



Telwatte: Post Tsunami Rehabilitation Project

FINAL REPORT

Project Duration: September 2005 – April 2008

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the project area

The village of Telwatte is located on the west coast of Sri Lanka in the Divisional Secretary area of Hikkaduwa. The village was devastated in the tsunami of 26 December 2004. The pre project research showed a total of 233 households in the village, including ninety three children under the age of five, fifty children of preschool age, eighty one children aged five-ten and 114 children aged over ten.

The main areas of employment pre tsunami were fishing, the coir industry, casual labour work, carpentry, and other self employment activities. Research at the end of the project shows that the main areas of employment are largely unchanged, demonstrating the ability of the community to return to their vocations.

The total number of deaths in Telwatte as a result of the tsunami was 28 and 1 person has a disability as a result of the tsunami.

1.2 Introduction to the project

The project was designed based on two key principles:

- An urgent need for certain key items that will significantly alter, or have the potential to significantly (positively) alter the quality of life of Telwatte residents in the short and medium term
- The need for a coherent and sustainable programme of redevelopment in Telwatte community

The goal of the project was to provide a solid foundation for the long term and sustainable redevelopment of Telwatte, with an emphasis on ensuring that the education and potential of children remains as unaffected as possible by the disaster. By initially providing items that can aid this process to community members, via accountable societies, the project aimed to establish a process of development and participation. The approach taken necessarily spans a long period of time relative to most "relief" projects, which, it was hoped, would create a more stable and accountable environment for the project to succeed. The focus on societies, education and credit means that community members are, in the long run, the agents of their own change.

The main objectives of the 24 month project were:

- 1) To ensure that, in as far as is possible, the immediate-medium term essential material needs of the community (with a particular focus on children), as articulated by them, are met either directly or indirectly.
- 2) To ensure that the impact of the tsunami on the preschool education of preschool-aged children is minimised
- 3) To ensure that the impact of the tsunami on the school education of school-aged children is minimised
- 4) To provide fast access to credit in order to facilitate employment and income generation

- 5) To empower women and the community in general to make democratic decisions and collectively represent the post-tsunami interests of Telwatte with external actors
- 6) To provide a platform for self-employment programmes for mothers by widening access to vocational training, in areas of genuinely high demand
- 7) To ensure that the needs of those suffering from post-tsunami trauma are fully addressed in a professional manner
- 8) To forge and fully utilise vertical and horizontal social capital channels¹ within the community, in all aspects of implementation.
- 9) To ensure that mothers and children are well trained in the basics of first aid and better prepared to deal with emergency situations
- 10) To ensure that mothers and children are well trained in the basics of general health
- 11) To provide capacity for the village's agricultural produce cycle to be restarted

Project activities included:

- Provision of stationary items for children
- Provision of school items (uniform, slippers, bag) for children
- Provision of equipment for preschools
- Provision of tables to households
- Provision of agricultural tools and seeds to households
- Provision of sheets and pillowcases to households
- Provision of chairs to Mother's Society members
- Counselling services
- Establishing Mother's Society
- Microcredit training
- Provision of credit to Mother's Society
- Establishing Children's Club
- Provision of equipment to Children's Club
- Health training
- First Aid training
- Vocational training
- ADIC TOT (Alcohol and Drugs in the Community Training of Trainers) programme
- Drugs awareness programme for children
- New Year Celebration for children

The project was implemented by Human Development Foundation (HDF).

1.3 Introduction to the final report

The final report aims to assess the impact of the project on the community of Telwatte and discuss to what extent objectives have been achieved. The report will reflect on the project as a whole and highlight the successes of the project as well as lessons learned which can inform future projects, of SLCT and HDF, and future work by the community of Telwatte.

1.4 Methodology

In order to collect the data required for this report, a variety of data collection methods were employed. Quarterly progress reports were submitted to SLCT by HDF demonstrating progress in all aspects of the project. Rapid appraisal by the SLCT Field Director at all stages of the project also provides information on the progress towards achieving the objectives. Data from questionnaires and focus groups with children and Mother's Society members in the final stage of the project will also be used to demonstrate how far objectives have been achieved and highlight strengths and limitations of the project.

