

Post-tsunami revival of fisheries sector and rehabilitation of fishing communities in Tamil Nadu*

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The Tamil Nadu Director of Fisheries made a comprehensive presentation on the havoc wrought by the tsunami in Tamil Nadu and the way the Department of Fisheries met the challenges of relief and rehabilitation.

Next to Andaman-Nicobar islands, Tamil Nadu, with its 1 076 km coastline, was the state worst hit by the tsunami. Nearly 420 fishing hamlets in all the 13 coastal districts of the state were affected, about 8 000 persons lost their lives and more than 55 000 homes were destroyed (Figure 1). Fishing and related activities ground to a halt. The initial assessment of damage caused to fishing implements is given in Table 1.

The fishing infrastructure – fishing harbours, jetties and fish landing centers – sustained damage worth Rs 650 million. The bar mouths of rivers were totally closed at many places.

Government relief measures

The Government of Tamil Nadu responded with alacrity to the tragedy, and came up with an action plan. The District administrations immediately mounted search, rescue, evacuation, relief and infrastructure-restoration work. The immediate relief packages provided

by the government included:

- Rs. 4 000, 60 kg of rice, a dhoti-saree set, two bedsheets and three litres of kerosene to those whose houses had been damaged. This relief assistance was extended to more than 118 000 families.
- Rs. 2 000, 60 kg of rice, a dhoti-saree set, two bedsheets and three litres of kerosene were distributed to those who had lost their livelihoods. Nearly 176 500 families were covered.
- Temporary shelters for fishers who had lost their homes.
- An ex-gratia payment of Rs.100 000 per deceased person from the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund.
- A special package for fisheries to repair and replace fishing equipment damaged by the tsunami. Fishers who lost wooden catamarans and nets were fully compensated. As regards FRP boats and vallams: those who suffered partial losses were compensated in full.

Table 2 summarizes relief packages announced by the government to repair and replace fishing crafts and gear.

Long-term measures

To facilitate long-term recovery, the government obtained assistance from the World Bank (US \$ 423



Figure 1: Map of Tamil Nadu showing the affected coastal areas

million), the ADB (US \$ 143.75 million) and IFAD (US \$ 30 million). Besides, a UNDP project aims at restoring livelihoods, upgrading infrastructure, and providing policy support.

Under a rehabilitation phase, the government plans to construct nearly 90 000 permanent houses across the State, at a cost of Rs 150 000 each. The houses will be constructed in a modern environment with access to roads, street lights, drinking water supply, community hall, etc.

In the fisheries sector, four fishing harbours will be reconstructed and modernised. Permanent openings will be provided at four river bar mouths to help fishermen venturing

* This article is based on a presentation made by Mr D P Yadav in the Workshop on Post-Tsunami Revival of Fisheries Sector and Rehabilitation of Fishing Communities, Mahabalipuram, 6-7 February 2006.

Table 1: Initial assessment of damage to fisheries sector in Tamil Nadu, India

Districts	Catamarans		Vallams		Mechanised fishing boats		Nets (metric tonnes)	Engines
	Partly damaged	Fully damaged	Partly damaged	Fully damaged	Partly damaged	Fully damaged		
Chennai	1 300	1 085	4	13	520	570	116.9	313
Kancheepuram	145	2 622	0	135	0	0	73.53	0
Thiruvallur	0	2 880	0	19	0	8	88.00	0
Villupuram	0	3 248	0	27	0	29	504.35	0
Cuddalore	565	3 700	78	668	361	364	548.31	580
Thiruvarur	7	0	12	0	0	0	6.54	3
Thanjavur	47	0	232	0	127	127	52.10	17
Nagapattinam	341	6 582	239	4 405	353	983	576.85	341
Pudukottai	192	89	402	188	59	59	35.32	19
Ramanatha Puram	0	0	260	2	9	10	0.31	0
Thoothukudi	666	3	698	1	0	0	77.85	63
Tirunelveli	620	767	196	254	0	0	50.36	134
Kanniyakumari	264	10 407	857	2 428	346	505	69.65	90
Total	4 147	31383	2 978	8 140	1 775	2 655	2 200.07	1 560

out to sea. Fishing harbours and jetties will be repaired, river channels will be dredged. A sum of Rs. 50 million has been provided for a communication network for fishermen venturing out to sea from Tamil Nadu. A sum of Rs. 650 million has been provided for restoring and upgrading the fishery infrastructure.

