Report on the Hambantota Symposium
SHARING AND ELABORATING POST-TSUNAMI RECOVERY RESEARCH OUTCOMES

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MONASH UNIVERSITY ASIA CENTRE
HAMBANTOTA DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
AL-HIKMA FOUNDATION (HAMBANTOTA)
THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION (SAINTHAMARUTHU)
SOCIAL POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO

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REPORT 7
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Report compiled by Martin Mulligan and Yaso Nadarajah with notes from Dilshani Samaraweera (Colombo), Wasana Weerartane (Melbourne) Azmi Thasim (Hambantota) and Gunasevam (Chennai)
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Preamble

In May 2010, over 50 people attended a symposium at the Peacock Beach Hotel in Hambantota, Sri Lanka, to discuss the findings of the post-tsunami research conducted by Judith Shaw, Martin Mulligan, Yaso Nadarajah, Dave Mercer and Iftekhar Ahmed, and to share experiences of post-tsunami recovery across a range of local areas in Sri Lanka and in Chennai. The event was jointly organised by the Hambantota District Chamber of Commerce and it brought together representatives from community organisations, nongovernment organisations and local government bodies in Hambantota, Saithamaruthu, Seenigama, and Thirukkovil in Sri Lanka. Also present was Dr Radhakrishnan Gunaseelvam from the University of Madras who worked with Yaso Nadarajah on the post-tsunami study of people relocated away from coastal villages in northern Chennai, two representatives of the Social Policy Analysis and Research Centre at the University of Colombo and an independent Colombo-based community development worker Myrna Setunga. The symposium adopted an open discursive format so that those present could speak from their own experiences in reflecting on, and elaborating, key research findings.

The research, which had been conducted in the areas listed above, relied heavily on the advice and participation of local advisors, guides and research assistants and many of those who had participated in the research were present at the symposium. Local guides and assistants contributed vital local knowledge but they also received some training in community mapping research methods and in methods for determining household livelihoods. Over a period of three years some significant research partnerships were built and this was reflected in the fact that so many people were happy to travel to Hambantota to participate in the symposium. The ‘extra step’ taken by the Melbourne-based researchers to take draft research reports and key findings into such a forum paid dividends in getting feedback that resulted in some fine-tuning of the research outcomes. Furthermore, those present at the symposium echoed the sentiments expressed by the Executive Director of the HDCC, Azmi Thassim, when he said that it was very important for people involved in local tsunami recovery efforts to come together to share their experiences and learning. Many of those present at the Hambantota symposium were personally affected by the tsunami and many said that more should have been done to document the lessons learnt in the post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation work. After all, it has become clear—especially after the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti—that a major disaster can strike unprepared communities—even densely packed urban communities—at any time. The 2004 tsunami was the most widespread natural disaster in recorded history and it resulted in unprecedented international aid to affected communities. Yet not enough has been done to document and share the lessons learnt, especially at a local level.

In part, the Hambantota symposium was triggered by the articulation of ‘entry stories’ that could capture the ways in which the Melbourne-based researchers had found a way into the local communities in which the research was conducted. The researchers worked with local guides and assistants to construct a concise profile on each case study area and its communities (see Report 2) and this method for condensing historical and demographic data into a concise profile was offered back to those participating in the Hambantota symposium. This kind of exchange between local people and ‘outside’ researchers thus helped to create what US sociologist bell hooks has called ‘spaces of radical openness’ in which participants can explore ways of thinking, speaking and acting.
that interact with changes in socio-economic and cultural structures (both local and global) in relation to one’s place and ‘home’. Such spaces for discussion and exchange can open up challenging questions but, as hooks has suggested, they provide a rare opportunity for all voices to be heard and considered and this, in turn, can result in better-informed responses to such challenging questions.

The Hambantota District Chamber of Commerce was the generous local host for the symposium and it organised the venue and provided administrative assistance to the key symposium organiser Wasana Weeraratne, who was based in the Globalism Research Centre at RMIT University in Melbourne. It was certainly not easy to bring together such a diverse group of people—many of them travelling six hours or more to attend—and the organising committee spread across Hambantota and Melbourne did a magnificent job. Proceedings had to be conducted in English, Tamil and Sinhala and Mr S.M. Risham and Mr M.Z.M. Hiran, from the Al Hikma Foundation in Hambantota, performed heroically in providing appropriate translations.

