us to study well. I will make her proud.



M. Senthamilselvi, Nagapattinam

Group interview at the Annai Sathya Orphanage.  
The happiness and bonding among children were striking.

*Left to Right:*  
**S. Subashree,  
K. Divya, A. Ramu,  
A. Tamilarasan,  
R. Rani, A. Tamilarasi,  
K. Dinesh, K. Nadia,  
A. Satish and  
N. Malaiarasi.**



1. All of us are very happy at the orphanage. We sleep on mattresses, have tube lights to read and a lot of play things which we did not have in our homes.
2. It is better than our homes as all we feel at home is sadness and the grief of having lost our parents and siblings. There is no diversion.
3. Here, we forget everything. We learn karate, singing, dancing, painting and drawing. It is like a whole new world for us.
4. All of us want to study well. We help one another with homework. But we need some help. Suriyakala Amma (District Social Welfare Officer in charge of the orphanage) has promised to get us a teacher in the evening to help us with studies.
5. We are determined to study very hard and do something useful in life. We do not want to go back to fishing. It is unpredictable, unsure and risky. Our parents have suffered enough.
6. Early warning signals and disaster preparedness would have been a big help to reduce the damage, at least the deaths.



*R. Ramanan, Chandirapady*

7. But whatever has happened is over. There is no use going over them again and again. We miss our parents very much. But we can do nothing to bring them back.

8. At least we will do well in life and fulfill their wish, which was that we study well and live with dignity.

## Summary

In Nagapattinam district, the worst affected in Tamil Nadu, 73 villages were badly hit. Human and property loss was put at several crores of rupees.

The children in this district were generally shy to speak compared to Kanyakumari. But once they were drawn out, they were clear and articulate. All of them were happy with the relief work.

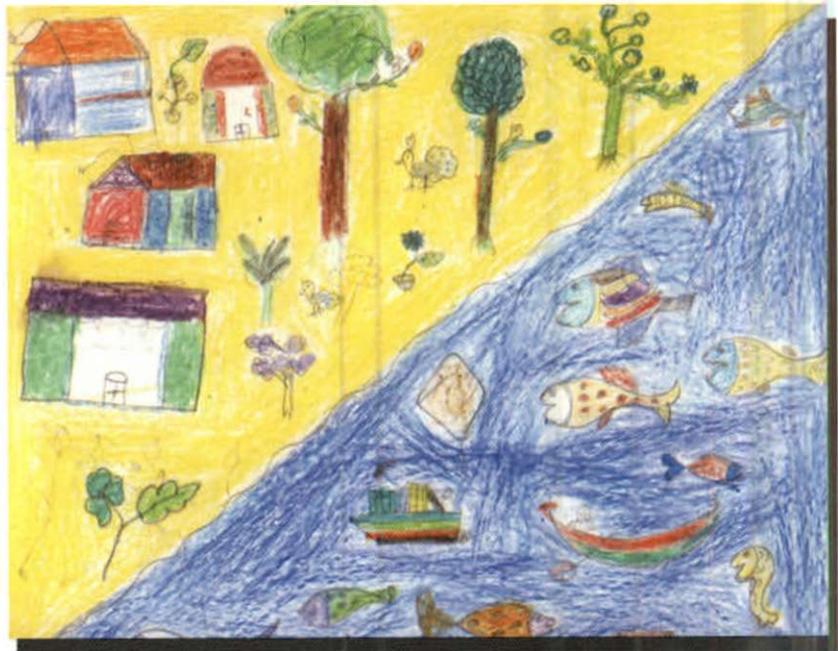
1. The emphasis in Nagapattinam was more on educational needs.

The majority of them wanted help in continuing with education. They wanted fee waiver till they complete XII standard. They also wanted free books, transportation and even special reservation in higher studies.

Some even suggested subsidy or loans for higher studies.

2. Almost all children, including in the elementary and middle schools, wanted a computer either in their school or in their village.
3. They were very vocal about the need for sanitation, particularly toilets and drinking water.
4. The children stressed the need for continuing psychological rehabilitation. Some even suggested that it be run in schools.
5. They were generally critical of the government not giving compensation to farmers and others who were affected by the Tsunami either directly or indirectly.
6. They emphasised the need for a good system of early warning and disaster preparedness.
7. The children brought out the role information dissemination can play in dealing with such calamities.
8. The good work being done by the government-run Annai Sathya Orphanage was striking. The children there seemed very happy.
9. All the children pointed to the miserable conditions at the temporary sheds.

# Cuddalore District



*V. Ezhilarasi, Devanampattinam*



Pudukuppam is one of the most affected villages in Cuddalore district with 108 people dead and 150 houses damaged. Over 30 fish buying agents also died in Tsunami. We interviewed three children in the Gandhi Peace Foundation's Child Care Education Centre in Pudukuppam. Over 45 Tsunami-affected children come here every evening to play, learn and be with each other.

**N. Keerthana**

12 years, VII standard, Pudukuppam

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**M**y father, Naguran, is a fisherman. He is now in Qatar. He went there after the Tsunami and does fishing. My mother, Poongodi, is a housewife. I have two younger sisters - one in V standard and the other in the balwadi (government play-school).

All of us escaped the Tsunami, but all our belongings were washed away. Luckily, the house escaped with minor damage.

**Feelings**

I am really scared of water. I worry about my father. He is not even with us now.

I wish there had been a warning so that the lives of hundreds of people in the village could have been saved.

I want to study well and make my parents proud.

**Rehabilitation**

This child-care centre is very good. It helps us forget the trauma we went through during and after the Tsunami.

We do painting, drawing, poetry writing, playing shuttle, and so on. We could have never dreamt of playing with many of the things we have here. Many of us have discovered talent that lay dormant in us.

I wish we had a computer here. It would make a big difference to our learning.

The rehabilitation programme for children is very good. I only hope it continues and does not stop after a year of the Tsunami, on December 26.



R. Ranjith, Cuddalore O.T

### S. Soundarya

12 years, VII standard at Samiarpettai  
Government High School



**M**y father, Sabapathy, died in the Tsunami. My mother, Nayagam, is a housewife. My father had returned from fishing and was spreading the nets to dry when the waves came. He got caught in the nets and died. My mother went to help him, but the waves pushed her atop a tree, to which she held on and was saved after a few hours.

#### Feelings

I am very scared of water. I can still see the huge black waves. I find it very difficult to study.

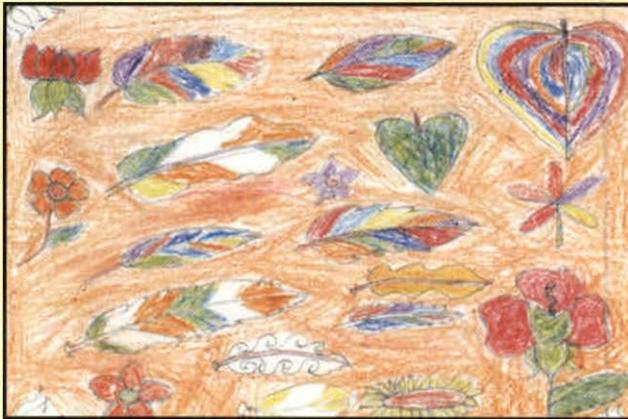
I am happy to come here (at the child-care/education centre) everyday after school. I have lots of friends here. There are also lots of things to play with. It makes me forget the trauma and feel better.

#### Future

I want to be a Collector to help the poor and the needy. The Collector was like god to us after the Tsunami. We owe him a lot. Also, my father wanted me to be a Collector. I will fulfill his wish, even if he is not alive.

I am confident I will become a Collector. But I may need help with school fees till my XII standard. Special reservation for us in higher studies will go a long way in rehabilitating us.

We need early warning systems.



R. Sangavi, Thazhanguda

We need more trees along the seashore to protect the hamlets on the shore from furious waves.

We also need to be educated on what to do during Tsunami. Had we known that, many lives could have been saved.

My mother now sells idlies. I help her. If she can be helped with some small loan to set up a petty shop or a small enterprise, it will really help us.



**D. Vineeth Kumar**

9 years, IV standard at Pudukuppam  
Panchayat Union Primary School

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**M**y father, Devadas, died in the Tsunami. My mother is a housewife. I have a younger sister (5-year-old).

My father rescued four children and was carrying them home when an old woman shouted for help. He saved her but drowned. I am proud of him. Even in death he helped others. I want to be like him.

**Feelings**

I do not want to go fishing like my father. I want to study well and become a Collector to help people. I know I can help people in many other ways but I prefer to be a Collector.

**Criticism**

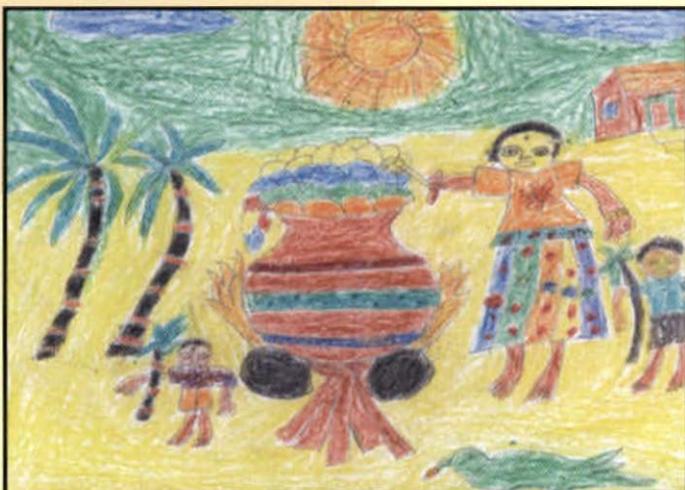
Children like me need help in education - mainly, fee waiver till we complete school. But, now, even the mandated fee waiver for the Tsunami-affected children is not followed in all schools. Worse, even the Unicef-given school-bags are issued only after collecting Rs 2 from each one of us. How can we afford it now? There must be some monitoring of the relief and rehabilitation work.

