

Sheltering the Unsheltered: A 'Post-Tsunami' Situation Analysis of Housing in Maruthamunai, Ampara District

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ABSTRACT. The village, Maruthamunai situated north of Kalmunai in Ampara District, was devastated by the tsunami that occurred in 2004. The tsunami affected families were not fully provided with housing facilities to date and a vast majority are still in welfare centres. This study was done to assess post-tsunami housing activities in Maruthamunai, and level to which the housing reconstruction activities had benefitted the affected people. Key informant interviews and secondary data collected from various sources were used in the analysis.

Around 2/3 of the entire Maruthamunai was affected by the tsunami disaster. Massive destruction was caused to several economic and social infrastructures. The loss caused to houses was estimated at Rs.1,674 Mn., about 75.88% of total monetary loss. Therefore, it was necessary to study the post-tsunami housing activities in Maruthamunai with the support of the government and donors. It was hypothesized that housing construction had benefitted the affected families.

About 2,564 families consisting of 9,416 persons were affected by tsunami. Fully damaged houses within the buffer zone (0 – 65 meters) were 277, while damaged houses within the 65 – 200 meters were 1718, of which 26.78% were fully damaged. Total damaged houses above the 200 meters zone were 481 in which 99.58% were fully damaged houses. Around 2,476 houses were required to be constructed for the affected families. But only 732 houses (29.56% damaged) were constructed by donors with Government support. Around 1,648 households were paid Rs.100,000 to Rs.250,000 for repairing damaged houses. Only 96 houses (34.65% of total damaged) were provided to affected beneficiaries in the buffer zone. Since the funding and designs for housing varied from donor to donor, beneficiaries had dissatisfaction with the houses provided. Funds provided for repairing partly damaged houses was also insufficient for most of the affected families.

The post-tsunami housing construction work of the government and donors was observed to be still going on at a slow pace. Hence it is evident that housing construction work in Maruthamunai had not significantly benefited the affected people as expected. There is an urgent need to monitor and expedite the reconstruction of houses to shelter the homeless poor people.

Key words: Post-Tsunami, Reconstruction, Housing, Resettlement, Maruthamunai.

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