

Tsunami Responses

Immediate Response

The tsunami stripped many Sri Lankan municipalities of staff, equipments and funds. Wells, drains, cemeteries, playgrounds, bus stands, market places, septic tanks, toilets needed to be cleaned and debris had to be removed. Soon after the disaster, UN-HABITAT surveyed affected cities and short-listed ten that required immediate attention. (Moratuwa, Galle, Weligama, Matara, Tangalla, Hambantota, Kattankudi, Batticaloa, Mullaitivu and Jaffna). Five of these cities were sites of the ongoing UNDP / UN-HABITAT Urban Governance Support Project. UN-HABITAT leveraged its vast experience in the country, and put together strong field teams to follow through reconstruction and rehabilitation projects. Its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, and the regional office in Fukuoka, Japan, prepared proposals for donors and attracted funds first from the Government of Japan for emergency operations in Sri Lanka.

UN-HABITAT's primary focus is to bring housing and settlement needs to the forefront, advocate community-driven reconstruction, demonstrate good practices, and support government institutions to mobilise resources by facilitating innovative partnerships. It coordinates activities in the permanent housing sector, and co-chairs donor coordination meetings with the World Bank. UN-HABITAT projects are supported by a range of partners — local and national governments in Japan, Germany, Spain and Italy, NGOs, UNDP and other UN agencies and leading corporates.

Reconstruction Activities

Projects supported by the Japanese Government of Japan span five cities and 25 settlements, benefiting over 5,000 families or 22,000 people. These initiatives are assisting tsunami-affected families to repair and rebuild their houses and restore vital community services. The Italian government, another key donor, is providing housing assistance to tsunami-affected families in three cities across the country as well as upgrading the capacity of the Government of Sri Lanka and NGOs to facilitate community involvement in the tsunami reconstruction process. The Italian-funded projects which got off the ground in September-October 2005 have shown impressive progress. The City of Munich in Germany and the City of Victoria-Gasteiz in Spain have provided funds to restore critical infrastructure badly damaged by the tsunami. UNDP is supporting an initiative at Moratuwa near Colombo, through an existing project – Lunawa Environmental Improvement and Community Development Project. This will help 100 tsunami-affected families. And with German chemical company, BASF, signing an agreement with UN-HABITAT, private sector is on board in a significant way. BASF will provide US\$ 500,000 and technical expertise for tsunami relief and rehabilitation work in Sri Lanka. Plans include construction of a fish market and a restaurant complex at Galle. (See Map for Details)



Jaffna (Japan)	Houses- 40	Wells- 40
Killinochchi (Japan)	Houses- 43	Wells - 8
Moratuwa (UNDP)	Houses- 100	
Kalutara (Italy)	Houses- 100	
Balapitiya (Citizens of Fukuoka)	Houses- 100	
Galle (Japan)	Houses 701	Roads- 550m
Galle (UAE)	Houses- 320	
Galle (BASF, Germany/Fish)		

People's Process

Putting people at the centre of the reconstruction programme

Over the past year, UN-HABITAT teams in Colombo, and in field offices along the ravaged coastline, have been working with community based groups, women's organizations, private agencies, municipalities, federal institutions and donors to make sure that principles of sustainability are part of the recovery process from the earliest stages. The visible results are the new houses, community centres, playgrounds, nurseries that have come up, and the roads, wells, drains and bridges that are being built or repaired. But equally important have been the outcomes which cannot be quantified. By helping start new community development councils (CDC), by revitalising inactive ones, engaging affected people in the planning and implementation of the projects that impact their lives, encouraging women to come forward and be part of decision-making processes, and by providing technical and managerial assistance to grassroots workers, UN-HABITAT has been catalysing a critical process that meshes physical rehabilitation with social recovery.

Laying the groundwork

The preparatory stages were crucial. First task was to identify affected communities. This was done in conjunction with the local authorities. The entry point to the community was through community leaders – religious heads, influential persons, elders, teachers etc. From the initial field visit to the crucial stage of selection and categorisation of beneficiary households involved a series of vital interfaces best explained through the flow-chart given right.

One of the key needs was the existence of a vibrant Community Development Council (CDC) to partner UN-HABITAT. Communities were encouraged to start new CDCs where none existed and revitalise inactive ones. A formal contract between UN-HABITAT and the CDC was signed to partner in the reconstruction and repair work. Community action planning (CAP) and community action planning (CAP) and community efforts in rebuilding their own houses and revitalizing their neighbourhoods. Local authorities and technical assistance to equip the communities with the necessary skills. Themes as diverse as accounting, financial management, construction management, health and personal hygiene.

Selection



Activities by Community Development Officer (CDO)

The Way to Community Recovery

Mala Kudaligama and Anoma Mendis, members of the Walauwatta CDC, in Galle, among the worst-hit in the tsunami, admit they were initially sceptical. But the two women at the first meeting between the community and UN-HABITAT officials was the absence of form-filling. Walauwatta today is on the way to challenges remain. The first house, built through community effort, came up in June 2005. Over 100 others have come up since. "If the community hadn't with every rupee, we would not have saved so much, Once all the houses get built, we will think of how best to generate incomes for families who have saved. Walauwatta CDC has also taken the initiative to renovate their community centre with the money they have saved. The day the tsunami struck Walauwatta, residents gathered to the centre which was on higher ground. Now, they want an upper storey.

Mala Kudaligama
UN-HABITAT Technical Officer and