After discussing research findings and local experiences on the first day, symposium participants tackled the difficult task on the second day of formulating a concise communiqué that could capture key learnings for post-tsunami recovery in no more than two pages. Having agreed on the themes that could be covered in such a statement, participants broke up into small working groups and came back with key points that have been included in the communiqué reproduced at the end of this report. The drafting of the communiqué enabled the symposium to go beyond the initial research findings in order to offer advice to all those who might be involved in disaster recovery in the future. While there is still unfinished post-tsunami recovery work to be done—especially in Sainthamuruthu—the lessons of the recovery effort ought to be considered by those who have a responsibility to resettle people who have been displaced by natural or human-made disasters. For a start, the post-tsunami experiences should inform policies and practices used to resettle people displaced by the long war in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

**Symposium attendance**

There were 47 people from Sri Lanka participating in the symposium and they represented 22 different organisation. They included:

- Hambantota District Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Azmi Thassim and four other representatives from HDCC.
- Santhamuruthu Muslim Women’s Research and Action Forum (MWRAF), two representatives.
- Mandanai Rural Development Association (Mandanai village, Thirukkovil), three representatives.
- Mandanai Women’s Association, three representatives.
- Care International Team Leader, Hambantota District, Manoj Jayasundara.
- Mr W M Raufdeen, former Chairman, Hambantota Urban Council
- Ms S P Sriyani Mangalika, Hambantota Women’s Development Federation.
• Mr Sunil Punchihewa, Ruhunu-Wellassa Area Federation, Hambantota.

• Foundation of Goodness, Seenigama, including FoG founder Kushil Gunasekera and two community development officers.

• Natural Environmental and Social Development Organisation (NESDO) (Sainthamuruthu), co-founder Mr. ASH Ashraff, officer Mr. A R M Sathath and two community development officers.

• Sainthamuruthu Mosque League chairman and two other representatives

• Sri Lanka People’s Church project co-ordinator for Kudiilnam Pastor Ram Arumugam

• Kudiilnam Rural Development Association, two representatives.

• Mr Philippe Fabry, Sri Lanka Solidarity (SLS)

• Al Hikma Foundation, Hambantota, represented by three executive members

• Fisheries Cooperative Union, Sainthamuruthu, four representatives.

• Tzu Chi Foundation, Hambantota, represented by Executive Secretary Mr Uditha Waduge.

• Sainthamuruthu Divisional Secretariat, represented by Divisional Secretary Mr Ahmed Lebbe Mohamed Saleem, and one other member.

• Mr Chandrasiri, Chairman of the Special Tsunami Mediation Board, Hambantota District and Principal of St Mary’s College, Hambantota.

• Mr M Nalin, Deputy Superintendent of Surveying, Hambantota, also a member of the Al Hikma Foundation

• Social Policy Analysis and Research Centre at Colombo University, represented by Professor Siri Hettige and one other staff member.

• Dr. Kaleel M.I.M. from South Eastern University of Sri Lanka

As noted earlier, Dr Radhakrishnan Gunaselvam from the University of Madras was also in attendance, as were Dr Judith Shaw from Monash University, and Professor Paul James, Dr Martin Mulligan and Dr Yaso Nadarajah from RMIT University, Melbourne.
Day one, Session 1

Welcome

The welcome address was given by Mr Azmi Thassim of the Hambantota District Chamber of Commerce. He welcomed the symposium participants and said proceedings would be conducted in English, Sinhala and Tamil. He explained the need to document the responses to the tsunami and the outcomes of tsunami recovery processes, for future reference. He stressed the critical role of civil society at times of disasters. Mr Thassim particularly thanked all those who had travelled from the Ampara District, Colombo and Seenigama to attend the symposium.

Introduction by Yaso Nadarajah

Dr Nadarajah explained that the Australian researchers were keen to get some feedback on draft research outcomes before submitting final reports to AusAID at the end of May. She also said that the researchers were pleased that they could provide an opportunity for people from tsunami-affected communities to come together and share their experiences. The researchers had been privileged to meet a wide range of passionate and committed community leaders who have worked hard since December 2004 to rebuild strong local communities, yet such people rarely knew what had happened elsewhere in Sri Lanka, let alone India. Dr Nadarajah thanked Dr Gunaselvam for coming all the way from Chennai to discuss the research findings in regard to resettled communities in that city. She said it had been a real pleasure to work with Dr Gunaselvam.

