

Rehabilitation of the Batticaloa District after Tsunami Disaster

Introduction

Batticaloa District along the Eastern Coastal belt of Sri Lanka has been ravaged by war, next to the North and required much rehabilitation. Arrival of the peace, industrious people and enthusiastic local administration saw the district rebuilding to provide a high standard of living even without much aid from the Government, Non-Governmental Organisations and the LTTE in the recent past. No doubt the Tsunami disaster has ruined the district to an unimaginable shape. The result is that the people are scattered in 94 refugee camps. Floods due to rain before and after the tsunami compounded their problems.

Two Major Areas of Rehabilitation

Infrastructure rehabilitation and development is one major area. We have to think of roads, rail, bridges, water, sanitation, and electricity. Plans have to be developed and implemented by appropriate Ministries. Urban Development Authority will coordinate their activities to rebuild a new Batticaloa. Schools, Universities and Government Departments also need rehabilitation. Hospitals need further care. We are, however, concentrating in this document on the other aspect of rehabilitation, namely people. We wish to present a comprehensive plan and the **Needs** for implementation.

Assessment

The first step is assessment of the problem. Data collection has been organised using the students and staff of the Eastern University, Sri Lanka. A questionnaire has been carried to the camp and the data obtained is being fed into the computer. We also will develop a programme to analyse the data.

Need: Computer programmers, and vehicles to go to camps

Two Categories of people

There are two categories of people hit by the tsunami disaster. The first group has fled from their homes fearing that the floods after the tsunami wave would destroy life and property. In actual fact, their houses have escaped damage. During the pell-mell, this group would have lost some valuables.

The second group has been ravaged by the wave and floods, losing life and property. Despair, dismay and sorrow are written on their face.

Care for the 1st Group

Counselling is essential for this group. Salvage for the lost valuables will go along the lines of 2nd group.

Need: Counselling group and centres for counselling

Care of the 2nd Group

This group is living in the temporary refugee camps, being cared by various compassionate teams from within Sri Lanka and abroad. Now we have to think of their long term care.

Semi permanent Refugee Camps

The affected people have to be accommodated and cared for in semi permanent refugee camps. Careful planning of these camps will solve the inherent problems seen in such camps found all over the world, constructed after major disasters. We may address to the following aspects of the camps:

- Site – good environment
- Structure – gives healthy environment: type of camp is discussed below
- Water – source of water, cleanliness of water and delivery
- Drainage – waste water rain water
- Environment – sanitation
- Power source
- Cooking facilities
- Toilets
- Sleeping facilities
- Food – cooked food or provisions given for residents to cook
- Schooling
- Health Care
- Administration
- Activity

Need: We wish the NGOs will take up these issues of the camp. One NGO may serve as coordinator and other NGOs may share the help, each one caring for one aspect

Grama Servaka (Village Head) and Divisional Secretary for the area will be responsible for the administration and they should coordinate with any NGOs embarked with the care of refugee camps.

Health care is by the DPDH and the MOH of the areas utilising the various peripheral hospitals in and around the area. Health care is a major area to be looked at separately.

Structure of Camps

Some camps may be for group living with compromise of privacy. These may be given for people who are totally dependent on others care. Other camps may be for family living with some privacy, such as simple huts. These may be given for people who have some sort of income, through employment. If State could find enough funds for monthly payments, camps may be built with some privacy.

Health Care

The medical status of every one in the camp has to be assessed first. For this purpose a questionnaire will be used to collect data and then the information is programmed into a computer.

Need: Simple instruments like blood pressure apparatus, urine test kit, haemoglobin, blood sugar kit, and weighing scale: medical students and nurses to collect data and make periodic visits, vehicle

Counselling has to be taken as a separate entity and on regular basis.

Need: Manpower

Activity groups have to be organised to get involve the people of the camp into various activities, which also help to keep the camp in a good shape.

Need: manpower

Salvage for lost valuables

Data collection using the questionnaire has also included a category for lost valuables. The group of people identified in this group should be referred to the DS division for registration of the lost items.

Need: Computers and programmers

The police, banks, insurance groups have to meet regularly and organise a working plan for this. For example the identity cards may be reissued.

Need: has to be identified

Employment

Our data collection provides the necessary information on employment.

Need: computers and programmers

People of the refugee camp may go into two types of employment. Some may go into their former employment and thus may earn their living. Such people may get better refugee camps with privacy for their families. Others may have lost their appliances needed for their work, such as fishing boats, agricultural machinery, in addition to their homes. Still others may have disabilities after the disaster preventing them from returning to work. This group of people may be managed in two ways:

a) They may be given help with various appliances to return to their occupation.

Need: provide appliances

b) Alternative employments may be given.

Need: manpower to assess potential and for training for alternative occupation

The 2nd group of people may also earn wages and enjoy better facilities in the refugee camps.

Monthly Payment and Cost of Care

Even though we request the NGOs to help with the refugee camps, we feel that every citizen of Sri Lanka, in particular those living in the District has a duty to contribute towards the cost of care and for a minimum monthly payment for refugees to enjoy some luxury. Government servants and semi government servants may contribute half a days pay monthly towards this fund. Wealthy people should contribute more. Unless we give generously we have no right to ask NGOs and foreign governments for funds.

Rebuilding Residences

This is a contentious issue at present. Whatever we build, it should be well away from the costal belt. Some suggest even 1 kilometre into the mainland. This is a complete translocation of people and many may not accept the situation. We also may have to acquire land in the interior, which may be deterred by property rights of people. Again going interior is a retrogressive step to which mankind has been always opposed. We should install better detection system for tsunami waves rather than run away from the

waves. 300 meters from the coastal belt is a reasonable suggestion and this also conserves natural reserves.

What to build: houses or flats? Building houses is less expensive and some may say that it is suited for our life style. But we have to progress and take this disaster in a positive manner as God given chance to build a beautiful Sri Lanka. Thus flats will give good look for our coastal belt. Living in flats also will remove the fear that is engraved in the minds of people after the tsunami wave disaster

Need: This is the foremost area of funding. We expect the foreign governments to help in this. Money and material may be donated. Bilateral agreements and low interest long term loans are alternatives.

Detection System

This is necessary not only for the Sri Lanka as a whole, but also in each District.

Need: We need equipment and training

Summary of the Needs for Care of People:

- Computers and programmers
- Manpower for survey, healthcare and counselling
- Refugee camp facilities and care
- Health-care equipment
- Appliances for employment
- Vehicles
- Employment training
- Funds and Material for buildings
- Detection system and training

Other Needs (not discussed in this document):

- Infrastructure
- Educational Institutions
- Government Departments
- Medical Institutions

Note:

Rehabilitation of other Districts may be also along the same lines.

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