1.5 Structure of report

The remainder of the report is divided into six main sections. The first five sections cover thematic areas of the project and will discuss the success of the project in that area. The five thematic areas are:

- Meeting immediate post tsunami needs
- Community empowerment
- Access to credit and income generating activities
- Tackling tsunami related stress and trauma
- Health and First Aid

The final section of the report will provide a summary, highlighting successes of the project and lessons learned.

2 Meeting immediate post tsunami needs

2.1 Introduction to the objectives

The project aimed to meet the community's immediate needs, and particularly children's needs by providing urgently required items which included stationary and school items for children, preschool equipment, tables, agricultural tools and seeds, and bed sheets and pillowcases to households, and chairs to Mother's Society members.

2.2 Objective Achievements and Limitations

Progress reports and rapid appraisal highlight that the project has been very successful in meeting immediate post tsunami needs via the distribution of key items for preschool children, school age children, Mother's Society members, and the community as a whole.

Between September 2005 and July 2006, all items documented in the project proposal were distributed to relevant community members. Rapid appraisal highlighted the positive impact of the distribution of items and surveys conducted towards the end of the project demonstrate the importance of the receipt of these items for community members in resuming 'normal' life.

Community involvement in the process of distribution was high with the Mother's Society members organizing the distribution increasing local ownership of the programme and women with sewing skills were involved in altering material provided for school uniforms.

In January 2006, agricultural tools and plants were distributed to 130 households in Telwatte, following the large loss of such items during the tsunami. Mother's Society members reported that agriculture in Telwatte, previously of a good standard, with all families growing some vegetables for subsistence purposes, had completely collapsed. By the end of the project, Mother's Society members reported that agricultural production had been restored to pre tsunami levels, and all households continued to rely on their own vegetable production for their consumption needs.

3 Community Empowerment

3.1 Introduction to the objective

The project aimed to empower women and the community in general to make democratic decisions and collectively represent the post-tsunami interests of Telwatte with external actors. The main vehicle for empowerment for women in the community was via the Mother's Society, established in the community by the Project Coordinator during the survey conducted in the pre project stage and for children in the community, the establishment of a Children's Club. Through these forums it was anticipated women and children could develop social capital within the community, share experiences and face difficulties collectively. It was also anticipated that the Mother's Society would provide an effective means for women in the community to represent themselves to external actors as needed.

3.2 Objective Achievements and Limitations

The project's attempts to empower the women in Telwatte via the Mother's Society can be considered largely successful. The original Mother's Society formed at the start of the programme now has over 100 members and meets regularly without assistance from the implementing agency, HDF, demonstrating its sustainability. The original Mother's Society was so successful that other women in the community became aware of it and expressed a desire to join. The original Society did not want to grow any bigger in terms of size as the members thought this would compromise their effectiveness at working together. Therefore, they encouraged other community women to set up their own Society. The second Mother's Society has now been meeting regularly for over one year, usually on the same day of the month as the original Society and so they work closely and share experiences with them. In the project extension granted by SLCT, a budget was given for entrepreneurship training and an installment of credit for the new Society as the women in the new Society had witnessed the success of these activities for the members of the original Society.

The Mother's Society have also had visits from other local groups interested in setting up organizations and delivering microcredit who have visited to learn from the experiences of the Mother's Society in Telwatte. The original Mother's Society also made an educational trip to visit Kantha Maha Sangamaya organisation in Hambantota in August 2006 in order to hear the experience of the women there of their microcredit programme. Sixty five women participated in this trip and it was well received with women citing the opportunity to travel together as a group and learn from a group of women similar to themselves as enjoyable and a good learning opportunity as well as further bonding them as a group.

The continuing success of both the Mother's Societies is still in evidence as meetings continue on a regular basis, loans are distributed and repaid, largely on time, and the Societies work together to improve their community and the lives of their children. In 2008, the Societies worked together to hold a 'fun day' primarily for children in the community to celebrate the Sinhala/Tamil New Year. Games and activities for every age group were held throughout the day and there was wide

community attendance and participation. The Mother's Society members commented that such an event would not have been possible or so successful without the cooperation between women in the community and development of social capital which has been facilitated by their involvement in the societies.

The Mother's Societies have recently worked together to draw up a constitution as one organisation and are currently in the process of registering with the Hikkaduwa Divisional Secretary as a Community Based Organisation (CBO). This move will aid their legitimacy within the community and provide a stronger platform in relations with external organizations.