While the Australian research will result in the submission of separate research reports on community, livelihoods, tourism and housing, the symposium will focus on the reports on community and livelihoods. Dr Nadarajah explained that the researchers had often been moved to tears when hearing people’s stories of tragic losses and difficult struggles. However, she also said that many people had appreciated the fact that people had come from Australia to listen, patiently, to their stories. She told the story of interviewing a woman at Mandanai who had lost all her children in the tsunami and her husband soon afterwards. At the end of the interview, the lady was visibly moved by an opportunity to tell her story. As the research team was leaving, she reached across and offered some vegetables from her little garden; thinking that it would be fresh and healthy for us. Despite her enormous loss and deep despair, and her everyday struggle to rebuild on her own, this lady responded to our short time with her, with dignity and generosity. In return, she reminded the researchers about a basic humanity that continues to survive the most horrific of disasters and human conditions.

Presentation of key research findings on rebuilding community

Dr Martin Mulligan presented a summary, in English, of the key findings contained in the draft report on rebuilding community after the tsunami that had been written by him and Dr Nadarajah.

Summaries of the presentation were presented in Tamil and Sinhala. Key points from Dr Mulligan’s presentation were:

1. The need for the study

   • There are fewer studies done on rebuilding communities than rebuilding infrastructure.
• There was also a lot of talk about ‘building back better,’ and we wanted to find out whether that really happened.

• The world knows a lot about short-term relief but not much about how to put communities in the driving seat.

• Poor delivery of aid can make existing tensions within and between communities worse.

• International aid agencies have now become more professional and can respond faster as well. But there is intense competition in aid delivery and agencies are also under heavy scrutiny in their own countries. They also work on fairly short--two-year--timeframes. This is just not enough to get shattered communities back on their feet. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the global aid industry in regard to community development?

• In disaster recovery, the tendency is to focus on asset replacement. The trouble is, most tsunami survivors were in fragile, vulnerable situations even before the tsunami. So ‘build back better,’ requires community development rather than simple asset replacement.

• Rapid rebuilding without long term assessment can have dire impacts. There was pressure to deliver new houses quickly. But as Philippe Fabry put it, the real challenge is not to put people into houses on empty paddocks but to think of how resettled communities might be operating in 10 or 20 years time

• This research wanted to examine the necessary shift between short-term relief and long-term social planning.

2. Methodology

Dr Mulligan said that he and Dr Nadarajah had used a ‘community-engaged’ research methodology—which they had developed in association with other people in the Globalism Research Centre at RMIT University—for this study. The methodology draws on five separate, yet integrated, research methods:

• The construction of a profile of case study areas and communities.

• The implementation of a ‘community life survey’ in all of the case study communities.

• The collection of ‘community member profiles’ within the case study communities.

• The collection of concise but rich stories related to the experiences of the case study communities.

• The use of long, semi-structured interviews with community members and those involved in the disaster recovery efforts.

3. Some negatives from the tsunami recovery process

• The civil war in Sri Lanka made fair distribution of aid more difficult. Distribution of aid between the south and east of Sri Lanka was not equitable. For instance, 400 families are still without housing in Sainthamaruthu, while more new houses were built than needed in Hambantota.
• Inequitable distribution of aid has worsened tensions between communities. In Ampara segregation has been going on for years and the tsunami has made things worse.

• In Chennai the authorities saw the tsunami as an opportunity for slum clearance. There was almost zero community consultation.

• Hasty relocation has created new social problems. For example, widows and children have been lumped together without adequate social support.

• People have been left with different levels of assets. Some have got good strong houses while some houses were such poor quality they are not even standing up anymore.

• Relocation has created livelihood problems. For example, fishermen were relocated some distance from the sea.

• Women and children were not taken into account adequately in the planning process. In many cases kitchens in new houses are not adequate or designed for firewood cooking. So they have been forced to build a little shack in the back to cook with firewood. Now there are problems with smoke inhalation and there is a significant danger of fire. The only place where the researchers saw adequate kitchens was in the Tzu Chi Village at Hambantota.

