

Mapping Impacts of Participatory Disaster Proofing of Tsunami Affected War Torn Villages

Project in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka



For more information contact:
Ravi Pratap Singh: ravi.pratap@aea-southasia.org
<http://aea-southasia.org>



Executive Summary

December 2010

Executive Summary

Introduction:

This evaluation report aims to draw out key lessons learned from an impact evaluation of a post-tsunami recovery project implemented by Aide et Action (AeA) and its local partner NGOs under the auspices of the European Commission in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, from January 2007 to September 2010. The project was funded by the European Commission (EC).

The three-year project, 'Participatory Disaster Proofing of Tsunami-Affected War-torn Villages', was led by AeA with the aim of restoring ecological balance and promoting eco-friendly development among affected war-torn and tsunami-affected villages which are primarily inhabited by internally displaced people (IDPs). More specifically, with a view to long-term sustainability, the project aimed to boost local capacity through higher levels of community participation and training in order to mitigate the effects of future natural hazards.

Specific objectives included; reclaiming land and water sources, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, using schools as village eco centres, developing infrastructure for disaster preparedness, and strengthening community-based organisations for self-development. All the activities are highly relevant in terms of what is now being called Climate Smart Disaster Risk Reduction.



With these objectives in mind, the project focused on empowering marginalised groups including female-headed households, women, landless labour, small farmers, and children to participate in improving local disaster preparedness. It is not often that disaster risk reduction is integrated into conflict recovery, especially at community level. Further, it is rare to use these two crises as an opportunity to adapt to climate changes. Thus, the AeA project is rare, and as a result the impact evaluation is even more important to draw lessons for future programmes.

Shortly after the project's conclusion, in November 2010, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) was invited by AeA for an impact evaluation of the project to determine if, and to what degree, the project had met its goals and generated positive impacts on target villages. The evaluation included an extensive review of project documents and field data from field visits to a selected five out of 25 communities in two divisions of Trincomalee. It also included meetings with key stakeholders such as project staff, UN agencies, local partners and government officials in Sri Lanka.

This executive summary briefly outlines the Sri Lankan context, the rationale and purpose of the evaluation, the evaluation process, and important findings and recommendations for the future. Given the nature of AeA's project and the impact

evaluation, it is envisioned that the outcomes of this evaluation will be used to improve future programmes that address the ambitious overlap of disaster, conflict, and climate change risk at community level in Sri Lanka and beyond.

Project and Evaluation Duration:

The three-year project was scheduled to begin in January 2007 and to conclude in December 2009. However, because of late government approval to work in the war-torn target villages, the project activities could only be completed in September 2010. The ravaging effects of war on local communities were too deep and widespread. AeA invited AIDMI to conduct the impact evaluation from November 23 to November 28, 2010. Extended preparation and data analysis was done during the preceding months.

Purpose of the Evaluation:

The aim of the evaluation was to assess and measure the impacts of AeA's project in 25 villages in Trincomalee while taking into account the effects of the 2004 tsunami and three decades of civil unrest. More specifically, the evaluation assessed progress made under four thematic areas: Program, Financial management, Partnership, and Reporting. One of the key elements under the Program area was to assess whether the project had created local organisations and improved their capacity to implement project activities. This element was included to lead to local sustainability.

Evaluation Process:

In order to evaluate the impact of civil unrest and the impacts of project activities, AIDMI sent in a



multi-disciplinary team with skills in risk reduction, evaluation, water resource management, and women's needs to develop various tools for data collection. More specifically, AIDMI developed tools for quantitative and qualitative data collection. These included questionnaires for focus group discussions and the community survey, and guidelines for case studies and missing voices. These tools were shared with AeA who subsequently piloted them and made adjustments.

In addition, AIDMI met with project staff, UN officials, government officials, and local project partners to gain insight into the project impacts, implementation process, constraints, and other project-related activities in and around the communities covered under the project.

AeA assembled a local team to facilitate the evaluation process and the AIDMI team planned data collection and field visit in project areas. For a more rigorous evaluation design, the project staff

selected five villages out of 25 villages at random to measure impacts and remove any selection bias.

Structure of the Evaluation Report:

The evaluation report is divided into several sections. The first section of the report provides useful background information about all involved agencies in the project. The second section describes the evaluation methodology and the tools proposed by the evaluation team for data collection and analysis. The third and final section synthesizes key findings and recommendations, based on project-related documents provided by AeA, with field visits and interviews. The report is produced by AIDMI for AeA to use when developing future programs. Experts in the subject matter within AIDMI peer reviewed the final draft.

