THE STRUGGLE OF THE SURVIVORS

Experience of the journey with the survivors of Tsunami in Chennai

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This book is purely to share the experience of the journey with the survivors of tsunami in Chennai. Some of the contents are expressed in plain language and tone. not intended to be offensive, but to ensure learning for the future. Opinions expressed in this book are based on the experience of Karunalaya during the relief and rehabilitation of the tsunami affected communities in Chennai from 26.12.2004 to 26.10.2007.

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Preface

On December 26, 2004, I was sitting on a cane chair and reading at home. Suddenly, I felt that everything was going wobbly. I felt odd and shaky and my blood pressure was shooting up. Then, I realised that there was a TREMOR. I opened the doors of the house and was about to wake up all my people at home, but the tremor stopped. Though the tremor was not as severe as the one that occurred in 2001, its impact was very strong and widely felt.

Around 8:00 a.m., the sea became very rough, with waves rising high up to 10 metres and the waters entered the fishing hutments. People who were still asleep were washed away from their dwelling places. Some people who went on their regular morning walk on the long stretch of road, were also washed away. Usually, the fisherfolk are very busy in the mornings and more so, on a Sunday, and they never foresaw this disaster and thus they were washed away into the sea.

It was a terrible, heart-rending sight to see the damage caused within no time. In 20 minutes, the disaster had destroyed everything. There was severe loss of human life and many dead bodies were disposed off the very same evening, while many were searching for their lost loved ones. The burials continued the next day too. We, at Karunalaya had to consider the plight of the disaster struck people, and to focus on relief plans. We started getting some food ready, as they had nothing to eat the whole day, having lost their dear ones and all their belongings. At once, an appeal was dashed off to our friends abroad by e-mail. We could not believe the overwhelming response and support that poured in from friends abroad and within the country.

Our main sponsors Cordaid, Amaidhi and Stichting Karunalaya, raised funds to support the affected people in India. The first phase of Relief work was conducted till March, 2005. Then, the second relief phase began after the fire accident in the temporary shelters. The tsunami affected families in North Chennai, I believe, are a unique community, as they were struck by disasters all through the year. We served them on a relief mode for the whole year due to consecutive emergencies arising, namely tsunami, rains, floods, fires and the health hazards that affected the community.

Karunalaya did play a major role in our part of the city by providing relief, helping children to resume schooling and providing livelihood gears to those who lost their fishing equipments. Alternate livelihoods, trainings for women advocacy for housing, construction of semi permanent houses and empowerment of the community to assert their rightful demands were amongst the many hats we donned during the entire period. Karunalaya also collaborated with the initiatives of various other agencies and Government organisations working for the relief and rehabilitation of the affected communities.

All through the process,Karunalaya demonstrated commitment to ensuring community participation maintaining quality and standards in the relief and rehabilitation efforts, with relevance, transparency and accountability that were evident from the kind of feedback we received from the affected people and outsiders who visited these communities.

Though Karunalaya had no prior experience in Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation, the situation demanded of us that we quickly equip ourselves with the means and knowledge to perform our roles during that time of crisis and to continue our efforts till the communities had fully recovered and were restored back to normalcy. The past two years and ten months have provided valuable experiences and learning that we have documented in this report. It is important to note that the Executive Committee of Karunalaya, under the Patronage of Rev. Fr Gerard, SDB., and the President, Mr. S. John Bosco, Vice President, Mr. B. Ravi Kumar David, Mr. V. Arun, Mr. J.B Solomon Peter, Dr. Ms. M. B Pavithra and Mr. C Arulanand came together, to support the team and did their best to monitor and evaluate the activities that were implemented.

Cordaid, the Dutch International organisation, supported our major relief and rehabilitation projects. Some of the

officers who were in the field during those difficult times were Ms. Bonnie Norman. Head of Emergency Department, Ms. Judith Kiers. Ms. Marlou Geurts. Mr. Gerard Schilderinck. Mr. Chan Ling Yong. Ms. Astrid van den Berg and so many other staff members who visited us, and who worked from the Hague. We are grateful to all of them for their support, trust and confidence in our efforts and abilities.

We would like to thank the foundation Amaidhi in Nijmegen in the Netherlands, which extended support through its fund raising with Wilde Ganzen, the Rotary Club of Nijmegen, The Parish of Beuningen, NCDO, and other individual donors. The role of Mr. Peter Deurloo and Ms. Dilia Hunsche has been tremendous during that difficult time to support the affected communities in Chennai, along with their colleagues. Ms. Nathalie de Haan, Ms. Ine Kruijdenberg - Burna. Ms. Jojo Heesbeen. Ms. Hedda Steenhouwer and other members. Our gratitude to Fr. Harrie van Dooren and members of Beuningen Parish and other well wishers of Amaidhi.

One of our strengths during the difficult time was Stichting Karunalaya, our counterpart in the Netherlands. Mr. Peter Sijtsma, Ms. Anne Slingerland, Ms. Leonore Melissen, Ms. Ianthe Schouten. Ms. Angelique Hendriks, Ms. Loes Wevers and Ms. Mijke van Gijn deserve a special mention. Their efforts were splendid and their support was generous. Particularly Ms. Loes, Ms. Mijke. Ms. Elina and Mr. Gijs van Holland were with us at that time and did wonderful work, braving all odds, psycho-socially. They were in the field every day, physically helping the community and children, supporting in fund raising and also spent a lot of their money in the relief work. Their presence in India brought the Dutch media to Chennai and our work was National news in the Netherlands. All this happened due to the loving mission of Don Bosco in Amsterdam, led by Fr. Harrie Kanters. SDB. We have no words to express our gratitude to all of them.

Ms. Lucia Remon Miranzo from MPDL, Spain, deserves a special mention as she efficiently led the relief programme supported by European Commission in Chennai and completed her mission successfully, partnering with Karunalaya in North Chennai. There were many other people who extended their help to us. We wish to thank Ms. Marja de Bruijn, Ms. Eine. Ms. Welt. Ms. Laden – Regensoga. Mr. Henk Kooij, Mr. Tuur Hendrix. Mr Henk Krabben from the Rotary Club, Achterhoek Oost. Andheri Hilfe Bonn, Germany, TdH, Germany, and UNDP for their loving support.

Our success would have been impossible without the untiring efforts of the staff team of Karunalaya and the children in the shelter home of Karunalaya, who did the work from their hearts. The credit for compiling this report goes to Prof. Josephine, Ms. Vasughi Adityan, Ms. Renitha NR, and Ms. Sunita Don Bosco, from the Department of Media and Communication Studies, University of Madras. Our thanks also to Mr. M. Kandasami, Mr. Aloysius James and Mr. Khilesh Chathurvedi, the consultants of Cordaid, who constantly guided our work. We sincerely thank the affected communities, who were very co-operative and resilient and from whom we have learnt a lot.

Special thanks to the Authorities of the Government of Tamil Nadu, for their coordination in all our efforts, despite differences in approach. The timely intervention of Mr C V. Sankar, IAS, OSD, Government of Tamil Nadu, ensured that the most vulnerable families got permanent houses. Thanks for his kind message for the publication of this book.

The press and the media played a very important role all through our efforts: their support during our struggle for the rights of the vulnerable was crucial and noteworthy.

Only by the Grace of God could we handle the relief and rehabilitation process. As mere mortals, nothing would have been possible with our own knowledge and strength.

Dr. N. Paul Sunder Singh
Director
Karunalaya Social Service Society
Chennai, India.

Foreword

On 26 December, 2004, Tsunami hit especially hard the people living near Fishing Harbour in Northern Chennai. This community – mostly living in bamboo huts – lost all their belongings. They were lucky to have saved their lives.

Karunalaya already knew this mixed community of fishing families and migratory workers as they worked with their children. After Tsunami however, the families as a whole were in dire need -- Karunalaya stayed with them and supported them until a final solution for their habitat had been found.

The community was first relocated to the temporary settlement Kargil Nagar, 9 kilometres away from Fishing Harbour. The government established temporary shelters which were cramped and not even providing the most basic living conditions to these people. Karunalaya supported this settlement with children's tuition activities, school-buses, medical post, community mobilisation and small income generating activities. Despite all efforts, the conditions in the settlement did not really improve, the people remained in a rather hopeless situation.

To no one´s surprise, a part of the settlement went up in flames. The temporary shelters had been constructed of highly inflammatory material and they were close together so that the fire could spread rapidly. Unfortunately one man and some domestic cattle died and it left the people once more devastated. Again, relief materials were distributed and this time, tents were constructed. The living conditions became even more critical, however, and after some strong lobby efforts, an alternative site was allotted for habitation by the Government. In the Autumn of 2005, the community could be shifted to Ernavur, a site with semi-permanent housing, made of bricks. Even before the community could move into these small houses, the houses were flooded by severe rains. Will this community ever be able to restart their lives?

Yet, from 2006 onwards, it seems people are moving forward a bit and some state of normalcy has set in. Karunalaya is finding its niche, being systematic in its approach and gaining strength in lobby and advocacy efforts. Then, the government announces its intention of moving the people from Ernavur to a permanent housing site. Even though this good news is being contested time and again -- either by the government or by the people themselves -- there are serious signs that it will really finally happen. That would be a wonderful ending to this story!

This report shares the experiences of the Tsunami response and rehabilitation efforts. The successes, the difficulties and especially everything learned in the process. Karunalaya has stood by the people of Kargil Nagar / Ernavur in all their mishaps. A number of strong women Self Help Groups have been formed, children are going to school, the community is organised and can take care of their immediate surroundings.

For the people of Ernavur / Kargil Nagar, the Tsunami aftermath must have been one of the most difficult times in their lives. Yet, despite all the difficulties, these people have not shown any dependency symptoms but only strength. In that way, Karunalaya must have inspired and motivated them.

Cordaid is proud that it has supported Karunalaya´s work for the people of Ernavur / Kargil Nagar.

I hope and believe that the report will reflect the resilience of the people and how we can all learn from this.

Ms. Judith Kiers
Senior Programme Officer
Emergency and Reconstruction
CORDAID, The Netherlands.

C.V. SANKAR, IAS.,
Officer on Special Duty
(Relief and Rehabilitation)

O/o. The Special Commissioner &
Commissioner of Revenue Administration
Ezhilagam, Chennai – 600 005

Dear Dr. Paul Sunder Singh.

I am happy to note that Karunalaya Social Service Society is bringing out a book to document the work that has been done in tsunami rehabilitation by your organization. I have been closely observing the significant steps that are being taken by Karunalaya Social Service Society especially in the area of ensuring the education of the children from the deprived families. Your gesture of running separate transport buses to enable the children of tsunami affected families to continue their education is worthy of emulation by any service minded organization.

I wish to congratulate yourself and your dedicated volunteers for the splendid work they have done in assisting the tsunami affected families.

Yours sincerely,

(C V SANKAR)

INTRODUCTION

Karunalaya is working for children and women in the fishing community at Kasimedu, North Chennai, since 1995. The beginning was at Pallavan Nagar, Pallapaguthi, on August 15, 1995, with non-formal education and evening classes. In November 1995, the Social Work students of Stella Maris College, requested them to take over the activities they had undertaken at Powerkuppam Pallam area, as part of their field work initiative. In the same month, an education centre was also started at Anna Nagar, at the temple near the seashore. Karunalaya's focus was on child labourers in the fishing community, with the motive of eliminating child labour and enrolling them in schools for formal education. In 1996, Karunalaya conducted a small research programme with support from the International Labour Organisation (ILO-IPEC). This scientific study exposed the prevalence of child labour in the fishing industry in the Kasimedu fishing harbour. Based on the findings, Karunalaya started a full-fledged programme for the elimination of child labour in the fishing communities in North Chennai with the support of Caritas, Netherlands (now Cordaid). Based on experience, Karunalaya started women's groups in the fishing communities to empower them socially, economically and politically and thereby, to protect the children. Thus, Karunalaya's work with the fishing communities in North Chennai was established, working for the protection, rescue and rehabilitation of street children and the prevention of STD, HIV/AIDS amongst them, until the time the tsunami struck the people of the area.

THE FISHING COMMUNITIES IN NORTH CHENNAI

The coastal area of North Chennai is known for its fishing industry surrounded by large number of slums and lower-class neighbourhood, where the majority of the people belong to the fishing community. The Kasimedu fishing harbour is the major fishing harbour of Chennai City. Here, deep-sea fishing is carried out with the presence of more than 2,500 mechanized fishing boats and innumerable traditional rafts. Unfortunately, children are employed in the industry to do odd jobs in this hazardous work-place, threatening their moral, physical, social and psychological well-being. The area stretches over 10 kilometres (kms) along the coast. It also houses a major fishing wholesale market. The presence of dockyard, movement of container lorries and the activities of local and outside labourers are characteristics of the place. The major parts of the slums exist near the seashore, along the coast. The fisher families in the slums live in small hutments of 100 square feet (sq. ft.), with out basic facilities of water, sanitation and hygiene. Illiteracy is rampant amongst the adults.

THE TSUNAMI

Boats sunk in the fishing harbour

On 26.12.2004, around 6.30 a.m., people experienced a tremor, which lasted for about 30 seconds. Then, around 8:30 a.m., an unprecedented tidal wave hit the shore and swept away everything into the sea including, men, women, children, fishing boats/rafts, nets, petty shops,

Damaged Huts in the Fishing Community

and the whole habitation of the fishing community was devastated. People were displaced, many stood stranded without even a change of dress. Many could not find their loved ones. Many people were moved to the hospital in critical condition. Dead bodies were recovered and cremated. Because of the calamity of tsunami, the entire community was affected: some of those who were not directly affected by tsunami suffered because of loss of livelihood. Karunalaya also suffered a loss of three education centres at Powerkuppam Pallam, Pallavan Nagar, Pallam and Anna Nagar around Kasimedu, due to tsunami. People in Chennai had not heard of the word "tsunami", until that day.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Following the news of the disaster, it was a shocking revelation to see that people had lost all their belongings. Karunalaya decided to provide food for the affected people in the North Chennai area on December 26th itself, and supplied food packets to the families in the evening. A staff team of Karunalaya made a quick assessment of the damage the following day. The team was divided into three groups of six persons each and did an on-the-spot identification of the immediate needs of the affected people, after talking to them about their situation. Food, water, clothing, and milk were provided.

Food being cooked at Karunalaya for the affected

Women's groups were also involved in making and supplying nutritious powder to the children. Provision of cooked food for the families was extended to seven days and later, distribution booths were set up in all the areas to enable smooth distribution of relief. In the following week, the supply of cooked food was stopped, to enable the people to cope with the situation and to return to their regular cooking, as they were provided with relief materials by the Government, philanthropists and NGOs.

Children in queue for food in the camp at a school in Thiruvotriyur

Identification of affected people

A survey was undertaken from January 4-24, 2005, to identify the victims in all the affected areas from Kasimedu to Thiruvotriyur. Karunalaya staff, equipped with the data they had gathered from the people, prepared the survey schedule. The entire staff team of Karunalaya and some volunteers from Social Work Department of Loyola College were involved in the survey. The survey was done along with photographing of the families affected.

Involvement of community to finalize the list of beneficiaries

After the survey, a process of verification and finalization of the exact affected families was done, involving the community members, to ensure that all those who had been identified were real victims, directly affected by

Affected people identified and photographed

tsunami. The women group members, youth and leaders from each area did this verification, as they knew the families in their areas better. As the survey took about 3 weeks, the indirectly affected groups approached Karunalaya for relief as they had been suffering from the loss of their livelihood and income for the past one month. Therefore, the next process of identifying the indirectly affected families was immediately carried out and 4500 families who had been indirectly dependent on the fishing industry were identified and their family details were enumerated by the staff. The target areas were identified on the basis of the work of Karunalaya since 1995 in the Kasimedu area and its surrounding fishing hutments. Some of the areas were the operational areas of their project, while others were the adjoining fishing community settlements that were already in contact with them through the fishermen associations in North Chennai. Only the families and people who were affected directly and indirectly by tsunami were identified. As a result, 1500 families were identified as directly affected by tsunami and 4500 families were identified as indirectly affected by tsunami. These 6000 families were the direct beneficiaries of the emergency aid project, jointly supported by 3 Dutch aid agencies, namely Cordaid (Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid), Amaidhi and Stichting Karunalaya, the Netherlands.

