



1 year after the December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami: Women marginalised and excluded from the reconstruction process

Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh

One year after the December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, affected women in India continue to be marginalised, discriminated and excluded from the process of rebuilding on all levels: the family, the community and the nation.

1. **Thousands of women and children still live in camps and other temporary facilities** which lack adequate sanitation, clean water, health services and security. Government compensations have not reached them or are insufficient to restore their livelihoods.
2. **Women's right to food is violated.** People are on the verge of starvation getting one meal a day. The food rations provided are of very low quality. This affects health of children and pregnant, breast feeding and elderly women.
3. Women suffer from increased **domestic violence** in camps and temporary shelters, as a result of increased alcoholism. There is inadequate protection provided by the police and camp administration because of the general perception of violence against women being a personal matter.
4. Children in camps and temporary shelters do not have **access to education**. Government scholarships are not sufficient to cover education costs. Schools are too far away from camps and transport is not provided.
5. Both **temporary and permanent housing facilities** are of low standards in design and construction and climatic conditions have not been taken into account. Facilities do not meet women's needs: there are no kitchen and bathing facilities. People remain uncertain regarding permanent housing. The Government's policy on buffer zone implies that fishermen and others are denied assistance in any rebuilding activities within 100-200 meters from the shoreline. However, hotels and tourist resorts near the sea have been restored.
6. The tsunami exacerbated **women's access to land**. Women in India do not have ownership rights to land registered to their husband and father's names as women are not recognised as head of household.
7. **Jobs and livelihoods:** In all the affected countries, women lost their jobs and livelihood sources. The governments have failed to respond effectively and survivors have to rely on NGO support.

8. **Caste and ethnic discrimination:** Entire communities of Dalit and Irula have been left out of relief and rehabilitation efforts. They have not been receiving any assistance from the Indian Government as they are not seen as directly affected by the tsunami although they have lost their livelihood sources.

In the light of the above, we express grave concern about lack of consultation with the people affected by the tsunami in the relief and reconstruction process. We demand that:

- Ø The Indian Government must speed up the process of housing reconstruction and permanent resettlement and assist non-governmental organisations involved in housing construction in obtaining ownership rights to the land allocated for building houses for the tsunami survivors.
- Ø The Indian Government must consult and involve affected people in the process of reconstruction and rebuilding. International and national NGOs must consult with the affected communities in planning, design and implementation of projects.
- Ø We are also aware of significant foreign assistance received by the Indian government, international and national NGOs and demand transparency and accountability in the funds spending.
- Ø Both state and non-state agencies working with the displaced must recognise and address gender specific and special needs of women.
- Ø Recognise the needs and rights of children, elderly, disabled, women living with HIV/AIDS and affected women who need long-term medical and psychological treatment and assistance.
- Ø The Indian Government must immediately provide gender disaggregate data in tsunami affected region.
- Ø The Indian Government must ensure that relief and reconstruction activities are implemented without discrimination based on gender, caste, class, ethnicity, religion, age, migration, citizenship and other factors.
- Ø The Indian Government must recognise the rights of the fishing communities to the sea and the coastal land and ensure that business interests in the rebuilding process do not negatively impact livelihoods of the seashore people.

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