**Future**

I come first in class. But if the government does not help children like me, I am sure it will be very difficult for us to continue with our education.

I know computers. I play and draw on the computer. I hold the 'mouse' and click on 'pencil' and draw. Then I colour it with the 'brush'.

I wish this Education Centre also had a computer. It would open a new world for children like me.



R. Thirunavukkarasu, Thazhanguda

We interviewed G. Malathi in the Indra Nagar Children Education Centre run in the evenings after school

**G. Malathi**

12 years, VI standard at Pudupettai  
Government High School



**M**y father, Gajapathy, is a fisherman and my mother is a housewife. My elder brother (VII standard) died in the Tsunami. He had gone to sell fish with my aunt. But while saving my aunt from the waves, he drowned. My father is now too sick to go fishing. My mother buys and sells fish.

Our home was partially damaged, and we are back there.

The relief work was good.

### Future

I want to study well and become a teacher because I like children. I know I have to pay fees that become particularly steep in XI and XII standard. But for that, I will save every paise and also earn by doing some petty work during my holidays.

I did not know about the Tsunami. But, now, I know its fury. I also know that I must rush to a higher ground if it strikes again.

Lots of tall trees could have saved many more people. If only we were warned, we could



S. Banupriya, Devanampattinam

have saved many lives. My dear brother would have been with me. I miss him very much.

I thought sea was our life, our world. Now, all that is shattered. I do not know why the sea was so angry with us. I am now very scared of the sea.



We interviewed five children in Sonnankuppam where 558 families are living in 410 temporary sheds. Over 200 houses were completely damaged and 46 people died in this village.

**S. Parthiban**

16 years, X standard, Sonnankuppam

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**M**y father, Subramani, is a fisherman, who works on a daily wage basis. My mother, Jaya, sells fish. I had three elder sisters, of whom one died in the Tsunami.

**Damage**

We lost our sister, the house and all our belongings. All of us were hurt. We are now in the temporary shed provided by NGOs. My father is too sick to work. My mother buys and sells fish.

My elder sister used to run a petty shop and even lend some money. But now everything is lost. She is taking tuitions in the evening. But not many people can pay for the tuitions. Our family income has dropped sharply.

The relief was good. Hopefully, the rehabilitation is also good.

**Future**

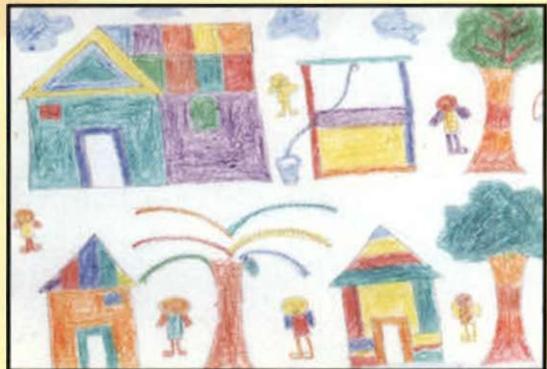
My sister knows typewriting and computers. It will be very useful if she gets some job or is given some loan to set up a small enterprise. She is smart. I am sure she will do well with some help.

I want to study well and do an ITI (technical) course because people say that gets a job easily. But the fee is a major problem. Even books and exam fee are something we can manage. The Government must help us by waiving fees till we complete XII standard.

Some special reservation for us in higher studies will also help the next generation look to better times. Fishing has become very risky and unpredictable.

But if at all some want to remain in fishing, the provision of infrastructure for value-addition such as refrigeration facility to store fish, or equipment to process sea food and so on will be useful.

Several NGOs have done good work. But almost all will go away now - one year after the Tsunami. The Government has to step in and help us now. With NGOs all over the place, expectations also increased. We need relevant and useful help from the government as for education, sanitation and livelihood. We do not want doles.



P. Suganthan, Devanampattinam

**N. ELLAPAN**

14 years, X standard, Sonnankuppam



**M**y father, A. Natarajan, committed suicide before the Tsunami due to poverty. My mother, N. Saroja, sells fish. I have four brothers and one sister. Two elder brothers are married and live separately. Only one brother goes fishing and fends for the rest of us.

Our house was totally damaged. My brother saved several children who were caught in the nets or in the shrubs as they fled. I also helped him.

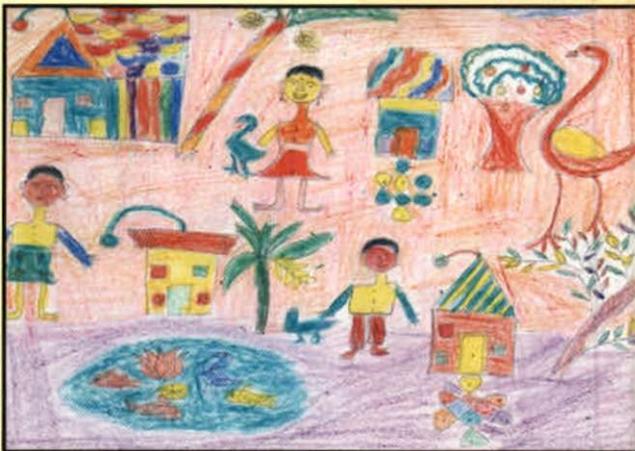
The relief work was good.

**Future**

I want to study well. With dwindling incomes from fishing, it is no longer an inviting proposition. So long our lives revolved around the sea. But now many of us want to move out of it.

I want to get into ITI (electrical). The Government must help us by waiving fees till XII standard. Even in normal times it was difficult. But now, after the Tsunami, we just cannot afford to pay fees. In fact, giving us books free would also go a long way in making sure children like me continue studies. We will be stopped from studying, pointing to the high cost.

Helping us with livelihood expansion by setting up infrastructure to add value in fishing will



R. Deepika, Cuddalore

also help those who wish to continue fishing. Sea-food processing units and ice box to store the catch longer will help us to do away with middlemen and also to wait for good prices.

Training in computers, nursing, driving and tailoring will be very helpful. There is a lot of talent and enterprise in us. Do not underestimate us. With some help we can do well too.



**K. Karthikeyan**

13 years, IX standard in Xavier  
Jesus Matriculation School

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**M**y father, M. Katavarayan, is a fisherman and my mother, K. Valarmathi, is a house wife. I have two elder sisters; one married.

**Damage**

As I fled from the waves, it was as if my house was chasing me, moved by the raging waters. All of us were injured. But my father who was on the sea shore was injured severely.

**Future**

I want to study well and join the police. School fee waiver is given to the Tsunami-affected children only for one year. After that we have to pay fees. But we cannot afford it with dwindling incomes and the reduced fish catch. Most of us are still too shell-shocked to venture into the sea as before. The Government must continue the fee waiver longer. Also when the NGOs go away, the Government must step in and help us. We need help for some more time.

It is true that alcoholism had increased when compensations were distributed immediately after the Tsunami. It also made many men lazy. So, the government must not give money to the elders. It should aid in children's education and also assist adults to help themselves.



B. Saktheeswaran, Cuddalore Port

## K. Vignesh

16 years, XI standard,  
Sonnankuppam



**M**y father, Kuppuswamy, is a fisherman who now shares a fibre-boat with five others. My mother, Vanaja, is a housewife. Two of my elder brothers and a younger sister died in the Tsunami.

Six of us had gone to the casuarina grove to collect fuelwood when the waves came. Only three of us escaped, the others, including my sister, died.

My house was damaged.

My father was severely injured. But he saved a whole street by warning them that "the water is coming, run."

But several did not take him seriously immediately. In fact, many thought it was the metro water coming in lorry to provide us with drinking water and came out with buckets.

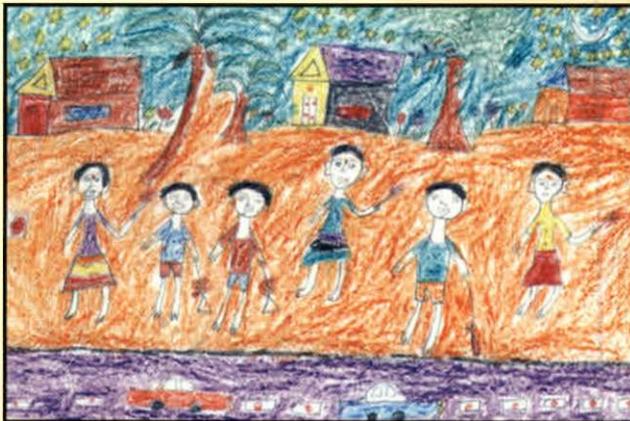
### Relief

Relief was good. It was immediate and it really saved many of us.

### Future

I want to study well and get into ITI (fitter). But money is the problem. It will be very helpful if government can help us with fee waiver.

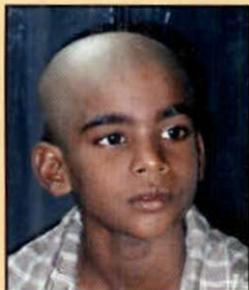
Helping us with education is much better than giving us doles or money to our parents.



R. Ranjitha, C. Pudupettai

With NGOs pouring in money and help, many men have become lazy and have started expecting too much. It is going to be a major problem when the NGOs leave our villages. Providing or planning alternative employment for adults is better than giving doles.

Investing in our education will, of course, be the best help the government can do for us.



**S. Sivakumar**  
10 years, V standard,  
Sonnankuppam

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**M**y father, Singaravelu, is disabled. My mother, Prabavati, used to collect shells and sell them. I have two sisters (one in IX standard and the other in III); both are in a hostel in the next village.

### Damage

My house was totally damaged. We now live in the temporary shed. It is terrible. My mother works in a shell sorting unit. She hardly earns half of what she used to when she sold shells herself. But now she has no money for initial investment. Our family is really suffering.