The Children's Club was set up to provide children in Telwatte with a forum to discuss issues affecting their lives and engage in positive educational and recreational activities outside of their schooling. The Children's Club has succeeded in becoming a sustainable forum for this purpose and continues to meet twice a month. It is facilitated by the Project Officer of the project, on a voluntary basis. Children's Club members gave positive feedback regarding the activities undertaken by the Club, including the Children's Talkshop, Health and First Aid training and Alcohol and Drugs awareness training. Eighty three per cent of Children's Club members reported that they had used the library books provided by the project and cited increasing their knowledge and enjoyment as the reasons they used the library. All Children's Club members reported that they used the sports equipment provided by the project on a regular basis. In December 2006, forty eight Children's Club members attended Alcohol and Drugs Awareness training and seventy five children attended the Children's Talkshop in 2006.

4 Access to credit and income generating activities

4.1 Introduction to the objectives

Due to the impact of the tsunami on the community members of Telwatte, there was a strong need for fast access to credit to allow households to rebuild their livelihoods in a sustainable manner, and diversify their income sources if desired. Therefore, a crucial objective of the project was to provide fast access to credit to facilitate employment and income generation. A related objective was to a platform for self-employment programmes for mothers by widening access to vocational training, in areas of genuinely high demand. It was anticipated that the activities undertaken to achieve these objectives would ensure that Telwatte residents would be able to avoid further disruption to their lives following the tsunami by smoothing their income and provide opportunities for sustainable improvement in their existing and new income generating activities.

4.2 Achievements and Limitations

The project has been successful in increasing access to credit and income generating activities in Telwatte community. The original Mother's Society members received training in microcredit, entrepreneurship, and vocational training in making handicrafts and dressmaking (areas where skills were in demand in the community).

Aided by HDF and the project assistant, the Mother's Society divided into small groups through which the loan system was operated and the ongoing repayments and loans highlights the sustainability of this institution. By common consent, a man whose wife had previously been part of the credit group and taken a loan, was allowed to join the credit group as his wife went abroad to work. The second Mother's Society were attracted to organizing their own Society (see above) due to seeing the work of the original Society. Following their formation, SLCT agreed to provide entrepreneurship training to this group and provide an installment of credit to enable the society

to begin giving loans. The final survey of the project found that ninety six households had taken a loan since the tsunami, the large majority through the Mother's Societies, compared to sixteen households who had taken a loan prior to the tsunami. The average loan taken by households prior to the tsunami was 5,000 rps. Most loans given thus far by the Mother's Society have been 10,000rps. However, as more individuals successfully repay their loans, they become eligible to take loans for 20-25,000rps and an increasing amount of loans are being taken for this amount.

Mother's Society members reported that their microcredit scheme worked successfully due to the harmony within the group and their ability to work together to solve problems as they arise, as well as the importance of a low interest rate, two per cent, which is not possible from other loan sources in the vicinity.

Ninety seven women in the community have attended vocational training sessions provided by the project, enabling them to use their new skills to develop businesses with the aid of loans. The occupations of individuals has remained largely unchanged since the tsunami, with fishing, casual labour, the coir industry, and small businesses the most common source of employment, highlighting the desire within the community to stay within their traditional areas of work and showing their ability, through the use of loans, to restore their livelihoods successfully.

5 Tackling tsunami related stress and trauma

5.1 Introduction to the objectives

The tsunami was clearly a stressful experience for all those who witnessed it and were caught up in it. During the pre project stage, rapid appraisal and the survey which was carried out highlighted the need for counseling in the community. The project proposal highlights the fact that many Telwatte residents spoke about their ongoing fears relating to the sea after the tsunami. Therefore, the project aimed to ensure that the needs of those suffering from post-tsunami trauma were fully addressed in a professional manner. In order to achieve this objective, a counselor was employed to be present in the community, for one day a week, for the first six months of the project. The counselor was trained to work with children and held group counseling sessions as well as being available on a drop in basis to any community member on an anonymous basis. Being able to access the counselor in these different ways was necessary due to a stigma being attached to seeing a counselor in some parts of the community.