Needs assessment

A needs assessment meeting was conducted in the community in two places – inviting representatives of the

Needs Assessment meeting

areas – one in Powerkuppam Pallam area, on the 9th of January, 2005, at 3:00 p.m. in the church, and the other for the Anna Nagar area families held in Karunalaya on the 16th of January, 2005. The relief materials that were distributed were actually based on a list enumerated by the women in the meeting, and included the needs of the people, as requested by them in the survey undertaken earlier. The people who were directly affected by tsunami had lost lives, houses, household goods, catamarans, nets, boats, fiber boats, etc. and also their livelihood and income. The indirectly affected people had lost livelihood equipments and income since the tsunami struck. Therefore, the following needs were identified for our support through this project:

The needs of the directly affected families for the relief phase

Food supply (Dry rations)
Household materials (cooking utensils, etc.)
Temporary shelters
Blankets
Mats
Clothes
Milk and Nutrition supplement for children
Toiletries such as soap, detergent, toothpowder, oil, etc
Children's needs for school – materials like bags, notebooks, pens, etc.
Uniforms for the children to go to school

The needs of the indirectly affected families for the relief phase

Food supply (Dry rations)
Toiletries like soap, detergent, toothpowder, oil, etc
Milk and Nutrition supplement for children

Purchase of items – distribution of relief to directly affected and indirectly affected families

In order to make the purchase of the things listed, a survey of the stores was done to find the best store that can provide such large volumes for the best price and within the shortest period of time. A quotation was obtained from a minimum of 3 big stores. The purchase of cooking utensils for 1500 families was finalized with the biggest stores in Chennai city, the Saravana Stores at T.Nagar. The purchase of dry rations like, rice, dhal, tamarind, spices, cooking oil, salt, masala, etc. for 6000 families was done through various stores that gave the lowest quotation. The rice was purchased from Karthikeyan Rice Mandy, Ravi Rice Mandy and K.M. Traders. Cooking oil was purchased from Sree Saraswathi Company and P. Ponnudurai, T.H. Road, Chennai – 81. Provisions were purchased from Sri Murugan Stores, Ganesh Ram, VSR & Co., Renu Agency and Sun Enterprises, Chennai – 81. The purchase of blankets to supply one each for 1500 families was done at Sree Veera's Collections, wholesale dealers at M.C. Road, Old Washermanpet. The purchase of 3000 mats, 2 each for 1500 families was done at the Corner Shop, Mat Market, Rattan Bazaar.

The purchase of 500 tarpaulin tents was done with Bimal water proofers at Venkatachala Street, Choolai, Chennai – 112, this being the lowest quotation, able to supply them within the shortest period of time.

The bamboos for the tents were purchased at Sree Murugan Depot and from M. Periyasamy, Chennai – 81.

Purchase of toiletries like bath soap, detergent soap, hair oil and tooth powder for 6000 families was done with V.N. Arumugam Stores.

Rice bags stocked for relief distribution.
Inside Photo - Relief materials for one family

Purchase of Education materials such as school bags was ordered with the National bags. Chennai. The school bags were specially made in New Delhi. with canvas materials. The notebooks were also ordered at Kamatchi Binding Works. notebook manufacturers. The pens pencils. geometry boxes, colour pencils. etc. were ordered at Nakoda pen center Chennai -79

Purchase of school uniforms, 2 sets each for 2000 children. was done with Saravana Stores and at Sree Veera s Collections. In all its undertakings regarding supply of relief materials, Karunalaya ensured quality and standard of goods and materials.

Nutrition supplement (eggs, peanuts, biscuits and milk) was prepared and given to the children in the affected areas every day in the evening. 500 children below 12 years of age were given the nutrition supplement

Relief materials stocked for distribution

Dry Rations

S.No	Relief material	No of Beneficiaries	Quantity
1.	1 Rice bag of 25 kgs boiled rice (ponni)	2,000 families	50,000 kilograms
2.	1 Rice bag of 10 kgs boiled rice (ponni)	4,000 families	40,000 kilograms
3.	1 kg pack Cooking Oil	6,000 families	6,000 kilograms
4.	1 kg Dhall pack	6,000 families	6,000 kilograms
5.	1 kg Salt powder pack	6,000 families	6,000 kilograms
6.	1 kg Crystal salt pack	6,000 families	6,000 kilograms
7.	1 kg Tamarind	6,000 families	6,000 kilograms
8.	200 gms Sambar Masala Pack	6,000 families	1,200 kilograms
9.	Pepper & Dhal 200 gms	6,000 families	1,200 kilograms

Cooking Utensils

S.No	Relief material	No of Beneficiaries	Quantity
1.	1 Aluminium Anna Kudai (Fish Baskets)	1,500 families	1,500
2.	1 Stainless Steel rice cooking vessel	1,500 families	1,500
3.	1 Stainless Steel lid for rice cooking vessel	1,500 families	1,500
4.	1 Stainless Steel Sambar vessel	1,500 families	1,500
5.	1 Stainless Steel lid for Sambar	1,500 families	1,500
6.	1 Stainless Steel rice serving ladle	1,500 families	1,500
7.	1 Stainless Steel sambar serving ladle	1,500 families	1,500
8.	1 Aluminium Milk cooker	1,500 families	1,500
9.	Stainless Steel plates 2 each	1,500 families	3,300
10.	Stainless Steel tumblers, two each	1,500 families	3,000
11.	1 Stainless Steel water jug	1,500 families	1,500
12.	1 small Stainless Steel tea carrier	1,500 families	1,500
13.	1 Iron Dosa pan	1,500 families	1,500
14.	1 Stainless Steel Dosa ladle	1,500 families	1,500
15.	Plastic pots for drinking water, 2 each	1,500 families	3,000

3000 Mats

1.	Double Mats made of coir, 2 each	1,500 families	3,000

1500 Blankets

1.	1 Double Blanket of good quality	1,500 families	1,500

Toiletries

1.	Bathing soap	6,000 families	6,000
2.	Washing soap	6,000 families	6,000
3.	Colgate Tooth Powder 100 gms	6,000 families	600 kgs
4.	Coconut Hair oil 100 gms	6,000 families	600 kgs

Tarpaulin Tents

1.	1 Tarpaulin tent of big size 21 x 12 feet	500 families	500
2.	Bamboo spars, 2 each of full length 40 feet	500 families	1,000 spars

Packed the relief materials in order for distribution

The staff team, children of the shelter home and Dutch volunteers arranged the relief materials and packed them, according to the number of families. The cooking vessels and other things were packed separately and the dry rations with dhal, etc., was packed separately. Each family was given three kits—(1)utensils, (2) one bag of 25 kg rice, and (3) a packet of dhal, salt, etc., with toiletries. Similarly, the school education materials were also packed according to the class in which each child was studying. This was done to enable easy distribution.

Packing the relief materials for distribution

Distribution of tokens for identification of beneficiaries

The staff team prepared tokens in two colours, yellow tokens for the directly affected families and green tokens for the indirectly affected families. People with the yellow tokens received the cooking utensils, 25 kg rice, dhal, spices and toiletries. The people with the green tokens got only the rice, spices, and toiletries, as they were only indirectly affected.

Education materials were distributed to the affected school-going children. A form was distributed to the affected children. They had to fill up and sign the form and get an attestation from the Head Master/ Headmistress of their school as a proof of their school identity. This also ensured that children resumed going to school.

A counterfoil of the form was given to the children who returned the filled-in form. The children were asked to come and collect the education materials. People with counter foils received the materials. Initially, the verification was done with the file. After receiving the relief materials, each child had to sign in the file. This was also a proof that Karunalaya had distributed the materials.

Relief distribution schedule

The following is the schedule of the relief distribution:

- Distribution of relief for directly affected families – January 25-27, 2005.
- Distribution of education materials to the first batch of children – January 29, 2005.
- Distribution of education materials to subsequent batches – February 5th, 12th and 19th, 2005.
- Distribution of relief for the indirectly affected families – February 10 – 11, 2005.
- Distribution of tarpaulin tents – February 2, 2005.
- Distribution of nutrition supplement for children - daily till October, 2005.

Police protection sought

The Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr. Masanamuthu, IPS, was informed about the relief distribution work and he was requested to provide protection for the same. The local Police Station personnel gave protection during the distribution programme, as large crowds were expected to attempt to gain entry into the premises forcibly. The Sub Inspector of H5 Police Station and a special battalion of about 15 policemen were deputed during all the days of relief distribution. The work commenced on January 25, 2005 and Sub Inspectors, Mr. C.P Radhakrishnan and Mr. Srinibabu supervised it. The second phase of relief for the indirectly affected families was done on February 8, 2005, and Sub Inspector, Mr. Emmanuel of H5 Police Station, New Washermenpet, inaugurated it.

Volunteers invited for the relief distribution

Karunalaya had appealed to the local groups for help in distribution, as more than 60 volunteers were needed. Friends and well-wishers came readily to assist in the distribution. A group of 5 employees of the LIC Corporation from Thiruvotriyur branch also came as volunteers. About 10 boys were guarding the gates while distribution of the goods was carried out.

Arrangement of venue for distribution of relief materials

The premises of Karunalaya Shelter Home at Tondiarpet was fixed as the venue for distribution, as it is located only a kilometre away from the affected areas. The venue was also selected in order to facilitate organization of people into a queue. The campus was fortified with barricades to help people form the queue. A big stage was erected to stack the materials for distribution. Shamianas were also erected to store the materials, as there was only an open ground.

Distribution of relief to the directly affected families

The directly affected families were given relief goods. As

People waiting to receive the relief supplies

people came with their tokens, the verification was done and the person was identified, signature was obtained for proof and the token was stamped. After receiving the token, the relief materials were distributed. The staff of the respective areas carried out the verification with the help

Distribution of relief to the directly affected families

of other staff members.

Distribution of relief to the indirectly affected families

The area staff identified the indirectly affected families. A green token was distributed to each family. They were invited on February 10-11, 2005, and they also had to show the token for identification and sign in the distribution list; after the token was stamped, they received the relief materials.

Education materials for children

2000 children received education materials. As the items required differed based on the requirements of the specific class, there is variation in the quantity and the number of children who received specific items.

Children with education materials

Children waiting to receive education materials

S.No	Relief Material	No of Beneficiaries	Quantity
1.	Canvas School Bags, big size	2,000 children	2,000
2.	Slate	750 children	750
3.	Four lines Note book	1,000 children	1,000
4.	Two lines Note book	1,000 children	1,000
5.	Ruled Note book	2,000 children	3,000
6.	Maths Note book	2,000 children	11,000
7.	One side Note book	2,000 children	11,000
8.	Drawing Note book	500 children	500
9.	Long size Note book	1,500 children	7,000
10.	Composition Note book	500 children	500
11.	Unruled Note book L.S	1,500 children	3,000
12.	Graph Note book	500 children	500
13.	Science Record Note book	250 children	250
14.	Pen (ink)	2,000 children	2,500
15.	Ball point pen	1,000 children	1,000

S.No	Relief Material	No of Beneficiaries	Quantity
16.	Pencil	2,000 children	2,600
17.	Eraser	2,000 children	2,500
18.	Ruler (wooden)	2,000 children	2,500
19.	Pencil Sharpener	2,000 children	2,500
20.	Colour pencil	2,000 children	3,500
21.	Crayons	1,000 children	1,000
22.	Sketch pen set	1,000 children	1,000
23.	Exam pad	750 children	750
24.	Pencil Box	2,000 children	2,000
25.	Geometry Box	1,000 children	1,000
26.	Atlas book	500 children	500
27.	Uniform 2 sets each	2,000 children	4,000

Counseling to children

Children affected by tsunami needed psychosocial intervention. The North Tamil Nadu Tsunami Relief Committee (NTTRC) supported Karunalaya with the funding support of Terres des Hommes, Germany, to start 7 children activity centres, to provide psychosocial support. Karunalaya staff were trained by NIMHANS to provide counseling to children using simple techniques This helped the children and community members to be relieved of their psychological stress, depression, anxiety and fear. The project also supported the affected communities for livelihood initiatives.

Children in the counselling session

LIFE ON THE ROADSIDE

Even after one month after tsunami, people were left stranded without shelters. They were living on the roadside and near Kasimedu graveyard, using their old sarees and plastic sheets as roofs. During incessant rains in January 2005, people suffered without shelters and so, in one of the community meetings, women asked Karunalaya whether it could provide at least tents for them as temporary shelters. Then, the number of tents

Life on the roadside after tsunami

Power Kuppam families in tent

required was assessed. During this assessment, the people pointed out that since the government had forced the people not to live in the place, many of the affected people had gone to their relatives' homes, and including these numbers, about 500 families were identified as needing tents. Karunalaya immediately identified the supplier and ordered for it. Every fourth day, the supplier agreed to provide 100 tents and by the 2nd of February, 2005, the organization was able to supply tarpaulin tents of 21 x 12 feet size, that could each accommodate 8 to 10 people, to sleep in. Bamboos were also provided to the people and they pitched the tents in their respective places immediately and started their life in the tents. One of the Tamil newspapers, Dinamani, carried the photograph of the people living in the tents given by Karunalaya in February, 2005.

RELOCATION OF THE AFFECTED FAMILIES IN TEMPORARY SHELTERS

One of the unpleasant changes for the affected people living along the Chennai coastline was their forced eviction from the affected areas to temporary shelters provided by the government, located several kilometres away from their original place. The families living in Anna Nagar Kuppam were forcefully evicted to the temporary shelters and bulldozers started demolishing the houses on the first two lanes. People from Anna Nagar rushed in panic to Karunalaya, seeking its help to stop the demolition of their houses. Karunalaya informed the North Tamil Nadu Tsunami Relief Committee (NTTRC) and requested immediate intervention of Ms. D. Geetha, Advocate, who was a member of the committee and the Convener, Mr. Thomas Jeyaraj, Director of Centre for

From L to R : Mr. Devanbu, ACDS, Dr. Paul Sunder Singh, Karunalaya, Mr. Thomas Jeyaraj, CCRD Fr. Jesu, Nesakkaram, Ms. D. Geetha, HRLN, Mr. Vidyadharan, CCRD and others at Anna Nagar, NTTRC solidarity against forceful eviction.

Child Rights and Development(CCRD). A case was filed by Mr Thomas Jeyaraj, seeking injunction of the demolition of the houses and the Honourable High Court ordered injunction, which was reported in the newspapers. A Community meeting was held at Anna Nagar by the NGO heads of NTTRC to express solidarity with them. However, people from the other coastal areas in North Chennai were resettled in Kargil Nagar temporary shelters with promises of better facilities and amenities.

LIFE IN KARGIL NAGAR TEMPORARY SHELTERS

After their eviction, the people were left to the mercy of the rain and the extreme summer heat. The shelters were built with bitumen sheets, which were supposed to be fire-resistant, light roofing. They were constructed without sufficient gap between each block of the structures. The intermediary space of about 5 feet was provided as a lane for people to walk through, resulting in extreme congestion. The land for relocation was low-lying and marshy, with clayey soil. Inadequate sanitation facilities further aggravated the situation. The toilets were also built using bitumen sheets, which were torn within a week, and thereafter, there was no privacy for women and girls to use those toilets. Therefore, people had to use the open spaces for defecation and women and young girls had to wait until dark to relieve themselves and this resulted in large-scale suffering and a marked increase in Reproductive Tract Infections (RTI), sexual abuse of girls and women. Drinking water was also not adequate and was supplied intermittently; the ground water available through hand pumps was brackish and unfit for even washing purposes. The nearest health care facilities and school were located several kilometres away. As Kargil Nagar was a place situated on the outskirts of Chennai, there was only one bus that passed by the road with a

Kargil Nagar temporary shelters

frequency of once every 2 hours. For the same reason, there was no health care facility, school, childcare facility, market or grocery shop located nearby. People had to walk a long distance to buy even the most essential items. During incessant rains, the entire temporary shelters in Kargil Nagar were inundated. People were frightened to see snakes around their habitats after the rains. Many children had dropped out of school due to this situation. Men could not go for fishing due to lack of transportation facilities. They were used to going out for fishing as early as 3:00 a.m., but they could not follow that routine from Kargil Nagar. Life became miserable for these approximately 2,000 families. Karunalaya decided to intervene in Kargil Nagar to provide Child care centres, 3 free school buses, evening classes, children's clubs and daily supply of nutrition supplement. A process of community integration was also initiated to foster harmony and unity amongst the people and to make them participate in the government meetings, with a view to vocalizing their miseries and plight.

Kargil Nagar after heavy rains

KARUNALAYA'S INTERVENTION IN KARGIL NAGAR

Education of Children

The education of the children was completely interrupted because of the tsnuami and the consequent shifting to the temporary shelters at Kargil Nagar. After the fire accident, which engulfed a major portion of these temporary shelters, the basic living conditions of the children rapidly deteriorated and their education became unimportant in the larger scheme of things for the parents, who had to deal with the loss of their belongings and homes and were concentrating on ensuring that they received relief. Karunalaya then started 6 preschool centres (Balwadis) for the children between the age group of 2-5 years, which continued to function in the semi-permanent shelters at Ernavur too. The main activities in the Balwadis were education, midday meals, regular assessment of the progress in the health of the children, home visits and monthly parents' meetings.