### Relief & Rehabilitation

The immediate relief work was good. But we got no compensation or help as we are not in the fishing profession. This is very unfair. With my father disabled and hardly able to move, the burden of the family is on my mother. The Tsunami has affected us as much or even more than it has the fishermen. We should get help. The Government must understand this.

### Future

I want to study well. I do not want to be a burden on my mother. Just like my sisters if I can be accommodated in some free hostel, I will be very happy. I want to do well in life and help my mother. She has suffered enough.



*B. Dineshkumar, Cuddalore*

Atrankarai village was busy with people engaged in boat-making. Having suffered severe damage to property, the village was slowly limping back to normalcy. We interviewed three children individually and also conducted a group interview with nine children.

**A. Seenu**

16 years, IX standard,  
St. David Higher Secondary School



**M**y father, S. Anbazhagan, is a fisherman and mother, A. Poongothai, a housewife. I have an elder brother who goes fishing and also does some headload work.

### Damage

Our house with all the things and books was washed away. All of us were injured.

### What Saved Us

There is no death in this area as the high wall (over 6 ft high running over 2 km) of the port saved us. But the loss of property was severe.

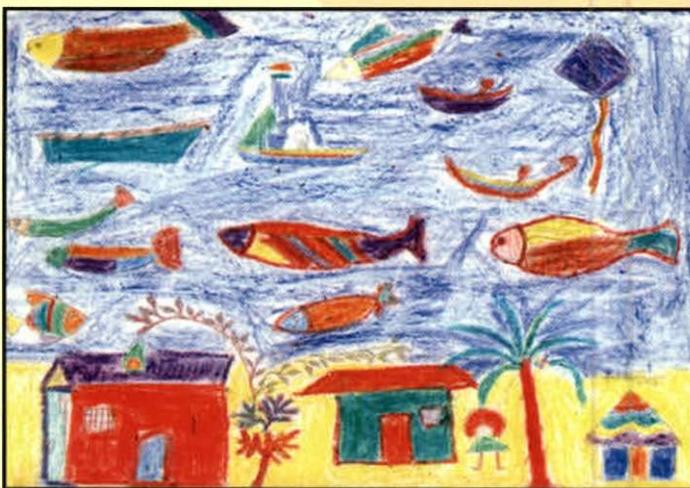
### Relief

The relief work was good. But there are no temporary shelters here as no house was fully damaged. We continue to live in our partially-damaged houses.

### Future

We are optimistic about the future. We all want to study further. I want to do ITI as that will get me a job. But we need fee waiver from the government.

Also we would like to move up the value chain in the fishing industry, such as fish processing. It would be good if the government provides us with infrastructure for that. Even small loans to do it ourselves will be very useful.



S. Irusammal, Devanampattinam

Lots of trees and high walls along the shoreline would have certainly prevented loss of life. This is amply proved by our village, which was saved by the high wall of the port.



**G. Nithya**

18 years, B.Com I year,  
St. Josephs College, Manjakuppam

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**M**y father, A. Govindaraj, died a few years ago. My mother, G. Anjalai, buys and sells fish. I have one brother and four sisters.

Our house was damaged and all the things washed away.

**Future**

I have to pay college fees. An NGO paid my first semester fees. My mother just cannot afford to pay the fees this semester.

The Government should have extended the fee waiver to college as well. After all, how many Tsunami-affected children will be in college?

**Lessons from the Tsunami**

I have learnt several things:

1. Should run for life instead of trying to save things.
2. Need for high walls, trees or stones along the seashore to serve as a protection from the huge waves.
3. We learnt the importance of saving and insurance. If only we had saved, we would not have been in such trouble. We were very arrogant as we thought we have the sea to rely on at all times. We have now learnt a lesson.
4. We also realise the importance of good, concrete house along the seashore.

SHGs were a great help in mobilising people, checking alcoholism among men, getting credit and bank loans.

I want to study well and work in a bank.



A. Gopal, C. Pudupettai

**D. Nagasundaram**

17 years, XI standard at St. David Higher  
Secondary School, Atrankkarai



**M**y father, Duraikannu, died a few years ago. My mother, Saroja, sells fish. I have a sister (in VI standard).

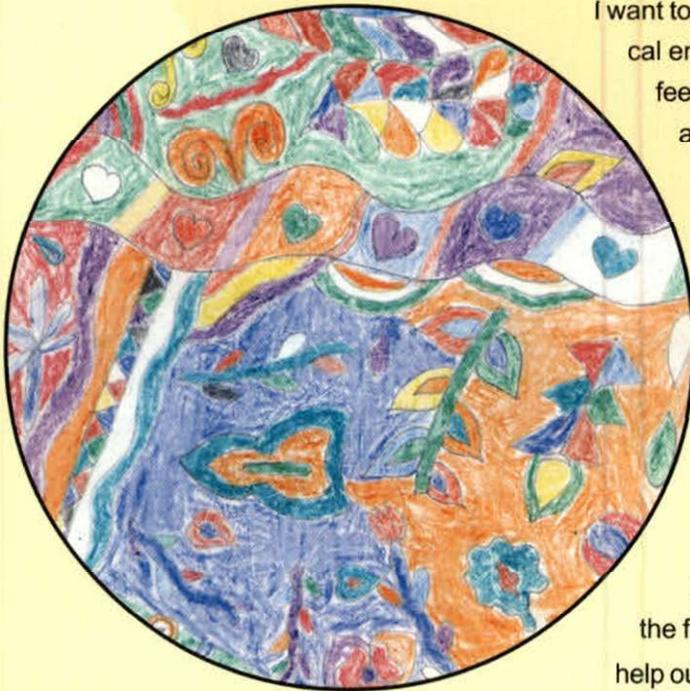
**Damage**

We lost everything. We have become poorer after the Tsunami.

**Feelings**

Already a fragile existence, our lives have now become even more risky. We feel quite helpless as such disasters are out of our control. But, at least, we should be prepared for it.

**Future**



Nandini, Thazhanguda

I want to study and become a mechanical engineer (ITI). But I need help in fee waiver. If not full waiver, at least a subsidy will be a big help.

As I am in XI standard, full fees was collected by my school. The fee waiver given by the government for the Tsunami-affected children was not extended to us. This has been a big burden on us.

The sea has become unpredictable and so has fishing. First, we need protection from the fury of the sea and next, help to help ourselves.

A group of nine children were interviewed in Atrankkarai village



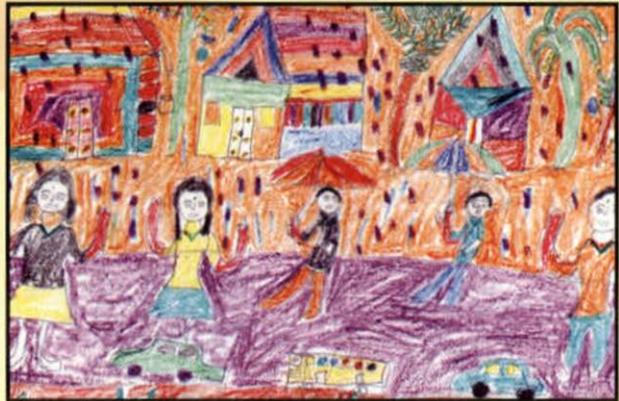
Left to Right:

A. Seenu,  
K. Sharmila,  
M. Kalaivani,  
G. Aruldas, D.  
Nagasundaram,  
S. Nagarani,  
G. Nithya,  
G. Sandhya,  
G. Vidya.

Life has changed for all of us. It seems like it can never be the same again.

### Future

1. We all want to study well. If fee waiver is extended after a year, it will help us continue our studies. Otherwise, with dwindling incomes, most of us will drop out. At the college level, if not full fee waiver, at least a partial waiver must be considered; it will be a great help. Some special reservation for Tsunami-affected children in higher education should also be considered by the government.
2. Training and infrastructure to move up the value chain in the fishing industry such as seafood processing, fish pickle making, providing cold storage and so on will go a long way in raising and sustaining our family incomes.
3. Vocational training is important for us, especially girls, to become independent. For instance, glass painting, candle making and embroidery. Providing every school/village with a computer will be very useful.
4. More than giving money to the adults, children's needs should be addressed. In fact, just giving money or doles is making men lazy and too



K. Surya, C. Pudupettai

dependent. Some men are genuinely scared of the sea. But most of them do not go fishing now as there are NGOs to help them. But once the NGOs leave – which most probably will happen next month [a year after the Tsunami] – we are sure they will start going fishing.

5. Children fear even water. They are severely traumatised. A long-term psychological rehabilitation is a must for every child. Setting up a psycho support cell in every school would be very useful.
6. To help people get over the fear and to build confidence it is important to devise and install protection measures along the coast. For instance, early warning systems, walls, trees, disaster preparedness and so on will go a long way in both mitigating damage during disasters such as the Tsunami as well as in instilling confidence.

We saw in the Discovery Channel that Tsunami strikes Japan very often and that the country has a good early warning system in place and is also well equipped to handle such disasters. Then why cannot we do it?



7. The gutters are overflowing. Sanitation is very poor. Temporary toilets have been built but their condition is pathetic and hence unusable. Cholera and dengue fever is prevalent here. We need good sanitation and drainage facility.

8. As a community, we need micro finance – a system of savings, insurance and credit. We have now realised the importance of it, especially during such disasters as the Tsunami.

## SUMMARY

1. Children in Cuddalore were generally articulate and clear.
2. They were confident of doing well. But they wanted a little push from the government.
3. Among other things they stressed the importance of providing education for all children.
4. They impressed that fee waiver till the completion of school and some special reservation in higher education will go a long way in making them self-reliant.
5. They wanted a computer in every school/village to bridge the digital divide.
6. They were critical of the government and the NGOs for giving doles or money as compensation to adults. They felt that this made them lazy and dependent.
7. They were critical of the government helping only the fishermen. They argued that others, such as farmers or petty-shop owners, were as much, if not more, affected.
8. Stressing the importance of vocational training for those keen on moving out of fishing, they also urged the government to help those who want to remain in fishing by providing them with infrastructure such as cold storage and training in seafood processing.
9. Pointing to the poor sanitation infrastructure and discussing the link between sanitation and health, the children wanted in place usable toilets and a good drainage system.
10. Stressing on long-term psychological rehabilitation, they wanted the government to think about protection measures to instill confidence among the people and to reduce the damage from such disasters.
11. Some children also pointed out the need for micro finance – credit, insurance and savings – especially important during such calamities as the Tsunami.