4. Some positives in the tsunami recovery process

• The Foundation of Goodness, under Mr Kushil Gunasekera, used the tsunami to put their existing community development plan into action and used cricket to get global support. The challenge is how to continue the funding.

• The People’s Church at Kudilnilam, Thirukkovil, began community planning very early and did not set a time frame, compared to the two-year time limit of many aid agencies. Pastor Ram is still working with these people.

• The Tzu Chi Foundation was very professional and carefully monitored construction of settlements.

• Self-help groups were very useful in temporary shelters in Chennai but were not followed up in the permanent settlements.

• The community at Thilagarnagar in Chennai, built their own temple, which became a community focus.

• In Hambantota, the community made significant efforts to make sure the community did not divide by forming a ‘civil society committee’ soon after the disaster.

• Sri Lanka Solidarity showed what can be done with properly thought-through planning for Ifouti Village in Hambantota.

• GOAL, an Irish NGO, worked very well in Sainthamuruthu under very difficult conditions, when other NGOs looked at the situation and pulled out. Unfortunately, GOAL pulled out after two years when there is so much more to be done.
5. Some key findings:

- Local knowledge is critical
- Partnerships can be successful between local and global organisations but the local and international organisations must be very clear about each other’s roles and responsibilities.
- The big challenge is in knowing how and when to shift from short-term relief to longer term planning and development. In the short term, the idea of communities moving into the driving seat does not make sense to us because they just need safety nets. In the longer term, however, the shift has to happen and this requires skill and experience in community development.
- There should be a more ‘deliberative’ approach to resettlement. The first step is to get people into decent temporary accommodation because they may be there for years. This can provide more time to plan new settlements with better physical and social planning. You need to focus on the long term; ‘more speed but less haste’. A little more time and care can make enormous differences.
- Community rehabilitation can take a long time. You can’t just say, we will hand over to the community in two years. This is a challenge to international NGOs.
- We need more trained people in community development, not just in Sri Lanka, but all over the world.
- There needs to be more focus on the particular needs of women and children and priority should be given to rebuilding religious centres, because these were extensively used as refuges following the disaster.
- ‘Build back better’ only happened rarely in regard to post-tsunami recovery in Sri Lanka and Chennai. Only a community development approach, such as that used at Seenigama, can improve the situation for disaster-affected communities.

Discussion of research findings in regard to rebuilding community

Key responses included:

- The Divisional Secretary of Sainthamuruthu, Mr A.L.M. Saleem, indicated that the government has taken measures to rebuild in a proper way but were hindered by the fact that people did not want to move away from their original settlements. There have been enormous delays because of this. There was also the problem of land availability. The government was compelled to buy 50 acres of land. Two hundred acres were surveyed and 50 acres bought at a cost of Rs 50 million. This took about two years. The land also had to be filled up because it was marshy land. So the government has spent Rs 8 million an acre so altogether Rs 300 million was spent on land and resettlement. There were no needs assessments done by INGOs as there was with Hambantota. INGOs added to the confusion of rebuilding and this affected government processes and plans.
- Dr Mulligan responded by saying that 1000 housing units were built on reclaimed marshy land in nearby Kalmunai while there were such long delays in building 200 houses at Sainthamuruthu. The buffer zone policy had also caused particular problems at Sainthamuruthu. Despite all the problems no solution was found for around 400 families in Sainthamuruthu and this is still a major problem, five years after the disaster.
It was suggested that it is not possible to compare different areas like Hambantota and Sainthamuruthu. The main reason for a better outcome in Hambantota was the better operational plan of the District Secretariat and civil society in Hambantota was also more active. Accessibility to land was also a factor. People could come from Colombo to Hambantota faster and more easily than to the east. Yet even in Hambantota, although some housing schemes even won awards, there were gaps in design and implementation.

In Chennai, the consequences of lack of coordination between government ministries and agencies affected the survivors more than anything else. However, it is also interesting that the people of Thilagarnagar and VOC Nagar have set up associations to meet their needs instead of relying on the government.

In Sainthamuruthu, after the tsunami over 600 houses were needed but after two years only 200 houses were built. Still we need another 404 houses that still need to be built for the tsunami survivors. They are still living in temporary shelter or living with relatives. They still do not have houses. Even the people who got houses do not have facilities. We have no market, no school and we have not got water yet. Most important many people have no livelihoods. They need livelihoods for incomes. For people in the shelter, they do not even have a mosque. So we hope somebody will help us.