Karunalaya had started supplementary education for school-going children in the year 2000 with the objective of facilitating school retention by providing them with extra coaching on lessons and to clarify any doubts that they might have. Later, when the tsunami-affected people were shifted to Kargil Nagar, the children were provided with the opportunity to study in the evenings at the semi-permanent house site. Initially, 9 supplementary education classes had been conducted covering 230 children.

From February 2005, Karunalaya also arranged for 3 free bus services to enable those children who were already enrolled in different schools before the tsunami to attend their respective schools, as Kargil Nagar was located some distance away from these schools and the existing bus service to them was erratic.

Makeshift education centre in Kargil Nagar temporary shelters

At Kargil Nagar, the desolate living conditions made it impossible for parents to provide nutritious food for their children. Karunalaya then drew up a menu (peanuts, eggs and biscuits) as nutrition supplement, which was distributed to 500 children below 12 years of age, every evening.

Karunalaya understood the importance of organizing the community into a cohesive unit, which would then make it possible for effective lobbying through organized representation of the local people's demands, such as continuous and adequate water and electricity supply, provision of sanitation mechanisms to ensure good hygiene and consequent sound health of the community, and so on. It therefore directed its efforts towards achieving community integration, through the establishment of separate departments (such as one for health, one for water supply and so on), headed by a group of community representatives, who were elected by the community themselves. These groups were then mobilized and guided by Karunalaya, to lobby with the concerned authorities for effective redress of their problems.

Nutritious food supplied by Karunalaya

Health Care Centre

Disasters affect the physical and mental health of the community. As part of tsunami response, provision of health care services was of prime importance due to the loss of large number of lives, injured survivors, displacement of people, disruption of water supply and basic sanitation problems. Karunalaya swung into swift action and offered medical and sanitary relief to the affected communities.

Dr. Sundaraiah attending to a patient at the free health center

In the second emergency after the fire accident, the health condition of the community went from bad to worse. A 3-year-old child died due to lack of health care service at Kargil Nagar. As a result of this, Karunalaya set up a free Health Care Centre with the support of Cordaid till the end of October 2005. A doctor and 2 nurses were appointed. During the rehabilitation phase, the Health Care Centre was supported by another organisation (MPDL) from Spain. Under this project, a doctor and 2 nurses continued to be employed in the Ernavur centre. Health care was improved and a health card was distributed to each and every family in Kargil Nagar. They had to come to the Health Care Centre with the card for free treatment. A premises was rented in Kargil Nagar to house the medical centre, thus enabling the doctor to

provide good health care as, until then, the medical team was visiting the camps on foot and treating the patients In addition to this, the Karunalaya staff conducted regular meetings with the community to create awareness on various health issues

Medical care of children at the Balwadis was attended to by a team of qualified doctors at Karunalaya's free Health Care Centre. At the monthly parents meeting, feedback on the children's health was given by the staff to the parents. Issues regarding cleanliness, food preparation, school enrolment and other necessary issues were also discussed.

FIRE IN KARGIL NAGAR TEMPORARY SHELTERS

The termination of the Tsunami Relief phase coincided with two major fires in Kargil Vetri Nagar. On June 15, 2005, nearly 510 houses (blocks G & H) in Kargil Nagar were burnt down in a fire accident. Again, around midnight on 23rd June, 2005, a second fire accident took place in Kargil Nagar, in which the remaining 1635 houses were burnt down. The reason for the fire accident has not yet been found. After the second fire accident, the whole area was plunged into chaos. People were not able to care for their children's education as they were only concerned about their lost goods and houses and were busy waiting for relief supply. Immediately after the fire accident, the staff team led by the Director went to the site to analyze the loss and to assess the needs of the people.

Immediate action was taken to continue the relief work to ensure the welfare of the victims affected by Tsunami. Many activities such as giving psychosocial support, medical care, free bus for the affected children, construction of semi-permanent houses were given priority and the community was provided provisions and

Temporary shelters gutted by flames

household articles once more. After the fire accident, the people lost their temporary tents and basic necessities and this circumstance led them to endure much hardship and suffering. Psychosocial support services were provided to them to help them reconcile to this fresh streak of misfortune and to enable them to adapt to the changes. The training for these services for the staff was conducted by NIMHANS and CSED. from 14.07.05 to 16.07.05. at Don Bosco Youth Animation Centre. Ennore This training on counseling during disaster situations helped the staff tremendously, who in turn were

Fr. Sundar Raj, SDB, Rector, Don Bosco Youth Centre, Broadway, inaugurating the distribution of relief materials. Ms. Eline, Dutch volunteer and Mr. Muruganandam, Revenue Inspector, are also seen.

empowered to help the community who were living in fear to cope with their condition and provided the much needed support to the affected people

The fire accident left the families homeless again and they lost many of their belongings and savings. This made them dependent on relief again. There was a need to provide good quality rice for them to help them tide over their situation, without starvation, for at least one month thereafter. Karunalaya arranged for dry rations distribution of dhal, tamarind, salt, cooking oil, masala powder, and 25 kg of first quality ponni rice to the people This helped them to face the next one-month period without starvation and to cope with the situation. Fr Sundar Raj, Rector, Don Bosco Youth Centre, Broadway inaugurated the distribution of relief materials and consoled the fire victims, in his address to them. The people were not able to go for any work after the fires therefore they had no source of income. The relief actually enabled them to resume cooking individually and to return to their family life.

No shelter for immediate purpose

Old tents were redistributed till German Agro Action (GAA) provided tents for all the families. Immediately after the fire accident, the entire Kargil Nagar community became homeless, living under the open sky without a roof over their heads. They used their clothes and blankets to secure some semblance of shelter. During this time, the tents that were distributed by Karunalaya with the support of Cordaid in the first relief phase after tsunami came in handy for redistribution. Actually, when the people were resettled from their original places from Kasimedu, some of them returned the tents to us for future use in case of need. About 200 tents were thus available with Karunalaya. These tents were redistributed to the people after the first fire accident. But since the second fire also took place, the tents were insufficient to accommodate all the people who, as a consequence had to live without a roof over their heads for more than 3 weeks. Thereafter, they received tents supplied by GAA who arranged for them with the support of European Commission, in collaboration with an NGO, CSHD.

Temporary shelters after fire accident

CONSTRUCTION OF SEMI PERMANENT HOUSES

Identification of alternative land for semi permanent houses

Even before the fire accidents, people wanted to be shifted from Kargil Nagar, to a higher place with better infrastructure and facilities. The occurrence of the fire accidents forced the Government to take a quick decision to find an alternate site to locate the temporary shelters. The Chennai NGO coordination council persuaded the Government to find alternative sites for the construction of the semi permanent houses for the tsunami victims. Many such sites were identified and proposed to the Collector for acquisition. such as the All India Radio land at Tiruvotriyur. The Tamil Nadu Housing board land at Neithal Nagar in Wimco. Tiruvottriyur and the land of Hindustan Lever Limited at Tondiarpet. But. the semi permanent houses were constructed at the Celcrete factory compound at Ernavur. identified by the Government

People's participation ensured

During the process of planning for the resettlement of the Kargil Nagar people to a new site due to the unsuitable land condition. the participation of the affected community in the planning process was overlooked. Karunalaya insisted on the inclusion of the people in the process. by taking representatives from Kargil Nagar to the Collector s meeting. This had a great impact in the community as it built confidence that efforts were being made by the government and the NGOs for their rehabilitation. Even in the very technical consultation meeting held at the PWD buildings chaired by the Collector, Mr. Chandramohan. IAS, two community representatives were taken by Karunalaya to make them participate in the process and to express their views. In that workshop. the model of the house was discussed, including the materials to be used for the construction.

Construction of semi permanent houses by Karunalaya

Though Karunalaya had no prior experience or expertise in the domain of shelter, the situation demanded that they undertake housing for the tsunami affected. In one of the meetings conducted by the NGO Coordination Council. PAM was the only NGO that planned to construct 2.000 semi permanent houses after the fire accident in Kargil Nagar. No other NGO was prepared to undertake this responsibility. Due to this. Karunalaya agreed to construct 200 houses to fill the gap in North Chennai. Cordaid had faith in Karunalaya and came forward to fund the construction of the 200 houses. Contractors FSO Designs Private Limited constructed the 200 houses

Laying of foundation stone for the construction

The programme for laying the foundation stone for the start of the construction of semi permanent houses at Ernavur site. was organized with only a day s notice. A meeting was held at the office of the Collector on the 18th of July. at 5:00 p.m. The NGO Coordination Council and the implementing organisations discussed the programme to be held on the 19th of July. 2005. Arrangements had to be made on a war footing. Karunalaya played an important role in the arrangement of the programme. Almost all the work was done by Karunalaya, including the arrangements for carving of Foundation Stone, printing of invitation, serving of coffee and snacks for guests and bringing the people from Kargil Nagar for the programme. Since we had prior experience. it was possible to do it on a war footing and we worked overnight to get things done. The programme was scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. and it was conducted on time

The Honorable Minister for Law and Information Technology. Mr. D. Jayakumar, who was also the local member of the legislative assembly from Royapuram. was the Chief Guest for the programme.

Besides. the Commissioner for Revenue Administration and Relief, Mr. Santhanam. IAS, the Collector of Chennai Mr. S. Chandramohan, IAS., and Collector of Tiruvallur Mr. Pankaj Kumar Bansal. IAS, and other officers were present. Mr. Aloysius James, Consultant of Cordaid, was present for the programme.

Minister D. Jayakumar lighting Kuthuvilakku From L to R : Mr. S. Chandra Mohan, IAS., Chennai Collector, Mr Pankaj Kumar Bansal, Thiruvallur Collector, Mr. Ekambaram, PAM Director, Mr. R. Santhanam, IAS., Commissioner for Revenue Administration & Dr. N. Paul Sunder Singh

Childcare centres in Ernavur semi permanent houses

Karunalaya Children's Education Centre

The whole campus for semi permanent houses was divided into 3 phases. according to the order of the commencement of construction in each phase. Due to lack of land, it was not possible to construct all the 2,200 houses. Only 1,748 houses were constructed totally Therefore. there was no space for childcare centres. Karunalaya constructed one childcare centre in Phase 3 and renovated 2 old buildings that were available at the site in Phase 1 and phase 3 for use for children's activities. health care centre, tailoring centre and project office

Community monitored the construction

The affected community was involved mainly in planning and monitoring the project implementation of relief and the construction of semi permanent houses. Particularly for the construction of houses, a community monitoring team was formed to be present at the site to check the quality of the construction. The community team was first trained about the quality of construction. A very simple way of understanding the quality was explained for each stage of the construction and the materials needed to be used and its proportion was also explained to them. This made them understand it easily and they were very effective in monitoring the quality. For instance. they insisted that the workers dig deeper for laying a strong foundation. They insisted that the mixture of cement and sand should not exceed 1:5, which is the accepted proportion. The community checked if the masons placed two 6 mm steel rods at every fourth layer of the brickwork as per instruction. Whenever they found discrepancies in the quality, they stopped the work and made them rectify the error and informed the site supervisors appointed by Karunalaya, and the coordinator, contractor and the Director at once. Weekly meetings were conducted to take stock of the progress of the construction work and to discuss the difficulties faced and the quality of work. The following were the members of the community monitoring committee: Ms. Bhavani. Mr. Maria Selvam, Mr. Kalaimani, Mr Saarangan, Mr Kumar. Ms. Eswari, Ms. Selvi, Ms. Ambika, Ms. Paanjali, Ms. Suriya and Ms. Parameswari.

Ms. Judith Kiers, Senior Programme Officer, Cordaid,interacting with the monitoring committee members, during the supervision of the semi permanent shelters at Ernavur.

Community involved for labour

It was categorically conveyed to the contractors FSO Designs Private Limited that they should give priority to the affected community, when employing both skilled and unskilled labour for construction work. This ensured that the community members had an opportunity to work and earn a livelihood in their own site, while it also kept them gainfully occupied during the time of crisis.

Opening of the semi permanent Houses

On October 19, 2005, the semi permanent houses were inaugurated and opened by the Honourable Chief Minister (CM) of Tamil Nadu, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa, at the Chief Minister's Chamber in the State Secretariat. Though the constructionwork was not over. the inauguration was decided by the Government and announced by the Collector two days before. Only 5 NGO representatives and 6 community members were invited. One representative from each organisation and one from the CNCC participated. On behalf of Karunalaya, the Director, Dr. Paul Sunder Singh and on behalf of the

Community members and NGO representatives with Chief Minister after opening of semi permanent houses

Dr. N. Paul Sunder Singh receiving certificate of appreciation from the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa

Funding partner. Cordaid, Mr. Aloysius James participated. The Chiel Minister inaugurated the houses by symbolically opening the plaque and handing over the keys to the community members. The CM also gave a certificate of appreciation to the NGO representatives

KARUNALAYA'S MODEL HOUSE

Though technical experts, assembled by CNCC conveners and approved by the Government of Tamil Nadu, prepared the design for the semi permanent house. the design of the house constructed by Karunalaya was modified to include the suggestions of the target community and consultants. One of the major changes in the plan was the separation of every house with a wall, to reduce conflict and increase privacy of each family. The design of the other NGO did not provide for this privacy, as the wall separating the houses was only two feet high, allowing the neighbours to peep in and affecting privacy; this was one of the major reasons why people liked our design. Besides this, there was a marked difference in the quality of materials used by Karunalaya. Karunalaya provided good quality doors, windows with iron grills, kitchen platforms, partition screens for privacy rainwater channels in front of the houses and septic tanks, and roofs with double groove Mangalore tiles on silver wood reapers. The height of the roof was raised higher to prevent rainwater from dripping in. The other NGO used single groove tiles on casuarina polls without any of the other facilities. In the ratio of 1: 5. 40 toilets and 40 bathrooms were built for the 200 houses, with separate blocks for males and females. Of all the semi permanent houses, Government officials and others appreciated and accepted the houses built by Karunalaya as a model semi permanent house. This was proved by the fact that when the UN representatives wanted to visit the semi permanent houses, the Collectors of Chennai and Thiruvallur and other dignitaries were able to show our houses as model semi permanent houses.

Karunalaya semi permanent houses in phase III, Ernavur

UNPRECEDENTED HEAVY RAINS

The tsunami affected people in Chennai were unfortunate to have suffered multiple hazards within one year, and they were moved to different places and schools, about 8 times. Due to the continuing emergency situation caused by unprecedented heavy rains, with 9 cyclones between October and December 2005, people had to be shifted to nearby schools again, for safety. The area was water logged again due to lack of drainage system, as the construction was not completed fully. The rains also claimed more than 250 lives, throughout the State Besides, about 50 people died of 2 stampedes in Chennai city, when the affected went to collect relief materials from the Government.

As an immediate relief measure, food was supplied by Karunalaya, at the site of the semi permanent houses

Semi permanent houses after unprecedented heavy rains

itself. When people were shifted to schools again from the semi permanent houses, Karunalaya supplied cooked food for them. for the first few days. We also mobilized food packets from corporate houses such asConfederation of Indian Industries, Ashok Leyland. etc. Our staff members distributed the food packets to the families. Later, the government also supplied food daily. with the help of NGOs. Karunalaya, besides providing food to the families. also supplied nutrition supplement for children, such as eggs. cereals. dhal. etc., so that the nutritional requirements of the children were met. Relief materials such as trunk box, utensils. rice bags, groceries and mats were supported by Stichting Amaidhi and Stichting Wilde Ganzen, the Netherlands.

Immediate flood relief at site

THE NEGLECTED FAMILIES

Karunalaya had lobbied with the Collectorate for inclusion of the left out families in the list for allotment of semi permanent and permanent houses. In Chennai City. the Government undertook a survey to identify the tsunami affected families and gave allotment of the temporary shelters to them. at Kargil Nagar. As per the government lists. 2.142 families were resettled in North Chennai and 1.100 in the South Chennai Thoraipakkam temporary shelters.

Left out families

In the process. many families were left out due to the following reasons:

Many unaffected people actually scuffled to get themselves photographed and listed. and the genuine families were pushed out in the process and neglected further.

Some others were promised that the film was over and that the photographers appointed by the Collectorate / TNSCB would come to list them on the next day. but they never turned up.

Some others left their place in panic to their relatives' homes outside Chennai. and on their return, found that they were left out: their repeated appeals to the officials remained neglected.

What was their plight?

Since they were neglected. they were living on the roadsides in tents and shanties. some were living with their relatives. some were also living in the temporary shelters in Ernavur. in the unoccupied houses. without official allocation.

Those neglected families who were living on the roadside at Pallavan Nagar. Thideer Nagar area. faced threat from antisocial elements. and women and children were living without safety and security. Education of the children was

affected and children were afflicted by communicable and seasonal diseases.

As they did not have permanent addresses, they were neglected in the distribution of any benefits and relief.

Due to the same reason, they were unable to even open a bank account for their self help groups.

Women and girl children had no privacy, as they lived on the roadside. They experienced extreme difficulty in having their bath and changing their clothes.