Context:

In order to understand the context in which AeA's project was carried out, the evaluation investigated some of the core initiatives undertaken in Sri Lanka



in the wake of the tsunami and civil unrest. We found that AeA's project related to a number of ongoing initiatives. It coincided with UNDP initiatives in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, livelihood restoration, European Commission (EC) supported reconstruction activities, and emergency relief work funded by ECHO. The World Bank provided support to the Government of Sri Lanka in the form of emergency relief, recovery, and reconstruction. These initiatives provided much needed ground work to help the IDP people settle down in their native villages i.e. AeA projected villages. Hence the AeA project was crucial for target communities in their recovery; from the twin blows of the tsunami to the years of civil unrest. The AeA built on and connected to local ongoing disaster, conflict, and development processes.

Three decades of civil unrest in Trincomalee caused significant damage to public and community assets and agriculture, especially in and around the target village areas. The 2004 tsunami exacerbated these effects and made the situation of civil unrest even more perilous. Moreover, because the tsunami struck areas that had not faced tsunamis in the past, residents were unprepared. As a result, the tsunami caused much greater losses in property, crops, and employment. In Trincomalee, loss of work for the poor was especially severe. Fall in work caused fall in income, leading to less or limited food and nutrition among these families.



Key Findings:

Based on the project proposal, project documents shared by AeA, field data collected through various tools, and field visits to the key project areas, the evaluation found multiple positive impacts generated by the three-year AeA program. In general, the findings of the evaluation reflect that timely implementation of project activities can help target communities and local partners reduce disaster impact and better prepare for future risks. More specifically, in Sri Lanka, risk reduction has helped rebuild more resilient villages following the immense damage of the tsunami and three decades of conflict. The key findings are listed as follows:

Civil unrest was especially apparent in Trincomalee during the implementation phase of the project. AeA's efforts to set up and launch community groups and other organisations were slow and delayed partly because of government restrictions based on the prolonged unrest in the area. But AeA persisted. The project created several useful and democratic local organisations including Village Reconstruction Committees (VRCs) and the Rural Development Society (RDS) in coordination with local partners and local authorities. This process was arduous but AeA persevered. Most of these groups were formed in the extension phase of the project to promote local capacity building, community participation, and community entitlement for long-term ecological sustainability. The groups that formed in the extension phase of the project needed more time towards the later part of program to deliver the desired outputs.

Nonetheless, it is clear that community organisations (SHGs, VRCs, RDSs) increased their capacity to involve and support community members in implementing eco-friendly rehabilitation activities. Participatory, democratic, local community owned structures were built to be more resilient.

The project was guided by an effective community needs assessment, which provided a comprehensive picture of community development activities. There was a matching overall feasibility study conducted to better inform project activities. Both studies were found to be useful and relevant.

Active community participation in debris clearance, water bodies' restoration, land





reclamation activities, and other disaster response activities led to strong feelings of personal responsibility for community development and risk reduction activities. These activities were well coordinated with lateral links such as other community and private initiatives by AeA.

Ecological development activities have resulted in sustainable livelihood options and facilities. Canal restoration in new farmland reclaimed by returned farmers is effective. AeA has provided needed links with the authorities in this initial and crucial stage. Similarly, organic farming training followed up with provision of seeds has made a major impact on community's awareness, attitude and farming activities.

The restoration and greater protection of water resources and expansion of land under cultivation has allowed hundreds of affected community members, including female farmers, to begin agricultural activities. Moreover, as said above, households now have greater access to water for drinking and domestic use. Communities have also benefited from water channels as they can use them for irrigation and restored graded bunding.

Good coordination with various government departments and the UNDP when conducting various trainings has led to skills and

knowledge acquisition. Trainings on gender and social issues also contributed to community capacity building.

Socio-economic development with female participation has also occurred. AeA has formed SHGs comprised of women, and provided added support to allow women to participate in project activities at many levels.

There has been an establishment of effective communication channels to convey social information. AeA has picked up broken links of communications between communities, between community and authorities, and between authorities to build bridges of communication. This has taken a lot of time and mending efforts from AeA teams.

The people have been empowered as a result of trainings and the availability of safer buildings. They are able to protect themselves and their possessions during disasters. Multi-purpose disaster protection shelters are equipped with a public address system and immediate response tools for early warning and disaster response. AeA is also working out details of their management with local authorities.

Schools were made more physically resilient and hygienic through the construction of toilets



and the provision of water resources. Moreover, various interactive IEC tools for disaster preparedness were distributed by AeA and are being used schools. However, these are in short supply.

Progress in nutrition, hygiene, and education has been made at local level with children.

There is now access to micro-finance and revolving fund services for the target community. This includes agri-allied revolving funds, which female farmers have accessed. Plans to upscale by measuring the financial impact assessment are being made by AeA.

For the disaster risk reduction community, it is important to note that local community-based organisations of an itinerant community are most effective at reducing risk, before and after disasters. In the current scenario, such organisations can build on donor investments to sustain social and economic development activities over the long term.