# Kanyakumari District



*J. Grace Dharshini, Kanyakumari*



Melamanakudi village, Rajakamangalam Block,  
Agasthiswaran Taluk (16 km from Nagercoil)

### **M. Sunil**

*17 years, second year at Kamaraj  
Polytechnic, Melamanakudi*

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**M**y father, A. Marcline, is a fisherman and mother, Arul Mary, is a housewife. There are three children in my family. My elder brother is out of the country on work and my sister is getting trained to be a teacher.

The family owns a catamaran.

### **The Damage**

All things at home, catamaran, fishing nets, and other equipment were washed away. As our house was on high ground, it was saved with minor damage.

All the 1500 families of our village (population - 7,000) were affected directly or indirectly. As many as 115 people died. Some 285 houses were fully damaged and 300 partially. Over 500 catamarans, 100 fibre boats and 81 Vallams were lost.

The total loss may be over Rs. 50 crores.

The bridge connecting the village to Kanyakumari was washed away. We now have to travel 16 km more through Nagercoil to reach Kanyakumari.

Balwadi, primary school, a fishermen-waiting shed, an auditorium, and an EB transformer were completely damaged. Fifty petty shops were washed away. Three fish processing units were damaged; each unit employed 100 families directly and indirectly.

### **Relief Work**

Immediate help was good. The Swiss NGO Carittas gave us food, clothes and so on. My father has started to go fishing only since October. The family income has come down sharply.

### **Feelings**

There is still the fear of water. We have no choice but to go to the sea for livelihood.



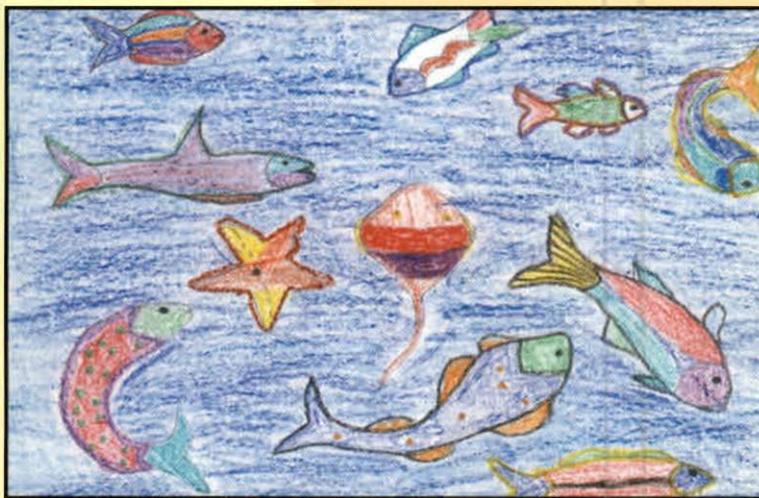
*F. Shijan, Kanyakumari*

## Future

I want to study well and do higher studies. I want to get away from fishing as I want to do something different from what my father does and also earn a secure living.

## What Needs to be Done

1. Every fisherman should have access to a means of production - that is, at least a catamaran each.
2. Rather than doles, the Government and the NGOs should revive and enhance our livelihood.
3. A lot of effort should be concentrated on the education of the children here. We need bus passes. Also, not all schools have waived fees completely as per the GO. We would also like the Government to extend the fee waiver for some more years.
4. Not only children but even the elders are still to overcome the fear of the sea. We need psycho-social help on a long-term basis to get over the fear.
5. We need groynes (toondil valayam) to stop high waves entering the villages. Villages with groynes were least affected.
6. The Melamanakudi-Kelamakudi bridge that was washed away should be constructed.
7. The hospital, 50 metres from the bridge, was also affected. It should be revived.
8. We need mangroves to stop high waves entering the villages.
9. We need a permanent - not an ad hoc - programme to rehabilitate Tsunami-affected fishermen. This should include special credit facilities, insurance cover and so on to scale up from catamaran to fibre-boats to mechanised boats. It is difficult for fisher-



*K. Rensila, Kanyakumari*

men to get loans from banks as they are unable to give security, collateral and so on.

10. The assurances given soon after Tsunami struck of providing loans in 15, 30 and 45 days never happened here.



**Fatima Shalini**

*11 years, VI standard at Little Flower High School, Melamanakudi*

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**M**y father, A. Parthiban, is a fisherman and mother, Marina, is a housewife. There are three children in the family. My younger sister is in II standard and younger brother in LKG.

**Damage**

My house was badly damaged and my parents were severely injured while running away from the waves.

**Relief & Rehabilitation**

NGOs gave food and clothing at the Carmel High School camp, 5 km from here. It was good. Carittas distributed catamarans and nets to those who lost them and is also constructing houses for the houseless. We now live in the temporary sheds.

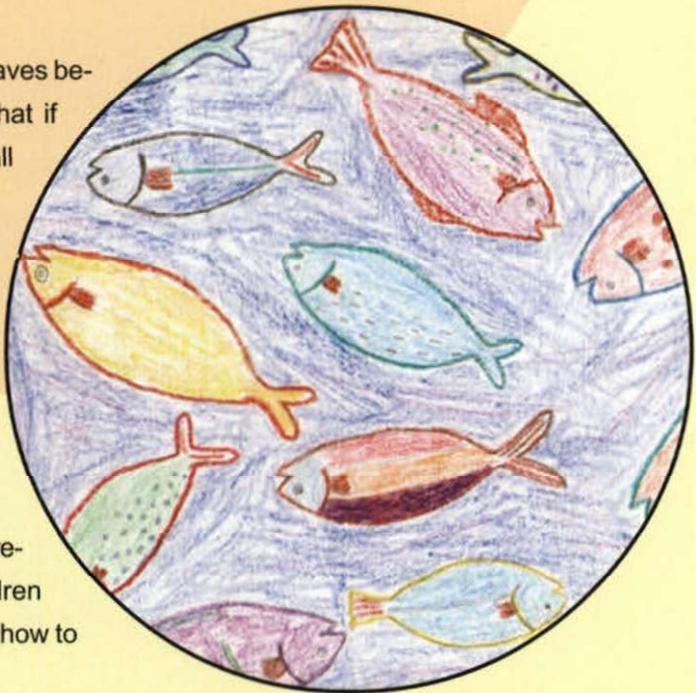
**Feelings**

I am not scared of water or waves because now I am confident that if something happens we are all affected.

I also now know what I must do if a Tsunami strikes again: Run to a higher place without wasting time on saving the belongings.

**Future**

I want to become a nun and create awareness among children about natural calamities and how to protect themselves.



*A. Shamini, Kanyakumari*



**A. Kebin**

*10 years, V standard at St. Antony's Primary School, Melapakkam, Melamanakudi*

**M**y father, Antony Adimai, is a fisherman and mother, Anthoniammal, is a housewife. I am the only son. My father does not own any catamaran but goes fishing with my uncle.

### Damage

My uncle lost his catamaran. Our house - a big one along the sea shore - was washed away with all our belongings.

### Relief

We all escaped and remained at the Kottar church for more than two months before we moved to the temporary shelter.

The food and clothes that the Government and the NGOs gave were good.

Carittas is now constructing permanent houses for us near the school.

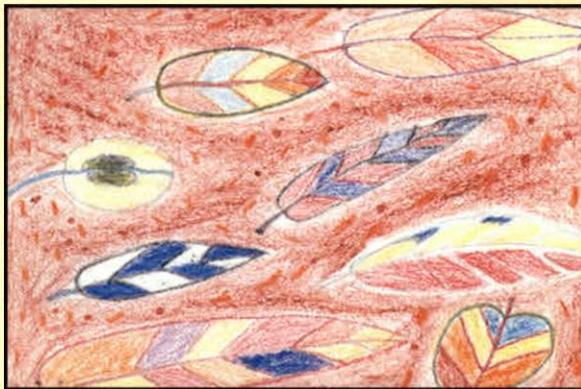
### Feelings

I am really scared of waves. I get up in the night cry and run out almost everyday. My father brings me back. I also get nightmares of all of us drowning, a devil lifting all of us and running away and so on.

After a blessed thread was tied round my wrist I feel better now. But I still get bad dreams.

### Future

I want to become a priest and educate people on natural calamities such as the Tsunami, the importance of being brave and saving people, as well as the importance of bonding and sharing in others' sorrow.



*G. Vinodhini, Midalam*

Now if the Tsunami strikes again, I know how to save myself and others too. NGOs educated us on such things. I have learnt a lot about natural calamities in the last one year.

We had no savings. I now realise the importance of savings to tide over such calamities.



### **Sajan Anthony**

10 years, V standard at St. Anthony's  
Primary School, Melamanakudi)

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**M**y father, Sajan George, is a fisherman and mother, Juliet, a housewife. I have an elder sister studying in VIII standard.

My father does not own a catamaran. He used to go fishing with my uncle.

### **Damage**

We were at home on the fateful day. Even when the first wave came, we ran to Kallarai Thottam, which is on a high ground. We escaped the killer third wave but our house was washed away with every thing in it. Two of my uncles who went in search of us were severely hurt.

After months of fear, my father has just begun to go fishing. But income has come down drastically. I do not ask my father to get me anything as I know the income is very low - barely enough for us to eat. Some days we do not even get anything to eat.