During rains, their tents and shanties were inundated with water, and they spent the nights standing, with their children.

The roads adjoining their dwellings were prone to heavy vehicular traffic. As a consequence, children and old people were affected by the noise and faced the constant threat of accidents.

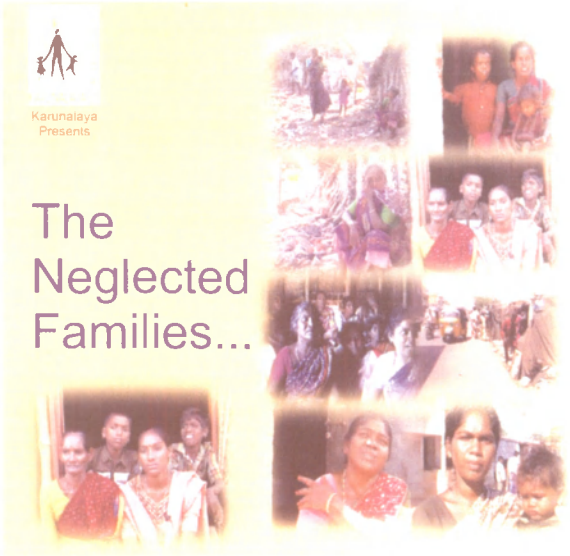
The Neglected Families living on roadside after tsunami

How many families were neglected?

It was extremely difficult to identify the genuine families who were neglected in Chennai City. Since Karunalaya had been working among the coastal communities for the past 12 years, we were able to identify the genuine neglected families in North Chennai areas. When we tried to find out the situation in the South Chennai areas, NGOs were not able to identify them, as they did not know the community before tsunami. A total of 52 families in North Chennai were truly neglected and needed support. There were also more claims through other influences. It was important to assist these 52 families first after verification, before heeding the claims made by others who were using pressure tactics to secure benefits.

The documentary film on "The Neglected Families"

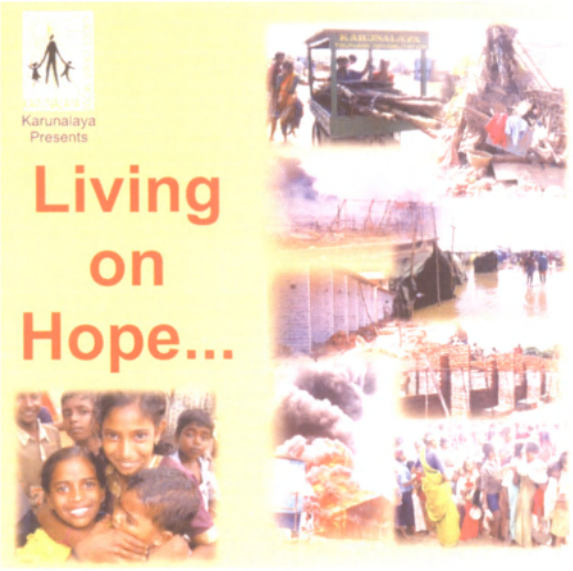
Even two years after tsunami, these neglected families were still suffering, without support. Their life stories were heart rending. Karunalaya decided to bring their plight to



Short Documentary on Neglected Families used as advocacy tool

the notice of the Government, so that they would be helped. With the support of Cordaid, The Netherlands, Karunalaya had produced 2 short documentary films, "THE NEGLECTED FAMILIES" and "LIVING ON HOPE", directed by Mr. Magimai Pragasam, Director, Centre for Media and Research, Chennai.

On the occasion of the Tsunami Memorial Day, Karunalaya organized a programme to commemorate the tsunami and pay homage to the deceased. The short documentary film on the "Neglected Families" (11 mins.) was screened, in the presence of Mr. D. Vivekanandan, IAS, Managing Director(MD), Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board(TNSCB), on 23.12.2006. On that day, a meeting had been arranged for the neglected families at 3:00



Video documentary film about the tsunami affected people, living on hope

p.m., at Hotel Ashoka. Mr. D. Vivekanandan, MD, TNSCB, was the Chief guest. Mr. Magimai Prakasam, Documentary Film Director, Rev. Fr. Gerald, Don Bosco Wisdom Town, Mr. S. John Bosco, President of Karunalaya and Ms. Bhuvana, Chief Community Development Officer(CCDO) of TNSCB, participated. After the formal beginning, the people from the neglected families also spoke about their experiences for the past 2 years after tsunami, struggling to live on the roadside, without protection. While addressing the gathering, the Chief Guest promised the neglected families that their names would be included in a very short period. The documentary film on "The Neglected families" was screened after lighting a candle and after two minutes of silence was observed. A Vote of thanks was delivered by Dr. Paul Sunder Singh.

Master Karthick, one of those affected, narrating the plight of neglected families to Mr. Vivekanandan, IAS, MD, TNSCB

Results of the effort

As the result of our effort to get these neglected families enlisted for the permanent houses, the media gave extensive coverage for the issue. The leading Tamil and English newspapers wrote specific articles about the neglected families. The report on the neglected families was given to the officer on Special Duty, Mr. C.V. Shankar, IAS, Mr. Vivekanandan, IAS, MD, Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board and the Chennai Collector, Ms. R. Jaya, IAS. They gave the assurance that they will include these families after verification. Subsequently, a list was published by the Government, in which 48 out of the 52 families were included. 4 families were again left out, a representation was given yet again to the officers by the people. They assured them that they would peruse the list and do the needful. People whose names were included were happy and thankful for the effort taken by Karunalaya, while those 4 left out families were worried whether they would be enlisted; after consistent follow up these 4 families were also included in the list.

UNFULFILLED PROMISES IN ERNAVUR

The tsunami affected families in the coastal North Chennai areas were settled in the temporary shelters at Kargil Nagar, built by the government, in February 2005, but, these were burnt down in two fire accidents, in the month of June, 2005. The agonies of the tsunami affected people in North Chennai had no end, despite the efforts of government and non-government organizations to restore normal life.

The term 'normal life' was, in a sense, undefined for the tsunami affected. A functional drainage system, regular water supply, uninterrupted independent electricity connection, health care facility, transportation facility, crime prevention-police outpost, public distribution system, etc., which are some essential services for a normal life, seems to be considered a luxury for the poor

Poor quality toilets pose innumerable problems

or the affected communities in North Chennai.

When the tsunami affected people were resettled, the government promised that all essential services would be provided to them to resume normal life and livelihood immediately. Despite the NGOs coming forward to supplement the Government efforts in the construction of semi permanent houses, the other commitments made by the Government remained unfulfilled, until after one year of resettlement. It was agreed that NGOs will construct semi permanent houses, while the Government will provide water, sanitation system, garbage collection, electricity connection, public distribution system, transportation facilities, health care, child care services, etc. In reality, only some of the promises were fulfilled.

Toilets without doors

The people in the temporary shelters required continuous psychosocial support not for the trauma created by tsunami, but the trauma created as a result of the conflicts that arose on a day-to-day basis for the following issues. Most of the toilets that were constructed were not functional, some were without doors, and some were so small in size that people could not sit in the toilet.

The area had no drainage system. Only leach pits were provided, which needed to be cleaned periodically as it got filled up.

The People in phase III fought often to use the few functional toilets, as one group said that the functiona toilets were built for them, while the other group said that they did not have enough toilets and most of them were not functional, therefore they need to use the few toilets that were functional. (As per sphere standards, there should be one toilet and a bath room for every 5 families)

It was promised that every 20 families would get one water connection, but till the end, this was not fulfilled.

Nine months after resettling them in the semi permanent houses, no electricity connection had been provided to Phase II and Phase III. Therefore, people had managed to take connections using hooks from the street light supply, despite the risk involved. In phase I, the electricity connection that was given was not uniform and foolproof, as people complained about leakage.

Public distribution system was not in place for Ernavur temporary shelters.

Two murders took place in the temporary shelters. Besides, illicit liquor and drugs were freely peddled. This highlighted the lack of an adequate police presence in the area.

There was no proper bus stand. Transportation for children was not arranged; therefore, Karunalaya had arranged free bus operation for school children.

The street light posts erected in the area were not deeply implanted, and cement mortar was not used to fix the post under the ground. When the workers dug the ground to build a rainwater drain chamber, a lamp post with a live

Hooks used to take electrical connections from the street lights

wire fell on the house. Fortunately, there was no casualty The posts were fixed only two feet deep.

Efforts made – No Action taken

Representatives from the community had petitioned the officials, seeking immediate action. When the people approached the Electricity Board office at Ernavur for power connections, they were told that the orders from the higher-ups (a colloquial term to denote government bureaucrats) were awaited.

Women in the temporary shelters trying to solve sanitation problems, in the face of an indifferent Municipal Corporation

When people approached the municipality for the removal of slush water from sewage pits, they were unwilling to take responsibility to clean the leach pits periodically. These pits were cleaned only when some officers visited the area, or after several representations had been made. Later, an NGO, Yes international was contracted by the municipality to remove garbage from the semi permanent houses.

While the police were well aware of the illegal activities of the antisocial elements, they preferred to turn a blind eye to them, and offenders were let off easily.

REHABILITATION PHASE

The rehabilitation phase of the project for the tsunami affected families in Ernavur semi permanent houses, supported by Cordaid, The Netherlands, commenced from November 2005 upto June 2007. This phase mainly covered the education of children, community integration, livelihood opportunities and advocacy and lobbying for the rights of the affected families.

Education of Children

After resettling the Kargil Nagar families at the new semi permanent house site at Ernavur, basic facilities for children were totally unavailable, and therefore, children were not taken care of by the system. Karunalaya immediately started 6 preschool centres (balwadis) for the children between 2-5 years of age, one transit school for dropouts and child labourers, and 9 supplementary education centres, besides continuing the 3 free bus services for children to go to school, supply of nutrition supplement and distribution of educational materials. People who were displaced several times were unable to provide for their children's education, as they were only concerned about their lost goods and houses and were busy waiting for relief supply.

Activity - based learning at childcare center in Ernavur

Commencement of Balwadis (Pre-school)

The identification of pre-school children was done by the staff. A list of children in the age group of 2 – 5 years in all the three phases of the semi permanent houses was prepared, and the children were enrolled in the pre-school. The parents of the identified children were informed about the importance of pre-school and were motivated to bring the children to the centres regularly. Six Balwadi centres commenced with 25 children each between 10:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. The centres were divided into two units, three in phase I and the other three centres in phase III. Six Balwadi teachers and six assistants from members of the women self help groups formed by Karunalaya, were appointed to run the Balwadis. An expert, Ms. Poornima Arun, gave in-service training on December 10 and 17, 2005. This was followed by training in activity-based learning methodology. The teachers were well-equipped through the training, to conduct preschool. The children were taught through various study methods like Songs, Stories, Games, Creative games, Pictures and Letters identification, etc. and also enjoyed Dance and Physical exercise

Noon Meals

In order to provide lunch for these children, the SHGs of Karunalaya in tsunami affected areas were contacted. The group members were provided training on fixing the menu, instructions were given to cook food in a hygienic way, with less spice and more nutrition. Every week, two groups on a rotational basis were assigned for cooking and providing noon meals for preschool children. As women SHG members were involved, they were paid for

Children eat noon meals at the childcare center

this work at the rate of Rs. 5/-. per child. This proved to be a feasible option, since many SHG members had their young children studying in the Balwadis. They were therefore, more conscientious when preparing food They had been provided cooking utensils to cook meals Food was served at 12:00 noon every day. The menu was fixed on a weekly basis and generally consisted of the following items

Monday	-	Sambar Rice, Vegetables Poriyal and Appalam
Tuesday	-	Tomato Rice, Egg and Appalam
Wednesday	-	Tamarind Rice, Carrot Beans and Appalam
Thursday	-	Keerai Rice, Carrot and Appalam
Friday	-	Karakulambu, Rice and Vegetable Poriyal.

The women groups also provided Fish, Eggs and Pappads for children, every week. Every day, the prepared food was tasted by the Balwadi teachers before serving to the children, to ensure that quality was maintained. As a result, some families who could not feed nutritious food felt very happy to see their children having quality food and they themselves dropped them in the centre every day. The meals were provided at 12:00 noon so that the daily habit of eating at noontime was implemented, which improved their health. The age weight ratio of the children had improved. Children were happy since they were taught through play way methods

Level of discipline was better. Parents felt happy seeing their children singing rhymes, noticing their marked familiarity with alphabets, etc. This had made them confident about the Balwadis' purpose. The practice of young children roaming the streets during daytime had been visibly and drastically reduced. Children looked healthier and cleaner. Parents meetings were conducted every month to educate the parents about childcare and the progress of the child's health and development. In the first year, 207 children and in the second year 179 children were attending the childcare centres. The teachers enrolled children who reached 5 years in the formal school, at the beginning of the academic year. 126 children were enrolled in the past two years. When the people were allotted permanent houses in August 2007, these children were enrolled in the childcare centres of the ICDS run by the Government in the vicinity

Monitoring the age-weight ratio of children in childcare centre

Transit school

One transit school was conducted for children who were dropouts, from the age group of 6 – 14 years. The transit schoolteacher was selected and provided training under "Education for all" Government scheme. The syllabus of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for all programme) was followed for teaching transit school children. The transit school was functioning in Phase III. The school timings were from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Fundamental education, awareness songs, games, group study, story-

telling, moral science, basic education, bingo, chart pictures, games, meditation exercise, identifying parts of the body were taught to them in a non formal atmosphere. Tests and assessments as per the Sarva Shikha Abhiyan (SSA) syllabus/guidelines were followed to ensure equivalency before rejoining school. Noon meals were also provided to these children. Every month, Parents meetings were conducted to discuss the children's progress, behaviour, attendance and future school admissions. Parents showed interest in participating in these meetings and accepted the feedback given to them. As a result, 72 children were enrolled in formal school in the first year and 25 children were enrolled in June 2007.

Children attending transit school in Ernavur

Unsuccessful enrollment of children in nearby schools

Since the people were resettled in the semi permanent houses, it was thought appropriate to enroll the children in the nearby schools, to ensure that children go to a school within one kilometre of their residence. The staff surveyed the area and identified the nearby schools for enrollment. After tedious efforts, 150 children were enrolled in the Municipality ETPS primary school, next to the semi permanent houses. But, due to the following reasons, the children could not continue in the schools:

- The school building could not accommodate 150 children.
- No toilet facility in the school.
- Only two teachers were available for all the students. Therefore, they could not manage all the children admitted.
- The school campus was not safe for the children,as it did not have a gate and there were gaping holes and bushy undergrowth all around.
- The old schools also refused to hand over the Transfer Certificates, which was essential for enrolling children in other schools. Due to non-availability of T.C.s, the primary school near the semi permanent houses refused to provide noon meals for the children.
- These problems resulted in the parents re-sending their children to the previous schools.

Supplementary education

Supplementary education programme was functioning in Phase I, II and III. The main objective of supplementary education was to ensure that children continue to stay in school, through extra coaching on lessons taught during regular school, and to clarify doubts. The majority of children could not study at home. The supplementary education programme provides the right ambience for studies. Evening tuitions are conducted between 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. The students were separated according to their classes and coached on subjects that they found difficult like Maths, English and Sciences. Tests were conducted periodically. Group study was encouraged. Every group with ten members had one leader. Teachers clarified the

Supplementary education classes after school, in the evenings, at Ernavur

students' doubts. Teachers increased the tuition time by one hour for students from VIII & IX standards, before the exams. The average attendance in all three phases was good: in Phase 1 - 143, Phase II - 60 and Phase III - 135. Supplementary nutrition was also given to them.

House visit and parents meeting

The children who roam around without going to the supplementary classes were monitored and their parents were counseled about these undesirable habits during house visits and advised to send their children to evening tuition classes. Parents' meeting was conducted every month for the benefit of the school going children to discuss about Utility of free bus service, Progress of learning, Discipline, Neatness and Savings. The importance of parents' visits to schools was also stressed. As a result, the children performed well in their school examinations, competitiveness had increased. They maintained their books and notebooks well. They had a higher level of confidence about their studies. Academically poor students were catching up with their counterparts. New students were seeking entry into supplementary education classes. Students wrote the exams very well. 30 children secured the first 5 ranks and except for one child, all those who wrote public exams from the 10th and 12th standard, passed.

FREE BUS SERVICE FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

The bus frequency from Ernavur to other areas was very poor and, as a consequence, the children were facing

Children who went to school by the free bus service

difficulty in attending schools. Since the Government did not make any arrangement for the transportation of children to go to school, Karunalaya hired 3 private buses every day, for the same purpose. The buses were tourist buses and 333 children enjoyed this facility. 3 youth were employed from the affected community to accompany the children in the buses, every day. The community appreciated this support wholeheartedly and requested that this service be continued.

