

Natural Hazards and Vulnerability in South Eastern Coastal Region of Sri Lanka: A case study in Maruthamunai area

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Sri Lanka has experienced several disasters including cyclone, typhoons, tornadoes, flood, drought, landslide, epidemics, lightening, accident related disaster and tsunami. Tsunami occurred on 24th December 2004 which was the biggest catastrophic disaster in Sri Lanka, affected entire north, east and south coastal belt and killing people and destroying properties. Maruthamunai in Ampara district in the south eastern coastal region was severely affected than other coastal regions of Sri Lanka. A questionnaire survey was carried out on hazard awareness in Maruthamunai area. The purpose of this study was to identify the community perception on hazards and vulnerability by mapping at community level. The study describes the factors or constraints of economic, social, physical or geographic nature, which reduce the ability to prepare and to cope with the impact of hazards. Throughout the study it was found that people are not aware about all the hazards around them and hazard mapping. More than 95 percent of residents lacked tsunami knowledge prior to the 2004 tsunami. People consider the reason for flooding as heavy rainfall and inadequate drainage system, but not aware that water disposal into marshy lands too contribute to flood the area. All the people who are living in the coastal area are vulnerable to the hazards, and it is recommended to educate the people on disaster and its management and also to develop a land use plan by authorities with the support of the community. Adequate drainage network systems have to be developed and implemented by the local authority.

Key words: Community perception, Natural hazard