### **Help**

The immediate relief was good. The school gave us training in Tsunami management. It also educated us on the natural calamities and how we can protect ourselves and others.

### **Problems**

The hospital is 12 km away. That is a real problem. Drinking water is also a problem.

### **Future**

I want to become a priest to help people in distress. I wanted to be a priest even as I was a small boy. But, now, the Tsunami has only reinforced it.

Lack of any saving has compounded our problems. I want to save to be able to manage any emergency.

There is a lot of anxiety and scare because of the large-scale damage. Once the fear and anxiety abates, I am sure we will emerge stronger. That will take some time. But I am confident that we will emerge stronger.



A. Vinodhini, Kanyakumari

Manvalakurichi Peria Valai village, 20 km from Nagercoil

**N. Reena**

*18 years of Manvalakurichi Peria Valai,  
discontinued studies after V standard due to poverty*



**M**y father, M. Nazreth, is a fisherman and mother, George Mary, a housewife. My family consists of six children - 2 boys and 4 girls. Two sisters are married and a brother is in VI standard and a sister in IX. My elder brother also goes fishing.

The family owned a catamaran that was damaged in the Tsunami.

The house was not affected as it is on a higher level.

**Damage**

Apart from the catamaran, nets and all other fishing equipment lost, our father was seriously injured in the leg. He now goes fishing with someone else on a daily wage basis. So, our income has come down sharply - it is less than Rs. 50 a day on an average.

In the village itself there were four deaths in the 550 families, 59 houses were fully damaged and 27 partially, besides the Balwadi and the primary school. Over 100 adults and at least 50 children were affected; many children are still recovering. Almost all children are suffering from severe psychological problems

**Feelings and What needs to be done**

I am very happy with the relief work.

Now, we are more aware of the Tsunami but very scared of it as well.

There is a terrible scare of waves in the village. Psycho-social intervention should be continued for some more time.

We do not need doles but livelihood support which is more sustainable. The fish catch has fallen sharply. Many in the village want to get away from sea work.

Livelihood support should be provided for women in particular - providing us with a sewing machine or helping us set up petty shops will go a long way in rehabilitating us in the long run.



A. William, Kanyakumari

We need safety nets to protect us from such calamities.

Construction of groynes along the seashore to prevent water from entering the villages will go a long way in protecting us. This will also help us overcome the fear of water.

**Future**

I am very keen on studying. Given a chance, I would like to pursue higher studies or get into some vocational training.



### **T. Hensahemi**

*17 years of Manavalakurichi Peria Valai discontinued after X standard due to poverty*

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**M**y father, M. Thomas, is a fisherman and mother, Lutecia, a housewife. We are six children - one son and five girls. Only two of the six children are studying. Our elder brother works in Indian Rare Earths on daily wage basis.

#### **Damage**

The only catamaran my father owned was lost in the Tsunami. Now, my father goes fishing with someone else. The income has come down sharply.

My second sister's wedding had to be stopped as we had no money to conduct it.

#### **Relief**

The initial relief was very good. But after that it has been drudgery for us. The Government gave Rs 4000 initially. But nothing after that. Things will never be the same again.

#### **Future**

I wish the government gives my father a catamaran. If it gives me a sewing machine, I can supplement the family income - at least, we can all eat twice everyday.

More than doles we need livelihood enhancement support.

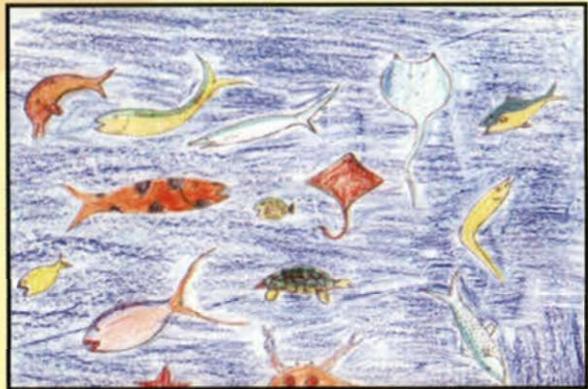
Savings is something we had never thought of till now. If only we had saved some money, it would have helped us now.

We also realise the importance of insurance.

Women of the SHGs managed to get loans from Pandian Bank at Valliyur. We are also now realising the usefulness of being part of an SHG.

But the SHGs did not get any subsidy; only loans - three times their savings.

The Government should help us by not insisting on collateral for loans from nationalised banks.



*A. Antony Raj, Kanyakumari*

**S. Abinash**  
14 years, Manavalakurichi Peria Valai.  
discontinued after VII standard due to poverty

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**M**y father, S. Satyaraj, is a fisherman and mother, Lucia, a housewife. We are three children - my elder brother is mentally-ill and my younger brother is in IX standard.

### Damage

As we did not own anything, we lost nothing. But we have lost confidence about our future.

### Relief & Rehabilitation

The immediate relief was very good. But as we had moved into this village only two years ago, we did not get any rehabilitation help from the government which other families in the village got.

Nor will we get a permanent house (currently under construction)...To be eligible for one, you have to have lived here for at least five years.

We live with our grandmother in the 10 ft x 10 ft temporary shed. Where hardly three people can live, three families are staying. It is horrible. We feel quite miserable.



*H. Gezhya, Kanyakumari*

### Future

I want to study. But how can I? I have to take care of my mentally-ill brother. And, also, my family just cannot afford to send me to school.

We need a shelter. My father needs a catamaran. Please help us to help ourselves.



**Y. Rachael**

5 years, UKG at St. Pious Kindergarten,  
Padanilam, Manavalakurichi Peria Valai

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**M**y father, S. Yesudas, is a fisherman. He also works on a daily wage basis in sand mining when he does not go fishing. My mother Vimala is a housewife. I have a younger sister.

My father lost his catamaran and nets in the Tsunami.

After a year, only now is he going fishing with someone else.

**Damage**

I was playing near my house when the big wave came. My leg got entangled in the debris of a wall of our neighbour's house. I was severely hurt. I was in the hospital for 15 days.

The Government gave us Rs. 5,000 for treatment.

**Feelings**

I am terribly scared of water. I am even scared of playing outside. I get nightmares. Often I cannot even sleep at nights. NYK (Nehru Yuva Kendra) volunteers are counselling me to dispel my fear. But it is taking a long time.

Even after a year, the 'black day' is still in front of my eyes.

I am not able to study. Even while at school I think the Tsunami will strike any time.



A. Anishkumar, Kanyakumari



**V. Vinishma**

5 years, UKG at the Balwadi,  
Manavalakurichi Peria Valai

**M**y father, A. Varghese, is a fisherman. My mother, Sheela, died seven months after the Tsunami; as she was severely wounded. "But the Government gave no compensation as it was not considered a death due to the Tsunami," said Vinishma after some prodding by her aunt, Pushpalily.

**Damage**

My house was damaged. My father was injured and my mother severely. She was in the hospital for seven months and died.

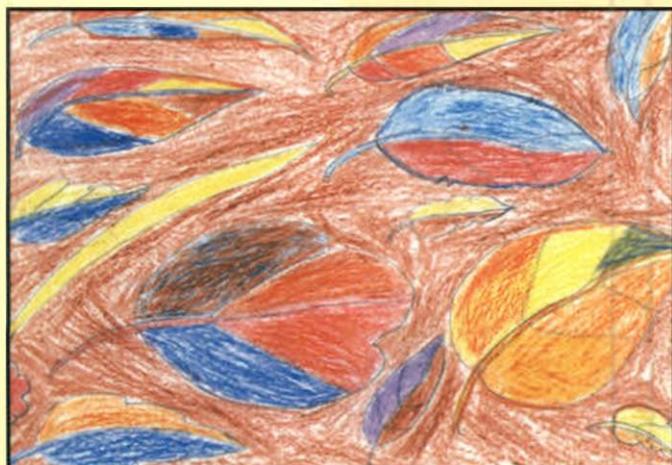
My father is very affected psychologically and physically. He is managing to work on a daily wage basis in sand mining. But he is finding it very difficult. I feel very sad to see him.

Our loans have mounted and my father is very ill now.

**Feelings**

I miss my mother. My aunt (A. Pushpalily) takes care of me and my younger sister.

I cry everyday for my mother. I am so scared that I am unable to sleep at nights. Most times I try to keep my sorrow to myself as I do not want to trouble my aunt.



S. Benray Shan, Neeradithurai

**Future**

I am unable to study in school. If I think of the Tsunami, my hair stands on ends and I become very moody.

I want to study a lot. But first I must get over my fear.

My father needs the catamaran and nets that he lost in Tsunami.



**J. Suman**

*17 years, of Pudur village near Mandaikadu,  
studied till X standard*

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**M**y father, J. James, is a fisherman and mother, R. Rajam, sells fish.

**Damage**

We lost a catamaran and nets. One side wall of our house is damaged. Every thing at home was washed away. All this was because we did not take the first two waves seriously. The third one was devastating.

**Relief**

The relief was good. NGOs did very well. They were there in a few hours to help us. But for them deaths and casualties would have been much higher.

Cell phones really helped us to get immediate relief measures, especially as telephone lines were down.

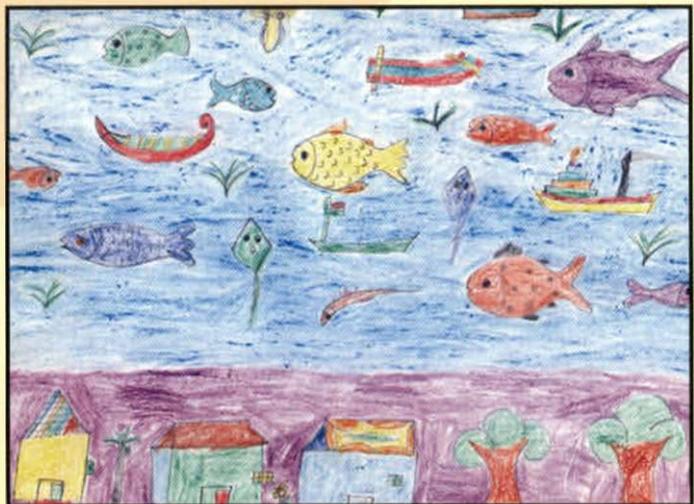
**Feelings**

We are all still in a state of fear. Most cruel is the rumours of the Tsunami striking again. One day last month rumours spread and at 1 a.m. we all fled our homes. This I feel is cruel.