It is important that in events such as this symposium, there is an opportunity for everyone to speak and also highlight many of the good practices, but also many of the issues that still remain unresolved. One of the key issues is that 400 families in Sainthamaruthu (where the tsunami impact was the most severe in Sri Lanka) remain in temporary shelters today, more than five years after the tsunami. It is evident that something needs to be done, and maybe one of the ways through is the creation of stronger civil societies to respond to such community issues.

The Foundation of Goodness at Seenigama had a vision of a rural community model and a plan, taking into consideration local priorities. The Foundation of Goodness is managed by a Board of Trustees. Around 1,000 houses were built, and livelihoods opportunities provided. The focus on children has paid off and many are now beginning to excel in education and sports. One of the key success factors of this kind of community rebuilding work and its sustainability is proving to donors that this NGO can manage funding and provide transparent feedback. The Seenigama resettlement village is 99 per cent funded by foreign donors, with only about 3-4 donors from Sri Lanka. There is a scaled-down model of this process, called the Village Heartbeat, which we hope to offer to other villages. Sri Lanka's urban-rural divide is widening. This urban-rural difference needs to be addressed urgently.

The Slum Clearance Board in Tamil Nadu, which was responsible for the relocation of tsunami-affected families, works on a Build, Own and Operate model. So people from the Board are appointed to look after certain amenities for two years and then transfer the management to local communities. The communities are given training for this. But in those two years the local communities depend so much on the Board that after two years they could not do things on their own. So capacity building has only started now. That is how the Community Association at Thilagamagar was set up. Chennai's drinking
water is the biggest problem in summer. But now, because of the efforts of the Association, the tsunami survivors know how to petition people, how to write to people and to get the water distribution working. The venture in building a temple is an example of bringing the community together.

- Just before the tsunami, the Sri Lankan People’s Church had some experience with drought relief. The 30 to 35 pastors, under the direction of the senior pastor, have focused on rebuilding the lives of 350 families that were allocated to the NGO by the District Office in Ampara. The People’s Church continues to play a role at Kudilnilam as they feel that there is still much work and capacity building to be done.

- The Hambantota Urban Council says that recovery was quick in Hambantota as there was rapid response from both government, and international aid arrived early to the area. There was surplus; about 600 houses were destroyed, but funds enabled the rebuilding of houses for 1,500 families. There are now more boats than before, because even people who did not have their own boats at the time of the tsunami, got their own boat.

- The experience in Sainthamuruthu is that the implementation stage of any overall development project has been a failure. Donors read reports but don’t know what really happens at the grassroots level of implementation. Donors and project representatives should be involved directly in project implementation.

Concluding remarks

Professor Paul James, Director, Global Cities Research Institute, RMIT University, and founder of the RMIT Globalism Research Centre, wound up the session by saying it had been a ‘remarkable’ gathering of researchers and community members trying to share their knowledge and experience. It is important to gather different perspectives to make sense of the world but this is rarely done. The process of consultation enabled the research to be both local and internationally relevant.

Day One, Session 2

The afternoon session on Day 1 focused on research findings in regard to household livelihoods. The session was chaired by Azmi Thassim and it began with a presentation of key research findings by Dr Judith Shaw. Summaries of the presentation were presented in Tamil and Sinhala.

Presentation of household livelihoods research findings

The research on household livelihoods focused on the experiences of resettlement communities in Hambantota, Seenigama, Chennai, and Thirukkovil (particularly the new settlements at Kudilnilam and Mandanai). Key points in the presentation by Dr Shaw were as follows:

- There are many studies on how tsunami affected household livelihoods were fairing a few months later or a year later, but not much on how they are fairing five years later. This research examines how households have adapted to challenges of the post-tsunami world, having to restart livelihoods or find new ones in a new location.
• In general, coastal communities have a precarious livelihoods base. Over-
dependence on limited fisheries resources, compounded by lack of options
for diversification, has forced people to rely more on fisheries, affecting
sustainability and resulting in lower catches; hence above average poverty in
coastal communities.

• For the most part, households in the resettlement programs have been well-
supported in terms of restoring their livelihoods—although this varied across
locations. Most households are not worse off and some are better off. About 75
per cent have resumed their pre-tsunami livelihoods.