However, during the Sabarimala season, the bus operators were not able to provide us with buses as they were over booked. During this time, parents tried to send their children to the nearby schools but, when they realised that the nearby schools were unable to cope, they insisted on sending their children to the old schools, nearly 9 kms away from the temporary shelters. This affected the safety of children while commuting to and from school. Besides, the following hardships were encountered:

Children had to wait for long hours to catch the Government bus and they reached the school very late, every morning.

Due to overcrowding, buses did not stop at the bus stop.

Children suffered in the crowd and even missed the place of alighting. Many children suffered injury while getting in and out of the bus.

Parents were restless when the children did not return on time. This led to many children dropping out from school.

Number of children used the bus

S. No.	Name of the school	Phase I & II	Phase III	Total
1.	Cherian Nagar CMS	43	42	85
2.	TRK Perumal School	25	8	33
3.	CMS Pudhumanai Kuppam	65	39	104
4.	Ramakrishna School	17	-	17
5.	Vinayagapuram School	3	14	17
6.	St. Teresa School	4	20	24
7.	Ettiyappan Naicker School	2	-	2
8.	Northwick School	3	-	3
9.	P.A.K. Palanisami School	1	-	1
10.	S.N. Chetty School	1	-	1
11.	C.S.I. Rajagopal School	-	2	2
12.	Deivasigamani School	1	-	1
13.	NCLP	8	11	19
14.	Tamil Nadu CMS	7	4	11
15.	Municipality Primary School	-	5	5
16.	Dharmambal High School	-	-	-
17.	CMS primary	4	-	4
18.	MPT Colony	1	-	1
19.	St. Peters	1	-	1
20.	St. Anne's	-	2	2
	Total	**186**	**147**	**333**

Some parents accompanied the children to school and as a result, lost their livelihood. Some others left their children in the relatives' homes that were located near their old school.

Dropouts increased during this period in the temporary shelters.

Government support for free bus service sought

In order to solve the problem of transportation of children to school, we met Government officials, including Mr. Chandramohan, IAS. Chennai District Collector, Ms. Sundari, Tsunami Tahsildar, Mr. Thatchina Moorthi, Tsunami Deputy Collector, Ms. Suji Thomas, IAS, Deputy Collector, Ponneri and Ms. Vijayalakshmi, Municipality Commissioner. Though they promised to do the needful, it was not possible to get their support for the children immediately.

The Hindu report and the impact

On January 3, 2006, the Hindu newspaper reporter, Ms. Sandhya, visited the Ernavur temporary shelter area, met a few children who were not attending the school, and enquired about the reason for this situation. They told her that as it was the Sabarimala season, all the tourist and private buses had been booked and hence, they were unable to attend school. These children were dependent on the private buses provided by Karunalaya. This issue was highlighted in her report that appeared in the Hindu on January 4, 2006. Due to this, the Director and the project coordinator went to meet the Collector, the Education department and Tsunami Tahsildar. After a discussion with the Collector, Mr. Muruganandan, IAS, he promised that they would try to get three Metropolitan Transport Corporation buses at concessional rates, for the transportation of the children. He gave a letter addressed to the MD of the Metropolitan Transport Corporation, seeking arrangement of buses for children. Later, another official said that a charge would be levied for each day per bus, which was higher than the cost we incurred for private bus operators. They also refused to give free bus passes; we were told that it was not the time for issuing fresh bus passes. Karunalaya was informed that the transport department would add an additional bus service during the school hours from the area, which did not happen. Until permanent houses were allotted to the people who lived in the semi permanent houses, Karunalaya arranged for free buses for children to attend school.

Children's Clubs

In order to promote leadership among children and to ensure protection of child rights, Children's Clubs were organized in the temporary shelters. The children's clubs provided an opportunity for children to develop leadership qualities, bring out their hidden talents, discuss issues concerning their rights, learn democratic process of electing and functioning as leaders and participate in every decision-making process. Three Children's Clubs were formed in 3 phases of Ernavur.

Children's Club members cleaning their premises

Office Bearers

Responsibilities	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
President	K. Sarath	Vignesh	Kalai Selvi
Secretary	P. Sumithra	T. Devika	Indhumathi
Treasurer	Manimozhi	Rekha Devi	Bhavani
Educational Department	J. Vadivu	K. Priya	Vignesh
Social Department	Prashanth	Banu Priya	Deepa
Sports Department	M. Ravichandran	Devaki	Vijesh
Cultural Department	Karuthamma	K. Malarvizhi	Ajay

Opportunities to exhibit their talents and be happy

Awareness rally by children's club members

Election was conducted to elect leaders for the various departments of the Club, namely, Education, Cultural, Social Service, and Sports Departments. Orientation was given to the above leaders on their roles and responsibilities in the Club. Every Friday, Children's Club meetings were held from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The children were trained to lead, organize and participate in the club activities. To create interest and responsibility among children, children were encouraged to select and perform various activities, according to their department. To monitor these departments, weekly departmental meetings were organized. Central children's leaders council was also formed that included the leaders of all the three phases, to discuss common issues and plan out joint programmes for the three phases. Summer camps and outings were planned by the children's leaders' council. Women self help group leaders got involved in the summer camps and prepared food for the children.

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION & LIVELIHOOD

The resettled people in the temporary and semi permanent houses were from eight different communities. In order to integrate them for peaceful coexistence and to enable them to address their problems regarding infrastructure and/or availability of services, Karunalaya decided on a strategy, i.e., to elect representatives street-wise, form working committees and monitor them for each phase. The strategy also

included training the committee members on conflict resolution, leadership, gender sensitivity and community-based disaster preparedness. The committees were given orientation to hold monthly meetings, to check the progress and to identify and resolve problems. The entire community had been suffering from social, physical, economical and health problems, which they found difficult to address and resolve. Therefore 5 groups were formed to address 5 major issues and each group member was made responsible for solving problems related to the issue. The names and lists of issues are given below:

Community representatives meeting

Issues	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Sanitation & Garbage Committee	Ms. Sarasu Ms. Sudha Ms. Dhavamani	Ms. Mapoobi Ms. Karpagam Mr. Arumugam	Ms. Nagoorammal Ms. Devi Ms. R. Sudha
Electricity Committee	Ms. Selvi Ms. Santha Ms. Kala	Ms. Saroja Ms. Rani	Ms. Murugammal Ms. Thangam Ms. Selvi Ms. Shanthi
Drinking Water & Hand Pump Committee	Ms. Shakila Mr. Loganathan Mr. Subramani Ms. Ilaiyarani	Ms. Sivakami Ms. Pushba	Ms. Jaya Ms. Lakshmi Ms. Kala Ms. Amsaveni
Permanent Shelter Committee	Mr. Anand Mr. Nithyanandham Ms. Padmavathi	Ms. Desam Mr. Madhu	Ms. Nirmala Ms. Kannagi
Area Emergency Committee	Mr. Subramani Ms. Sarasu Ms. Selvi Ms. Stella Ms. Bhawani	Ms. Thamaraiselvi Ms. Vadivu	Ms. Nagoorammal Ms. Devi Ms. Selvi Ms. Kala Ms. Yasodha

The team decided to write petitions to the Chennai District Collector, to solve the common problems in the affected areas. They followed the strategy of writing petitions and meeting the department officials, contacting the officials over telephone, demanding prompt action, calling for agitation and the use of other such pressure tactics to solve the issues.

Similarly, each of the representatives gathered the street resident-members once a month and identified issues and discussed the various problems confronting them at the time, in addition to the following recurring problems

Antisocial Activities
Water, Road, Ration Shop, Election I.D. Card
Maintenance of water tanks
Electricity problems
Educational support
Free bus service
Drinking water, Drainage facilities
Cleaning the stagnant water
Supplementary school
Importance of Education
Chikun Kunya – Mosquito Menace
Permanent housing

Functional systems in semi permanent houses

Functional Systems	Phase I			Phase II			Phase III		
	Total	A	B	Total	A	B	Total	A	B
Street Light	64	20	44	13	11	2 (2)	38	9	29
Pump	30	26	4	19	12	7	36	34	2
Bathroom	59	25	34	56	56	-	72	64	8
Toilet	52	32	20	56	56	-	72	64	8
Water point	63	-	63	42	2	40	42	-	42

A –Functioning, B- Not Functioning

Women self-help groups (SHGs) in semi permanent shelters

People affected by tsunami lost their livelihood and suffered a great deal. The Karunalaya staff emphasized the importance of savings and insurance among the women and their families living in the temporary shelters. Women were open to the idea of joining the self help groups.

Karunalaya had a target of forming 50 self-help groups, out of which 47 women self help groups were formed and the bank accounts were opened for each group

Women SHG movement has taken good shape in the semi permanent shelters. Government-approved trainers guided the groups and Karunalaya was able to achieve

Inauguration of small businesses for women SHGs

its goal quickly. Weekly meetings were conducted to enhance their soft skills and build unity within the group. It was also a prerequisite for the continuation of the groups. 47 groups have started bank accounts in a nearby nationalised bank. The groups are independently operating the accounts. The groups have received loans and allowed small borrowings to their members. The Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) recognised the self help groups and provided the start-up capital and vocational training. The women self help groups were graded by the officials and were provided with Rs. 30.000/- each, as start-up capital, to launch new businesses, such as sales in instalments of essential commodities (rice, fish and so on) jewellery, sarees, and clothes.

SHG Federation formation

Formation of SHG federation is mandatory as per Women Development Corporation's rules. Office bearers needed to be elected among SHG members of Phase I. Ms. Yasodha was elected as the president. Ms. Durgadevi as secretary and Ms. Ammu as treasurer. The forum has been named as Karunalaya Women's Forum.

The election for 16 groups in phase II was was conducted. Ms. Bhavani (Thamarai), Ms. Stella (Iyarkai) and Ms. Uma (Amudham) were the nominees, for the post of president.

Ms. Bhavani was elected as the president, Ms. Tamizhselvi as treasurer and Ms. Jayanthi as the secretary of the forum. The forum was recognised as a successful women's forum.

Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board Livelihood Project Meeting

The government of Tamil Nadu, through the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, initiated a livelihood project for the tsunami affected families, with the support of Asian Development Bank(ADB). Various livelihood programmes were planned to support the economic

Mrs. Bhuvana, CCDO, addressing the tsunami affected community

development of the people. As a priority, they first targeted the families living in the Ernavur semi permanent houses in North Chennai and Semmancherry families in South Chennai. The women self help groups formed by Karunalaya were identified by the Community Development Officers(CDOs) as effective and they resolved to support the groups. They graded the groups to find out the quality of each group and their progress, in order to select them as beneficiaries of their schemes that provided start-up capital for small business initiatives. All the groups in Ernavur formed by Karunalaya were found to be effective and received start-up capital.

The TNSCB called for a meeting of all the NGOs and conveyed their plans to give training for SHGs, through agencies that are experienced in vocational training. Karunalaya collaborated with the TNSCB, to identify the potential beneficiaries of the various trainings, from among the self help groups formed by Karunalaya at the semi permanent houses, at Ernavur. Once the training was completed, it was planned to distribute equipments to the SHGs that they required to enable them to pursue the new skills they had learned and to assist them with all the paper work needed for documentation.

Trainings and livelihood equipments by TNSCB

Entrepreneurship development training to women SHG members was provided from 25.05.06 to 02.06.06. In this training, they were taught to make candles, incense sticks, paper bags, dolls, garlands, etc. The trainers

From L to R : Mr. Vivekanandan, IAS,MD, TNSCB, Mr. Sellamuthu, IAS. Chairman TNSCB, Mr. Alex George Genson, ADB, Mr. C.V. Sankar, IAS, OSD, and Mr. Anil Dass, ADB, Chennai, at Ernavur, distributing livelihood equipment to the community

were from Don Bosco Beatitudes

The second training was conducted from 20.11.06 to 30.11.06. for 9 days. Flower making, Macrame (Pot holder. Towel holder, Loom work, Patch work. Door mat. Cell phone covers) were 'aught to the women of the SHGs and they eagerly participated in the programme. It was expected that this exposure will influence some of them to start an enterprise or home- based industry, so that they can improve their economical status

The TNSCB, through the ADB livelihood support project. provided a revolving fund of Rs.30.000/- each, to 47 women self help groups and 3 men self help groups in the Ernavur semi permanent shelters, after grading them. The women invested the amount in business and earned a profit. which they can use for further development.

During the visit of Mr. Alex George Genson, Urban Specialist, Asian Development Bank, the following equipments were distributed by the TNSCB. in the presence of Mr. Sellamuthu, IAS. Chairman, TNSCB. Mr C.V.Sankar, IAS. Officer on Special Duty. Mr Vivekanandan. IAS. MD. TNSCB and other officials

17 tailoring machines were provided to the women who underwent training on making Jute products.

6 luggage carriers and 12 gas auto rickshaws were provided to members of men and women self help

groups.

35 ice boxes were provided for use in petty shops. Mobile shops were provided to 31 groups.

Fish carts were supplied to 36 men and women.

One ice cream vending cart was supplied.

51 wet grinders were provided.

2 Cycle rickshaws were supplied.

These equipments were very helpful for the beneficiaries to start alternate livelihoods, to support their families.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY

The people affected by tsunami and living in the temporary shelters need to be prepared to deal with any hazardous event in the future. Though natural hazards cannot be prevented, man can minimize the fallout from any disaster, if she/he is prepared. Therefore, a disaster preparedness initiative was planned and implemented by Karunalaya. As a first step, the staff team of Karunalaya was provided training on disaster preparedness covering many types of hazards. They conducted orientation sessions among the women, youth, children and men. Then, the community representatives were trained, and they were formed into different committees such as early warning, rescue and first aid, damage assessment, relief and coordination, water and sanitation, shelter and management, and monitoring. Each committee was trained on their roles and responsibilities and periodic meetings were conducted.

Community mapping in session for Disaster preparedness

Community emergency response training for youth in tsunami temporary shelters, Ernavur

Mr. Charles McClung training the youth on fire flighting

Karunalaya, in collaboration with International Centre for Emergency Techniques(ICET), Netherlands, organized Community Emergency Response training for Youth in tsunami temporary shelters in Ernavur. This was aimed towards equipping the people in the temporary shelters with skills in disaster preparedness.

Fifteen youth were selected and trained with full equipments, for emergency response. Mr. Charles McClung, an experienced Rescue Specialist in the international arena, from ICET, was the trainer. The youth were given training on Fire Fighting, First Aid and Water Rescue Techniques. The trained youth form part of the emergency response team in the community, that has been trained to swing into action in case of an emergency situation, before the arrival of the Fire and Rescue service brigade. They would also assist the Fire Brigade. Besides being the rescue team members, they would also

educate other youth and children about emergency response, so that they are all aware of the do's and don'ts during emergency and can be used gainfully at the time in the efforts to save lives.

The ICET is an international training centre, which trained the Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue services personnel, in the Netherlands, last year.

The training for the youth was conducted from January 22-26, 2006. For two days, the youth were trained on Water Rescue Techniques, both on still water and at sea. They were also trained to use rescue equipments such as life buoys, life jackets, rubber inflatable boats, without board motor engines, and in sea rescue techniques without any rescue gears. During the last two days training at sea was conducted at the seashore, near Thiruchinakuppam, near Tiruvotriyur.

The training was funded by Cordaid, Netherlands. Besides Mr. Charles McClung, Mr. Veeranmani, Assistant Divisional Officer, Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services who also underwent similar training at ICET, The Netherlands, in 2005, assisted as the co-instructor. The training concluded with a demonstration by the newly trained Emergency Response team members for the people in the tsunami temporary shelters, to educate them on methods to save lives, during disasters.

First Aid practical training

Water rescue training at sea

Mock Drill in the semi permanent shelters

Mock drill - Rescue committee in action

On April 24, 2007, a mock drill was conducted to demonstrate the disaster preparedness regimen among the community members. The community was prepared and the committees performed their respective roles during the mock drill. The fire service department, police, school teacher, doctors and members from the committees were invited for a planning meeting that discussed how the drill would be conducted. The mock drill was conducted in the community, in Phase III of the semi permanent shelters. The committees performed their roles and the rescued people the participants were then taken by bus to Ennore youth animation centre grounds, for fire fighting demonstration. After the drill, a post-drill analysis was conducted, where the participants expressed how they felt and what they learned from the mock drill. This exercise was a great lesson for the participants, as they could visualize a disaster and run to protect themselves. Some carried children, some carried old persons and all salvaged only the essentials things and documents from their homes. They were able to understand how to identify the vulnerable persons.

Fire rescue drill

NETWORKING AND COORDINATION

All the activities of Karunalaya call for networking with groups of people at the local, national and international levels. It involves aligning with donors, Government organisations and officials, experts in various fields, other social service organisations, volunteers and the general public, to carry out efficiently every project of Karunalaya, particularly the protection of the rights of children and disadvantaged communities.