We need confidence and a way of removing our fear.

**The Learning Experience**

We are now better prepared to face such disasters. We are also cautious now.



*D. Shalini, Neeradithurai*

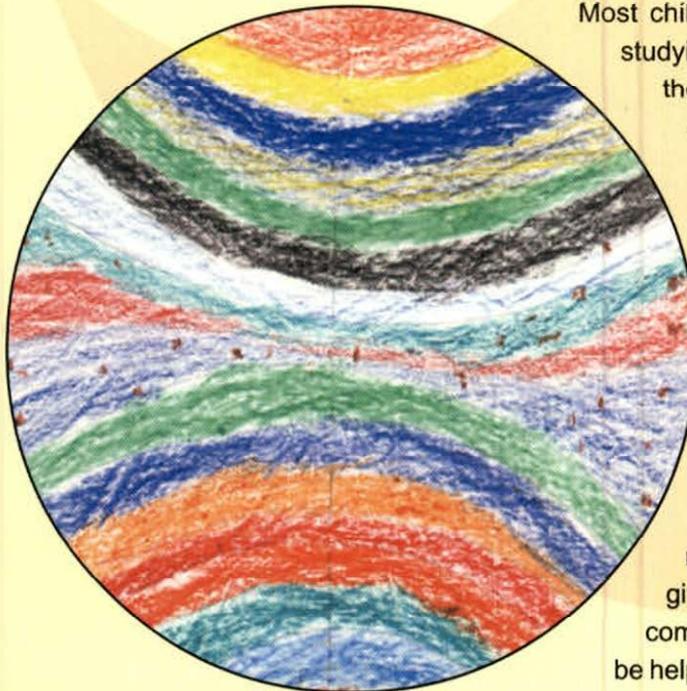
Individual interviews were conducted of three adolescents who were undergoing a residential camp for the Tsunami displaced and homeless children, conducted for 50 students from five villages. This three-month camp was conducted by the NYK. NYK has a Programme on Psycho Social Support with support from UNICEF. At the camp the participants were given career guidance, and and put through courses in spoken English, life skill development, disaster preparedness, yoga and mediation, stress management and awareness of environmental issues.

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## Future

The Government is helping, but we need groynes along the coast to prevent waves from entering our homes.

An early warning system must be put in place and we need to be trained in disaster preparedness.



*M. Jeni, Inayamputhanthurai*

Important is to do something about education.

Most children here are very keen on studying but have discontinued as they have to work and supplement the family income that has fallen sharply. Thus, it is crucial to enhance the family income and also sustain it if children are to continue with their studies.

Many of us want to move away from fishing as it is unsure, unpredictable and risky. But we do not know any other vocation. Our lives revolve around the sea. If we are given some vocational training in computers, BPOs and so on, it will be helpful in building a new future.



**V. Popson**

*17 years, of Kadiapattinam village discontinued after IX standard due to poverty, goes fishing*

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**M**y father, S. Vijayan, is a fisherman and mother, Albera Sahaya Rani, a housewife. I have two sisters and two brothers — all younger; three of them are in school.

**Damage**

My father had a boat but that was damaged in the Tsunami. Two of the three nets we had were washed away along with other fishing equipment.

My father now goes fishing with someone else on a daily wage basis. As our house is on higher ground, it escaped the waves.

**Relief & Rehabilitation**

The immediate relief was very good. But I am not happy with rehabilitation. The Government gave Rs 10,000 for the boat. But over and above that we have spent Rs 25,000 to repair it. It is still not usable. We do not have the nets and other fishing equipment.

**Feelings**

I was washed away into the sea. It is really a miracle that I escaped. This is a new life for me. I am very scared of waves. But I have no choice I have to go fishing to help the family eat everyday.

I wish I can study further and get away from fishing, which is becoming very difficult and risky.

**Future**

Children's education is what should be given utmost importance. Livelihood must be enhanced so that there is more income for the family and the children are freed from the responsibility of supplementing family income.

Important is also to remove the mortal fear of the sea most of us still have. It can be done by piling groynes along the shore. It will give us a lot of confidence and help dispel the fear.

Special savings, insurance and loan schemes should be worked out for those affected by the Tsunami and also those sea-dependent and in constant risk.



*S. Mary Florence, Kanyakumari*

### S. Jenitta

17 years, of Mandaikadu Pudur village; has completed diploma in tailoring after X standard



**M**y father, S. Savariapichai, is a fisherman and mother, Helen Mary, is a housewife. I have a younger sister and brother in school.

#### Damage

First we thought the Tsunami was a joke. In fact, our parents went to the seashore to dry the nets. They were both engulfed by the sea. They were thrown back on the shore after over an hour. Both survived but were severely injured.

They took treatment for over two months in the hospital. The Government took care of the medical bills.

In all, we lost over Rs 1.5 lakhs — boat, nets, fishing equipments and so on.

But the Government gave only Rs. 25,000 as compensation.

The Tsunami has set our lives back several years.

My father now goes fishing with someone else on a daily wage basis. Incomes have dropped sharply. So, now my brother (he discontinued studies) is going fishing to supplement income. He is very interested to study but has no choice.

#### Feelings

I am very scared. Till my father and brother come back from the sea, I remain mortally scared. If we all die it is ok. I see the sufferings of children with one or both parents lost in the Tsunami. It is harrowing. We just cannot go through it again.

Psychologically, we are all severely affected. We need sustained, long-term help. It is a complex problem - not just the fear of water.



T. Thasma, Kanyakumari

#### Future

Our future is unsure. We need safety-nets. I am sure it can be worked out. As we are all aware of the fury of the sea now, we will cooperate in working out an insurance and savings scheme for ourselves. But the Government must help in giving us special loans and subsidy.

There is an urgent need to prioritise education for the children. So many of us have various skills and talents, which need to be brought out.



**Anne Suchi**

*18 years, of Kadiapattinam village; discontinued after VII standard due to illness*

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**M**y father, T. Crassian, is a fisherman and mother, Lousie Mary, a housewife. I have five brothers and two sisters. My two elder brothers go fishing with my father.

My father had a boat and a catamaran.

**Damage**

Our catamaran was broken and nets were washed away. My father and brothers were injured severely.

**Feeling**

I am petrified of the sea. My father and brothers are also scared. They have no choice but to go fishing.

**Future**

The future appears very bleak. The only hope is that the children will study well and take up some other profession.

We need groynes along the shore to dispel our fear.

We need help - education, income enhancement, loans...

We are a proud people. We have never asked for help till now. But now we have no choice. We feel humiliated. But what can we do by ourselves?



C. Melbin, Poothurai

**S. Nithya**

*18 years, of Chinna Valai village,  
has a diploma in nursing after XII standard*



**M**y father, A. Susainayagam, is a fisherman and mother, Marianayagi, is a housewife. I have one sister and three brothers. Only one younger brother is studying in the IX standard. My two elder brothers go fishing with my father.

My father has a catamaran, which escaped the tsunami. The fishing net was washed away.

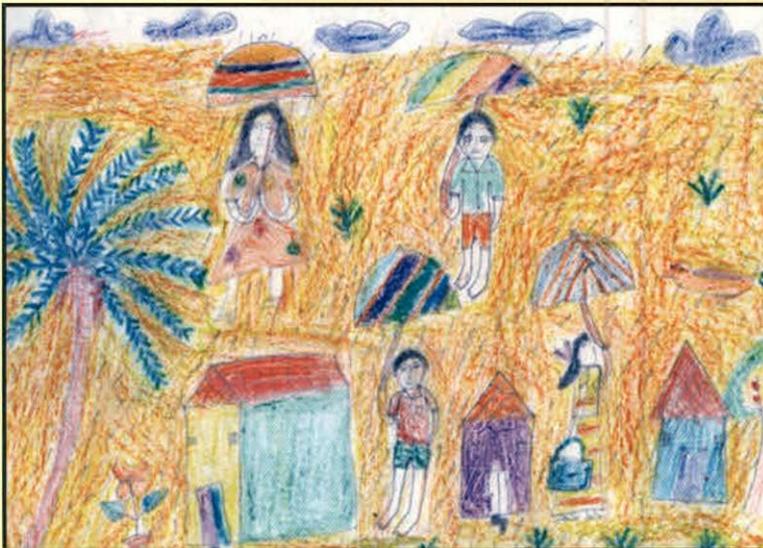
**Future**

We are sea-dependent but as we are still to get over the fear of the Tsunami, we need long-term psycho-social help.

A good early warning system is needed.

Now we are better prepared to deal with the Tsunami simply because we now know of it and its fury. But we need to be trained in disaster management.

We have no savings or insurance. We have realised their importance now.



*S. Ligitha, Poothurai*

We want to move away from being sea-dependent. But we are caught in a bind as we have no choice, no other skill or even an awareness of alternatives.

But we have tremendous hope in the future generation, if only they can be educated well.



**Anthony Ajit**

*11 years, VI standard at Babuji Memorial Higher Secondary School, Chinna Valai village*

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**M**y father, A. Martin, is a fisherman and mother, Vijaya, a housewife. I have two younger sisters.

**Damage**

I was playing on the seashore with my friends even after the first two waves without realising the danger. I was washed away by the third wave. I held on to a tree and was thrown back on the shore after some time.

This was a scary experience. I get affected even now, thinking about it, and by the recollections of the sight of floating bodies. Often I am unable to sleep at night.

My house was washed away. We now live in a temporary shed.