• Did we see ‘build back better’? On the whole, the answer is no—except in
Hambantota, where infrastructure and urban development will stimulate
private investment and transform livelihoods in future. But elsewhere, people
have gone back to marginal livelihoods.

• There has been no clear policy framework for post-tsunami livelihood
programs. Aid agencies moved in, set up a large variety of small scale
initiatives, but did not ask how markets can support these activities? Have they
survived for five years? The answer is usually no.

• Big investments are needed to integrate coastal communities into national and
regional development processes, e.g. improving infrastructure, addressing
social and gender discrimination, investing in education. While such things
were not completely ignored they should have been at the forefront.

• Aid programs tend to have a short-term focus. Most came in straight after the
tsunami, when people lived in temporary accommodations. But by 2006-07,
when people were moving into their new houses, many livelihood support
programs were gone.

Discussion of research findings on household livelihoods

Key points made in the discussion of the presentation on household livelihoods were:

• Resettled communities in VOC Nagar and Thilagarnagar have to deal with
resentment from older settlers in the area. This crossed into areas of local trade
and employment.

• Apart from fishing and the very micro-level activities, small and medium
businesses were not properly looked after. If someone lost a boat they were
given a boat, but if a business building is damaged, no one talks of giving a new
building. In Hambantota, we asked donors and larger Chambers of Commerce
elsewhere in Sri Lanka to help support small and medium businesses. Some
Chambers laughed and said banks or insurance will pay. But business people
were also in camps. The Norwegian Embassy gave us Rs 30 million to start
helping small businesses. Then other support started flowing in, slowly.

• For some, the shock of having lost family and also businesses meant also that
they were slow in reporting their losses. As a result, they lost any access to
funds or aid.

• There were about 68 INGOs working during tsunami times in Hambantota.
One of the problems was lack of information. How many houses? how many
deaths? what are the affected businesses? There was no information. The
reliability of information was also questionable. A lot of aid agencies built
houses without lists and built houses in different ways. So information was a
problem. Lack of coordination among agencies was another problem.
• It is always difficult to get accurate information about income—especially during disaster assessment and rebuilding processes. Real income figures are suppressed as people hope to get more aid by hiding their true income figures.

• The Hambantota Women’s Development Federation worked with about 27,000 households before the tsunami. After the tsunami, 3,500 families from this area were estimated to have been affected by the tsunami. The Federation primarily dealt with micro-financial assistance. The tsunami destroyed livelihoods worth about Rs 7 million. There were pre-tsunami loans and these had to be written off.

• Aid distribution in some places did not have a clear program. Some people used this as an opportunity to increase their assets. For instance, some families got five to six sewing machines. It is not possible to develop livelihoods and uplift families in a short time. It takes a long time to build people up mentally. At the same time, many of the assets provided were of poor quality.

• In Seenigama, in one of the villages there were 120 people who died. Most were coral miners, previously, where almost every house had a kiln. However, there was no longer this livelihood because of the new government ban on coral mining. Now we started a diving training centre. Young people can even go abroad after the training. I think, if there is a good administration, we can continue this way.

• There is an interesting story. When you drive to Colombo from Galle, at the boundary, there is a sign board. On one side the board says ‘Thank you come again’ on the other side the board says ‘Ayubowan.’ One boy has turned this sign, with the side facing the sea saying ‘Thank you come again,’ because some people got unexpected benefits from the tsunami. This is another story: One family lost a mother because of the tsunami. Another lost the father. The two families eventually joined through marriage. Each had one child from the previous marriage. Now they had another, new child. When the parents went out the children had a fight. So the mother said, ‘your child and my child have got together and hit our child.’ This story reflects the way we have now view social life. Aid is also like new businesses and we forget the influence on children.

• In Tsunami Nagar, Chennai, a survey was done by a Canadian aid agency focusing on children. There was a drastic jump in alcohol consumption among men, women and children. So this was noticed and some work has been done.

• There is a difference between relief work and livelihoods rebuilding and we in NESDO (Sainthamuruthu) distinguish this difference when we work. Many people think emergency relief is the same as livelihood development but the difference is very critical when we are addressing community rebuilding efforts.

