

LRRD and the Tsunami Response Sri Lanka

The Tsunami disaster in the Asia region was quite a complex one in the sense that entire clusters of coastal villages were totally or partially destroyed wherein people lost every thing and this left the population in a situation of dire poverty,. The disaster response was also quite a challenge in the sense that the classical disaster response based on the continuum model was questioned; there was a need to address the emergency response from a more comprehensive perspective, taking into account the need to go for a long term development oriented disaster response.

The Tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka itself was very complex. About two thirds of the islands coastal stretch was totally or partially destroyed, the economical infrastructure was reduced to nothing in a context where a huge part of the country's economy depends on the fishing and the tourist industry. The Tsunami disaster handicapped the already lingering war torn national economy and made things worse. In this context the impact of the disaster had a strong direct and indirect effect. The direct effect was on the population in the coastal areas which was affected, especially the fishing and the tourist based industry. The indirect effect was that the global economical situation was totally disrupted by the Tsunami disaster, making a larger spectrum of population vulnerable, leading to non access to basic goods and services by the disadvantaged people. The impact of tsunami on the global economy was quite important in the sense that the interlinked national economy in a war torn context was thrown out of gear. For example, the interior tourist oriented work force having job outlets in the coastal areas were out of job, the interior population dependant on the maritime economy for their survival were also affected by Tsunami.

The analysis of the disaster response in Sri Lanka, depicts that the disaster response was carried out on a contiguuum model in the sense that Chronology was not the basis of thinking, but rather the different types of activities taking place at the same time, some being parallel activities, some integrating short term and long term activities, short-term activities including longer term perspectives. These different kinds of activities were centred on direct survival response, prevention oriented activities, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, capacity building activities, livelihood activities etc. and above all short term planning with a long term perspective.

The extent of the damages in this war torn and fragile economy was such that from the beginning itself the disaster response was more oriented towards a long term perspective. Right from the start it was felt that the national structure needed to be strengthened in order to cope up with the variety of needs of the society; the initial crisis situation depicted that there was high level vulnerability and thus a need for capacity building of the newly recruited staff. Even the financial management at the national and diocesan level was reviewed completely and new systems and structures put up.

The need for coordination was felt at various levels. Since four of the eleven dioceses were affected, it was of capital importance to coordinate the activities between the national and the different dioceses; on the other hand due to the presence of numerous caritas MO the need to coordinate between SEDEC and the CI MO was felt as being of high importance and this resulted in the setting up of a facilitating partner, whose role and responsibility was to coordinate the work and presence of the different CIMO. A third level of coordination was between SEDEC, CI MO and the different platforms and consortium existing in Sri Lanka. Such coordination was deemed necessary from the start itself because of the

nature of the programme which did not restrict itself to the disaster response, but had to have a long term perspective which was also development oriented.

The strategies adopted by the Caritas network had to take into account the need to avoid duplication of work because the nature of the Tsunami disaster was vast and the presence of a variety of actors ready to render service was important. SEDEC and the CI Mo from the beginning itself fixed as one of the goals the LRRD principle to effectively carry out the disaster response.

First of all the caritas network in close collaboration with SEDEC and the diocesan partners fixed some basic principles as follows :

- Deliver service in the working areas of the diocesan structures because they are more efficient than dispersing the efforts.
- Work in areas where no other organisation is taking up activities.
- The need to give ownership to the local communities, the appropriateness of the aid, because the beneficiaries helped will be accompanied and sustainable long term activities were supposed to be taken up (construction of houses etc.).

The above basic principles prepared the ground for elaborating a strategy based on the LRRD approach:

1. In almost all the affected areas, the CI MO worked in close collaboration with the local diocesan partner. Such a strategy was important for many reasons :
 - The war situation and the growing anti-minority and in particular anti-christian feeling within Sri Lanka, leading to cooperation with the diocesan structures who have a longstanding local presence.
 - The local partners have an in-depth knowledge of the specific social and cultural conditions and therefore are in a better position to assess the long-term effects of aid.
 - This linking with the local partner was also felt as extremely important because the Tsunami disaster has also disfigured the social and cultural configuration; and any disaster response with a long term perspective must keep in mind ownership, sustainability and impact ; building up of the capacities of the structure and the beneficiaries to cope up with crises or disasters.
2. From the beginning itself, the ERST as well as the facilitating partners in the field, adopted a people centered approach to the need assessment and also project formulation. This was done in the perspective of making people participate in defining their own future project, their capacity active collaboration during the implementation leading to local solidarity among the beneficiaries etc. This also gave the possibility to better understand peoples' own mechanisms in time of crisis and to design programmes that appreciate local realities and peoples' aspiration for their own lives.
3. Integrate the disaster preparedness and mitigation components in the different programmes so that the population is prepared for the future disasters.
4. Capacity building of the different staff in order to help them deliver goods efficiently ; putting of new financial management structures and systems etc.
5. The different CI MO were also voicing out the needs of the most vulnerable and affected people, especially in the north and north-east, because these category of people are the most vulnerable and suffer disproportionately from the effects of disasters and crises.
6. Sedec and the CI MO from the beginning took into consideration "the Do no harm principle" and the "Conflict sensitive approach", because Sri Lanka is a war torn

country, religious fundamentalism is gaining momentum and above all the country is in a political turmoil.

7. In the preparation of the second phase of the SOA it is clearly understood that the issue of reducing the country's overall vulnerability of the affected sri lankan population needs to be addressed over the long term. Hence the disaster response will take into account three categories of beneficiaires :
 - 1. Those directly affected by Tsunami and living in the affected areas
 - 2. Those indirectly affected by Tsunami.
 - 3. The up-rooted war victims.

The whole programme will take into account the global poverty alleviation in the working areas and also respond to the needs of the war affected victims.

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