The government has undertaken to restore the Cuddalore and Nagapattinam sea ports. Mangrove forests and sand dunes serve as natural barriers against natural disasters. Shelterbelt plantations are therefore planned in all the 13 coastal districts of Tamil Nadu.

The government has drawn up a comprehensive plan to develop coastal areas with such initiatives as strengthening connectivity in coastal areas, constructing link roads and bridges, increasing disaster preparedness and human resource development through training.

Role of NGOs and the private sector.

An outpouring of relief from everywhere led to problems of organisation and co-ordination.



A fishing port in Tamil Nadu - Back to work



NGO co-ordination centres were therefore set up in all the affected districts. The outcome was a great partnership between NGOs, corporates and the Government.

NGOs and corporates constructed some 18 000 temporary shelters and over 32 000 permanent shelters. They donated a substantial number of FRP fishing crafts, engines and nets to fishermen. Some 4 000 FRP crafts were supplied to fishermen in Tamil Nadu.

Many corporates have set up desalination plants to provide drinking water to the affected communities. A few corporates and NGOs have come forward to construct fish markets and fish auction halls. Another initiative of great significance is the setting up of village knowledge centres in tsunami-affected areas.

Policy interventions to restore the livelihoods of fisher communities.

1. Advance warning systems to be developed and established by the Central Government.
2. Tamil Nadu government to provide fishers with a communication network. It will enable them to send out distress

calls, and hear advance weather warnings.

3. Policy decision: no house will be reconstructed within 200 metres of the High Tide Line (HTL) in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ). New houses will be located beyond 200 meters of the HTL. Families will get insurance coverage for 10 years.
4. Shelterbelt plantations across the coast of Tamil Nadu to be set up to protect coastal communities from future natural calamities.
5. The government will encourage conversion of all traditional wooden catamarans into FRP catamarans through a 50 percent subsidy subject to a maximum of Rs.75 000. Low-interest bank loans will be available for the remainder.
6. Better roads and connecting bridges will improve connectivity with coastal areas.
7. A major impetus has been given for the development and modernisation of the fishery infrastructure in Tamil Nadu.
8. Coastal communities will be trained in alternative livelihood options.

9. The World Bank has proposed to establish a fund of US \$ 2.5 million to study policy issues relating to fisheries in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.
10. Diversification of the coastal economy. As a first step, a sum of approximately Rs. 280 million has been received under a centrally sponsored scheme to promote mariculture activities – such as the culture of finfish, mussel and oyster, seaweeds, ornamental fish, crab and lobster fattening. Fisherfolk will be trained in post-harvest operations and in value addition.

Key Issues to be Addressed.

The Tamil Nadu government proposes to address some key issues through the following implementations.

1. **Initiate co-management of coastal resources.**
2. **Enhance the capacity of the Department of Fisheries.** In particular, the regulatory role of the Department of Fisheries must be improved. Currently, almost 90 percent of the Department's effort goes into welfare. Development must become the pre-eminent role. This requires substantial investment in machinery, equipment and manpower, and a new emphasis on human resource development.
3. **Diversification of coastal economy** by promoting budget tourism, eco-tourism, watersports, leisure tourism and industrialisation. Culture fishery must be stimulated. Private initiatives are needed to develop cold chains and value addition centres in coastal areas.
4. **Development of domestic fisheries market.** This includes development of on-line auctioning of fish, and access of fishing hamlets to market intelligence so that they market fish profitably.

Said Mr Yadav: "We have gone far in the journey to a better future, but there's still a long way to go."

Table 2: Relief package for repair/ replacement of fishing craft, gear and equipment

Details	Partly damaged craft	Fully damaged
Catamarans Wooden / FRP	Rs. 10 000 or the assessed damage value, which ever is lower.	Rs. 32 000/- (inclusive of Net)
Vallam Wooden / FRP	Rs. 15 000 or the assessed damage value, which ever is lower.	Rs. 75 000/- as subsidy and Rs. 75 000 as loan (inclusive of engine & net)
Mechanised Boat	60% of the damage value as subsidy subject to a maximum of Rs. 300 000 and remaining 40% of the damaged value as loan.	35% of the current replacement value of the craft as subsidy subject to maximum of Rs. 500 000 and the remaining 65% of the replacement value as bank loan.
Engines	Repair / Replacement Rs. 5 000/-	
Nets	For catamarans – Rs. 10 000/- For vallams – Rs. 20 000/-	