• It was noted that in Sri Lanka, certain groups of people—including public servants and pensioners—were not entitled to tsunami aid even though they may have lost all in the disaster. This created real hardship for many such people.

• The national agencies in charge of various aspects of maintenance and continuation of systems are not up to the task. So there is a need for a system,
to ensure maintenance and management of facilities provided through foreign donations. The Tzu Chi Foundation is still trying to address remaining problems faced by village residents in Hambantota. We do not know when the government agencies will take over. So we have set up volunteer groups made up of residents. But the thing is, when housing schemes, or buildings, or anything else, are built through foreign funds, there needs to be some system to ensure their continuation and repairs. Someone must be responsible

- Sri Lanka Solidarity founder Philippe Fabry commented on the same problem as the Tzu Chi Foundation, i.e. the continuation of the work, once SL Solidarity leaves. The whole thing depends on the efficiency of the authorities managing each sector. The roads, drains, parks in the re-settlement need to be maintained. As an alternative to the authorities, the NGO has set up a market and shops to get money to empower the Village Committee to maintain the village. But these things take time to start generating incomes.

- There was a lot investment into fisheries. So this will increase output, but it can only go up to a maximum level. If the resources of the sea are depleted, livelihoods will be lost once again. So it is critical that we study the sustainability of resources when giving aid in particular areas.

- Since the basis of the aid system was asset replacement how can broader needs be addressed? Also, although lots of boats were given, a lot of them were not seaworthy. They are put in the back of the house. So they are not all being used anyway. At SL Solidarity, the approach of replacing the working tool was taken. So not only a boat was given, but also a net and everything they needed. Where there were too many boats, multi-day boat alternatives were opted for. But then there is the problem of not giving it to one person. The multi-day boats have to be allocated on a community level but it was very difficult to decide how to do this.

- The discussion suggested that some things had not been covered so far in the presentation of research findings in relation to livelihoods and other challenges, such as:
  - the setting up of local committees that can oversee aid and aid distribution
  - the need to include aid/resources for small and medium business from the outset.
  - the fact that many repairs could have been done, rather than total replacement of houses and buildings
  - the need for in-depth work about long-term resettlement of orphans
  - the needs of Muslim widows have not been addressed. Muslim widows cannot go out for four months and 10 days. So how will they be looked after during this period?
  - the serious need for counselling. This was still needed even five years after the tsunami. There was also the compounded issue of the civil war and the resettlement of these people who were not just survivors of the tsunami but also internally displaced people from the civil conflict.
Response to the day from Professor Siri Hettige

Professor Hettige was asked to offer some reflections on the day’s discussions. He began by saying that there are probably three key questions to be addressed:

1. After five years are we in a position to say we have established systems, at different levels, to reduce disaster risk?
2. Can we reduce existing and new vulnerabilities?
3. How do we build sustainable and resilient communities?

There are three levels at which livelihood issues need to be considered:

1. At the community level. But the capacity to be able to bring them up is very limited. Micro-credit does not really lift people out of poverty.
2. In integrating micro-levels into a national plan, the question is What industries do you target? Due to industrialisation, we have become even more vulnerable because of conditions in the country itself. The garment industry, for instance, has become vulnerable because our labour is no longer cheap. So can we build industries on the basis of cheap labour any more? Right now 70 per cent of income from garment exports goes out, because we only have labour. So we have to ask what kind of industry do we mean when we say industry development?
3. Regional development alone will not fix our problems because our structural problems are pervasive. Even to seek medical facilities people travel to Colombo. It is important to think about what kind of development we might have to promote, to address such issues. Maybe we can think of disaster management as development and it is also very connected to governance issues. As we know devolution is often discussed but the problems associated with devolution—where the local authorities are not empowered to take action—are not limited to tsunami resettlement areas alone. This is a problem for the whole country.

Day Two

The second day began with a continuation of the discussion about post-tsunami experiences within the communities represented at the symposium. On behalf of the symposium organising committee, Azmi Thassim and Prof. Siri Hettige then announced that participants would then be broken into five separate working groups to discuss key themes that had emerged on Day One. The aim of the working groups would be to develop a concise set of points related to their designated theme. These points would be collected and integrated into a two-page communiqué to be released as a concise summary of the symposium outcomes.