5.2 Achievements and Limitations

This component of the project was the most difficult to implement due to difficulties finding a suitably qualified counselor who could be available in Telwatte for the proposed amount of time. As a result of this, the counseling available in the community was more sporadic than planned which inevitably impacted on the desire to provide an unobtrusive service which could be accessed when required by residents.

Despite this issue, members of the Mother's Society gave favourable reports of the counseling that was available as part of the project. The service was mainly used by women and children and greater efforts could have been made to engage men in the process who may have not visited the counselor due to the stigma attached to it, rather than feeling it unnecessary. All households who lost family members in the tsunami met with the counselor and Mother's Society members reported they felt happier knowing their children had attended group counseling sessions. Focus group discussions with the Mother's Societies and rapid appraisal indicate that collective post tsunami stress has been reduced which the counseling service played an

important role in. However, Mother's Society members stressed that having the means to rebuild their lives (through access to credit) was equally important in combating the stress they endured post tsunami.

6 Health and First Aid

6.1 Introduction to the objectives

Pre project research highlighted the need to address health issues in Telwatte. The community were facing health related problems post tsunami which they had not faced before. The project proposal showed that many of these were related to the increase in flies, stagnant water and mosquitos since the tsunami. Therefore the project delivered a health training programme for mothers, and for children to equip community residents with the skills required to tackle the new risks they faced and achieve the objective of ensuring mothers and children are well trained in the basics of general health.

Pre project research also highlighted the fact that many community residents felt they were ill prepared to cope with the aftermath of the tsunami and the injuries which occurred within their community. Community members expressed a desire to become more knowledgeable about first aid as they would feel more comfortable knowing they were prepared to deal with injuries and administer first aid if required in the future. Therefore, training was provided to mothers and children in basic first aid to achieve the objective of ensuring that mothers and children are well trained in the basics of first aid and better prepared to deal with emergency situations.

6.2 Achievements and Limitations

The project was successful in providing training to both mothers and children in matters of health and first aid as planned. Between April and August 2007, training was delivered covering topics such as the prevention of accidents, applying first aid knowledge to accidents, malnutrition and balanced diets, prevention of diseases, safe drinking water, sanitation, personal hygiene, reproductive health, and infectious diseases.

Trainings were well received by women and children who attended them. Mother's Society members reported that general health in the community and health awareness had improved and that members who had received training made efforts to educate other Society members, and the wider community on the issues they have learned about.

Children's Club members also attended Alcohol and Drugs information training which was well received with children citing their knowledge in this area as an impact of the project on their lives. Mother's Society members were also happy with this component of the project, expressing the importance of children learning about issues surrounding alcohol and drugs when they are relatively young.

7 Summary

The project can be considered successful and has achieved all of the objectives to a significant extent. The delivery of key items to the community in the wake of the tsunami not only met needs of community members effectively (due to appropriate processes to determine what items were

required), but were delivered in an effective manner, through the community itself, via the Mother's Society,

The development of the Mother's Societies as sustainable institutions can be seen as the most significant success of the project and will ensure that changes that have taken place in the community over the period of the project are sustainable. Their delivery of the microcredit element of the project has been successful, demonstrated in the low default rate on the repayment of loans, and the setting up of a second Mother's Society to emulate the first, particularly in the area of savings and loans. Vocational training for women in the community was well received and several women currently use the training in their income generating activities.

Children in Telwatte community have benefited from the distribution of key items for their schooling and the availability of counseling at the beginning of the project. Many children have positively engaged in health, first aid, and alcohol and drugs training as well as the ongoing Children's Club and various activities related to this, including using the library books and sports equipment and engaging in the Children's Talkshop.

The project has experienced limitations, most notably the difficulties faced in recruiting a counselor to spend enough time in the community, which was never fully overcome. Monitoring of the project should also be highlighted as a weakness, with more detail required in HDFs quarterly reports, particularly concerning feedback from the community on various activities and the documentation of problems arising and how they were dealt with. Improved reporting in future projects will make it easier for problems to be addressed swiftly and highlight them for consideration in future project proposals of both HDF and SLCT.

The development of social capital within the community and the impact of the project as a whole has been most tangibly demonstrated during the New Year celebrations held in Telwatte over the course of the project. The New Year period is an important cultural time throughout Sri Lanka and the 2008 celebrations highlighted the ability of the community to work together to ensure a memorable day for children as well as the community's progress in rebuilding their lives following the tsunami.