As part of relief and rehabilitation work, Karunalaya was working closely with both government and private agencies. The tsunami disaster relief work afforded Karunalaya an opportunity to handle a disaster situation. Though Karunalaya had no prior experience or expertise in this area, it was able to gain knowledge about disaster relief operations and the priorities involved, through diverse information circulated by the experts and during the consultative meeting conducted by Karunalaya. The relief and rehabilitation work was executed in close coordination with local school authorities, the police administrative bodies of government, and other NGOs

NGO Coordination meeting at Karunalaya

School Authorities

The tsunami washed away everything, including school books and other materials, so it became necessary as an immediate relief measure to supply education materials

to school-going children. Karunalaya partnered with the local schools in identifying the affected children, to distribute education materials to them. Recognizing the efforts of Karunalaya, the Heads of the schools were extremely cooperative and were helpful in coordinating this endeavour. The local school authorities were also helpful in admitting the children from the transit school run by Karunalaya. From the transit school run for child labourers and school dropouts, a total of 67 children were enrolled by Karunalaya staff into regular schools.

Government Departments

Collectorate

Being one of the major players in the field of relief and rehabilitation, Karunalaya was always invited for the meetings and consultations regarding the tsunami by the government departments, from the very beginning. Immediately after the tsunami, on December 29, 2004, a meeting of the NGOs in the coastal areas was convened by the then Collector of Chennai. The district Social Welfare Officer informed Karunalaya about the meeting with the Collector. However, it was the new Collector of Chennai, Mr. S. Chandramohan, IAS, who established coordination between the Government and NGOs, from February 2005. After the signing of the MoU with the Collectors of Chennai and Tiruvallur, Karunalaya constructed 200 semi permanent houses for the tsunami affected in Ernavur.

During the monsoon, the coordination with the Collectorate was strengthened. The unprecedented heavy rains caused another emergency situation for the people and the collectorate sought the assistance of Karunalaya, in evacuating people to nearby school buildings, in organizing trucks to carry the belongings of families and in distribution of food for the people.

Efforts to contain Chikun Kunya were also made in collaboration with the Chennai Corporation, Health Department; the Assistant Health officers and deputy collectors, who personally visited the people in their settlements and explained to them about the importance of eradicating mosquitoes and ways to prevent the spread of diseases.

One of the sites finalised by the Collector of Chennai for permanent house construction, was the unused land of 5 acres. belonging to the company, Hindustan Lever Limited, in Tondiarpet. This site was actually identified and informed to the Collector of Chennai, Mr. S. Chandramohan, IAS, by Karunalaya. After getting the information about the location from the Director of Karunalaya, the Collector made a request to the company and successfully persuaded them to give the land for permanent house construction for the tsunami affected. This is one of the significant impacts as a result of coordination between Government and NGOs.

Police

The police department extended their full support to the efforts of Karunalaya. The Police Commissioners readily deputed their men, on receiving any requests from Karunalaya. The policemen were deputed on many occasions to give protection during distribution of relief materials, as large crowds thronged the gates of Karunalaya. It would never have been possible for the staff of Karunalaya to regulate a large crowd like this, but for the efforts of the men in uniform, who aided in the formation of queues, keeping the crowd under control, during the distribution of relief materials. The men also pitched in during the monsoon, when heavy rains caused havoc in the neighbourhood. The police, who were providing protection to the people, also volunteered to assist in the distribution of food. Karunalaya also worked in close coordination with the local police stations, when seeking help in solving the domestic problems of the people.

Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board

As part of the rehabilitation programme for the tsunami-affected people, as mentioned earlier in this report, the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board collaborated with Karunalaya, to facilitate execution of their projects for SHGs, Thus, training in making candles, incense sticks, paper bags and other handicrafts was given, besides imparting knowledge to develop their business skills, aimed towards improving their economic status.

Electricity Board & Metro Water

The electricity board was approached several times, with complaints of erratic power supply and non-availability of street lights. This was redressed periodically, with the

help of officials of the Electricity Board. Metro Water was responsible for the provision of drinking water to the affected areas. Complaints of non supply of water were immediately addressed by the department.

Coordination with other NGOs operating in the same area

After the tsunami, many NGOs came forward to help the affected people with relief materials, which was appreciable. Karunalaya, in the first week of relief operations, supplied food and milk to the people, only with the support of the local friends and NGOs such as Don Bosco Youth Centre, Broadway, Don Bosco Wisdom Town, Redhills, Sparks Development Group, TNVHA, Bro. Siga Animation Centre and Guild of Service. Corporates such as Office Tiger; Dr. Mehta Hospital, LIC and Genuine Computers, also helped in the relief operations.

As the relief phase progressed into the rehabilitation phase, more coordination was needed amongst the NGOs, in order to prevent duplication of work. In one such instance, Don Bosco Anbu Illam cooperated with Karunalaya regarding this issue, by agreeing not to provide the same services and work on the same issues as Karunalaya. Instead, it was decided that Don Bosco Anbu Illam would concentrate on Youth, disabled children and orphans in the areas.

North Tamil Nadu Tsunami Relief Committee

After the tsunami, a network was formed by the NGOs working in the coastal areas, under the banner North Tamil Nadu Tsunami Relief Committee, which was supported by Terres des Hommes, Germany. Karunalaya was one of the members of the network, covering North Chennai coastal areas, from Kasimedu to Tiruvotriyur. Under this project, 7 new staff were appointed exclusively for providing psychosocial support for children in the affected areas, for 10 months. Nutrition supplement and milk powder were also provided for children in the temporary shelters through this project.

It must be noted here that the advocate who filed the Public Interest Litigation(PIL) in the Madras High Court, for an injunction against the eviction spree in Anna Nagar fishermen slum, mentioned earlier in this report, was a member of the North Tamil Nnadu Tsunami Relief Committee. This highlights the necessity for and the effectiveness of networking with other agencies.

ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

One of the major areas Karunalaya ventured into is Advocacy and Lobbying with the various Government departments and NGOs, to fulfill the basic needs of the people. Though the Government was committed and willing to help the tsunami affected people, there seems to be gaps and failures in the delivery mechanism, which were not brought to the knowledge of the various higher officials. When matters were brought to the knowledge of the higher officers, they took action to solve the issues. But often, it was not a smooth process, as there were always hindrances and counter claims and pictures given to the officers, by other vested interests. This made it difficult for them to come to a conclusion and take decisive action. Only a strategic and systematic approach when taking action, can help achieve the goal of solving the problems of the people, quickly. The basic value behind our approach is that "Relief is a right, not Charity". Genuine families should not be marginalized, their rights should be protected and justice should be rendered to them.

Consistent efforts were made to ensure that the basic needs were fulfilled in the temporary shelters. The following services were restored through advocacy and lobbying: bus halts at the temporary shelter, water and sanitation, garbage collection, postal service, street lights and roads. But the following problems were not resolved in the temporary shelters despite efforts: Police outpost, ration card and voter ID, rain water drain, school, ICDS centre, transportation for school going children and Health care. It was given to understand that since the semi permanent houses were temporary settlements, the authorities concerned preferred not to spend money on drainage system and other facilities.

Masthan Koil Kuppam and Appar Nagar Families

Along with the people from Chennai district, 63 families from two areas in Tiruvallur district, were also provided temporary shelters in Ernavur. They were not included for the allotment of permanent houses in Tondiarpet, as they were from another district. These 63 families underwent multiple stress and anxiety as they would be isolated again, if they were left out. Considering their psychosocial wellbeing, Karunalaya lobbied with the Collectors of Tiruvallur and Chennai districts and the Officer on Special Duty(OSD), Relief and Rehabilitation, to include these 63 families, for allotment in Chennai. After consistent efforts by Karunalaya and the people, the Collector of Tiruvallur sent the list of 63 families to the Chennai Collector for inclusion, and they were allotted permanent houses in the Tondiarpet HLL permanent house tenements.

Kidney Racket

From November 2006, Karunalaya was implementing a project for the Prevention of STD, HIV/AIDS and trafficking of women in the temporary shelters, funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Through this project, we could examine the lifestyle of the people in the temporary shelters more closely. This led to more shocking revelations that more women had resorted to selling their Kidneys for money and that some women were also lured into prostitution in the temporary shelters. After these revelations surfaced, we started to talk to the women in the temporary shelters, to identify how many of them had sold their kidneys and to create awareness about the risks and issues involved. This intervention created awareness among the people that led some of the community members to speak to the press in a public hearing about the sale of kidneys and this was duly reported in the newspapers. This led to the situation taking a serious turn, with the government of Tamil Nadu ordering an enquiry. Consequently, the homes of the brokers who enticed the women were searched, and the hospitals that performed the surgery, were questioned.

It was found that women were targeted for the sale of their kidneys. In the temporary shelters, more than 30 women were identified who had sold their kidneys, though of this number, about 12 had done so before tsunami, and the rest after tsunami. Only two of this number were men and the rest were women. Apparently, the women were promised a sum of Rs.1,50,000/- each, if they sold their kidneys, but in reality, they were cheated and were given only about Rs. 30,000/- to Rs. 50,000/-No proper follow up treatment was given to them, except in a few cases.

The occurrence of this event cannot be fully attributed to poverty, as much effort had been undertaken by Karunalaya to help the women self help groups to create alternate livelihoods, and the Government had also started the ADB project to provide support for the livelihoods of people. Despite these efforts, the brokers were successful in alluring the people, to sell their kidneys for money.

This issue took centre stage in the news media in the whole of India, and particularly, in Chennai. The task of handling many state and international press and media regarding this situation, was time-consuming. In the meantime, we also tried to identify instances of sale of Kidneys in other coastal slums and we were getting information that many women had already sold their Kidneys and this has been a continuing racket in Chennai for quite some years. In the year 2002, when the Government's attention turned against money lenders we exposed in the New Indian Express newspaper, that women resort to sale of kidneys to pay back money lenders. But at that time, no action was taken. However, on this occasion, the Government took strict action against such preying on poor people.

Karunalaya conducted awareness sessions on the impact of sale of kidneys on health and socio-economic status, for the women in the temporary shelters. It was surprising to learn that despite the media exposure and the Government enquiry, one woman sold her kidney during that very week.

A meeting that raised controversy

The Government, through the TNSCB, constructed 1392 permanent houses for tsunami affected people in North Chennai; 960 houses at the Hindustan Lever Limited land

and 432 houses at Thilagar Nagar, in Tondiarpet. It was planned to shift the people from the temporary shelters to these permanent houses at the earliest. Contrary to the Government's assurance, officers from the TNSCB invited the people living in the temporary shelters for a meeting on 14.12.2006, to discuss plans for the construction of permanent houses, at All India Radio land, at Ernavur. In that meeting, the people were informed that the 1392 permanent houses that were being constructed at Tondiarpet and Thilagar Nagar, were not meant for them and only the AIR land at Ernavur had been allocated for the people living in temporary shelters. This sparked controversy and people's anger. The women self help group federation discussed this problem and planned to hold a demonstration, to draw the attention of the Government, and to convince them to allot the 1392 permanent houses to those families living in the temporary shelters. On the 25th of December, 2007, the women in the semi permanent houses (temporary shelters) conducted a demonstration between 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., demanding houses. This was widely covered by the press. The Government backtracked and gave the assurance that the 1392 houses would be allotted to those families presently living in the temporary shelters Karunalaya played a major role in guiding the women leaders to initiate this action.

Women planned for agitation

Women planned for the demonstration and decided to print a pamphlet spelling out their demands. Two of the women leaders, Ms. Nagooramal and Ms. Bhavani went to all the press offices, to deliver the invitation and pamphlets. Each group decided to share the expenditure and collected Rs. 75/- each, which they spent for the arrangements for the demonstration. Sound system, banner and pamphlets were printed and arranged for distribution. Men too, joined in the demonstration. The demonstration was held outdoors, at the junction of phase I and II. The Hindu published a preliminary report about the demonstration on the morning of Dec. 25th 2007, which drew the attention of all the press. The Police came to give protection during the programme. Women and children raised slogans demanding permanent houses and children explained how they were suffering due to the long commute to school.

Demonstration led by the women leaders in temporary shelters demanding permanent houses

Obstacles from Men

When the women planned for the demonstration, the men were motivated to stop the initiatives of the women, by the staff of other NGOs. After coming to know about this through the women, our staff reassured them that their initiatives were in the right direction and they could proceed with their plans. After these hurdles, women successfully led the demonstration, demanding permanent houses. As a result of the demonstration, top Government officials for relief, gave an assurance through The Hindu newspaper report, that the permanent houses would be given to Tsunami Nagar dwellers, and there should be no cause for worry, on that account. The details of the protest meeting were printed in all the leading newspapers.

ALLOTMENT OF PERMANENT HOUSES FOR TSUNAMI VICTIMS

The Government enlisted 2508 beneficiaries for allotment of permanent houses in North Chennai. In the first phase, 1392 permanent houses were constructed by the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board at Tondiarpet in June 2007. The construction of 1116 more permanent houses was expected to be completed only after 12 months from then. In order to distribute these 1392 permanent houses to the people living in the temporary shelters, the TNSCB prepared a list of 991 families. The Collector of Chennai forwarded this list to the higher officials for approval and decided to allot the houses on 7.4.2007. But, the people were not aware of the list and found that many families were left out in this list. Besides, the Anna Nagar people had agitated, demanding that the 1392 houses be distributed to them, as the buildings were near to their area. Due to the agitation, officials were not able to distribute the houses to the people and they called off the effort.

Again, many representations were made by the Anna Nagar people, demanding that the 1392 houses be allotted to them and not to those who were living in the temporary shelters. Karunalaya made consistent efforts to press for the allotment of houses on a priority basis, to those who were suffering and living in the temporary shelters for more than 2 years. In one of the review meetings organized by TNTRC, at the office of Mr. C.V. Shankar, IAS, OSD, for relief and reconstruction, the Director of Karunalaya made a powerpoint presentation about the pathetic situation of the people who were living in the temporary shelters and those living on the roadside for more than 2 years, without shelters. Karunalaya also empowered the affected people with many petitions and guided them to meet the concerned officials continuously. The Government officials were totally convinced that priority should be given to those who were living in the temporary shelters for the past two and a half years.

As a result, the government decided to allot the houses to the 991 families first and to distribute the remaining 401 houses on the basis of seniority in age. On 22.06.2007, the Collector of Chennai called for a meeting to plan for the allotment of permanent houses to 991 families. In that meeting, the Director of Karunalaya and a representative from PAM were present. Details regarding the steps to be taken before allotment and the requisite arrangements, were discussed. The NGO representatives gave many suggestions for arrangements before allotment. As per the plan, it was decided to allot the houses on the 27th of June, 2007 to 991 families. But, during that meeting, the Director of Karunalaya wanted a clarification as to the exact identity of the 991 beneficiaries, because the list was never published and he was unsure whether all those living in the temporary shelters had been included. The Collector assured him that after allotment to the 991 families, they could discuss as to how they can take into consideration the left out families.

LEFT OUT FAMILIES

After the allotment of the houses to 991 families, the Director of Karunalaya met the Collector on the 29th of June, 2007, with the list of 120 left out families (74 who lived in the temporary shelters, 31 families who lived in a community hall and 15 families who were living on the roadside). The Collector categorically refused to consider any of the left out families, as she was only prepared to allot the remaining 401 houses, on the basis of seniority of age. It was not possible to convince the Collector that these 120 families were those who lived

and suffered in the temporary shelters, and that in the allotment to 991 families, many who did not reside in the temporary shelters had been included, resulting in this injustice. But the Collector rejected any plea and said that these 120 families would get houses only after one more year at Ernavur, which is 9 kilometres away from the fishing harbour.

JUSTICE FROM THE HIGH COURT

In order to stop this injustice, people asked for our intervention. Karunalaya held discussions with the affected families and guided them to seek justice from the Court of Law. 5 petitioners (Ms. Meenakshi, Ms. Sangeetha, Mr. Padmanaban, Mr. Kuttaiyan and Ms. Renuka) who filed the case, were guided to contact the Human Rights Law Network(HRLN) and to request their support. The Director of HRLN, Ms. D. Geetha, advocate, filed a PIL, seeking allocation of houses to the 120 left out families. The High Court of Madras ordered status quo and directed the Government to file the list of 991 beneficiaries, and their reply. This was widely published in the press. After arguments, on 17.08.2007, the High Court passed an order, directing the State Government to consider the case of 120 families left out in the allotment of permanent houses.

DEMOLITION OF THE SEMI PERMANENT HOUSES IN ERNAVUR

Ever since the left out families filed a PIL in the High Court and received a favourable order directing the State Government to consider these families in the allotment of remaining houses in Tondiarpet, the officials had been harsher to them. This was evident by the demolition of the semi permanent houses, throwing caution to the winds and displaying scant regard for the Humanitarian principles and Human Rights of the affected. The semi permanent houses were demolished on Saturday, the 6th of October, 2007, shockingly,without any prior notice to the people already living with fear, insecurity and without basic necessities like drinking water and electricity.