The themes selected from discussion on Day One were as follows:

1. Short-term relief and long-term planning.
2. Relations between local organisations and international aid agencies.
3. Addressing divisions and vulnerabilities
4. Addressing needs of women, children, and youth.
5. Creating sustainable livelihoods.
Azmi Thassim, Siri Hettige and Martin Mulligan offered to amalgamate the points emerging from the five working groups into the two-page Hambantota Communiqué (see pp. 18–19).

In May 2010, more than 50 people representing a wide range of community-based organisations in the southern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka met with researchers from the University of Colombo, the University of Madras, and RMIT and Monash Universities in Melbourne, Australia, to consider the outcomes of research conducted on tsunami recovery and rehabilitation and to also share experiences across a range of local communities in Sri Lanka and southern India. Those present included representatives of local and international NGOs, delegates from Rural Development Societies, local women’s groups and religious centres, and people involved in the planning of new settlements and in local government within tsunami-affected areas.

The gathering was principally organised by the Hambantota District Chamber of Commerce (HDCC) and the Social Policy Analysis and Research Centre (SPARC) at the University of Colombo. It was held in Hambantota.

The gathering worked to identify and document key lessons learnt from post-tsunami recovery effort in order to share these findings with local communities all around the world who may face future disasters. From Burma to Haiti there have been many natural disasters since the 2004 tsunami for which local communities have been poorly prepared and the time has surely come to document and disseminate lessons learnt in rebuilding shattered communities. At the same time, the lessons from the tsunami recovery effort can inform the resettlement people displaced by human conflict and wars and this should be the case for people displaced by war in north-eastern Sri Lanka.

This communiqué seeks to provide a very concise summary of key findings of the Hambantota gathering. More detailed findings can be obtained by contacting the HDCC or SPARC.

**Short-term relief and long-term planning**

- Short-term relief should aim to ensure that culturally appropriate food is delivered and that climatically appropriate shelter and clothing is provided.
- There should be a focus on hygiene and public health, while care should also be taken to treat the dead with due respect.
- There should be plans for emergency communication and all relief efforts should aim to increase the capacity of local government and civil society organisations to carry out emergency relief operations.
- Resettlement plans must be guided by a master plan and every effort should be made to minimize the distance from pre-disaster settlements.
- There needs to be an emphasis on access to infrastructure in regard to health care, education and markets. Transport can become a major impediment to recovery.
- Resettlement housing needs to be appropriate in regard to design and location and resettlement processes need to unfold in consultation with recipient communities.

**Relations between local agencies and international aid agencies**

- Care needs to be taken to find good matches in such partnerships
• Local agencies need to be prepared to work with international agencies and to use the experience to increase their skill and capacity.
• International agencies need to be given more opportunities to learn about local practices and techniques so that they can deliver more appropriate aid and also benefit from the experience in regard to future work.

Addressing divisions and vulnerabilities
• Groups of people—such as government servants and pensioners—were excluded from benefits and this caused real hardship.
• Some people got things they were not entitled to and there needs to be a better system for registering significant assets.
• Relocation meant that some people had to do work they were not skilled for and single parents could not get help with caring for children so they could go to work.
• Relocation often divides people from their families and old neighbours, so it would be better to resettle people in batches.
• Houses given to orphan children or single parents were sometimes taken away from them because they could not be occupied in the short term.
• The unfair distribution of aid between the south and east of Sri Lanka has left ongoing problems for people living in the east (e.g. not enough houses).
• International agencies often paid a higher rate than local organisations for cash-for-work programs and this meant such jobs could not be sustained with the INGOs left.

Addressing the needs of women, children and youth
• Women and young people should have been more involved in the delivery of aid and in planning for long-term social recovery.
• Psycho-social and counselling programs for traumatised people were not adequate and were stopped too soon.
• Resettlement did not adequately take into account childcare, education for children, employment for young people and livelihoods for widows.
• Resettlement houses rarely had adequate kitchens and this caused particular problems for women.

Creating sustainable livelihoods
• There needs to be better sharing of information and communication between multiple stakeholders in regard to livelihood planning.
• Assistance needs to be given to damaged small to medium businesses, including assistance in relocation or revival of previously successful businesses.
• There is a need for more business planning in developing and funding new enterprises.
• Other issues include: initiation costs, access to adequate resources, incentives for good practice, and the need for diversification of local and regional economies.