In short, the AeA project is participatory in its process and decision making. The AeA project has built various key elements for disaster proofing at local level in villages. The dual losses of war and tsunami have been effectively addressed by AeA at community level.

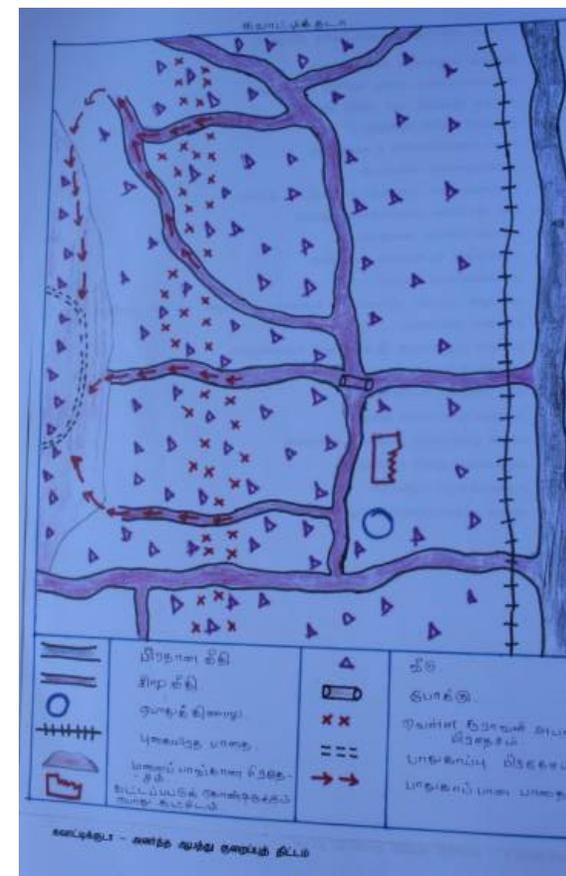
Initial key steps were taken to start restoring ecological balance in the communities by AeA. Communities have found ways to take up eco-friendly development. These have been achieved with war torn and tsunami affected internally displaced people of Sri Lanka.

The evaluation team found reclaimed land and water sources in communities. This is a clear move from farmers towards sustainable (and often organic) agricultural practices. Robust and local community based organisations for the above projects formed in the project villages.

Recommendations:

In addition to the positive impacts mentioned above, the evaluation identified key areas in which the program might build on:

- First, while a majority of community members were trained in agricultural, land use, and water restoration techniques, many members, including a large number of women, could still not benefit from such training. Moreover, in regards to organic farming, many farmers who received training have neither fully started practicing organic farming techniques nor disseminated those techniques to a large number of farmers. AeA should allocate more time and resources to build on the above practice of organic farming by the target community. Training must be viewed as an integrative process that evolves from one stage to the next. The evaluation team



recommends a phase II for these communities to build on the achievements.

- Second, though there is an excellent plan to avail revolving funds for agri-allied activities to target the community, many local small business owners had limited access to markets and funds. Furthermore, most owners possess limited knowledge of micro-insurance to cover their property and assets against risks. They also lack business continuity planning inputs and stabilisation funds to make their livelihoods resilient. These can be integrated with risk reduction. Risk transfer tools such as insurance (e.g. life, property), savings and more may be explored as AeA has significant capacity as well as experience with similar projects in India. The evaluation team recommends building on investments made by EC and AeA in these communities. This can be done by making plans to form capital at local level, and weaving together social protection and insurance.

- Third, in relation to community preparedness for disasters, the project communities were only recently provided with a disaster preparedness plan. Moreover, it is too early to assess the impacts of training in disaster management, disaster response and other areas, because



training only began in February 2010 (Technical update, January 2010). Nonetheless, it is anticipated that timely action and the implementation of important project activities is needed. Including village committees, children, teachers and volunteers in disaster preparedness training would build community capacity for better disaster response. An impact assessment of training after the recent floods in Sri Lanka would be valuable to AeA and EC.

- Fourth, adding a community-driven disaster risk reduction (DRR) component developed by local community-based organisations from the affected community to the ecological development programs would be a positive next step to ensure long-term sustainable development. A key point in this seems the need to make livelihoods resilient from climate change and natural hazard risks. The evaluation team recommends more conceptual thinking by AeA with communities and authorities (and donors) on Resilient Livelihoods in changing climate and disaster risk landscape. A regional workshop with ECHO and UN may be timely.
- Most of the SHG members were well informed, but not articulate enough, to speak at length about their achievements, challenges and future needs. This might point to a need for greater engagement and joint visioning and sharing at SHG meetings on the ground. The evaluation team recommends that, by the next phase, AeA put more thought and input into building the local leadership of the community members in project areas.