My father has gone fishing in Mangalore.

**Future**

I want the Government to help me and my sisters study by giving us fee waiver for some more time.

It should also protect us from the fury of the sea by building groynes to control the waves.



*J. Suganya, Poothurai*

### **J. Enistan**

13 years, VII standard at St. Mary's Higher  
Secondary School, Colachel



**M**y father, J. Joseph, is a fisherman and mother, Mariakoratti, a housewife. I have four brothers. My father and my elder brother work at the port.

#### **Damage**

Our house was damaged. My father and brother were severely injured.

#### **Feelings**

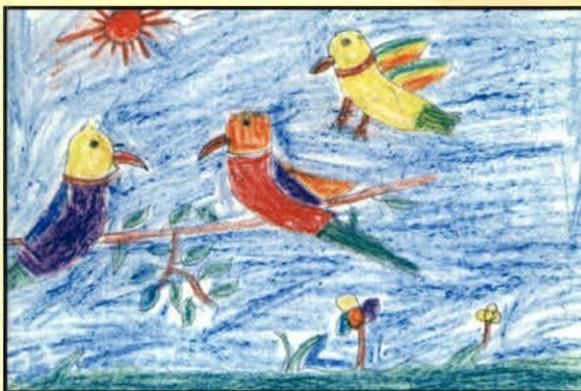
I used to love the sea. But now I am terribly scared of it. I am unable to sleep in the night. The tall black waves and the dead bodies keep recurring in my dreams.

#### **Relief & Rehabilitation**

The relief work was very good. We are now in a temporary shed. It leaks badly. The asbestos was killing, in the heat. Thatch coverings were provided, but in many places they caught fire. The sheds are miserable.

Toilets are so bad that the filth just overflows. We are not able to use them. Girls and women find it especially difficult. Many of them even have severe stomach problems trying to put off the nature's call.

#### **Lessons Learnt**



*T. Shakin Thobias, Poothurai*

We are more aware now of the Tsunami. We now know that first, we have to run away without trying to save our things and also that we have to head for a higher level.

Some warning could have reduced a lot of the damage.

#### **Future**

All I want is good education.



**V. Punita**

*13 years, VIII standard, Colachel*

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**M**y father died five years ago. My mother, Sahaya Mary, sells fish. I have four sisters and two brothers. My elder brother goes fishing to support the family of seven. The rest of us are in school.

**Damage**

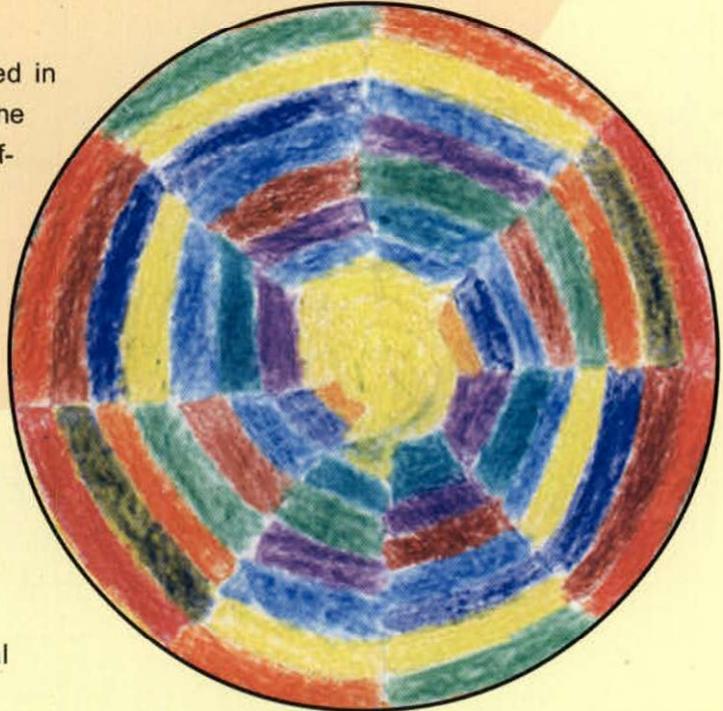
Our house, with every thing in it, was washed away by the Tsunami. My brother was injured.

**Future**

It will be very helpful if my mother can work. She wants to but does not know what to do. If the government can help her set up a petty shop it will be of great help to our family.

We are all very interested in studying further. But under the circumstances it is quite difficult. We are unable to concentrate because of the mortal fear of the sea and the trauma of Tsunami. So, it would be good if an NGO or the Government arranges for a teacher to visit us in the evenings to help us with our studies and also infuse us with some confidence.

Long-term psychological help is crucial for us.



*J. Ragesh, Kanyakumari*

**V. Nishan**

*15 years, XI standard at St. Mary's Higher  
Secondary School, Kottilpadu*

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**O**urs is one of the worst affected village in Kanyakumari district with 197 dead and hundreds of catamarans, boats and houses damaged.

My father, N. Vengeslas, is a fisherman and my mother, Arulselvi, a housewife. My father owned a catamaran, which was damaged and the nets were washed away. I have a brother and a sister.

### **Relief & Rehabilitation**

The immediate relief work done by the government and NGOs was good. We are all in temporary sheds now. The Government has identified land and NGOs are constructing permanent houses for us.

### **Future**

Almost everyone here, particularly the children, is suffering from severe psychological problems. The fear of water and having seen bodies of people and goats and cows floating in the water have had a severe traumatic effect. There is need for long-term counselling.

There is a need for livelihood enhancement for those who want to continue in fishing and help for those who want to move out.

Crucial is to help the affected children continue with their education. I am studying computer and mathematics. It would really be good if our village is given a computer so that students like me can improve ourselves.

Organisations such as Unicef and NYK have set up education centres for children in the evenings in many affected villages. These centres are provided with play things and the children are taught to draw, paint, sing, dance and so on. Similarly, for older children it will be very useful if a teacher is sent here.

Setting up SHGs will also help inculcate the habit of saving and the importance of insurance.

Youth should be given training in repairing engines, boat-making, driving and so on. It will go a long way in sustaining our future.

### **Criticism**

Some 35 families in our village, which was one of the worst affected, got no help from the Government despite losing their houses, boats and nets. They must be given immediate help.

Also, families not directly involved in fishing got no government help. They are also severely affected. They must also be helped.



**Jina Mol**

*17 years, of Kottilpadu village, undergoing training in computer after XII standard*

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**M**y father, L. Mendez, is a fisherman and mother, Amudha, a housewife. I have a sister and a brother. My brother is also undergoing training in computer.

**Damage**

Our house was washed away with all the things in it and our catamaran was damaged. We have nothing now.

We are now in the temporary shed, which is terrible. Apart from its small size, it becomes a furnace in summer and leaks during rains.

My brother saved several people before escaping.

**Relief**

NGOs and the government did excellent relief work. The NGOs gave two catamarans to people in our village after putting lots. Others go fishing on a daily wage basis with them. But incomes have fallen sharply.

**Rehabilitation**

The NGOs are constructing permanent houses for us. The NGOs are giving catamarans. But not for all.

**Feeling**

A terrible fear engulfs all of us. Now, with heavy rains people are mortally scared of high waves.

**Future**

Fish catch has fallen but due to several complex reasons. The sea has become unpredictable, risky and scary.

Many men have lost legs or hands or are badly injured and unable to go fishing. They must be provided with alternative vocational skills.

Education should be made a priority in the Tsunami-affected areas.



*M. Saleen, Neeradithurai*

### **S. Vijila**

*17 years, just completed 12th,  
Colachel*

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**M**y father, S. Shiluvaipillai, is a fisherman. My mother died a few years ago. I have three sisters and two brothers. One brother is married and lives separately and the other goes fishing. My father is too old to go fishing. My father owned a catamaran and my brother a boat with out-board motor.

#### **Damage**

Our house was washed away with all the belongings. We lost my uncle and aunt to the Tsunami. While my uncle's body was found, we never got my aunt's body.

Unable to get work here, my brother has gone to Kerala to fish. My father, who lost his boat in the Tsunami, refuses to go fishing for a wage.

#### **Relief & Rehabilitation**

The immediate relief was good. The government gave Rs 4,000 immediately and Rs 1,000 for three months. NGOs helped school children with bags and books.

But rehabilitation leaves much to be desired.

No catamaran or net was given to anyone in Colachel.

While over 200 fibre-boats were damaged, only 24 were given.

Several NGOs took lists of the affected people and things lost for some six months after the Tsunami. But nothing much happened.

Some NGOs are doing a lot of good programmes for children. For instance, the Voluntary Health Association of Kanyakumari is helping in nutrition enhancement; the NYK and Unicef are involved in psychological rehabilitation, and KSS repaired the toilets and made them usable.

#### **Feelings**

We are a tough lot. We work very hard. We are not used to putting out our hand to accept doles or any help.

But now we are reduced to begging. This is a terrible state to be in. Several children have stopped studies to supplement family incomes or simple because the family cannot afford to send them to school.

## Problems

We are facing untold misery in the temporary sheds. Apart from its poor condition, it is very unsafe, devoid of any privacy. Girls and women find it very difficult to live here.

Many of us have lived in large houses; some of us are even used to having a study for children.

Now 8-10 people cram into the 10 ft x10 ft sheds. Children find it very difficult to study and there is no privacy as the sheds are contiguous.

Sexual harassment is common, as toilets are at a distance and in lonely dark places.

We are 'celebrating' the Tsunami anniversary, but even the foundation for our permanent houses have not been laid.

Whether or not there will be another Tsunami we do not know, but the fear that it may recur is killing us. There are also plenty of complex psychological problems.

We have been pushed back by several years. Our life will never be the same again.

## Future

Our future seems very bleak.

First, the government and NGOs must concentrate on children's education.

When parents earn no income, how can they pay the Rs 1,200 the schools expect for XI and XII standard students?