The people who executed this inhumane act, had no empathy for these poor citizens who had been undergoing much suffering, ever since the tsunami. Their knowledge on disasters is minimal, as they did not realize that they were creating a man-made disaster by this forceful eviction, displacing them yet again and rendering them homeless.

Before demolishing the houses, they did not even ensure that they had been vacated. When the bull dozers started the demolition, a one year old girl child was inside a house in phase I, while her mother was hurriedly securing some of her belongings from it. Noticing the brick wall collapsing, she grabbed the child and ran out screaming. Fortunately, both were saved. Another person who was running a petty shop as his livelihood inside his house in Phase I, was not given the time or opportunity to salvage the goods from his shop, before his house was demolished. Material loss for many varied, depending on their ability to salvage their possessions, within the limited time.

NGOs were blamed for educating the people about their Human Rights and for guiding them to seek justice through lawful means. NGOs were also treated as though they were the foes of the Government, forgetting the historic Government - NGO coordination after tsunami, which resulted in the construction of these semi permanent houses in Ernavur by the NGOs, and various other services rendered by the NGOs during times of crises.

This was evident by the fact that the Ponneri RDO who was heading the demolition team, besides verbally

Demolition of semi permanent houses in phase III by Government

abusing the people, also blamed the NGOs and maliciously instigated some people to become violent against them, by implying that they were the reason for the demolition of the houses. When the NGO workers asked the RDO why she was instigating the people, she meted out an outrageous challenge to them that she would continue to do so, since the NGOs were supporting these poor people. This proved that these officials wanted the poor people to be ignorant about their rights and to continue to remain voiceless, while injustice was meted out to them, and they wanted to browbeat the NGOs into mute subservience

Homeless again after the demolition

It was very painful to see this injustice inflicted ruthlessly on these tsunami affected families in North Chennai, living in Ernavur semi permanent shelters, who had already been experiencing a series of disasters, for more than 2 years and 10 months. Some of these people continued to live in the demolished sites, while some dwelt in the project office building in Ernavur. It was heart rending to see them suffer.

Left out Families partially considered

As per the direction of the Madras High Court, the Collector of Chennai called the NGOs for a meeting on 03.08.2007, to discuss about the allotment of the remaining 401 houses to the beneficiaries, and to include 120 families in the allotment. In that meeting, the Collector of Chennai gave the assurance that they would freeze 120 houses and prepare a list of beneficiaries, on the basis of seniority of age, for the rest. She asked Karunalaya to provide proof of residence of these 120 families by September 7, 2007, which was duly complied with. But, in the subsequent meeting, on October 12,2007, the Collector said that out of 120 families, only 57 out of 74 living in the temporary shelters, would be allotted permanent houses, also excluding 31 families who lived in a community hall and 15 families who lived on the roadside since the tsunami. In that meeting, the Director of Karunalaya expressed shock and disappointment over the demolition of semi permanent houses and the brutal manner in which the RDO of Ponneri conducted it. While the Collector of Chennai expressed regret over the incident, she categorically refused to consider any more people for allotment. She announced in the meeting that the remaining houses would be allotted on October 16, 2007.

DEATH OF TWO CHILDREN TURNED THE TIDE

On October 13, 2007, at 7:00 a.m., two little children who went in search of their grand mother, who had gone for open defecation near the railway track, as the toilet blocks were also demolished, were run over by a train. This gruesome accident sent shock waves through all those who lived in the temporary shelters. This was widely reported in the media and "The Hindu" wrote about the suffering of the people, after demolition of houses, on October 14, 2007. This actually turned the tide and one of the Senior Government Administrators, Mr. C.V. Sankar

2 little children run over by train, impact of the demolition of houses

IAS. who was the OSD for relief and rehabilitation, telephonically assured the Director of Karunalaya that he would do the needful. to include the left out families. As a result of his timely intervention. the Collector included the neglected families. Finally out of 120, 102 families were allotted permanent houses on October 16. 2007. from among the remaining 401 houses in Tondiarpet. Though 18 families were still left out. efforts were taken to provide temporary relief. However the remaining 1116 families. from the total list of 2508, would get their permanent houses only after the completion of the construction. These families continued to live in their respective areas. The advocacy and lobby efforts of Karunalaya finally ended successfully. and the most vulnerable families were made to feel happy and secure in the end. In this whole process, there were malicious attempts to demoralize us by those who disliked our committed efforts for the cause of the neglected families and by those who did not get permanent house allotment. Our staff team was subjected to false allegations of accepting bribes by these vested interests. Therefore. it was never an easy process for us.

Permanent housing tenements at Tondiarpet, built by TNSCB

RELIEF FOR THE OTHER COASTAL COMMUNITIES IN NORTH CHENNAI

The Movement for Peace, Disarmament and Liberty (MPDL). Spain. started its work in Chennai for providing relief to the tsunami-affected communities. under the leadership of Ms. Lucia Remon Miranzo, Country representative. India. They identified Karunalaya as one of their partners. to implement the project in North Chennai along with CCRD. and Udavi. who were responsible for the implementation in South Chennai. The Relief Movement came to know about Karunalaya through Mr. Aloysius James. Consultant, Cordaid. MPDL implemented the relief work funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department. from November 2005 to June 2006. The following were the main areas of work implemented by Karunalaya through MPDL. Spain, at a cost of Rs.1.35 crores.

1. Distribution of 21 Catamarans and nets to 21 beneficiaries
2. Repair of 6 ICDS centres in the tsunami affected areas
3. Start-up capital of Rs.30.000/- each. to 200 Self Help Groups
4. Distribution of shelter improvement materials to 1000 families
5. Construction of toilet blocks consisting of 6 toilets and repair of 5 toilets
6. Provision of 80 moveable waste bins and construction of 2 concrete waste bins
7. Vocational training in Driving to 46 beneficiaries
8. Vocational training as Beauticians to 91 beneficiaries
9. Vocational training in simple chemical training to 50 beneficiaries
10. Vocational training in tailoring to 48 persons
11. Basic Business skill training to 202 members of 200 SHGs
12. 10 Supplementary Education centres covering 584 children
13. A free health care centre. with one doctor and 2 nurses. in the temporary shelters

Minister K.P.P. Samy inaugurating the distribution of shelter improvement materials

The MPDL project was a boon to hundreds of families, to rebuild their lives. The training programmes offered in various fields to men and women, were an effort in human resource development, that would go a long way towards infusing confidence and equipping them with the means to earn a decent income, to provide for their families. In addition to this, the programmes helped Karunalaya to improve the living conditions and health conditions by putting up shelters, constructing toilets and most importantly, providing a health care centre, to attend to their simple health problems

Distribution of Catamarans and Nets

The fishermen community that suffered the most damage as a result of the tsunami, had lost many possessions, such as Catamarans and nets, in the tsunami. They were finding it very difficult to survive, after these losses. Karunalaya Social Service Society, with the help of MPDL (Spain) and European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department, decided to provide Catamarans and nets, to those who were thus affected, in order to rehabilitate them. We started to prepare the list of the potential beneficiaries. The list was framed keeping in mind the following criteria—level of poverty, real need of the people and their eagerness to work, determination to improve their life status—using which they were finally short listed and identified. In the month of March, 2006, a total of 21 potential beneficiaries was thus identified. Eight of them were selected and taken to a company in Marakkanam, to give the specifications by which the Catamarans were to be built. This visit was arranged by Karunalaya.

On 29.05.06, a function was organised in which Mr. Paul, European Commission Humanitarian Office(ECHO), Ms. Lucia Remon Miranzo, Country Representative, India, MPDL Spain, and Dr. N. Paul Sunder Singh, Director, Karunalaya, participated. Mr. Paul Filler from European Commission gave away the Catamarans to the beneficiaries.

Ms. Lucia & Mr. Paul Filler from European Commission giving away Catamarans

Waste Disposal Bins

In the entire 12 target areas of the MPDL - supported project, the people were sensitized about maintenance of health and hygiene and on the importance of keeping the area clean and tidy. They were also educated about the

Moveable waste bins used at Thideer Nagar

unhealthy consequences of strewing the garbage in and around their homes. It was planned to install waste bins in the target areas, to make the area clean and tidy. A meeting was conducted with the area leader regarding the installation of Waste bins in the areas. After a detailed discussion with the Project Coordinator and the area CDOs, the areas for the installation of the waste bins were selected. 80 moveable bins in 5 areas and 2 constructed bins in one area, were provided. The following table gives the details of the moveable bins:

List of the Mobile Waste Bins in each area

S. No	Area	No. of Bins
1.	Thideer Nagar	3
2.	Pallavan Nagar	3
3.	Singaravelar Nagar	6
4.	Thiruchinankuppam	36
5.	Ernavur	32
	Total	**80**

Two Waste bins were constructed at Palagaithotti Kuppam.

Constructed waste bin at Palagaithotti Kuppam

Construction of Toilets

In one of the needs assessment meetings in Palagaithotti Kuppam, the community requested that the toilets be repaired, as they had been usable before, but were currently, unusable. Consequently, they were forced to use the outdoors for defecation, which led to an unhealthy and unhygienic atmosphere in the area, while women had to walk up to the next area to use the pay and use toilets. Hence, it was planned to repair the old toilets and to also construct a new toilet block consisting of 5 toilets for the people, to ensure cleanliness and hygiene.

Opening of toilet blocks by Ms. Namita, Cine Actor (centre), flanked by Ms. Lucia (left), Mr. B. Ravi Kumar David (right) and Dr. Paul Sunder Singh

The Thiruvotriyur Municipality Commissioner, Ms. Vijayalakshmi, was approached for necessary permission and approval. Permission was granted by her in the month of June, 2006. Immediately, quotations were received from three persons, namely S. Francis Xavier, Santiagu Construction and J. Luis. After detailed analysis of the selection norms, S. Francis Xavier, Contractor, was finally selected, to undertake work for the toilet repair and construction. The construction of the new toilet and the repair work of the old toilet were successfully completed, within the stipulated time.

On 10th of August, 2006, the constructed toilet blocks were opened for the people's use by one of the famous Actresses, Ms. Namita. A programme was organized to inaugurate the toilet blocks: women and leaders from the area were invited to participate in the function. Ms. Lucia Remon Miranzo, country representative, MPDL Spain, and Mr. Ravi Kumar David, Vice President, Karunalaya, were the special guests. An awareness poster was also released by Ms. Namita, to educate the people about the use of toilet blocks, to ensure health and hygiene.

REHABILITATION OF THE COASTAL COMMUNITIES IN NORTH CHENNAI

The Dutch Counterpart of Karunalaya was formed in the Netherlands on December 10, 2004, by the Dutch volunteers of Karunalaya. As a response to the plight of the tsunami affected people in India, the members of the board campaigned in the Netherlands and raised funds from the Dutch people. Since the relief project carried out with support from MPDL, Spain, for the coastal communities in North Chennai came to a close in June 2006, people were left without any rehabilitation support. At this juncture, Stichting Karunalaya (Karunalaya Foundation), Netherlands, came forward to support the coastal communities in North Chennai for three years, from July 2006 to June 2009. This project covered the tsunami affected people in the coastal communities in North Chennai and in the temporary shelters. A total of 8,845 families, 1,000 children and 195 women self help groups in 13 fishing slums surrounding the harbour namely, Anna Nagar, G.M. Pettai, Indira Nagar, Kargil Nagar, Kasipuram, MGR Nagar, Pallagaithotti Kuppam, Pallavan Nagar, Power Kuppam, Singaravelan Nagar, Thideer Nagar, Thiruvalluvar Nagar and Thiruchinan Kuppam, were covered under this project. The programme was managed by a 30-member staff team.

Children in Thiruchinan Kuppam

The objective of the project was to improve the standard of living and the livelihoods of families affected by tsunami in the coastal communities in North Chennai and to ensure that the people were supported in all possible ways to rebuild their lives.

The rehabilitation work focused on education, women's

Stichting Karunalaya Project beneficiaries

S.No.	Area	Total families	Total school going children	Total No. of SHGs
1.	Indira Nagar	450	20	12
2.	G.M. Pettai	220	20	2
3.	MGR Nagar	240	20	2
4.	Thiruvalluvar Nagar	145	20	2
5.	Singaravelan Nagar	1700	70	22
6.	Kasipuram	260	50	17
7.	Power Kuppam	230	50	4
8.	Thideer Nagar	300	50	14
9.	Pallavan Nagar	350	50	14
10.	Anna Nagar	600	60	20
11.	Thiruchinan Kuppam	1800	80	33
12.	Palagaithotti Kuppam	350	90	9
13.	Kargil Nagar	2200	387	44
	Total	**8845**	**967**	**195**

development, health care, advocacy and disaster preparedness. The free health care centre with a doctor and two nurses that functioned at Ernavur temporary shelters, came under the aegis of this project. The enormity of the damage caused to a large number of families along the Chennai coast, was unprecedented. Most of these families were already in a very vulnerable position, socially and economically burdened with the problems of poverty, ill health, child labour, etc. The tsunami simply shattered their lives, resulting in loss of their dear ones and their meagre possessions, and uprooting them from their homes. The people were mentally and emotionally traumatised. Rebuilding the lives of such victims is not something that can be achieved in a short time. Sustained support is needed within families and communities, to help them slowly recover from the trauma and work towards restoration of some sense of normalcy in their lives, with courage and confidence. There needs to be a holistic approach to the rehabilitation programme extending over a period of time, to eliminate poverty, child labour, lack of educational opportunities for children, disease, exploitation of women and children, etc.

FIBREGLASS BOATS AND NETS FOR THE FISHING COMMUNITY

As a rehabilitation measure, Karunalaya planned to support restoration of the livelihoods of the fishing community, by supplying them with boats and nets, with the funding of Stichting Karunalaya and Stichting Amaidhi, The Netherlands. As our organization is committed to the upliftment of women, we decided to provide fibreglass boats to the Women and Men Self Help Groups of the fishing community, to enhance women's right to own assets and as a measure of ensuring equal opportunity for them. 33 self help groups received fibreglass boats fitted with engines and nets, each in the name of the SHG. The fibreglass boats were manufactured at Marakkanam by four companies, namely Annai Fibre Boat Works, Jayaam Fibre Boat Maraam, and Thunaivan Fibre Boats, each of whom supplied 10 boats, while Maruthi Fibre Boat Maraam supplied 3 boats.

The Engine was finalized with Balaji Agro Tech company and Tanay and Company who are the importers of Yanmark TIGER Marine Diesel Engine, of 10 HP capacity, from Thailand. These enginess were readily available, with the lowest quotation, and were lightweight models, liked by the beneficiaries. All these factors weighed in favour of finalizing the deal for these boats. The need for fishing nets was also articulated during the participatory needs assessment meeting held with the fishermen and women. The fishing nets such as Kavalai Valai, Semakeral Valai, Thattakal Valai, Line and pun steel with lead and float, each weighing 10 kgs, were required. The nets were supplied by Manikanda Prabhu Fishnets, near Marakkanam.

Fibreglass boats for tsunami affected fishermen

Selection of beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of the fibreglass boats were the women and men from Self Help Groups of the Fishing Community at Kasimedu. As an attempt to empower them with a fresh lease of life, fibreglass boats were distributed to those women and men who took the initiative to organize themselves into self help groups, thus working together for their upliftment.

The SHGs were selected as sole beneficiaries for distribution of fibreglass boats, so that a minimum of 15 to 20 families would benefit from receipt of each boat.

Subsidy and interest free loan

The fibreglass boats were not distributed totally free of cost. The groups had proved to be responsible and had decided not to receive it for free but, partially for a subsidy

and the rest on a loan basis. The boats were distributed at a 50% subsidized cost and a 50 % interest-free loan payable in easy instalments, by way of cheques to Karunalaya. The total cost of one fibreglass boat with all accessories was Rs.1,55,000/- But in reality, only 3 women groups repaid Rs. 50.00/- each, while none of the other groups repaid any amount. We also found that the fishermen were keen only to sell the boat and to share the money amongst themselves. In some groups, one member became the sole owner of the boat by paying off the other members.

Distribution function

Karunalaya believes in coordinated efforts for any humanitarian work. Particularly, coordinating with the Government has been an important task, geared towards meaningful intervention. The relief and rehabilitation efforts were made with a view to coordinating with the government departments and other agencies, to strengthen the process of restoring normal life to the people. In this regard, our District Collector, Mr. S. Chandra Mohan, IAS, was a pillar of support in our efforts. The boats were distributed in his presence and in the presence of Rev. Fr. K.M. Jose, Rector, Don Bosco Youth Centre, Broadway, and our Dutch volunteers, Ms. Mijke van Gijn and Ms. Loes Wevers, to the first 10 groups on the 21st of April, 2005, at 4 p.m. The second phase of the boats distribution was held on the 30th of May, 2005. 17 fibreglass boats fitted with engines and nets were distributed in the presence of Mr. Dharmendra Prathap Yadav, IAS, who was the Additional Director of Fisheries and Rev. Fr. N. Gerard, Patron of Karunalaya, Mr. S. John Bosco, President and Mr. B. Ravi Kumar David, Vice President of Karunalaya.

The third and final phase of the boat distribution was held on June 15, 2005, when 6 boats were gifted.

Chennai Collector, Mr. Chandra Mohan, IAS, cutting the ribbon at the boat distribution function. Fr. K.M. Jose, SDB, Mr. John Bosco, Mr. Ravi Kumar David, Ms. Loes and Ms. Mijke are also seen. (First phase of distribution)

Mr Dharmendra Prathap Yadav, IAS, Director of Fisheries, flagging off the fibreglass boats, in the presence of Fr.Gerard, SDB (Second phase of distribution)

MOBILE SHOPS FOR ALTERNATE LIVELIHOOD

Being an organization committed to the upliftment of women, Karunalaya decided to provide 20 Mobile Shops to the Women Self Help Groups of the affected fishing community, with the same avowed purpose of enhancing their right to hold assets, and to create opportunities for alternate livelihoods. Karunalaya purchased the mobile shops from the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, at a subsidized rate of Rs. 4.000/- per shop

Our Dutch counterpart, Stichting Karunalaya, the Netherlands, and another Dutch organization, Stichting Amaidhi, joined our relief and rehabilitation efforts, by extending their support. The beneficiaries of the Mobile Shops were the Women Self Help Groups of the Fishing Community at Kasimedu. A total of 299 families benefitted from the 20 mobile shops.

Mr. Ambuj Sharma, IAS, MD,TNSCB, distributing mobile shops to women SHGs

Mr. Ambuj Sharma, IAS, who was the Managing Director of Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, handed over the Mobile shops to the women groups, on the 27th of May, 2005, at 4 p.m. Some utilized these mobile shops to start much-needed small shops at the temporary shelters and others started street vending, on wheels

Women SHG members who received the mobile shops

VISIT OF DUTCH MP, Ms. FEMKE HALSEMA

The Dutch Green party leader, Ms. Femke Halsema, visited the tsunami affected areas in Chennai, as part of her tour of the projects funded by Cordaid, the Netherlands, for the rehabilitation of the tsunami affected communities, and other development work. On July 28, 2006, Ms. Femke Halsema arrived in Chennai by train, accompanied by Ms. Rieneke van der Laak and Ms. Karen Mol, of Cordaid. After a brief discussion at the head office of Karunalaya, she visited the tsunami temporary shelters in Ernavur, to see the houses constructed by Karunalaya, with the support of Cordaid. She also interacted with the people, staff and the children in the shelters. She expressed her satisfaction over the work carried out with the support of the Dutch organisations and wished Karunalaya good luck. Her visit to Chennai was reported in the New Indian Express, along with her interview

Dutch MP, Ms. Femke Halsema, at the tsunami temporary shelters

PREVENTION OF STD, HIV/AIDS AMONG THE TSUNAMI AFFECTED FAMILIES

The families that were living in the temporary shelters at Ernavur, faced threat of abuse and exploitation. Many incidences of sexual abuse of women were reported. The children also lived in a high-risk situation, amidst a large community, where instances of sexual abuse had been reported. Safety of girl children had been threatened after evening hours. Besides allurement of women and girls into commercial sex in the temporary shelters, multi-partner sex was reportedly on the rise. Casual sex with more than one woman/man was reported through SHG members and through our community development workers. The awareness level on the high risk of STD, HIV/AIDS was very low among the people and condom use was not in practice.

Since massive resettlement from their original place after tsunami, women bore an additional burden to earn income, to supplement the family's economic resources. This posed a threat to their safety as they fell prey to allurement into the trade of commercial sex workers. The lack of livelihood option and the circumstance of men away at sea for days together, had also made women vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Family disharmony, separation, bigamy and desertion were found to be on the rise. Early marriage and child marriage increased in the temporary shelters, as a measure of protection designed by parents, for their young daughters.

This situation was a cause for concern. Therefore Karunalaya launched a one-year project for the prevention of STD, HIV/AIDS among the tsunami affected families living in the temporary shelters in North Chennai with the funding support of UNDP.

Protection of Children – Proactive action

The children were sexually abused and there were reports of rape. Due to lack of awareness and fear of stigma people did not take action against the perpetrators. After many attempts by Karunalaya to empower the people to register a complaint against child sexual abuse, the parents of Banu (name changed) came forward to file a case against the perpetrator. Banu was sexually abused by a 50-year old man. The mother gave a complaint to the police, but the police did not register a case, but only detained the culprit in the police station for two days and released him. He again abused the child and threatened her parents, which was then brought to the knowledge of Karunalaya staff team. A complaint was lodged, but the police did not register a case. This was brought to the notice of the High Court through the Advocate, Ms. D Geetha. The Court directed the police to register the complaint and transferred the case to CB-CID for investigation. The culprit was then remanded in jail.

Education of young boys on STD, HIV/AIDS at temporary shelters

A step backwards as a fallout

In another case of child sexual abuse, on 28.12.05, Selvi (name changed), a 13-year old girl child from Phase I, went to buy some groceries from the shop within the temporary shelter compound, around 6:30 p.m. While she was returning from the shop, three youth waylaid her in a dark place and threatened her to come with them and they also grabbed her skirt and pulled her hard. But luckily, Selvi pushed them away and went running to her home. Selvi narrated this incident to her parents, who immediately went to the place of occurrence. But, the three youth had escaped from that place. Due to this incident, her parents stopped sending Selvi outdoors after 6:00 p.m

Protection of Women – proactive attempts

Women in the tsunami affected areas were also not safe. There were repeated reports of sexual abuse, eve teasing and rape of women. Since the community was shifted to Ernavur semi permanent houses, they were living in a compound adjacent to the railway track. For the sake of convenience, people cross the railway track to go to the other side of the area, to travel by bus or autorickshaw. Since many of the toilets in the semi permanent houses were nonfunctional, the women had no choice but to go near the track, for open defecation. Women and girls were abused and molested by unknown men. On a particular night, two women were raped by three men near the railway track, while the women were returning home at about 8:00 p.m. They were waylaid near the track in a dark place, their mouths were shut and they were taken to a lonely place and raped. The women returned in panic and pain. When this case was reported to the police station, the police filed a case of attempted rape and the culprits were arrested and released within a week. When Karunalaya tried to register the case as a medico-legal case in the hospital, the hospital did not do so, despite the women reporting that there was penetration, demanding that they be furnished with a police report first. Due to shame and fear, the women did not press for further action. This was reported in the Tamil news paper Dinagaran.

The women who lived on the roadside for more than two and a half years after tsunami as neglected families faced the worst. They were subject to repeated attempts at rape every night, when their husbands were away at sea, fishing. All the women from the fifteen families who lived on the roadside near Pallavan Nagar near Kasimedu, experienced this threat. When they lodged complaints with the police station, the FIR was not filed and a case was not registered. Despite sending letters to the CM's cell, the Collector and the Police Commissioner, no action was taken to provide protection to the women. Due to this threat, a few families were sent by Karunalaya to dwell in the vacant houses in the temporary shelters, until they were allotted permanent houses.

The project implemented by Karunalaya with the support of UNDP covered 500 women, 500 children, 250 men and 250 youth in the temporary shelters. 20 Peer Educators were identified and trained to form a support group for the project. Community participation was ensured through a community watchdog committee, which ensured sustainability of the impact. The staff team comprised of one coordinator, one counselor and four field staff. The project intervention included one to one contact, group sessions, community events, condom demonstration, condom outlets, counseling, STD screening and treatment, HIV testing and follow-up. The project also provided livelihood training for the women to supplement their incomes, such as training on production of sanitary napkins, soft baby toys and diapers. Production and marketing of hygiene products were envisaged as a large scale enterprise.

Group session on HIV/AIDS for young girls at temporary shelters

AN UNFORTUNATE ENCOUNTER—RELIEF TRUCKS FROM THE NETHERLANDS

In order to provide relief supplies to the tsunami affected people, a Dutch Foundation, Stichting Motherhood, had brought 10 trucks from the Netherlands by road to India in the name of Karunalaya, Chennai. Though the goods were not requested for by Karunalaya, respecting the noble intentions of the Dutch people, Karunalaya had helped Motherhood in filing the necessary papers for the Indian Customs department to clear the goods on arrival.

Karunalaya, at the instance of Vidotrans, which was the official transport agent of Motherhood, had requested the Government of India to exempt the customs duty for the full consignment brought by Motherhood. It had also given an undertaking to the Government of India, Land Customs Station, that the goods would be distributed to the poor and needy people, free of cost, without any distinction of caste, creed and race, and would produce distribution certificates to the Customs for the entire consignment after distribution. Only on receipt of this undertaking were the ten trucks with the consignment allowed to enter India, with exemption of customs duty.

As the above goods had been cleared against General Exemption no. 18 vide Customs Notification no. 148/94 dated 13.07.94, Karunalaya had to close the file with the Customs after distribution of the goods, by submitting the distribution certificates, in order to cancel the undertaking with them

Dutch AID transport Vidotrans, carried not just AID, but hearts of Dutch people by road to India

A joint meeting of responsible members of Karunalaya and Motherhood Foundation, The Netherlands, was held on February 19, 2005, at 5:00 p.m., at Don Bosco Wisdom Town, Chennai, where the 10 trucks were parked. The following simple procedures were drawn up before distribution of the goods, to ensure that the distribution was smooth and complied with the government procedures, and to get the free distribution certificates from the government officials, as per the requirement

- Meet the District Collector of the area and inform him about the relief goods and seek his approval and support; seek presence of the Government officers for distribution and secure the distribution certificates from them.
- Ask for necessary Police Protection.
- Ensure that every beneficiary signs or places her/his thumb impression as proof that she/he has received the relief materials
- Keep account of packages
- Give an account to the officers, of the exact number of packages distributed
- Fill the model Distribution Certificate with necessary details
- Get the Distribution Certificate from the Government officer present at the distribution site

Further to the meeting of February 19, 2005, Ms. Nicolien de Kroon, the Chairwoman of Motherhood Foundation and her team left for distribution of relief goods, in various places in Tamil Nadu. Karunalaya arranged for the distribution of the goods in Chennai by coordinating with the Chennai Collectorate, as per the advice of Mr. C.V. Sankar, IAS, The Collector of Chennai

Mr. S. Chandra Mohan, IAS, Collector of Chennai, inaugurating the distribution. Mr. S. John Bosco, President, Karunalaya, Mr. Mike Ogborne, Blythswood care and Mr. Chris from Motherhood are also seen

Mr. S. Chandramohan, IAS, inaugurated the distribution at the tsunami temporary shelters in Thoraipakkam.

On returning from her trip to distribute the relief materials, a meeting was held between Karunalaya and Ms. Nicolieri and her team from Motherhood, on February 25, 2005, at 9:30 p.m., at Don Bosco Wisdom Town, Redhills, in order to assess the distribution process and to verify the certificates obtained after distribution. It was found that the distribution certificates received by Ms. Nicolien and her team at Pondicherry, Nagapattinam and Kanyakumari were not as per the customs requirements. Efforts made by Karunalaya to get the certificates rectified by the respective Collectors of Nagapattinam and Kanyakumari failed, as the Collectors refused to do so, stating that the distribution was not done as per the Government procedures and also that it was not done in the presence of the Government officials, by Motherhood.

Meanwhile, the second consignment by Air was intended to be sent in the name of Karunalaya. Karunalaya refused to accept the air cargo and asked that their name not be used to bring the goods. Accordingly, Motherhood changed the name of the recipient and in this instance, the air cargo was cleared by the Customs Department only when Motherhood Foundation paid the customs duty.

On March 1, 2005, Ms. Nicolien promised to get the certificates rectified by the Collectors, when she went again to distribute the second consignment in the South. From then on, she did not contact us. On Monday, March 7, 2005, we received information that she had left for Holland the previous night, without informing us. Due to the efforts of Cordaid, the certificate was rectified by the Collector of Kanyakumari. But the certificate from Pondicherry could not be rectified, despite efforts by Kalvikendra, a partner of Cordaid.

It was very unfortunate that Karunalaya was put in a very awkward situation, as the 3 member team headed by Ms. Nicolieri was very arrogant and indifferent towards everyone, flouted all norms with impunity, and in the process, got Karunalaya into deep trouble. However, the drivers of Vidotrans were most understanding and exhibited voluntarism and high regard for the local laws and procedures. Their efforts were commendable. Incidentally, Vidotrans is a transport agency in the Netherlands, involved solely in transporting aid to designated destinations. A detailed report of the above episode was sent to Cordaid. This actually disturbed our concentration on the relief operations, for more than a month.

Dutch AID goods being distributed at Kargil Nagar, North Chennai

LESSONS LEARNT

- Working for any group of people at any level, there should be a sincere effort to establish mutual trust. after efforts to overcome the initial crisis. A relationship built on trust would be doubly beneficial to both sides.

- Working for people should be working with the people. A NGO intervention should be in the nature of a catalyst. Any development process should take place on a participatory basis.

- Coordinating with Government and other like-minded organisations is very essential and must be undertaken in a spirit of unity and cooperation, with the goal of empowering the poor and the marginalized.

- Sustained efforts are called for against the red tape. apathy and at times, indifference of people or authorities.

- Awareness needs to be created amongst the target groups that they should strive to make themselves self-sufficient with the assistance they get and uplift and liberate themselves from the poor and oppressive conditions.

- All efforts should be made to build the self-confidence and self-esteem of the affected communities.

- Their strengths and weaknesses should be identified and they should be helped to overcome their weaknesses and build on their strengths.

- All humanitarian mission work should be carried out with love, compassion, empathy and highest regard for human rights. and prudence must be practised when making decisions regarding accepting aid from any donors.

- It is important that the local knowledge and experience of NGOs are utilized while planning for and deciding on relief and rehabilitation measures for the affected.

- Such local knowledge and experience of NGOs can prevent naive promotion of leadership by fledgling NGOs, amongst unscrupulous elements, with vested interests, who impede development efforts.

- Only the evicted people had to suffer for a long period. while the tsunami affected communities that continued to live in their original place of habitation, resumed normal life soon. Therefore, evictions must be avoided, unless absolutely necessary.

- Coordination of the work between the NGOs in the disaster-affected areas should be led by neutral people who are not implementing relief projects, in order to prevent prejudice, bias and to ensure a healthy working relationship.

- Advocacy and Lobbying are important components of disaster relief and rehabilitation work. Ensuring the rights of the affected people needs a consistent and systematic approach that includes direct involvement of the affected people.

- While collecting relief, affected communities were grateful, but when their request for more than their share was denied, some of them reacted most abominably. Such behaviour and outbursts are normal during times of crises. The dynamics of any community is complex, therefore, understanding these nuances is important to deal effectively with them.

- Committed NGOs who work for the most vulnerable families stand exposed to malicious attempts to damage their reputation and credibility while dealing with sensitive issues and this may result in demoralization and act as deterrents. In order to ensure equality and to protect the most vulnerable, it is imperative to be always prepared for the worst and to never lose heart during such situations. Accountability, transparency and courage can act as potent weapons in such circumstances, which provides the much-needed strength to counter these devious attempts.

CONCLUSION

Karunalaya as a social service organisation has come a long way from its humble beginnings of commitment to the cause of addressing the problems of unfortunate children, deprived of a childhood. The very location of the organisation, in coastal North Chennai, left the organisation without the option of limiting its activities to this problem alone. A survey aimed at unravelling the causes of the problems of street children and their exploitation, was an eye-opener that spurred them to look for the root of the problem, namely, the poor and oppressive social and economic conditions of their families. This made Karunalaya launch the Self Help Group programme for the poor of the locality, particularly for women. As its efforts continued towards re-building the shattered dreams of children and their families, there came the tremors and monstrous waves that devastated the lives of the people. Karunalaya rushed to the rescue and rehabilitation of the tsunami affected people in North Chennai. In doing so, Karunalaya received an opportunity for accelerated growth in stature and maturity on an unprecedented scale, as the activities detailed above reveal. This novel experience was yet another invitation to commit itself to the service of people. In retrospect, it is evident that Karunalaya has emerged stronger and taller from this whole mission and has become a beacon for other organisations involved in tsunami relief and rehabilitation. That it has been so successful doing so stands testimony to the future potential of this organisation. This report will hopefully, while standing as a record of Karunalaya's effective work in tsunami relief and rehabilitation, also serve as a resource document from which other organisations can cull out lessons. While many have been the achievements, there remains many more milestones to be crossed on the road to empowerment of the poor people, and it is evident from the report that Karunalaya is aware of this huge responsibility. It is just the beginning in working for and with the people, and it needs all the assistance, encouragement and a pat to continue its fruitful activities.

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