The Government must ensure fee-waiver, give them a subsidy or provide them with loans. In whatever way possible it should ensure that all children who want to be in school are there.

Next it should focus on livelihood enhancement and long-term psychological rehabilitation.

We need proper houses for a dignified existence.

We need vigilance groups to provide us with security against sexual harassment.

Our President Abdul Kalam asks us to dream. But we dream only of the Tsunami. Will the Government help us to dream better?



*J. Anandhi, Udhayamarthandam*

A group discussion with 12 children in Kanyakumari Town

*Left to Right:*

**U. Sreenu (16);  
S. Subash (15);  
M. Jesuputhran (15);  
C. Siluvaidasan (12);  
L. Alangaram (15);  
J. Arogyamuthu (14);  
Anthony Kishore (15);  
S. Marian (16);  
M. Punithan (16);  
A. George Albert (17);  
S. Vinod (14); and  
C. Antian Raj (17).**



**W**e all live in about 100 temporary sheds here. There are over 200 children - over 150 of them are in schools.

All of us lost our homes and much of our belongings including boats and nets. The tents are very uncomfortable and we are waiting to move into permanent homes that are being constructed by the Government (38) and Salvation Army and other NGOs and are to be ready by March next year.

### **Relief & Rehabilitation**

The relief was immediate and good. We realised the importance of communication systems.

The Tiruvalluvar statue (133 feet) and the Vivekananda rock reduced the fury of the sea and lessened the damage considerably.

The Salvation Army was quick in providing the much-needed relief.

The church was a great help in relief work; it not only speeded the process but it also made sure it reached all the needy.

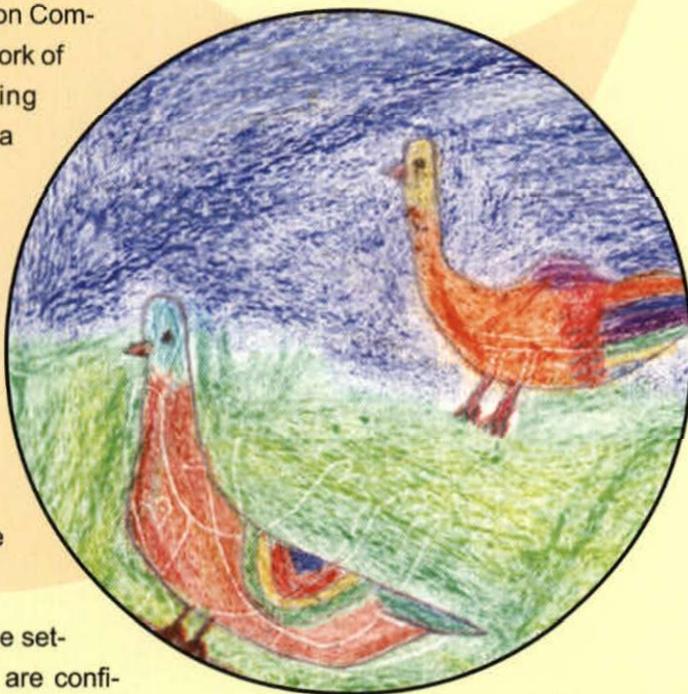
The Salvation Army gave us rice and other provisions all these months. It will stop it from next month.

The Government seems to be underestimating the problems and the damage. The compensation given for boats was not given to all of us. Many did not get nets and engines and hence are unable to go fishing.

Incomes have dropped sharply.

## Future

1. We want to go to school. But because of poverty and the need to supplement family incomes, many of us have dropped out of school.
2. An evening school where we can also study would be a great help. Most of us are eager to study further.
3. We need livelihood enhancement equipment such as nets and engines. We also need training in allied activities such as boat-making, engine repairing and so on.
4. Cooperative fishing - a boat for 10 families and so on - could also be thought of. Important is to own the means of production.
5. We need sustained psychological rehabilitation. Unicef and NYK are doing good work in setting up education centres for children and providing play things. It has gone a long way in reducing fear among children and bringing out their hidden talents, in drawing, painting, poetry writing, singing and so on.
6. The Tsunami Legal Action Committee formed by a network of advocates is also doing good work in Kanyakumari.
7. Groynes along the sea would help us get over the fear and feel more confident about the sea.
8. We need an early warning system. It could have reduced the damage considerably.
9. We have suffered a huge setback. But with help we are confident of the future.



Anish, Poothurai

## SUMMARY

Thirty-three villages were affected by the Tsunami in Kanyakumari; more than the loss of life, it was of houses and livelihood systems.

The children of Kanyakumari were generally educated, articulate and forthcoming.

The influence of the church on children was striking and the important role played by it in relief operations was also clear.

In Kanyakumari, the children stressed on:

1. Long-term psychological rehabilitation
2. Livelihood enhancement, security and expansion - much more than in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam
3. Sustained education and vocational training
4. Construction of gronyes along the coast to give them confidence that the sea will not enter their villages

The children here were quite critical and the issues they discussed quite revealing.

For instance, while praising the relief work of the government and the NGOs as "very good", they raised the following issues:

1. The need for the government to monitor the rehabilitation work
2. The poor conditions of the temporary shelters and toilets
3. The prevalence of sexual harassment given the nature of the temporary shelters and the need to set up vigilance groups to provide them security
4. The need for help in the form of things and opportunities than in monetary terms.

## CONCLUSION

The children were generally shy to speak but once drawn out, they were clear and articulate.

Most striking was their resilience. Even after experiencing the devastations and the trauma of the Tsunami and the heavy spells of rains and floods this year, they were, in general, positive, hopeful and confident of a bright future.

The bonding, the camaraderie and the affection among them was at once striking and touching.

Their ability to understand and react to issues beyond their background and exposure was impressive.

## CRITICISMS

The children were quite critical and could discuss complex issues.

For instance, while praising the relief work in the immediate aftermath of the Tsunami, both by the government and the NGOs as "very good", they raised the following issues:

The shortcomings of the on-going rehabilitation work and the need for the government to monitor it better.

The poor conditions of the temporary shelters and toilets and the misery they faced because of that.

The incidences of sexual harassment at the temporary shelters and the need to set up vigilance groups to provide them security.

The need for help in the form of opportunities rather than in monetary terms.

The government helping only the fishermen, when others, such as farmers, petty shop owners and vendors, were affected as much, or even more.

They were generally critical of the government not giving compensation to farmers and others who were affected by Tsunami either directly or indirectly.

The government and the NGOs giving doles or money as compensation to adults, making them lazy and dependent on external help.

## SUGGESTIONS

### ● For Personal Improvement

In general, children were confident of doing well. But they wanted some push from the government.

Almost all of them stressed the importance of providing education opportunities. A majority of them wanted help in continuing with education.

They stressed that fee waiver till the completion of school and special reservation in higher education would go a long way in making them self-reliant. They also wanted free books, transportation and even subsidy or loans for pursuing higher education.

Most children suggested that livelihood enhancement, livelihood security and livelihood expansion will not only benefit the community in the long-run, but also ensure that children remained in school. They were confident that these measures would raise the retention rates in school.

Almost all children, including in the elementary and middle schools, wanted a computer either in their school or in their village. They wanted a computer in every school/village to bridge the digital divide.

Stressing the importance of vocational training for those who wanted to move out of fishing, many wanted the government to help those who want to remain in fishing by providing them with infrastructure such as cold storage, training in seafood processing and so on to move up the value chain.

### ● For Community Protection

The children were very vocal about the need for a good sanitation infrastructure, particularly toilets and drinking water in the temporary sheds and in the areas devastated by the Tsunami. They were clear about the link between good sanitation facility and health.

They stressed the need for continuing psychological rehabilitation. Some even suggested that counseling sessions be organised in schools.

Emphasising on the long-term psychological rehabilitation, they wanted the government to think about protection measures to instill confidence among the people and to reduce the damages from such disasters.

They stressed the need for a good system of early warning and disaster preparedness.

They wanted trees planted along the shoreline to prevent high waves entering their village.

Some argued that sea walls and groynes along the coast would not only protect the villages from disasters such as the Tsunami, but also instill a sense of confidence among the people.

Some children argued for the need for safety nets in general and to guard against such calamities in particular.

Many discussed the role of savings and insurance in protecting them against such disasters.

The children elaborated on the role that information dissemination can play in dealing with such calamities and insisted that crucial information on the state of the sea and disaster management be made available to them regularly.

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In Nagapattinam, M. Alagesan, P. Tamilselvi and M.Y.Mohamed Sadiq of the Tsunami Legal Action Committee (of the SOCCO Trust, People's Rights Watch and Human Rights Law Network).

In Cuddalore, Antony Sami and A. Raman of BLESS.

In Kanyakumari, S. Senthil Kumar, District Youth Coordinator, Nehru Yuva Kendra (of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India), Beula, Field Extender, Child Protection, Unicef, and S. Balasundari, Advocate and Zonal Coordinator, Tsunami Legal Action Committee.

The cooperation and enthusiasm shown by children in the three districts, however, was the sole reason that made this project possible.

## **UNICEF tsunami recovery : Building back better for Children**

UNICEF is working in close collaboration with the Government and partners to implement the tsunami recovery programme. Our goal is not only to restore what was lost or destroyed, but to build back better for children - better schools providing good education, better opportunities and better health facilities, and better opportunities.

From 2005 to 2007, build back better will be UNICEF's recovery guideline that focuses on interventions in Health, Nutrition, Water and Sanitation, Education, Child Protection, and HIV / AIDS Prevention. By building back better, UNICEF aims to achieve positive outcomes in child survival and to improve the situation that existed for children and families before the tsunami.

Building back better also reflects the commitment expressed by governments, private sector and individuals who contributed over \$ 28 million to support UNICEF efforts in India's tsunami relief and recovery.

The build back better strategy takes forward child-centered accomplishments that UNICEF helped to achieve by working closely with central and state governments, sister UN agencies, and local and international humanitarian agencies.

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